

Glimpses of Godliness (Part 2) – Godliness and Gathering

Beau Hughes – August 3, 2014

How are you all doing? Good. If you're new here, I know John already did this, but I want to say hi. I'm really glad you're here. I know some of you have just transitioned in over the last couple of weeks. Maybe even tonight is your first time to be with us. My name is Beau. I'm one of our pastors, just like John. We're delighted you chose to join with us tonight.

You've actually jumped into week two of what's going to be a five-week sermon series on a letter in the Bible called 1 Timothy. If you have a Bible, I'd love for you to turn there with me as we look into it tonight. If you don't have a Bible, there should be one that looks just like *this* that's in front of you somewhere in the back of the seat (hopefully in the little container it's supposed to be in). You can follow along there.

If you missed last week, we kicked off and actually just spent the whole evening last week looking into the purpose and the background of the letter of 1 Timothy. As we did that, what we learned is Paul, the apostle, planted a church in Ephesus, a city in the ancient world. He planted that church, loved that church, had to leave that church. He left it and entrusted it to its elders he appointed.

Then when he came back to that church, he found it in a mess. It was in a mess because a bunch of the teachers in the church, specifically a couple of the elders (we'll read their names tonight) actually were leading the church astray in false teaching. He left Timothy there (this disciple), and then he left and went to Macedonia and wrote a letter back to Timothy, which is called 1 Timothy.

The purpose of the book is to write a letter to Timothy and tell him, encourage him, demand him even, to put away the false teachers. What this whole letter is about is Timothy putting away the false teachers in Ephesus, the false teaching in Ephesus, but then also for Timothy to lead the church into living and acting as they ought to live and act as the household of God. These are the purposes of the book.

We talked about that last week. Tonight, as we said last week, what we're going to do is pull up a chair, and we're going to learn from the church in Ephesus. We're going to learn both what they did that was so devastatingly chaotic and poisonous to the church, and we're going to learn about that because as we transition to a church, we don't want to do that. We don't want to do the things they did. We don't want to have our church go the way their church went.

Then also we're going to look and see what we could do that they didn't do that Paul wanted them to do. He writes about it here. We have the opportunity looking back on their history to say, "Hey, let's do *that*. Let's go *that* way because *that* way is the way God says we ought to go as his people and as a local church."

This letter is just filled with these glimpses of how we have to live in a godly way. The first glimpse of godliness Paul writes about in this letter is a glimpse into how we can be godly when we gather on Sundays. That's what chapter 2 is about. Let me pray. I know Josh just prayed, but let me pray again. I'd encourage you to pray with me, pray for me, pray for yourself even as I pray. Then we'll read and think through and listen to God's Word from chapter 2 together.

Father, we thank you that you have not left us to ourselves again. You've given us your Spirit who you said would lead us into truth. So tonight as we look at this Scripture that you, by your Spirit, have just put together and left for us, Father, we pray the truths of who you are and all that you've done and how you want us to live in light of that would be really clear to us. Open up our hearts, open up our minds, open up our ears, Lord, to receive your Word.

As Josh prayed, incline us to not just receive it but to obey it. Where we need to be convicted and challenged, I pray you'd do that. Where we need to be comforted, I pray you'd do that. Lord, where we need to be confronted, maybe even tonight, I pray you would do that. We thank you for this letter and for the gift it is to us especially as we look ahead to becoming our own local church over this next year. Speak to us. We pray in Christ's name, amen.

John Stott, who is one of my favorite authors and theologians, wrote this about chapter 2 of Timothy and particularly about the significance that emphasizes in regard to the worship gathering. This is what Stott wrote. He said, "This emphasis [the emphasis that's in 1 Timothy 2] on the priority of worship has particular importance for us who are called 'evangelical' people." If you're a member of our church, you're an evangelical person. You would fit in this category.

He says, "For whenever we fail [as evangelicals, as Christians] to take public worship seriously, we are less than the fully biblical Christians we claim to be." "We go to church for the preaching," some of us will say, "but not for the praise." Or, "Evangelism is our specialty, not worship." He is saying that's not a good attitude. That's the attitude that's actually not taking what this gathering is meant to be seriously. It's actually bringing your consumerism into this gathering.

He says, "In consequence [when we do that] either our worship services [reflect it because they] are slovenly..." or *careless*. I looked that word up for you and for me because I didn't use it in a sentence this week. I assumed you didn't. So they're careless. They're perfunctory. They're without thought, just duty. They're "...mechanical and dull or, in an attempt to remedy this, we go to the opposite extreme and become repetitive, unreflective and even flippant."

I want to ask you a question that I'll come back to later on. The question is this, especially if you're a Christian, or even maybe more especially if you're a member of our church...*What do you understand based on God's Word to be your responsibility in this gathering tonight?* Are you responsible for anything besides just showing up? Is there anything God has said to you through his Word that he has revealed to us that would shape and mold our attitude and our actions when we come together on Sundays?

If you don't have responsibility or if you're not aware of it (these are rhetorical questions for you to answer, just to think about), why would you come? If you have no role here except just to be here, why would you show up? What would compel you to be here on Sunday night instead of wherever else you could be? There are some pretty cool places to be here in town. Maybe another question would actually help get to the bottom of sort of how you think about these worship gatherings.

Would you consider the worship gatherings here on Sundays more akin to a concert hall or a banquet hall? This is a question a guy named Mike Cospser asked in a book he wrote called *Rhythms of Grace: How the Church's Worship Tells the Story of the Gospel*. He is a worship pastor. He said, "If it's a concert hall [if you think about these gatherings as a concert hall], we show up as passive observers and critics, eager to have the itches of our preferences and felt needs scratched."

It's sort of like showing up at the movie theater. We go to the movies for ourselves. We go to the movies because we think it's going to be funny, and that's going to be happy for us. That's why we go to the movie. We go to the show, the concert hall, because we think it's going to be good. We go

to have our preferences sort of met. That's not a bad thing altogether, but if you start treating this gathering like that, it becomes a bad thing.

He says, "A banquet hall, by contrast..." That's the concert hall mindset. Is it a concert hall or a banquet hall? He says, "A banquet hall, by contrast, is a communal gathering. We come hungry and in community, ready to participate and to share the experience with one another. In the New Testament, the glimpses we're given of the gathered church are very much like the banquet hall, or perhaps even the potluck." Not the concert hall.

"The church [in the New Testament] comes together with the expectation of participating by giving and receiving." What he is saying is the responsibility the New Testament conveys about us coming together is we're going to participate together. We're here to participate by giving and bringing something to give, to serve one another and build each other up, and also by receiving, is what he is saying here.

He goes, and he says, "There's an expectation that members gather with work to do." We're not just here just to be here. We're here gathered because there's something to do. There's actually work to do when we gather. He says, "From a wide-angle lens [so sort of big picture], we see them meeting to remember the gospel and spur one another along." That's big-picture purposes. Then he says but if you zoom the camera in, we see a variety of ways we're actually supposed to do that in the New Testament.

What 1 Timothy is is it's a zooming in of the camera. What Paul is going to do is outline both what the church in Ephesus was *not* doing as they gathered together that they *needed* to be doing and also what they *were* doing that they *shouldn't* be doing. It gives us a really close glimpse of, "This is our responsibility (or at least part of our responsibility) when we gather as a church." It's very, very helpful.

Look at verse 18 of chapter 1 with me. We'll walk through, because I want to just start a little bit before chapter 2 just to remind you of the purpose of the letter. Then it goes right into what we're going to read in chapter 2. It says this in verse 18. He says, "**This charge I entrust to you, Timothy...**" "This is what I wrote to you about (this charge)." It's the same charge he gave that we read last week in chapter 1, verses 4 through 7, the charge of putting away the false teaching. Paul commanded this and charged this to Timothy and the church, so he is reminding him of this.

He says, **"I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience,"** which we talked about last week. He says, **"By rejecting this, some [these false teachers] have made shipwreck of their faith, among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander..."** So these are the two elders. **"...whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme."**

Paul is reminding him, "This is the purpose of the letter. It's to put away these false teachers. It's to live by faith and love and holiness, unlike these guys are doing." Then in chapter 2, he says, **"First of all, then..."** "In light of this purpose of writing, I'm urging you to do something particular." He says, **"...I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people..."**

Circle that phrase (if you have a Bible you're writing in) "all people." It's going to be really important as we connect some dots here and read this letter. Paul's point here is not so much to delineate between different types of prayers (supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings...what's the difference?). His major point here is actually to encourage the church that all types of prayers should be made for all types of people. You should be praying in every way for all people.

Apparently part of the division in the church at Ephesus when they were gathering that the false teaching was promoting was a division that found the church being exclusive in the way they were praying. They were only praying for certain types of people. They were being led to believe this is what they were going to do. There was a special group of people, and these people deserved special attention and special prayer. "We just leave these people out."

Paul is writing and saying, "No, no, no, no, no, no, no. When you get together to pray, you need to pray for *all* people. You need to be praying for all types of people." Then he digresses for a moment, and he actually gives an example. He says in verse 2, "All people even includes praying for kings or emperors and for all who are in high positions."

It's amazing. It's staggering Paul writes this because he is going to be killed just a few years later by the emperor. He is going to be put to death by the emperor, and he is saying, "Listen. Even these people who are in a high position who are totally against our faith, we even pray for *these* people.

We pray for all people, even these people who are in high positions in life and in the government and other places."

There's nothing new in that. I mean, Paul is just saying what the Old Testament said, but there is something profound in that, that even as we think about who we pray for as a church... We come to Elder-Led Prayer. We come in here. We pray. Once a month or so, I'll lead through a pastoral prayer. If you notice, we're always praying for those in authority. We're always praying for those in high positions because of this verse of Scripture.

We pray for our president. We pray for our Supreme Court justices. We pray for our state senators and representatives and our governor and our mayor and our city council and our school board members and your boss and whoever is in authority over you and the presidents of the universities. We pray for these people. Paul says in verse 2 the reason we pray for them is "**...that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.**"

Part of the reason we pray for these people is so we just live a quiet life, godly and dignified. There's something that's dignified and godly about praying for those in authority. Listen. His point here is not that we should pray so all these people in authority would just kind of leave us alone and we could just kind of keep to ourselves and be quiet as Christians. His point is more so that when we pray for those in authority, it brings the reputation of Christ higher in their eyes.

Apparently part of what was happening as the church was praying in exclusive and not good ways was the reputation of Christ was not only being sullied among themselves as there was division, but people who were peering into the church were saying, "Okay, something is not good here." Paul is saying so your prayers are actually meant to be used by God even for those outside of the church.

He says the very same thing in 1 Thessalonians 4. He says you want to lead a quiet life in order to win the respect of outsiders. We pray so we can live a quiet life, but the purpose of praying to live a quiet life is so outsiders would look in and respect our faith as much as possible. So you can be as little of a stumbling block as necessary to those who are outside the faith.

You know, I've even seen this worked out in my own life. As a pastor early on here, I used to, based on this text, just handwrite letters to our mayor, to some of our city council members, to our leaders, politically those who were in high office. I still do that some, not as much as I should. It was

amazing. Even the ones in our city who are not Christians (very visibly and vocally not Christians), when I'd meet them and introduce myself, they'd know who I was.

They'd be so thankful, even non-Christians! Nobody is going to get mad at you if you just say, "Hey, we're praying for you. I pray for you. Our church prays for you. Here's what I'm praying for you. I thank God for you." Especially when you're praying for people who, you know, typically don't hear that... Typically what they hear are complaints. It's like, "Can you get the roads fixed in Denton already, please? Gosh! It's just unbelievable. Can you fix the road? I'm trying to ride my bike!"

That's what they hear on every level. So whether you're a Christian or not, to receive from a Christian something that just says, "Hey, I'm just praying for you, and I thank God you're leading our city, or you're leading this area," man, people receive that. That's part of, I think, what Paul is saying. He says that's respectable, even to those who don't believe what you believe.

Now obviously there are people who it's not respectable for them. It just makes them angrier. That's fine as well, but the point is, listen, you need to be praying for all people, even those who are in authority so the reputation of Christ may be held in a high regard as much as possible, even among those outside of the church.

That's sort of how he digresses, but then he comes back to his point in verse 3, and he says, "**This is good...**" What's a good thing? Praying for all people. He is back on verse 1. This is good to pray for all people. "**...and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior...**" That's amazing! Do you want to know how you can please God today? You can pray for all people. It's pretty amazing how we can please God when we gather. Well, one of the ways is we can pray in a way Paul is outlining here.

He says, "**This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior...**" Why? Because this God our Savior desires...who? What does it say? "**...all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.**" So don't miss what Paul is saying here. He is saying the reason we're to be praying for all people is that's who needs the gospel, and that's who God loves: all people! God's heart, his desire, is that all people would turn from their sins, turn from their false saviors, and put their faith in Christ to be their Savior, to save them from the wrath of God.

Of course, not all people do this. That's beside the point. That's a different sermon. Not everybody does that, but what he is saying here is the gospel is not just for a certain type of person as the false teachers were apparently teaching in their sermons and modeling in their prayers. It's for all

people, all who would turn from their sins and put their faith in Jesus Christ and call upon him to be Lord of their lives.

When you really understand what Paul is saying and you trace it and connect the dots here, it's really quite convicting. He is not just sort of humdrum. "Oh, yeah. You need to pray when you gather. It's a good thing for the church to pray. Christians should pray." Well, duh! Of course we want to communicate with the God who saved us out of darkness and into his light. Yeah, we're compelled to pray, but Paul is saying something here that's much deeper than that and actually much more convicting than that.

What he is saying is our prayers are not disconnected from our understanding of the gospel, and they're not disconnected from our own hearts. Let me put it this way. If there are people or people groups who we are unwilling to pray for as a church, who you are unwilling to pray for or unable to pray for as an individual, then you and I might just have more of the Ephesian church and its false teaching in our church and in our lives than we could possibly imagine.

So just to give you a few questions to think about, are there certain people or types of people in your life who you can't pray for? Think about it. There were some I found this week who I really struggle with. I was convicted big time. I'm not going to share with you. You don't need to know me *that* much, but I was convicted. Think about this. Are there certain types of people, are there certain people in your family, certain people at your work, a certain political party and anybody who is attached to it, certain races, certain classes of people you just can't pray for?

Who are people in your life who you have such utter disrespect and disdain for that you can't even come before God with sincerity and ask him to bless them with good things, even himself if they're not Christians? What does that reveal about your heart? What does that reveal about your understanding of God's love for you? What does that reveal about the self-righteousness that's still in you and in me if we can't pray for these people?

That's sort of getting close, I think, to what Paul is saying. So listen. He is stepping into some real talk here. This is what's going on in the church at Ephesus. He goes on in verse 5, and he goes deeper. He says, "**For there is one God...**" He is on the same thought here. "**For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus...**"

That's the gospel. There's one God, and there's one mediator that's made a way for us to be reconciled to this God who we have offended because of our sin. That's the man Christ, the man God, Jesus. That's what he is saying here. Verse 6. This Jesus "**...gave himself as a ransom for all...**" There's that word again.

He gave himself for all, "**...which is the testimony given at the proper time.**" Again, the reason we pray for all is that Christ gave himself for all. All who would put their faith in him could be saved. They wouldn't have to perish. They could have eternal life. That's an amazing thing! Paul is saying, "Listen! Do you believe that? If you believe that, you'll pray for them. You'll pray for all people. This is even why God made me a minister of the gospel."

That's what verse 7 says. He says, "**For this I was appointed a preacher... (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.**" "All people need to hear the gospel. The people who weren't hearing the gospel were the non-Jews. It was the Gentiles. It was an exclusive faith that needed to go outward, so God raised me up as a preacher."

This is what Paul is saying here. Again, the reason we pray is that praying for all people in our hearts and in our church crushes the exclusivity of heart that resides within all of us, that we're all tempted to. It crushes it, and it aligns our hearts with God's heart. God loves all people. He is not just for a certain class or a certain race.

You know, one of the examples where we saw this really clearly, I think, in our own church in the recent days was when Trayvon Martin was killed. I don't know if you remember this. If you don't remember it, I wish you did. I'm glad I got to remind you about it tonight. What was devastating about that week... That was a hard week for our church.

It was devastating to see the racialization that still is in our country. As much as we would like to act like it doesn't exist, that racism is a thing of the past, and really it's only white people who act like that, it's only the majority culture that acts like that... As much as we'd like to act like it doesn't exist anymore, what that event exposed was that, oh, it's still there. It's still there, and it's still going to be there until Jesus returns.

It was a hard week, because you look around this room... You know, we are an increasingly multi-ethnic church. Now we're majority white, no doubt, but we're an increasingly multi-ethnic church.

So that event...due to the diversity of our body, the diversity of backgrounds, the diversity of perspectives on that event...had an opportunity to really divide our church.

What happened was when we came into this room the Sunday after that happened, do you know what we did? I didn't get up here and read the case and talk about what I thought was right, what was wrong. We didn't take a side. We prayed. Do you know who we prayed for? We prayed for Trayvon Martin's family and we prayed for George Zimmerman and his family. We prayed for all people in that case.

Do you know what that did? That challenged us. No matter what perspective we came from, no matter what our heritage was, that was challenging and humbling. It was hard to pray for certain people in that event, but doing it exposed something that needed to be exposed, that, regardless of what we think or regardless of how we feel and regardless of what this particular part of our identity tells us to do, as children of God, that identity compels us because of Christ's death for all people to pray for all people even, and maybe especially, when we don't want to.

It's totally humbling. I think that's part of what Paul is getting at here. He is saying, "Listen. This exclusivity that's in the church and in your heart more so that you bring into the church gathering is poisonous." He says pray for all people, because that's what the gospel informs us to do. Then Paul digs into some of the specific issues surrounding prayer that were going on at the gathering in Ephesus.

Verses 8 through 15 are some of the most sensitive verses in the entire Bible. I just need you to know that. I'm excited for us to walk through it. We're not scared of that. We don't want to skip sensitive things because they're sensitive culturally or otherwise. We want to peer into God's Word and believe it's really helpful for us by faith, even if some things are difficult to understand. That's part of why these verses are sensitive, because they *are* hard to understand.

The apostle Peter, who was alive when Paul wrote, said some of the things Paul wrote were difficult to understand. If they were difficult to understand for the apostle Peter, I'm just guessing 2,000 years later for you and me, who are not apostles, this is going to be difficult for us to understand too. That's okay. It doesn't need to scare us. We may leave with more questions, but we need to ask those questions. This is how you grow up in your faith. There's something good God has for us.

These verses are also sensitive because a lot of times when you hear the verses we're going to walk through preached, they're just totally taken out of the letter and read completely separate from the letter, which is just a bad thing to do. You don't just get to pull a part of the letter out and not understand it in the middle of its context, which is why it's helpful to study entire books and entire letters that are in the Bible, because you can trace Paul's train of thought.

It's not like he is done here in verse 7, and then he moves on to a new point. He is saying the same thing all the way to chapter 3, verses 14 to 16, that we looked at last week. Let's just read this, but I want to encourage you as we do, pull up a seat, and listen hard. Work hard here with me to listen, not just to what he is saying, but why what he is saying matters for our church, particularly as we become a church that's moving forward into this season of transition.

Verse 8. He says, "**I desire then...**" He is talking about prayer. The *then* connects it to the verses he has been saying. "I desire then in light of what I've just said..." "**...that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling.**" Apparently one of the problems that was going on in Ephesus is when they were gathering, there was quarreling, and there was anger, especially among the men.

It's not to say that women don't struggle with quarreling, they don't struggle with anger. When Paul was writing, what was going on in the church, the men in particular were quarreling. They had anger when they met together. This verse is not saying men should pray. His point is not, "Hey, men, you should pray." He is assuming they're praying, and he is assuming they're praying by lifting up holy hands. The command is not to lift up your hands.

The way they prayed in the New Testament and in the Old Testament was they lifted up their hands, and they prayed. What Paul is saying here is, "Hey, listen. When you pray, don't you dare walk into the gathering and lift up your hands (which is a sign of submission to God) if you're angry at your brother and you're going to quarrel with your brother and not repent of it. Don't act outwardly like you're submitting to God when you come into the gathering, and you hate your brother who is standing next to you. Don't you dare do that!"

That's what he is saying. It doesn't mean the women can do that, but he is speaking specifically to the men here. He is saying, "Don't do that! When you pray with your hands lifted high, you put away anger and quarreling, or don't lift up your hands before you repent." I think that's what he is getting

at here. Listen. Your issue coming into these gatherings may not be that you hate your brother. I mean, it may not be that Joel over here is mad at Josh here, so they're coming in this gathering...

Sorry, brothers. I felt comfortable with you two since I know you and love you. You guys are just angry, and you're going to fight (you are now). You know, that's not his point. Maybe it's something else you're bringing from your heart in here. You come in here, and you sing these songs, and you raise your hand. Outwardly you're saying one thing while your heart is just far from the Lord. It could be far from the Lord in a hundred different ways. He was far from the Lord in Ephesus because these brothers were in division with each other and fighting.

You know, even I remember as I was preparing this week, my church in Portland... I was a part of a church plant. We'd set up and tear down in an elementary school every week. I was a young pastor (because I'm so old now). Anyway, I was younger then. I remember one of the staff meetings, the senior pastor of the church came in. I was unaware of what he was talking about. He is a good pastor. I learned most everything I know about pastoring from him.

He came into the setting of the staff meeting, and he pointed out that at the back of the gathering on Sundays, there were some businessmen. One of them was a loan officer and the other was a realtor. While the church was there gathering and lifting up holy hands and praying and rejoicing and singing to the Lord, they were back there making business deals at the back wall.

Now that's not a bad thing in and of itself for those two brothers to work together to help somebody buy a house, but to bring that into the worship gathering as such a priority that you're neglecting what you're there to do (which is worship God) or even worse, you're acting like you're there to worship God while you're really there to do something else like make money, that's a bad thing.

We could go on and on with examples, but this is the point Paul is making. He is saying, "Hey, if you're going to come into the gathering, you need to make sure your heart before the Lord is right, not perfect, but don't come in here not intending to allow your mouth and your hands being held high and your prayers of submission to match up to your heart of submission before the Lord, your heart of love for the Lord that's expressed with your love toward your brothers." This is what he says to the men here.

Then he turns, and he digs into some of the particular issues that are hindering the women in Ephesus and hindering them from promoting godliness in the gathering and living as they ought. I

just want to point out Paul is going to say quite a bit more here to the women than to the men. It's important *that* you know that, first, and it's important *why* he does that, secondly.

Theologian Gordon Fee explains it this way. He says the answer of why he is going to do this lies close at hand actually in this letter in 1 Timothy 5, verses 3 through 16, and also 2 Timothy (the other letter he wrote to Timothy and to the church) in chapter 3, verses 5 through 9.

He says it's clear from the latter passage (from 2 Timothy) that the false teachers in Ephesus who we've been reading about were finding their most fruitful hearing at the church at Ephesus among (and he quotes Paul here) "weak-willed women" in the church who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires. "These women are always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth."

Get this. The particular way the false teaching was creating maybe the most havoc was among this particular group of women in the church. He says the same thing in 1 Timothy 5. He says according to 1 Timothy 5, among these very women are some younger widows in the church who are living for pleasure, who have become gossips and busybodies, saying things they ought not to and, by doing so, are bringing the gospel in disrepute. Some of them, Paul says, have already turned away to follow Satan. That's what he says in 1 Timothy 5:15. We'll come back to this in a minute.

Paul's advice there in 1 Timothy 5 is similar to what he is going to say here in 1 Timothy 2. Paul is going to labor here and speak to the women more because they needed to be spoken to more because they were the ones who were most being led astray by the false teaching. Okay? You just need to know that. That's why there are more verses here, because he has more to say, because apparently that was one of the primary problems that was going on.

This is what he says in verse 9. He says, "**...likewise...**" So just like he said to the men. He says, "**...likewise also that women...**" This word includes wives. It includes those who are single. It includes all women. The women "**...should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works.**"

Get this. The men are showing up to the gathering with anger and ready to fight, and the women are showing up just dressed sketchy. They're not dressed modestly. I'm thankful modesty was a first-century problem. I'm really thankful in our day and age our culture doesn't struggle with modesty.

Especially in our church, there's no temptation to be immodest. That doesn't happen here. I'm just really glad. Surely you know I'm being sarcastic. I'm laying it on pretty thick. I just want to make sure you don't miss what I'm saying.

Just imagine we *did* struggle in our church with modesty, women, men. Again, just like anger and quarreling is not just a manhood issue, modesty is not just a woman issue. He is particularly speaking to the women at that church. Just imagine. "Does God even care about that issue? Seriously, what does my clothing have to do with the Sunday gathering? Why does that matter?" Well, apparently it matters. Apparently it really matters.

What I'm thankful for, again, is we don't have to wonder what God thinks about it or what God says about it. He tells us in his Word, and this is what Paul writes as he is carried along by the Holy Spirit. He says, "Listen! Be respectable in the way you dress. Respect God. Respect your brothers and sisters in Christ. Respect yourself. Be respectable. Have self-control. Be modest. Use good judgment." That's what he is saying to the women here.

He is saying to the women, "Listen. Don't dress up so people will marvel at your body, or don't dress up so people will marvel at your money (or, in Denton, your thrift). Don't dress up so they'll marvel at how thrifty you are, how you pull it together. Don't dress up so people will marvel at your fashion sense or at your subculture you're a part of. Dress up so people will marvel at God. What are you doing worrying about your clothes?"

Actually, get some *new* clothes is what he is saying, literally. Then also symbolically, say, "Clothe yourself in good works." You want to worry about what to wear on Sundays? Wear some good works to service. That's what you need to wear. That's what he is saying. It's crazy encouraging. I love that Paul is really practical.

In chapter 5, he actually gives a list of what some of these good works are. He talks about if you're a mother bringing up children, which was actually something some think was being demeaned in the church... The idea of being married and the idea of having children and raising up those children was just something that was just looked down upon, not unlike our day and age.

"If you do that, if that's what your role is, if you're a housewife, that's just pitiful." He says, "No, no, no. That's a good work." That's a glorious work God gives you if you're a mom (to disciple your kids). What better work is that if you're a mom? That's your legacy. That's you making disciples.

Then he also gives other good works. He says showing hospitality, washing the feet of the saints, caring for the afflicted. These are some of the prime examples he gives in this letter of what good works are.

He is saying, "Listen. Clothe up in that." Ladies and gentlemen, there's no higher calling or there's no higher aim for the Christian than to be described as a man or a woman who is clothed with good works. Our good works don't save us. We stand naked before the Lord until he clothes us in his righteousness, but he saves us to do good works. Then we get dressed up in that as well. That's what Paul is saying here.

If you could even imagine with me... I mean, it really is amazing. Every person you see in public and I see in public checked themselves in the mirror before they left their house and thought, "Well, this is good enough. I'm going to go out now publicly with what I'm wearing." That's really an amazing thing. Okay? It amazes me. Maybe it doesn't amaze you. I mean, I feel safe to enter into this conversation. My wife dresses me, so it doesn't really matter. I just entrust myself to her on these things.

It is an amazing thing to me. You know, you thought about what you were going to put on before you came here (some of you more than others apparently, but we all thought about what we were going to wear when we came here). Imagine if we gave as much thought to putting on and preparing to serve and do good works when we came. What if we thought as much about that? Could you even imagine a church where none of us cared about how we appeared?

I don't mean in a way that you just kind of roll out of bed and show up. You know, you have that vomit breath or whatever. That's not what I'm talking about. I'm not talking about have bad hygiene and not take care of yourself. I'm just talking about what if you weren't enslaved to having to appear a certain way to others because you were so compelled and filled with zeal to serve other people?

You weren't consumed by your appearance; you were consumed by coming here to do the work God has given you, the good works he has placed in front of you and made available for you to do to build up the church. Wouldn't that be amazing, not just for you and for our church, but even for the people who would come in who are not Christians to see that? That's crazy countercultural to see a church that's that way. They legitimately care more about loving each other than they do about how they appear to each other. That's deep.

What you need to see is that's the invitation Paul is giving here. He is not just slapping them on the wrist and saying, "Hey, put on some clothes," or, "Take off some of those costly clothes." He is just saying, "Listen. Stop doing that. Stop wearing that, but wear something better." He is inviting them into something better here, which is amazing.

Then he moves from modesty to the actual other problem going on among that group of women in the church at Ephesus: insubordination. There's modesty, on the one hand, and then there's insubordination going on, on the other hand. This is what he says in verse 11 about that. He says, **"Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness."**

Again, apparently in the gathering, the women were not learning quietly. They were not submitting themselves to God to the order God had provided for them in the leadership of the church. They were being boisterous. Apparently, they had taken hold of the false teaching, and they were being unruly when they were gathering together. Paul is saying, "Hey, listen. That's not okay. Insubordination is not okay. God is not a God of chaos like that."

"Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness." Listen. The word *quietly* here doesn't mean physical silence. He is not saying women can't talk in the gathering. It's like, "Oops. You said something. You greeted somebody. Sorry! You're not allowed. That's what the Word said. You can't!" Oh, Nicole was up here singing. Oh, we can't let her sing because she is...

That's not what it's saying. It's obvious in all of his letters that the women are doing all sorts of good things in the church. They're speaking. They're praying, even prophesying (some of them who had that gift). He is not saying women can't speak. He is not saying they need to be mute in the gathering. The word *quietly* is conveying a posture of heart. He is saying let's learn with humility, a quietness of spirit.

Then the word *submissiveness*. Just like the men are submitting to God as they're praying with their hands raised and their hearts bowed down low, the women are submitting to God as well and to the leadership and the eldership and the authority structures God has set up in the church. That's what he is saying here.

I do want to stop and belabor this point just a minute and maybe even get on a soapbox because it's really important you understand before we get to the next verse that Paul's primary concern here

with the men and the women is not to tell them what they can't do. He is not trying to be a policeman here. He is going to say something in the next verse. He is going to say, "Hey, this is reserved solely for men." We'll get to that, but I need you to hear he is not saying, "Women can't do *this*, can't do *this*." His point is, "Listen. There's chaos going on. Stop the chaos."

The reality of the Christian life is it's not good for man to be alone. We need to hear this as a church, because I think so often, whether we say it or whether we just express it and model it, we have simply demeaned and neglected the women of our congregation. I'll just step out and say, you know, not on purpose, but I'm sure I've been privy and a part of this.

I just want to say if you're a woman here, man, I'm so thankful God has made you, that he made woman in general, made you, that he saved you, that he put his Spirit inside of you, and that he put marvelous gifts in your life to build me up and to build this church up. I am the beneficiary in so many ways of the gifted women God has put around me. I thank God for that.

I don't know where you've been in terms of your church background. I don't know what you've heard preached on this verse or other verses, but there have been some pretty horrible things said about women. They're still being said. If you've had some horrible things said to you and you have some wounds, if you've felt neglected or just outright dishonored and disparaged, I just want to say personally for the way we've done that as a church potentially, for any other church, I'm sorry.

I'm genuinely grieved about that, and I'm sorry. I even pray this apology might be, for some of you, a point of beginning to heal in some of those ways so you can actually return to doing what God has created you to do, which is to flourish in serving the church, clothing yourself in the good works and the good gifts he has given you to build up his body. I want to invite you into that.

Listen. One of the things we've not done well is we've not stewarded your gifts. We've not nurtured your gifts and empowered you and given you lanes to run here. I don't know how well we're going to do in the future, but I just want you to know we're trying. Help us. Please help us. Be gentle, but help us. Help us get there. That's where we want to go, because that's what we need. It's not good for man to be alone, and that goes for marriage, but it also goes for the church.

What Paul is *not* saying here is women have to be silent, and there's nothing for them to do in the church. Mama, there's plenty for you to do, and we need you to do it! We're not going to be who we need to be without you doing it, and yet there's only one thing Paul says in the entire New

Testament that women are going to entrust to the men of the church, and that's to be elders. That's what he says in the next verse. Look at this verse with me.

In verse 12, he says, "**I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet.**" Again, the word *quiet* here doesn't mean physical silence. It's the same word used in verse 11. What Paul *does* clarify here... Hear me. Look at me. The reason he clarifies it is apparently it needed clarifying in Ephesus, because it was a train wreck. What he clarifies is God, before the foundation of the world, designed and determined the church (just like he did the Christian marriage and the Christian home) to be led by godly, sacrificial, humble men.

That's what Paul clarifies here. Now some of you may be wondering, "Well, where does it say that in the verse? Where does it actually say *elder* in verse 12? I don't see *elder* in verse 12." You're right. You don't see *elder* in verse 12. You see *elder* in the next paragraph, which is where this thought is going. What you also do see in verse 12 (just so you know) is this phrase: "**...to teach or to exercise authority...**"

As you keep reading 1 Timothy and you get into chapter 3 that talks about elders and you get into chapter 5 that talks about elders again, what you see is these functions (the functions of teaching and exercising authority) are the unique functions of the elder body of the church. That's what he says in the rest of the letter, which again is why it's important to read this with the rest of the letter.

To teach and to exercise authority are what elders do. In the first-century church and even the church today, teaching is synonymous with exercising authority. The primary way authority is exercised in the church still is through teaching. I'm doing it right now. Is there any question who has authority in this room? Not because I'm domineering or because I'm authoritative but because the content teaching itself as a function is authoritative.

You're receiving; I'm giving. It's meant to be that way. God has designed it to be that way. To teach and to exercise authority, he is saying, "Listen. That's not the place for women." What's amazing is that's apparently the one thing the women were really vying to do at the church of Ephesus, and it was creating chaos because that's not what they were meant to be doing. Instead of just entrusting themselves to God's plan for that, they were being boisterous and chaotic and frustrated.

Prompted by the false teaching and the division, Paul is here reminding the church this particular role is for men. Again, women are to fill and flourish in every other major role in church life, except

for this one. Why, though? Paul tells us why in verse 13. Keep reading with me. He says this. He explains it. He labors. It's not just his thought. He is not just going, "Oh, this sounds good to me. Things are a mess in Ephesus. I'll just make up a rule." That's not what he did here.

He says, "**For Adam was formed first, then Eve.**" Paul roots his argument, he roots his belief in this role, in the belief that God created Adam and he created Eve, but he created Adam first and then Eve. He is saying the reason men and women have different roles in the church is God designed it that way from the beginning. It's a beautiful design.

In fact, we're going to spend the whole fall talking about this design, talking about biblical manhood, biblical womanhood. When he says Adam was formed first and then Eve, he is rooting his conviction that the weighty responsibility of authoritative teaching and leadership is for men because that's God's design. It's not just Paul's opinion. Listen.

God, when he breathed into the dust, wasn't surprised it was a man. Why he made a man first and not a woman, I don't know. I wasn't there. I'm not God. What I strive to do, like we all should strive to do, is entrust God's wisdom to our own hearts about that, to believe he knew what he was doing, he still knows what he is doing. When he made Adam and then he took Eve out of his side, he was good, and he was wise.

What that conveys in creation is not a matter of inequality. He doesn't mean men are more important than women. That's *not* what Paul is saying here. It's not about their value or their dignity or worth. It's about different roles. We were made differently to serve in different ways. It's not about value, dignity, and worth. You know, what's amazing is even in one of his other letters, Paul says this pretty clearly. He says pretty clearly that men and women are beautifully equal in value, dignity, and worth.

Just in case the men are trying to feel superior or tempted to feel superior or the women are tempted to feel inferior, look what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11. He says, "**...in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; for as woman was made from man** [which he is talking about in 1 Timothy 2], **so man is now born of woman.**" Yes, God made Adam first and then Eve. In case you're feeling all puffed up because Adam was made first and you're a man, you came from a woman. Your mama gave birth to you. That's how you're here.

If you start feeling superior, go talk to your mom and humble yourself. Okay? Remember that. I mean, it's foolishness. It shouldn't even be a conversation in a church that's living in a godly way and men leading sacrificially and women following that lead in love and in response to sacrificial leadership.

It is an issue, sadly enough. Paul says, "**And all things are from God.**" We should all be humbled before God in this. We're not independent of one another, even though we have different and distinct roles in the church. Then in verse 14, he says, "**...and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.**" What in the world does that mean? Okay, surely he is not saying Adam wasn't deceived at all, right?

In Romans 5, he says through Adam sin entered the world, right? He blames the whole deal on Adam. Through one man, sin entered the world. Then even God, you know, when he came to the garden after the fall, do you know what he was looking for? He was looking for Adam. He came, and he found Adam because Adam was created first, which meant he was the authority and the leader and the one ultimately responsible for the oversight of the garden (that little temple God put them in) and the church, he and his wife.

When it went wrong, God came and found Adam and said, "What in the world happened?" Paul is not saying here that Adam didn't sin or get deceived. So what *is* he saying? Well, here's what I think he is getting across here. I think what he is trying to say in light of the women being led astray by Satan, which he already talked about, we already mentioned in 1 Timothy 5, is that Eve was the one who was actually led astray by the snake. She was actually deceived by the snake, and Paul says this again. He says it in another place in 2 Corinthians 11. He writes this.

He said, "**But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts [speaking to the church] will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.**" I think he is saying the exact same thing to the women in Ephesus in this verse. He knows what's happening to the women. They're being led astray by the false teaching, which really means they're being led astray by the same Serpent that led the mother of the race to begin with the stray in the garden.

I think that's what he is saying. He is saying don't be led astray by the Snake. Understand what's happening. Don't be carried away into your own desires. He gets into that in 1 Timothy 5. Even

though the women are tempted to be led astray, just like Eve was, he says, "**Yet she...**" The *she* here is actually the women in Ephesus again, so he shifts back from Eve to the women of Ephesus.

He says, "**Yet she will be saved through childbearing...**" At least that's easy to understand. If nothing else in this text was easy to understand, at least he left that for us to think through together. What does *that* mean? Does that mean that if you want to be saved, you have to go have some babies? No! That's not what that means. That can't be what that means, because Paul has already said there's one mediator between God and man, who gave himself as a ransom, and it's Jesus Christ, not your baby, not you having a baby, not the process of getting pregnant.

None of that saves, so what is he saying here? It says, "**Yet she will be saved through childbearing...**" I think if you follow his thought, it becomes somewhat clear. I think what he is saying is these women are being led astray by Satan, and yet if these women would give themselves over to the good works God has for them... Remember this is the good work he talks about (one of them) in 1 Timothy 5. I think it's symbolic here.

He has something specific in mind. I don't know what, but I know *he* knows what, and it makes sense if we knew what he knew. I think he is saying, "You'll be saved from that temptation. You'll find yourself being pulled away from that trap if you give yourself over to being a model, godly woman, over to the good works God has for you." One of those is childbearing, which I think symbolizes the rest of them he mentions in 1 Timothy 5.

I think that's what he is saying, and he says, "**Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith...**" Again, he is assuming they are saved by faith through grace. Okay? Nothing else. He says if they continue in the faith, the faith is actually leading them to love and holiness and self-control. I think Paul's point is, "With this insubordination, humble yourself before the Lord. Know who you are in the Lord, how he has gifted you, what he has gifted you to do. Then submit yourself to the Lord and give yourself to good works so you won't be led astray by Satan."

I think that's the point he is making, but listen. Let's sort of pan back out here. Think about what we've just read and what the gathering in Ephesus must have been like. That is a train wreck of a gathering. Let me just summarize what we just read through in these 15 verses, okay? There is haughtiness in the church in Ephesus when they gather. There is self-righteousness. There is exclusivity. There is anger. There is division. There is immodesty. There is insubordination.

In many ways, this gathering is a picture of the satanic. It's a picture of chaos. The gathering of the church is meant to be a foretaste of the new heavens and the new earth where heaven and earth overlap as we gather. This was the opposite. As we said last week, there is so much here for us to look at and go, "This is crazy! How do we avoid that as a church? We don't want to go that way." That's part of what we need to be seeing but back to my original question I even asked at the beginning of the sermon here.

In light of all this, what's your responsibility and what's my responsibility when we come to the gathering? This is what's going on in Ephesus. It's really clear. It's not good. There are a lot of not-good things going on. Paul exhorts them to do some things that are really godly. What's our role? What's your role when we come together?

Well, for starters, we should gather. You know what's amazing to me is that Paul, with all this train wreck going on, didn't shut down the gathering. I'm just a bad person. I would just say, "I'm done." Maybe I wouldn't have (by God's grace), but I just feel like it could have been easy to say, "Do you know what? We're done. This is crazy. If you want to just go worship Satan, go do it. Go over here. Wear what you want to wear. Give yourself over to whatever teaching you want. Just go do it, and we'll just start some new churches or do whatever."

He didn't do that. He didn't tell them to stop gathering. He could have shut it down, and he didn't. Gathering is important. Let me just say something. You know, a podcast doesn't replace gathering together with the church. Your Home Group doesn't replace it. There's no other gathering like this gathering, and this gathering is so important that even when it was such a mess, Paul didn't shut it down.

Part of what we need to take away from this is that moving forward as we become a church, our gathering together is super significant in the life of our faith. It's something we need. It's a habit we continue to have to build into our lives together. Of course, it's not enough to just gather, because they were gathering in Ephesus. That's part of the point of the letter. We must be gathering in a certain way with a certain conviction and humility of heart and for a certain purpose where we're putting to death the haughtiness of our hearts.

We're showing up ready to serve and not be served. We're coming here not to have our preferences met but to meet the needs of the saints who are around us. We're preparing our hearts even before

we come in this room as much as possible so we won't walk in with division and envy and strife and other things hindering us from raising our hands in a way that pleases God.

All the while, when we meet, we're gathering with the hope that God has in his own heart and his own desires that people would come to know him...all types of people...because he died for all people. As we move forward as a church, these are the postures of heart, the realities of our life together, we need to foster. What I'm grateful for is that even now as we come to the Lord's Supper, we have an opportunity to see how this was modeled so perfectly, so wonderfully in the Lord Jesus Christ, who Paul already said in this verse of Scripture that he gave himself as a ransom.

This Christ-man, this God-man, Jesus Christ, became a mediator for you and for me. All the help we need to be what Paul is outlining here in these verses of Scripture...to be godly when we gather, to consider others more important than ourselves, to come in here and participate and not just treat this like we treat the movie theater, not just treat this like we treat going to a concert, not just treat this like we treat going to a different class or some other gathering...but to treat this in the way it deserves, in a way that we're coming and we're participating in giving ourselves to one another.

All the energy, all the strength, all the hope, all the help we need to do that is found through remembering and living in light of what the one mediator, Christ, has done for us. That's what we're to come remember now. Let me pray for you. Let me pray for me. Just ask. Church, let's ask in the days and years ahead that this gathering would become increasingly pleasing to the Lord.

Who cares what we're doing if it's not pleasing him. We would come (all of us) with the intent and the hope that this would please him every time we meet together. He would never say of us what he said so often of his people, that, "Your lips say *this*, but your heart is far from me. Don't even bring me your songs. Don't even come to the Table. Don't even show up, because it's not authentic." May that never be true. May he lead us by his Spirit to be increasingly a people when we gather who please him.

Father, we're thankful our ability to please you rests in what your Son has already done, and yet as your children and your sons and daughters now, we pray those other things the Scriptures outline that please you, we would walk in those increasingly, especially as it pertains to us gathering together.

Lord, as we come to this Table now, we thank you for your Son. We thank you, Lord, that you gave him once for all for sins. As we take the bread and the juice tonight, I pray we would know you and what you've done is as real to us as the bread and the juice we'll taste and feel. Lord, forgive us...forgive me...of our exclusivity of heart.

Lord, even tonight, the faces and the names and the people groups who came to our minds, that we just really care about ourselves more than we care about them, so much so that we won't even pray for them, Lord, forgive us. Lord, heal us. Lord, for the wounds that exist among our body, would you reveal those and would you lead us into revival and refreshing? Lord Spirit, come now and minister as we remember the death, proclaim the death, and look forward to the return of Christ. It's in his name we pray, amen.