

## 1 TIMOTHY 2:8-10

(Reading: 1 Pet.2:13-3:12; Ps.134; 1 Tim.2:1-10)

### The Way We Are Together Before God

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ...

This text is about worship.

And if there has been one subject more debated than any other amongst Christians in the last fifty years, it would have to be this subject of worship.

The Christian Church has seen more change, and so more division, because of this, than ever before over anything else.

Our text is about one aspect of worship which has often been overlooked in the so-called "Worship Wars" debate.

Indeed, if this area was considered more often, much of the damage which has been done, could have been avoided altogether.

Because this factor is about the need for God's people to come before Him in a holy and reverent way.

The best way to worship the Lord is to come prepared to worship Him.

A quiet and early Saturday night, with a prayer for the next day, makes Sunday the Lord's Day.

Perhaps that's why some churches have loud and dancing music - it's what their people have been doing late Saturday night!

The apostle Paul is very concerned about the attitude of believers when they come together in public worship.

This is why the first aspect we consider in the text this morning is about... THE HEART OF WORSHIP.

Brothers and sisters, boys and girls, how can we know we have THE HEART OF WORSHIP?

Well, think about what you do.

Actually - that's the key!

You **should** think about what you do!

THE HEART OF WORSHIP means our thoughts are focused on the Lord.

That starts a long time before we step through that door!

It's in us right through the week already.

We show whose we are before we come and profess that together in public worship.

In the Latin there is a phrase which shows this.

It says, 'Ora Et Labora'.

Translated it means, 'Pray and Work.'

Our whole living is taken up with the Lord.

Whatever we think, or say, or do, we are looking to the Lord.

When verse 8 begins, with the apostle's desire that men everywhere lift up holy hands in prayer, it is a command.

It's what we have to do.

But let's not think that the way prayer is done here, is what matters.

The vital thing is that there's this looking to the Lord being done.

That is what Paul has just written about in the verses 1 till 7 - a theme continued from the Old Testament.

This is why we read Psalm 134 - there the point is that prayers **are** offered, and offered day and night.

So, whether it is standing or sitting; whether it is with outstretched arms or hands folded together; whether it's with eyes lifted up or looking down; it's what on your heart that matters.

And what's on your heart shows in what you do.

The actual life of the worshipper is the focus here.

Holy hands represent a life where all its parts are given to God as His.

This is a person who fights sin.

This is the believer seeking to claim every square millimetre for Christ his Lord.

Psalm 66, verse 18, pictures what happens if sin does win.

There the psalmist acknowledges, "If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened."

The modest clothing and the good deeds of verses 9 and 10, tie in exactly with this.

The Lord desires, with the modest clothing, that nothing distract believers from wholesome relationships.

Provocative clothing can easily bring about the wrong kind of thoughts, and through that immoral behaviour occurs.

The focus here is positively on the Lord.

Christians are putting on what pleases Him.

That's why 'good deeds' are mentioned.

They show the right spirit inside them.

It is this spirit Jesus had spoken of to the Samaritan woman at the well.

He said there, as John 4 verse 24 records, that true worshippers are those who worship in spirit and in truth.

It's from their hearts, and according to God's Word.

They look to the Lord.

But those who look to themselves show quite different characteristics.

Think about the anger or disputing in verse 8.

They are signs of a break in the unity of Christ's Church.

While unresolved, they are obstacles to God's people being together before God.

As John says in his first letter, chapter 3, verse 20, "If anyone says, 'I love God,' yet hates his brother, he is a liar.

"For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen."

John wasn't saying a person in this situation is an unbeliever.

In that state of hate towards his brother, though, he had blocked himself off from the Lord.

The same as the text.

Where there is anger or disputing, there there is no heart of worship! (cf. 1 Pet.3:7.)

Congregation, don't we know that in our basic human relationships with each other?

If we create antagonism, we cannot get along together.

Then there's always something held back - it's not complete commitment.

It means we're trusting only in **ourselves**.

The same is true, in a different way, in verse 9.

Braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or expensive clothes, are not wrong in themselves.

When Christian women do it because they're looking to themselves, though, it's wrong!

Don't think it would have been easy to escape this temptation.

Then you don't know a woman!

Because it's the way her inner security can fall into this trap, that makes this so dangerous.

Society then seems to have been much like society now.

The money was flowing around, and all kinds of luxuries quickly became fashionable.

And quite bizarre ones too!

One of their 'flavours of the month', was the popularity of hair styles.

It seems many of the women spent much time and money on getting that looking just right.

You wouldn't want to get it wrong - would you?

Pliny, a Roman statesman of the time, complains about the big money spent on getting ready.

Various satirists made many jokes about the hours spent in dressing the hair of women.

It was quite a problem.

Congregation, it's not much different than our world today - is it?

How many woman aren't at the hairdressers every week?

How many men as well - for that matter?  
Don't those fashion parades seem to be getting more daring each season?  
I mean, look at what they wear - or should I say, what they don't wear?

Those kind of clothes attract attention to the wrong things.  
Dressing with decency and propriety, however, is thinking about what you're doing, and especially, preparing for where you're going.  
Being feminine **is** about being beautiful.  
But for believing women, it's where that beauty comes from which matters.  
And that's not on the outside!

Others aren't to be drawn to how stunning you look, but to how lovely is the One who lives in you.

That means being neat and clean and presentable.  
It doesn't mean being provocative, however.

This is **THE HEART OF WORSHIP**.  
But there is another side to this text.  
In fact, it is the subject of what would have to be the second greatest debate within Christian churches over the past fifty years.  
Have you guessed it yet?  
This is the women in office debate.  
And so our second aspect to this text is... **THE HEAD IN WORSHIP**.

Perhaps, though, you had already picked this up.  
You wondered earlier why I stopped at verse 10.  
The verses 11 till 15 are the ones which engender the most debate.  
They're the one constantly disputed.  
They must be important.

Well, they are important, but not to our text this afternoon.  
And, Lord willing, we'll come to them next week.

What does matter to the verses 8 till 10 is what has come before in Scripture and in church history.  
The apostle is drawing all that together, and especially in the light of what Jesus Christ has done and is doing, he gives this church order for the new covenant church.  
That's what 1st Timothy is.  
It's a Church Order – a primitive Code Book which lays out how things are to be conducted in Christ's Church.

Paul realises that his time on earth is nearly done, so he gives this guidance to those following him in the leadership of the church.  
That's why he writes in chapter 3, the verses 14 and 15, "Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how

people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth."

We have to note, then, the importance of the men in worship being mentioned first.

Verse 8 has the men leading the worship.

In the biblical tradition of the Old Testament priesthood, the men are identified as those publicly praying.

There is a difference now, though, from what happened in the temple.

Then there were only a few who could be priests, and that priesthood finished with the ultimate sacrifice in Jesus Christ, the Passover Lamb Himself.

All of us are now priests and prophets and kings.

We are, therefore, all equal before the Lord.

Both men and women are mentioned as being together in public worship.

There are a different roles they perform, though.

It is a difference that can be pictured this way:

There are two officers with the rank of Major in the army.

Status wise, they are both the same.

In their roles, though, there's all the difference.

Because one is a Major in the Engineering Corps, while the other is a Major in the Medical Corps.

Completely different jobs!

The ministry that is performed publicly before the Lord is the male's leadership of the Old Testament continued in the New Testament.

David Feddes notes, "In Old Testament Israel, priests were officially responsible to lead public worship rituals and to teach the law of Moses.

"Without exception, these official leaders and teachers were men."

"When Jesus came to earth, He maintained the practice of having only men as official leaders.

"Jesus had many followers, women as well as men, but when Jesus chose twelve apostles to serve as leaders, all twelve were men."

We see this also reflected in the Synagogue service, which the early church closely followed.

That was the way most Jews were worshipping every week, in the time of the New Testament.

They followed the Jewish custom of the men taking the lead in the worship services.

The women had to sit at the back, or in the gallery - and keep quiet!

The main responsibility of the ladies was to look after the children and observe what was happening at the meetings.

All of the teaching and public praying was done by men.

The pattern here is important.

This is what the Spirit is saying through the apostle for the Church's order of worship, until Christ returns.

It is the Spirit who clearly says that the male members of the church are meant to give the lead in praying in the assemblies of worship.

As a side-line to this, this is also a text which challenges a common practice amongst many churches today.

There has come about a recent tradition of believers - men and women - worshipping with their hands lifted up high in praise to the Lord.

If you were to look up the passages they quote for this practice, especially the psalms which they quote the most, there is no proof.

Each of those references is actually supporting the principle of verse 8, that hands are lifted up **in prayer**, and then only by males in public worship.

Yet, congregation, we also have to note that women are mentioned specifically in the context of worship.

They do have a role - a very special one.

As women mattered to the Lord Jesus, so they are a vital part of His Church in her worship.

This was quite a contrast to the common rabbinical practice, which treated women as little more than furniture.

You see, when Paul speaks of the women's profession of their Christian faith, shown through good deeds, he uses a very strong word.

The word "profess" means "to convey a message loudly and clearly."

It clearly shows their equal part in the witness of the public worship, though in a different role.

And what a witness that is!

This true beauty of femininity can be a potent instrument in God's hands, for challenging and comforting others!

Women such as Hannah, Abigail, Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, and Lydia, are outstanding examples of this godly feminine beauty.

They proved the words of 1st Peter chapter 3.

For in verse 4 there the apostle says the quality which matters is "that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.

"For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful."

With women who served in the way of verse 10 of our text, and with men who led the way verse 8 says, **there** is the worshipping together the Lord loves!

Looking to the Lord means we also look to where we should be with others, as He tells us to be.

That's the church upon which His blessing flows, because that's the church open to taking it all in!

Amen.

PRAYER:

Let's pray...

Lord, this is Your Word.

You give it to us for our good, so that we bring You alone all the glory.

Even though sometimes we cannot understand it all, yet how blessed we are when we humble ourselves before it.

Because it's You!

And we want to worship You.

Father, that's in everything we do.

Please, guide us through, by Your own Spirit.

In Jesus' Name alone, we pray, Amen.