

In Search of Shepherds - Women pt2

REVIEW: In our search for shepherds we have begun to look at what the Bible says about women in ministry. Two weeks ago we looked at Galatians 3:28. We saw that the verse does in fact, make some incredible changes in views on women. Back in that time period, women held a very small place. Even to the point that a common Jewish prayer was “Thank God I’m not a Gentile, and slave or a woman.” Paul was making everyone aware that because of Jesus Christ, because of what he did for us in His death, and resurrection, and because of our faith in Him, we are all on the same playing field. Jews are not better than Gentiles, free men are not better than slaves. Men, are not better than women.

However, we also saw that just because we are all united in Jesus Christ, and on the same field, that does not negate that we all have different roles to play. Think about this: According to the book of Romans, the Gentiles coming to Christ serves a purpose - they were to make the Jews jealous because God was doing something with them. If Paul meant that roles are done away with when we come to Christ, that means that the Gentiles role is done away with. They are no longer to show the Jews that God is doing things elsewhere, and no jealousy to draw them in to what God is doing in Christ. If Paul’s purpose in Galatians 3:28 was about roles, then Paul is working against himself in many places in Scripture.

INTRO: To say that I have done my fair share of reading on this subject, and on this verse we look at today, is an understatement. I have read a variety of opinions, I have read Greek scholars that have dug DEEP into Greek to try to determine what Paul meant in 1 Timothy 2:12. In the end I will say this: I have found some things that absolutely must be true about this verse, and they could be no other way. I have also found things about this verse that still are open for interpretation. So, I will help us walk through this verse, and I will draw conclusions about what I think Paul was getting at and why. You are welcome to have a different point than me, but as I always remind you, make sure your point is based on biblical study, not on your opinion. “I just don’t think that was what Paul was saying” does not cut the mustard.

Turn to 1 Timothy 2:12 - “I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet.”

- I. Again, to just rip this one verse out and try to understand it would be foolish - it has a context and we must understand the context
 - A. The context of the book is that Paul is trying to correct people that were teaching false doctrines
 1. If we miss that we miss a lot
 - B. Second part of the context is submission in holy and quiet living: 2:1-3

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- C. The third part of the context is that Paul is asserting himself: 2:5-7
 - 1. Paul is saying, “God appointed me to teach you right from wrong”
 - 2. I have that authority
- D. The final part about context is chapter 3
 - 1. Chapter 3 comes on the heels of this section we are studying about women
 - 2. It plays a role
- II. Cultural context: Ephesus
 - A. It has been asserted that Ephesus was a town in which women were the main rulers over political and religious life
 - 1. They had the temple to Artemis there - that was a female deity
 - a) They even say that statues depict Artemis as a mother/nurturer goddess
 - 2. The reason this has been asserted is to say that Paul was reacting against the culture of Ephesus and his prohibitions against women are because of the cultural setting
 - B. The problem is the extensive research that has gone in to the culture of Ephesus
 - 1. The political culture was the same as it was throughout the empire - men held the prominent positions
 - a) There were some women in positions, but they were usually the wives of the rich men and the positions were given out for monetary donations - and the positions were more token in nature
 - 2. As for the religious culture, yes there was the temple to Artemis, but men were the priests of the temple
 - a) The women that held any kind of position was again for helping out the temple in material ways
 - b) Not because women were in charge like has been alleged
 - C. The point of bringing this up is to say that Paul’s statement about women is not as culturally conditioned as people think that it is
 - 1. That is not to say that the culture did not play a part
 - 2. That is what context is, and we cannot remove this statement completely from it’s cultural context either
- III. Let’s look at the verse in more detail
 - A. “I do not permit...”
 - 1. Some people say that Paul did not say “I forbid” so therefore he was not making a blanket statement for all time
 - 2. The problem with that is Paul just a few verses before was asserting his apostolic authority - as such, trying to make a divide like “I do not permit” and “I forbid” seems tenuous at best

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- B. “a woman to teach or assume authority over a man”
1. One interpretation that is given for this section is that the phrase “to teach or assume authority” is better understood as “to teach in a domineering way”
 - a) This, it is said, is what Paul was concerned with, women teaching in a manner that was domineering to men
 - b) But again, there is a problem with this interpretation - one that both sides of the debate about women in ministry acknowledge
 2. There was a study done of the grammar of this sentence
 - a) They started first with the NT, and exact matches, and there is one exact match - Acts 16:21
 - b) They then widen their search to similar phrases (Our phrase is an infinitive, so they looked for phrases other than just infinitives) and found 52 other similar passages in the NT
 - c) Then they widened the search to all of Greek literature for 300 years around the time of Paul and found 48 exact matches to our sentence
 - d) That is a lot of grammar related things to throw at you at once, but the result was this - in every instance, when a word was joined by or/nor in Greek, both the first word and the second word were either positive or negative. You never had one positive and the other negative
 - (1) That means that teaching is a positive thing, so authority is also positive
 - (2) Authority being viewed positively means that you cannot translate the verse “teaching (positive) in a domineering way (negative)”
 - (3) They both must be positive
 3. So far that only eliminates one interpretation that people try to use to explain this verse - we are still after what it means
 4. Some people want to limit this verse to the cultural context in Ephesus, so that it does not apply today
 - a) There is both truth and untruth to this approach
 - b) We have already said that Ephesus was not the woman dominated culture that others have made it out to be - that is one of the context issues we talked about
 - c) Paul is exercising his apostolic authority here (another context issue) so it seems he is pretty serious about what he is saying
 - d) How the cultural context fits in this verse has to do with the false teachers
 - (1) We know that Timothy was left in Ephesus to combat false teachers

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- (2) We also know historically that women would gather together to be taught - often in a home context
 - (a) So turn to 2 Timothy 3:1-6
 - (b) Does that not fit here - men, false teachers, worming their way in to teach, in this case, gullible women
 - (c) But the question is, what were they being taught
- (3) We can only infer from what we know by 1 and 2 Timothy, but it seems a good bet they were teaching that male authority in church, at home, and even women bearing children were the result of sin - part of the curse of the fall
 - (a) This is why we started this entire series about elders with how God designed men and women to be
 - (b) What were our God given roles
 - i) Before the fall of man, when sin entered the universe and fractured EVERYTHING, men were given headship over creation (a huge task)
 - ii) When women were created, before the fall, they were created as a helper for man
 - (1) Man held the responsibility
 - (2) Yet women were actively helping at the task of establishing order for humanity to prosper
 - (3) Which is why in Romans 5 Adam is the one that gets the blame for sin coming into the world
 - (a) Why? Because he failed to exercise headship at a crucial moment in history
 - (b) Rather than exercising headship when Eve was hanging out with the snake, he was passive and failed at his role of establishing order for humanity to thrive
 - (4) And ever since then, the roles, and our own desires have become disordered
 - (a) Men abuse their position of headship, rather than exercising it in the loving manner God asks - which explains God's commands for husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church
 - (b) Women, in some ways like Eve, can try to take control of the position of headship in ways in which is inappropriate
 - (c) BTW, there are times that are completely appropriate - single mothers for example

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- e) So the question then becomes, do Paul's prohibitions to this church at this stage of history apply only to them, or does it carry through to us?
 - (1) The answer is: it carries through to us for two reasons
 - (2) The first reason is that scripturally, especially in the NT, there is virtually nothing that is so culturally bound that we cannot find a principle for our day and age
 - (a) For example: "Greet one another with a holy kiss" - How often have you heard me come up here and tell you, "That's all the announcements, so pucker up!"
 - (b) But you have heard me say, "That's all the announcements, so greet some folks" - principle: greet one another warmly
 - (c) Point is, even if reason two did not exist, this reason of drawing principles would exist and we would have to discover a valid principle to draw from the passage
 - (3) The second reason, and stronger reason, is that this is based off God's design from the beginning
 - (a) Men were given headship - a role that has nothing to do with talent, skill or ability
 - i) So women are not in any way inferior
 - (b) Women were given the supporting role for headship
 - (4) So when it comes to Paul's prohibitions, authority falls very squarely in this category - but what about teaching, why is that included?
 - (a) Is teaching a means of exercising authority?
 - i) The answer is yes, and no
 - ii) Yes, because teaching anything is in some ways to be viewed as the final authority on an issue
 - iii) No because the genuine final authority in the life of every believer is not the one teaching (including the pastor) but the Word of God
 - (b) Some like to point to verse 14 and say that Eve was deceived and Adam wasn't so men are better at understanding truth or women are somehow intellectually or morally deficient
 - i) Let me say this, verse 14 is a difficult verse to interpret
 - ii) Stating unequivocally what the verse means is very hard
 - iii) But I can tell you unequivocally what it does not mean - it does not mean women are deficient
- (1) Nowhere else in all of Scripture is it taught that women are deficient

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- (2) In fact, women are cast in very positive light in a variety of ways
 - (a) Women were the first to discover the empty tomb - even though by the standard of the day, they could not give testimony
 - (b) Pricilla and Aquila taught Apollos - again she being listed first in most of the references we see them in
 - (3) Even our own experience teaches us that women are not inferior in their intellectual abilities
 - (a) I have several ladies in the church that I run things past for opinions and advice
 - (b) And let's face it gentlemen, when it comes to understanding the emotional end of life - we are just buffoons
 - (c) Women understand those things in ways that we struggle to grasp
 - iv) So, what do I think this verse means
 - (1) The best explanation I have heard, and tend to agree with is verse 14 is a further explanation of headship
 - (2) The snake circumvented God's plan for male headship and went after Eve
 - (3) It is also possible Paul had in mind a retelling of the gospel in a manner of speaking
 - (a) Adam was formed first - he has headship
 - (b) Then sin entered the world by headship not being observed
 - (c) Then in verse 15 he talks about salvation
 - (4) As I have said, this verse is very difficult to translate, and scholars have debated it's meaning for years
- IV. To finish things up, and gives us a bigger perspective, we need to widen our view by taking a look at the wider context
- A. One area of context we have not talked about is what follows chapter 2 - chapter 3
 - B. After finishing these instructions about women and authority, Paul heads into our qualifications on elders
 - 1. We have already seen in this study that the elders are the highest office in the church
 - 2. No where in scripture are women mentioned to be elders
 - a) Not in the list of qualifications
 - b) No examples of a woman being an elder

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3. However we do have instructions about women being deacons
 - a) We have examples in the NT of women serving in this role
4. We also have examples of women teaching in a variety of capacities
 - a) Teaching their own children at home
 - b) Teaching other women
 - c) Even, as we mentioned before Priscilla and her husband teaching Apollos
 - d) But we have no example of women teaching in the same capacity an elder would teach - in a manner of authority for the church
- C. Sometimes we are so locked into our western way of reading scripture that we forget that this was originally a letter
 1. Granted it was addressing several different topics
 2. But given the overall theme of addressing false teaching, it seems clear that all of these seemingly unrelated topics are more related than we might think
 - a) So Paul addresses an issue of authority in chapter two for women, using as support God's original design
 - b) Then he launches into the character of those in authority in the church - seems as if the two topics are related
- D. There is another way in which these two seem to be related and then we will answer the questions that are usually on people's minds after reading this passage
 1. As you read through chapter two, you see that Paul has a penchant for using similar words in a series
 - a) v.1 - petitions, prayers, intercession
 - b) v. 2 - kings and those in authority
 - c) v. 2b - peaceful and quiet lives and godliness and holiness
 - d) v. 4 - to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth
 - e) v. 7 - herald and apostle AND "I am telling the truth, I am not lying"
 - f) v. 8 - without anger or disputing
 - g) v. 9 - dress modestly, with decency and propriety
 - h) v. 11 - quietness and full submission
 - i) Each of these are examples of using similar terms to describe the same idea
 2. Look at verse 12 again - "I do not permit a woman to teach or assume authority" - teach and assume authority are again similar ideas
 - a) One scholar has noted that these are verbs and the rest are nouns or adjectives so it is not the same
 - b) But I believe they are missing the bigger picture of the context of the letter

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- (1) Paul was in the habit of using similar terms, be they nouns, adjectives, or verbs
 - (2) The fact that these are the only verbs does not negate what I am about to say
 - c) I agree with Dr. Craig Blomberg when he makes the point that because of this habit of Paul's in using similar terms to describe the same general concept, Paul was driving at a particular idea, that had similar concepts
 - (1) Due to its close proximity to chapter 3 with its description of the authority figures in the church who are to be able to teach, Paul was excluding women from the role of elder, or the authoritative role of teaching in the church
- E. So allow me to draw conclusions for our day and age
1. The church has responded to these verses in a variety of ways
 - a) Some have forbidden women to teach or speak at all in church
 - b) Some allow women to teach other women, but not men
 - c) Some throw out the verses saying women can hold any position in the church, including elder and teaching roles - but they do so using grounds we have already shown to be false
 2. So here is what I believe
 - a) I believe women can use their gifts in tremendous ways in the church
 - b) I believe women can teach men
 - (1) The setting would be an issue
 - (2) Propriety must be observed
 - (3) So, for instance, Priscilla did not teach Apollos alone, her husband was with her
 - (a) It would be inappropriate for a woman to teach a man one on one in a formal setting (meaning informal conversation where a man learns something is no problem)
 - (b) It would be just as wrong for a man to disciple (that's the idea here) a woman
 - (c) Propriety and wisdom come into play and must be observed
 - c) I believe, that a woman can teach from the pulpit, as long as she is under the authority of the elders
 - (1) For example, when Shirley Wallace speaks in my absence, she does so at my request
 - (2) She has also sent me her sermon in advance for review and suggestions
 - (3) So in that sense, headship is still being followed

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- (a) Just like at home, dad may want to be apprised of a given situation that is happening in the family
- (b) But he trusts his wife to deal with the situation in a God honoring manner
- d) The only area I believe women are not allow to hold is the position of elder
 - (1) Deacon is fine
 - (2) Some churches have created a separate category of deaconess, and I don't believe that is needed
 - (3) Eldership is a role for the man
 - (a) It is an extension of the role of headship that God created man to hold
 - (b) It would be hypocritical to agree that men should exercise headship at home, and at church hand that authority to women
 - (4) This of course follows that elders, just like husbands, view this position as one of loving sacrifice
 - (a) Any disordered desire to "lord it over others" men or women would disqualify a man from the office
 - (b) He is either understanding of the great role that headship is, in the home, with his wife, with his family, if single how he mirrors headship to his sisters in Christ, and in the church, or he does not serve in that role
- e) So the question of authority - authority is given to the elders of a church
 - (1) Both men and women should be living in submission to that authority
 - (2) Our scripture verse - they keep watch over your souls as people that must give an account - submit to them so their job is a joy and not a burden
 - (3) So what a church teaches is decided by the elders
 - (a) Can a woman teach - sure
 - (b) As long as she is under the authority of the elders
 - (c) Can a man teach - sure - as long as he is under the authority of the elders

CONCLUSION: This has been a very tough passage, but I hope you now see why I started with God's design, and have highlighted throughout how that applies. It helps us to better understand these verses, and to be able to submit to them.