

“The church rekindled – 1st and 2nd Timothy”

September 18, 2022



“Of first importance”

God calls us to worship:

Responsive reading: Psalm 118

Hymn: #290 “Immortal, Invisible, God only wise”

We respond in praise, confession, and supplication:

Prayers of Praise and supplication (*Please remain standing*):

God our Creator,
You sustain your creation
as the source of life for every precious thing.
You have given us more than we could ever earn or deserve,
and so we offer you our love and loyalty,
for without you, we would not be.
Receive our worship this day, O God.
Speak to us in the sounds and silence of this hour,
and amaze us
with your promise of new life revealed in Jesus Christ,
and your power at work in us and among us through the Spirit.
Amen.

Prayers of Confession (*Please be seated; said in unison*):

**Merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against you
in thought, word, and deed.
We have not loved you
with our whole heart, mind, and strength;
we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.
In your mercy
forgive what we have been,
amend what we are,
and direct what we shall be,
so that we may delight in your will
and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your holy name.
Amen.**

Assurance of grace:

(The response to: "Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good" is: "**His love endures forever.**")

God speaks to us:

Hymn: #442 "Speak, Lord, in the stillness"

Unison prayer for illumination:

**Living God,
to turn away from you is to fall
and to turn towards you is to rise.
By the power of your Spirit,
reform your church
and help us to hear your word
in ways that we will understand it truly;
so that in understanding we may trust fully;
and that in trusting we may follow you always.
Give us, dear God,
your help in all our responsibilities;
your guidance in all our uncertainties;
and your wisdom in all our discerning.
Where we are corrupt, purify us.
Where we are in error, direct us.
Where we are divided, reunite us.
And use your church to your glory
and the service of your people,
through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.¹**

¹ A prayer for the church from the writings of the Reformers.

Of first importance

After making the introductions in which he warns and encourages us (via Timothy) to adhere to sound doctrine concerning the use of Scripture, the person and work of Jesus the Messiah, and how one ought to behave in the household of God, Paul then began to elaborate with what he considered to be of first importance for the Christian church.

READ 1ST TIMOTHY 2:1-15.

Chapter 2 can be considered in two teaching sections. The first (verses 1-7) deals with the action of first importance for Christians. The second (verses 8-15) deals with our attitude and preparation for such action.

Attitude and Preparation:

Because Paul's teaching in the second section can be offensive, I think it behoves us to spend a few minutes talking about it right from the start.

Although these verses deal with outward concerns, the heart of the matter is the heart. In other words, Paul is addressing believer's attitude and preparation for gathering with other believers in prayer and worship of the Living God. In verse 8 he addresses men. In verses 9 and 10 he addresses women's attire. In verse 11 and 12 he deals with authority within the assembly. And in verses 13-15 he references the fall of Adam and Eve as the backing for his arguments.

a) In both the matters of women's clothing and men's aggression, Paul was trying to stress that our attitude and personal preparation affect our ability to worship and pray without distraction. Clothing and jewellery were symbols of status and so, he was here teaching that what we wear and how we adorn our bodies ought not create division within the assembly or distraction. We are equally beloved by God, and so, as siblings in Christ, we should not be in competition but conduct ourselves appropriately. His encouragement for men to lay aside their anger also points to our attitude in worship. Indeed, anger, bitterness, and envy within Christian assemblies not only harms our individual sense of well-being, it harms our image in the world as revealers of the truth of the Living God. Jesus went so far as to tell us not even bother coming to worship until we have reconciled:

When you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.²

Many congregations include a “Passing of the peace” at the beginning of the liturgy during which worshippers are asked to greet one another. The actual intent of this liturgical practice is to put into action both Paul’s and Jesus’ teaching. It is an effort for individuals to reconcile with one another before the worship service continues. It is not meant to be simply an excuse to say “Good morning” and shake hands, but rather an attempt to lay aside anger and argument so that you can lift up holy hands in worship. One of the reasons I’ve never included this practice in our worship is that it is seldom used in the way it is intended.

Physical preparation together with attitude of mind and heart enable us to worship and pray in truth and faith.

b) Now, perhaps what is the more controversial, is Paul’s prohibitions of women taking leadership and teaching roles within the Christian assembly.

Last week I said that the threat against the church in Ephesus, about which Paul warned Timothy in this letter, came from teachers who were misrepresenting Scripture by interpreting it in ways that support popular ideas, rather than shaping popular ideas according to the sound doctrine of scripture.

What we’ve just read clearly prohibits women from teaching and ruling Christian congregations.

In 1966, the Presbyterian Church in Canada changed its polity to allow for women to become ordained as ruling elders and teaching elders.

Are we guilty of apostasy?

In every decision we make as Christians, whether about what to wear or what to eat; who to marry or who should teach, it behoves us to have enough humility to accept that we may be wrong. If nothing else, that opens us to be corrected later as the Holy Spirit reveals to us more of His truth.

That being said, when we make these big decisions, what we try and do is to examine the issue in the light of the entire testimony of scripture, not merely one or two verses. And there are enough instances in scripture in which women took

² Matthew 5:23-24

leadership/teaching roles in the community of faith to suggest that Paul was addressing not a general and ageless truth, but some particular issues in a particular context.

After all, Paul himself wasn't consistent in this issue! In his letter to the Corinthians in which he again addressed appropriate clothing for public gatherings of prayer, he presumed women took leadership roles therein. In his other letter to Timothy, in 2nd Timothy 1:5, he noted that Timothy's faith was the result of the teaching he had received from his mother and grandmother! In Galatians 3:28 he wrote that, in Christ, there is no hierarchy of status, authority, or value:

If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.

In Acts we read of house churches hosted and led by women. And, in the Old Testament, we have examples of women like Ruth, and Deborah, and Rahab who had to earn her living as a prostitute.

Paul's purpose in highlighting these issues of authority, apparel, argument, and anger, can be inferred from the posture of the men at prayer: lifting up *holy* hands.

What is at the heart of the matter, is the condition of believers' hearts when they come to that which is of first importance:

Action:

The church rekindled by the Holy Spirit is firstly a community of prayer.

In fact, taught Paul, this is of first importance for individual Christians, and for the life and witness of the church, which is the household of God.

Think about that for a moment. Before sharing one's wealth with those in need, before clothing and sheltering those who have no social networks, before advocating for those with no public voice, what Paul teaches is of first importance for Christians, for the church, is prayer.

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings should be made....

The first thing we ought to notice in this doctrine is for whom we are to pray. Paul taught that the church rekindled prays for **everyone**.
taught that Christians are to pray for **everyone**.

The Westminster Larger Catechism says:

We are to pray for the whole church of Christ upon earth; for magistrates [politicians, lawyers, administrators] and ministers [pastors, preachers, elders]; for ourselves, our brethren, yea, our enemies; and for all sorts of [people] living or that shall live hereafter....³

The church of Jesus Christ must of first importance be a community of people who pray for everyone, whether we like them or not.

Now, “Why?” is the next question. Maybe you don’t want to pray for the murderer, or the terrorist, or the pastor who insulted you, or the elder who doesn’t visit you, or for the Prime Minister, or for your neighbour, or your cousin.

As people who bear the name of Christ, as children of the heavenly Father and members of His household by His adoptive grace, we represent in St. Clair township, Mooretown, and Corunna the One Living, Creating, and Triune God.

And this God, as Paul taught, desires that **everyone** be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.

In the context in which Paul wrote his letter, there were other, much more popular ideas. The city of Ephesus, was not only the capital city of the Roman province of Asia and so was a hub of commerce, politics, travel, and academia, it was also the centre of worship of the goddess Artemis.

In the face of the gods Artemis, and business; politics, and advanced intellectual thinking, Paul teaches that there is only one God who can affect salvation. There is one living God in fellowship with whom is peace, healing, and contentment.

So, why do we pray?

Because God is real, good, and able to affect salvation. Because supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings are not simply “good thoughts” or, “good vibes”, but that the One to whom we pray is living and, like a loving father, he hears our prayers and not only desires everyone’s salvation but is able to affect such graces through the mediation of Jesus of Nazareth, who is the Messiah.

³ W.L.C. answer #183

So, the church is to be the community in the world that prays for everyone believing that God is real, good, and able; that in Jesus Christ everyone can enjoy the fellowship with the God that is described as peace.

So, fellow members of the household of God that gathers in in Mooretown/Rokeby Line:

Let us, first of all, be people who come before the Living God, by the mediation of Christ Jesus, who prays on our behalf at the throne of grace.

Let us adopt the mindset of the God who desires everyone to be saved and come to a knowledge of truth.

And, let us raise our holy hands and make intercessions, prayers, supplications, and thanksgivings for *all* people.

For the health of our souls, the good of our societies, and the glory of God.
Amen.

We respond in thanksgiving, intercession, and faith:

Prayers of thanksgiving and intercession:

God in whom we live and move and have our being,
each week our prayers join with those of Christians around the world
to seek your healing grace for those in need
and to pray for justice and mercy in your fragile creation.

We thank you for the ways in which your Spirit can surprise us,
bringing healing and hope in situations which cause us to despair.

Encourage us when we feel overwhelmed.

God, speak to us a word of hope

Embrace us with your love.

We remember before you today people living face to face with war and violence,
for the peoples of Ukraine, Syria, Yemen, Myanmar, Ethiopia and Tigre, South
Sudan

*Here, you can add any other conflict situations in the news
and all those places where ancient hatreds burn.*

Keep ten seconds of silence.

God, speak to us a word of peace

Embrace us with your love.

We remember before you today people living with illness and suffering,
for those struggling with disability or waiting for treatment,
and for those who know grief or fear or loneliness

Keep ten seconds of silence.

God, speak to us a word of healing

Embrace us with your love.

We remember before you today people facing discrimination and social
prejudice,
for those who are bullied at school, at work or at home,
and for those who are made ashamed of who they are

Keep ten seconds of silence.

God, speak to us a word of dignity

Embrace us with your love.

We remember before you people caught up in economic uncertainty,
those worried for the future, or struggling to make ends meet

Keep ten seconds of silence.

God, speak to us a word of reassurance

Embrace us with your love.

We remember before you today your whole creation in its increasing
vulnerability.

Teach us how to care for the rips and tears in the fabric of the world you love
so that all your creatures may live together in health and wholeness.

Keep ten seconds of silence.

God, speak to us a word of wisdom

Embrace us with your love.

Receive all our prayers, spoken and unspoken, as we offer together the words Jesus taught us:

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn: #174 "Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness"

God sends us with God's blessing:

Benediction

Congregation sings "Amen"