

1 Timothy 2:9-15

Few Bible passages are as troublesome as this one in light of modern cultural norms. It is difficult to reconcile with the prevailing ideas, and even laws, mandating equality between men and women. Still, there it is. Along with 1 Corinthians 14:33-35 these verses clearly define different *public* roles for men and women in the assembly.

Does this mean that Paul was, as some say, a misogynist (woman-hater)? Not at all. Certainly we don't see him doing the things that "creepy" men use to slight women: using their appearance to make them objects, telling lewd jokes about them, or always placing them in menial roles. Quite the contrary. He calls women to prize their inward selves over their looks (1 Tim. 2:9), forbids coarse jesting (Eph. 5:4), and speaks warmly and respectfully of many women who have labored alongside him for the Lord (Rom. 16).

Paul's notion of modesty goes nowhere near the extreme of hiding women from all men other than their husbands, lest they tempt them – a practice common in the Roman, Greek, and Jewish cultures of his day and some Middle Eastern cultures today. In fact, the account of Priscilla and Aquila teaching Apollos in Acts 18:26 shows a wife acting as the partner of her husband in a private ministry, even one involving another man. (This couple is mentioned six times altogether in Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, and 2 Timothy, always together, never individually. Sweet, isn't it?) In other places Paul tells men to control themselves, not pretend to be helpless victims of alluring females.

So, we have seen that the Lord, speaking through Paul, has assigned different parts to men and women in public ministry. But there is one place where there is not only equality, but **no distinction** between men and

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women: in Christ. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). Both are saved by the same faith and trust in the same Savior's blood. Both are indwelt by the same Spirit. Both equally partake of the same cup and the same loaf, having the same participation in the body of Christ. Neither is more a Christian than the other.

So are the distinct public roles an example of inequality? In one sense, no. Men and women have exactly the same right to express their opinions in assembly meetings. Surprised? The catch is that men have no right whatsoever to speak their personal opinions, only what is given to them by the Spirit. Many men have reported that when they have given out a message, a woman has told them afterward that the Spirit had impressed the same message on her heart before he spoke. Shame on us men if we do not obey the privilege and duty of speaking aloud a word that has been given to brothers and sisters alike.

Notes

2:9 Most commentators agree that this verse does not prohibit simple braids, but costly and elaborate hair styles.

2:11 Note the word "learn" in this verse. Any education for women was very rare at the time. Literacy rates for women were about 10% of those for men of the same class.

2:12 A common question is whether the prohibition against women having authority over men is limited to the assembly, or is universal. As this passage and most of 1 Timothy relates to order in the assembly, it's reasonable to assume that is the context.

2:15 This verse is notoriously difficult to interpret. Some theories are: 1) women's lives will be spared during childbirth; 2) women (and men) are saved through Christ, the woman's seed (Ge. 3:15); and 3) bearing and raising godly children will save/preserve the woman's standing in the assembly.

For study and discussion:

1. What does "modesty" mean besides clothes that are not revealing? How should a godly woman be clothed (answer not limited to garments)?

2. What is the connection between verse 12 and verses 13-14?
3. Lest we think that rules for clothing, speech, and behavior are given only to women, read the following Scriptures and summarize the instructions they give to *all* believers, or specifically to men:
 - 1 Corinthians 11:14
 - James 2:1-4
 - Colossians 3:12
 - 1 Peter 5:5
 - 1 Corinthians 16:15-16
 - Hebrews 13:17
 - Romans 13:1,5
 - Ephesians 5:21
 - 1 Corinthians 14:30
 - James 3:1
 - 1 Timothy 3:1-13
 - Titus 1:5-9
4. Verse 14 labels Eve as a transgressor. Did Adam transgress equally? What is different about the way Eve responded to temptation?