



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

1 Timothy 2: 8-15

1 Timothy

“Women in the Church”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Text this evening is 1 Timothy 2:8-15, a very interesting, maybe provocative text. We'll look at it in a moment, but let's begin with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank you for this time together this evening and we pray you'd bless it. We pray that you would guide us in our thinking and give us a good understanding of the text that we will consider this evening and we pray that through our time of study together, we would understand better the roles of men and women in the church, and we might have a zeal for the function of the church, that it would function well.

We live in a time in which the things we study are under attack and have been for some time, and the church in many ways is being eroded. We know that the gates of hell cannot prevail against it, but we are responsible to do our part in preserving the truth and championing what is right in the principles that you have set forth by which the church is to function. Fortunately, you do protect your church and you are in control, but we do recognize our responsibility, and we're reminded of that this evening, and pray that you'd bless us as we study these things and consider them, and prepare our hearts to do that. And may the things that we read and study be understood and received properly and well. We pray that for ourselves whenever we read the word of God and when we study it that our hearts would be prepared for it. We pray that, not only for ourselves this evening, but for the other classes that meet.

We pray you'd bless those who teach and all who listen and receive instruction that they would do so properly with open hearts. Only the Spirit of God can open our hearts and we pray that he would do that this evening. Guide us in our thinking. May the things we do be helpful to us and honoring to you. May you be glorified in our time together. Bless us now. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

[Message] Again, the text is 1 Timothy 2:8-15. "Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension. Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments, but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness. A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. But women will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint."

With 2 Timothy 2:9-15, we come to a subject that is greatly debated in our day, that of the role of women in the church. And while the position that Paul takes on this issue is not PC – it's not politically correct – it is, I think, for the most part, clear and certainly important. I say for the most part clear because in verse 15 we have text that is not easy to understand. The British commentator Donald Guthrie called Paul's statement, a woman will be preserved, or literally, saved through the bearing of children among the most difficult expressions in the whole of the Pastorals. We could probably extend that beyond the Pastoral Epistles to the whole New Testament. It's a very difficult statement to interpret, but the other statements are not nearly so difficult in meaning, but have been very difficult for many people, many modern interpreters to accept at face value.

So this is our subject, the role of women in the church. Our text does not exhaust the subject, but it does, I think, pretty much get to the heart of it. But before Paul takes up that subject, he completes the previous subject, that of public prayer in the church, which he began in verse 1 of the chapter. He said there, "First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, and petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men" And now in verse 8, he says, "Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension."

Now, there are two words in Greek for man. First, is *anthropos*, a word which most of us are familiar with, words derived from anthropology, for example, is one. And that's the word that we have in verse 1. I urge that prayers be made on behalf of all men, and that is the word *anthropos*, or the plural *anthropon*, and it refers to mankind. It refers to male and female. So all kinds of people, he asks us or commands the church to pray on behalf of. Well, here in verse 8, it's a different word that's used. It's the word *aner* and it means male. So it is the males, the

men, as distinguished from the women, who are to pray publicly, and when they pray, they are to do it lifting up holy hands. That was a Jewish practice of prayer.

Some of the commentators said it's also a gentile practice, but I don't know about that, but I do know that it was a custom in ancient Israel to pray with hands lifted up. And we have a number of examples of that, but one would be Psalm 28:2, "Hear the voice of my supplications when I cry to you for help, when I lift up my hands toward your holy sanctuary." So evidently, this was a practice, a pattern of prayer, and as I said, there are other examples of that in the Old Testament of lifting up hands. It's a proper posture for prayer, one that perhaps signifies gesturing toward the temple or gesturing toward heaven, a desire or an anticipation of receiving an answer from God, but Paul's point here is not so much the position of prayer.

In fact, we might say it's not at all the position of prayer. It's not his concern that we lift up our hands when we pray, but the point is the spiritual quality of prayer. It is to be holy. So these are holy hands that are lifted up. And our prayers are to be prayers from a life that issue from a life that is characterized by holiness. Hands are symbolic of daily life. Hear that in the Old Testament. The law in Deuteronomy was to be bound to the forehead and to the arm, or the hand, and the point of that was not that phylacteries were to be made. A person can make a case for that being part of the purpose, I suppose, but it seems to me that the point of that instruction that Moses gave was that the law is to govern one's thinking and one's activity, and the hand is indicative or symbolic of activity. We do work, particularly if you lived in an agrarian culture, as they did. It was the work of the day. It was done with the hands, as it is for the most part today as well. Even in an age of computers, we use our hands to do things, but that's what it's symbolic of. It's symbolic of one's daily life. And so, holy hands signify an unpolluted life. That's the point that Paul's making.

When we pray, we're to pray in that way. In Psalm 66, in verse 18 gives us a good example of what Paul means. The psalmist writes, "If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear." So we are not to be living in open sin or secret sin. God sees our heart. He sees our lives. He knows what's going on. What are to confess our sins. We're to pray in that way. We're to have holy lives and our prayers are to issue from that kind of a life. So this is what he urges and he urges the men to do that in the meeting of the church. That's the subject. That's the situation that is being discussed in chapter 2, the meeting of the church. And so, when public prayer is given, it's the men, the males, that are to do that, which leads into the next section, the final portion of this chapter because everything so far has been about men in the meeting of the

church, but women as well were a part of that meeting. And so, Paul now explains their role in it and he begins with the word likewise, which connects this section with the previous one.

So Paul is still talking about the meeting of the church. He's still talking about what goes on when public prayer is given. And here, he tells what the women are to do in that meeting. It has to do with their clothing. That's the instruction that he gives. They are to be dressed in an appropriate way. "Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments."

Paul is here stating a principle. He is not setting forth or laying down a dress code, other than to say that a woman should not dress ostentatiously when she comes into the meeting of the church. A person's clothing should reflect their state of mind, their spiritual condition. Maybe I should revise that statement. A person's clothing does, in many ways, reflect their spiritual state of mind, and what the woman's clothing should do should be to express a good state of mind. It should be appropriate for that meeting. And that's not only true for women. We could say the same for men as well. Whoever it is, male or female, they should dress appropriately when they come to the meeting of the church. They should dress with proper decorum.

So we can apply this to the men as well. That is, I think, certainly an implication, but the subject here is not the men; it's the women in the church. And women may have been in particular need of this instruction because in Roman times women gave a lot of attention to these things, to the way they did their hair. I know they do that today, but if you've seen any of the ancient statues of Roman women, you can see that a great deal of attention was given to braiding of the hair and the way it was fixed. And so, fashionable women would do that. They'd braid their hair in very elaborate ways and Paul was warning against that, warning against time consuming worldly interests, which weren't appropriate for the meeting of the church. He wasn't prohibiting attractiveness. He wasn't prohibiting good taste in the way one dresses or the way one wears her or his hair.

Christians ought to dress with taste, not necessarily with flare, and they shouldn't necessarily be up on the latest styles and be the most stylish individual, but they ought to be tasteful. There ought to be decorum in the way they present themselves. They ought to come to church in a way that's tasteful.

I had a phone call some years ago. A young fellow over at SMU, married, had a child, wanted to talk to me about this church. I'd never seen him before, but I came over and he quizzed me about the church, and he wanted to make sure if he came, he could come barefoot.

Does he have to wear a coat and tie? And he was very adamant about that. And I didn't tell him he had to wear shoes, but I did make it clear that I thought it's proper to dress appropriately when one comes to church, and I think that's what Paul is saying here. There's a right way to dress.

Remember, we're coming into the presence of the Lord and we're coming under his word. We ought to look appropriate. How we do that is a question that Paul really doesn't settle there. He doesn't give us a dress code, doesn't say how we should and shouldn't dress, but he does lay down some appropriate principles, and we shouldn't be overdone in what we do.

On the other hand, one can underdo things and really fall into the problem. R.H. Lenksi, who's a Lutheran commentator had a good comment on this. He writes, "Paul is not insisting on drab dress. Even this may be worn with vanity. The very drabness may be made a display." And that's true, and he goes on to talk about different kinds of people. A queen wouldn't be expected to dress in a shabby way. You would expect her to dress in a certain way and the people underneath her, the servants, would dress in a certain way. But what is to be done is to be done with decorum. It's to be done with taste. It to be done with modesty, whatever that is, and that's something that one must deal with or arrive at before the Lord.

What should catch the eye is not the clothing, but the conduct. That is what Paul says a woman should be dressed in in verse 10; good works. "But rather by means of good works, as is proper women making a claim to godliness." So it's the character, it's good deeds, that are important, and they do have a bearing on a person's appearance. A person can be dressed in the finest clothing, in the latest style, but if there's a hardness to the character, if there's an abusiveness about that person, if there's an arrogance about that person, you're not attracted to that person at all. Their nice clothes aren't attractive, but a person can be dressed very modestly and the character of that person shines through, and that's what Paul is saying ought to be the clothing of Christian women who make a claim to godliness, that godliness ought to be seen. That's what ought to catch the eye and it does. People who are godly people, who have character that reflects the image of Jesus Christ, they appear very attractive, and that is what women are to work at, and that is what men are to work at. That's to be our great concern.

So women are to dress appropriately, and as I said by implication, that's true of men as well. And then, Paul says that women are to learn and not teach. Verse 11: "A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness." Now, Paul's instruction here on submissiveness is not an expression of chauvinism or of male superiority. Paul did not teach that. The Bible does not teach that. But Paul has probably been given the thought of in those

terms as being chauvinistic, particularly from a text like this or from 1 Corinthians 14 where we have a parallel to this, but that's not the case at all.

In fact, if we read through Paul's letters, and we look at the book of Acts, we examine his life in light of all of that, we see just the opposite. He had a very high regard for women. He ministered with women. He was associated with Priscilla and Aquila – we'll talk about them in a moment – with Euodia, and Syntyche, and Philippi. He had associations in the ministry with women. The book of Romans was not entrusted to a man. It was Phoebe who carried it from Corinth to Rome. He entrusted her with that valuable document. Maybe the most valuable document in the history of the world was given to a woman and Paul entrusted it to her. He has much to say in this book about women later on, in the Pastorals he does. He has great concern for the widows in the church and lays down instruction as to how they're to be cared for. He speaks of the ministry that women do have in Titus 2 of older women to younger women.

So Paul does not have any sense of male superiority about what he is saying, what he's teaching here. The issue that is dealt with in this passage and the same in 1 Corinthians 14 is not one of essence or inherent worth, but of function. Not everyone functions in the same way. Not everyone functions in the same way in life, in business, and not everyone functions in the same way in the church. God has not given equal authority to all people, and that's what this is about. This is about authority within the church. And we see that elsewhere.

We see Paul develop this issue of the relationship of men and women in 1 Corinthians, and if you look over at 1 Corinthians 11, we see the point that I'm making brought out, I think, very clearly in verse 3, where this is not an issue of essence or value between the male and the female, or the man and the woman in the church. It's not Paul's point. Here, he says, "But I want you to understand," this is 1 Corinthians 11:3, "that Christ is the head of every man." This is the order of authority. "Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of the woman, and God is the head of Christ."

Now, that last statement makes it very clear that this has nothing to do with inherent worth or value. Christ is under the Father, but Christ and the Father are of one essence. The doctrine of the Trinity makes that very clear. They are one and the same in essence, but as our mediator, Christ is under the authority of the Father. Now, that is a division of function, not one of essence, and Paul is not saying in this text that men are greater than women. That's not the point of either passage, of 1 Timothy 2, or 1 Corinthians 11, or 1 Corinthians 14. It has to do with function and authority in the church.

The occasion for prohibiting women from speaking or exercising authority over men may have been what some commentators suspect was a new spirit of emancipation in the churches, which led to the abuse of Christian freedom, and that new spirit of emancipation – I forget which commentator put that way, Kelly or Guthrie, or one of them – but that new spirit of emancipation may have arisen out of the false teaching that had come. Because remember, the background for this, the occasion for this letter to Timothy in Ephesus was false teachers had come in. They'd stirred up things. They were teaching erroneous things from the law. And perhaps they had also had some effect upon the women, or it may be simply a misunderstanding of their equality in Christ. Whatever the historical occasion for it was, it is, I think, proper or correct to say that it is a natural tendency among men and women to exert authority, to try to rest authority from one another, and it must be guarded against.

Now, that is the result of the fall, that conflict. That's what the Lord said in Genesis 3 in verse 16 when he said to Eve, "Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you." Now, I don't take that statement to be a command. It's not a command. It's a statement of fact and I don't take it to be a statement of the divine order. The Lord is not giving instruction on the woman is to be under the authority of the man. That went before, as we'll see in a moment. That was established in the creation of the man and the woman. What he is saying is now that sin has happened, now that the fall has occurred, this is going to be the relationship that prevails between men and women in marriage. It's going to be one of conflict. It's going to be one of you, Eve, trying to assert your authority to gain mastery over your husband and he's going to rule over you. And so, there's going to be this conflict.

Now, the word desire that's used there supports that, I think, because it's used, "Your desire will be for your husband," that same word is used in the next chapter. If you'll look over at Genesis 4 in verse 7 when God is speaking to Cain and he warns him about what he's about to do. He's plotting the murder of his brother. He's mulling this over in his mind and the Lord exposes that sin and says to him, "Sin is crouching at the door," and he said, "Its desire is for you." Same word, but you must master it. It wants to master you, this sin, it's like a beast that's crouching there. It's like a lion that's crouching there that wants to pounce upon you and devour you. It wants to control you and it's going to unless you control it, and Cain did not do that. He refused the counsel of God and sin mastered him.

Now, that is what Eve wanted to do. She wanted to master Adam. She's going to have this desire over him. He's the head and she would try to usurp that, but she would not succeed is

what he's saying. She will not prevail. The man will prevail and not necessarily in a pleasant way. That is typical. Sin has introduced conflict between men and women. In Christ, that enmity, that hostility, or that natural tendency to vie for preeminence is ended, but still, we're sinners and have within our members the principle of sin and it will be there till the day we do. And so, within marriages there will be this conflict. Even Christian homes will have to deal with this and it will be present in Christian assemblies. There's this tendency because we're sinners and it must be mastered or it will master us.

Now, that's what Paul is doing here. He's giving advice in order that Timothy will teach properly and master this problem so that it won't destroy the church in Ephesus. This is a perennial problem and it's one that a church must always be dealing with. There are all kinds of problems that are always going on. There's never a time when we can rest. Elders, deacons, church members, believer priests must always be prepared for what's coming because we don't know what's coming next, and this is one problem that's perennial.

Now, the fact that women are not inferior and that this is not teaching the inferiority of women is indicated, I think, in the instruction that Paul gives here that women are to receive instruction. Women are to be taught the same as men are taught. They are to be in the same meeting with men. They're to hear the same things that men hear. It's to be directed to them as much as it's to be directed to the men in the congregation because they can learn the same as men. They are just as intellectually capable as men. They're just as smart as men. And of course, many are smarter than men. We know that.

I would say that my wife is smarter than I am. She doesn't have the training that I do, but I would say that she is a smarter person than I am. Now, don't let that out of this room, but I think it's true. And I can remember going through grade school, and high school, and college, and there were girls that were the smartest in the class; the valedictorians. It's not unusual.

So this is not about that, but it's about the meeting of the church and what takes place in it. And in the meeting of the church when men and women are gathered together, the women are to learn and not speak, not teach, not exercise authority. That is what Paul states in verse 12. "But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet." They're not to teach because teaching men is exercising authority over men.

So what can women do in a church other than learn? That's an exciting thing to be able to come to church and learn, but women are like men in that they want to do something with what they learn. They want to do something with their lives other than sit, and listen, and think.

And there are many things that women can do. They each have spiritual gifts. Every believer in Jesus Christ has a spiritual gift. Every woman has a gift, just as every man has a gift. Some men, some women, probably have more than one gift. They're gifted alike and they're gifted with all the gifts that men are gifted with. And there are numerous gifts we have in the New Testament and you should study them. I think we've had some articles on that in the newsletter that we put out. Study the gifts, and think about the gifts, and what you might have, and how you can use them. They're given to women the same as they are given to men, and the women can teach, and women can evangelize as men teach and evangelize. There are women who have the gifts of helps, gifts of service, just as men have those gifts.

The difference though is in the venue – that may be a legal term – the place in which those gifts are exercised. That's the difference. But it appears from Acts 18:24-28 that Priscilla had a gift of teaching. She seems to have had a significant part to play in the instruction of Apollus, who became a great preacher and defender of faith in the first century. She did that along with her husband Aquila. They were in Ephesus. They heard Apollus speaking. They were impressed by his gift and they were impressed by his knowledge, and his ability to communicate with it, and to respond to the challenges that were given to him, but they also recognized that he had some gaps in his knowledge. He didn't have a full understanding of things. He understood the baptism of John. He was a disciple of John the Baptist, but he hadn't had the fuller revelation of what Christ had accomplished and done. And so, we're told that they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. Both of them did that. The Greek text is very clear. It's a plural. Both took him aside, both explained the way of God more accurately.

So she was an effective part in that ministry, which built into that men, who went on to have a very significant ministry, who may, in fact, have been the author of the book of Hebrews. We don't know that, but that's one possibility, one candidate for the author of that book. We have women in this church who are very good teachers. Now, that's not the issue. The issue here is where they teach, and according to 1 Timothy 2 and 1 Corinthians 14, it is not in the meeting of the church.

Now, women have a very active role in the church in other ways. In Sunday schools, they teach. Many women teach in our Sunday schools. They do a very good job. Vacation Bible school. Maybe women are more effective in that area with children and in vacation Bible school than men would be. They teach in women's Bible classes. And they are indispensable in

other areas in the function of the church. They help in many ways, and I can name just a few in this assembly, in areas of mercy and areas of hospitality, probably better than men in those areas because, I'm not going to make a scientific statement, but it seems to me that women are more compassionate, more concerned about others than men tend to be. My wife tells me that's true, but I think it probably is. So Believers Chapel, we have mercy ministries, we have hospitality ministry, and women are in charge of that. I've gone on hospital visitations and the women are already there ministering to the person in need in the hospital.

The opportunities for women to minister in the church are many. Women have great influence in the church. And not to slight women in the least, in fact, to honor them, the greatest influence in the church that women have is probably in the home. Now, if you're interested in this subject and you want to go into it more deeply, get Dr. Johnson's tapes because he taught on this some years ago, but he did two lessons on what I'm going to do in one lesson, what I'm going to finish up in about 15 minutes, but he goes into it in much more depth, and much more breadth, and has very interesting things to say on the issues that I've just discussed about ministry of women, and particularly, ministry in this church. He speaks of that, but in the course of his lesson, he said something like, "I am a great believer in motherhood," and then, he stressed the importance of a mother raising children. He gave examples from his own family, but I know there are women here that could give the same kinds of examples. That is a fundamental function of the woman that is essential for the good of the church.

Let me give some examples. Some of them you're very familiar with. I'll just give three examples. Susanna Wesley; that's a well-known example of her famous influence upon her two sons, John and Charles. Many people trace their spiritual development to her care for them, and her discipline, and all of that from their childhood. So she's famous for the influence that she had on those men, and therefore, the influence that took place through them, the influence that they had.

Centuries before that, Monica is an equally famous, maybe even more famous example. The mother of Augustine, who was persistent in her prayer toward her son, concerned deeply about his spiritual life and his conversion, she prayed for it daily. She pursued him from North Africa to Milan. She was highly instrumental in his conversion. Few men have had as great an influence upon Christianity as Augustine. And so, we could say, legitimately, that in some ways, in some very real sense, Augustine was Monica's gift to the church. What a blessing she was to the church. She had great influence.

In more modern times, I can think of J. Gresham Machen, who was a great defender of the faith in the earlier part of the 20th century. He founded Westminster Seminary, wrote very significant books against liberalism, and for orthodoxy. As a man, he paid tribute to his mother for the instruction he received in the Bible at her knee. She had a profound influence on his life. By the age of 12, he had a command of large portions of scripture. He said, and he was a seminary professor, he said that at the age of 12, he knew the Bible better than many seminary students knew it. He wasn't praising himself. He was praising his mother. He knew, for example, all the kings of Israel, and the Judah, and the character of all of them, and he had all kinds of knowledge like that because his mother had taught him the Bible. And at her direction, he memorized the shorter catechism of the Westminster confession of faith. As a child, he had that, which prepared him for the great conflicts that he entered as a student in Germany, and then, later as a professor at the seminary level.

Women have a great role to play. In fact, I'd say that their role is equal to that of men; it's just that it's different. It is in the role that God has given women that they will best serve God and they will best serve his people, and they will find their fulfillment, and that role is not teaching in the meeting of the church. It is not in exercising authority over the church.

Now, the objection raised against that is that Paul's injunction against women teaching in this text is cultural. So it doesn't apply today. But in verses 13 or 14, Paul gives the grounds for his injunction. There are two. Both are Biblical and both are transcultural or precultural. The first is grounded in creation and the second is grounded in the fall. So the basis of his instruction here relates to all cultures and all times, from the very beginning, that this is the pattern that was set. And he writes in verse 13, "For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve."

Man's chronological priority in creation exhibits priority in authority and function. Man was created first. And so, Paul sees in that the proper order of creation. Now, that's probably not the only purpose, and Dr. Johnson in his tape on this subject points that out by going to 1 Corinthians 11:8-10. And there, Paul writes in a similar vein. "For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man," and going back to the creation in which God created Adam out of the dust of the ground, but he took Eve out of his side. She originated from man. She is his helpmate. She was created for the man. She's made of the same stuff as man, so she's not inferior to him, but her role, her function is seen and her relationship to authority is seen in the fact that she was taken from man and for his purpose to be a helpmate in the great ministry that God had given to man.

So from the creation itself, the order of creation, the origin of the woman, Paul draws this order of authority of man, or the male over the female. So first of all, from creation, but a second ground for this authority is seen in the fall. Verse 14: "And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression." Paul is not here dismissing Adam's guilt. He deals with that in another place, in Romans 5 in verse 12. Adam is the federal head of the race and he is the reason that the race fell, not Eve. But what he says here is Adam was not deceived when he sinned. He sinned knowingly. He sinned with his eyes open, so his sin was great. His point is that Eve was deceived and that's his point because that fits the argument that he's making here. She was fooled, in effect, she was fooled by the devil in matters of doctrine because the serpent falsified the truth about God, and she did not have the discernment to recognize that. She believed it. She was deceived. And since Adam and Eve are the parents of the race, their propensities were transmitted to their descendants, or as Donald Guthrie suggests in his commentary, Eve's deception may indicate a greater aptitude of the weaker sex to be led astray.

That seems to be what Paul is saying. That seems to be the implication that he's making here, but if that is the case, if that is true, it is not true of all women. We know that, but I've already said, you know that's my thoughts on that. Many are more insightful than men and many men are not as insightful as women. There are a number of examples of that. I won't go into that, but you know women who have more insight and more wisdom than their husbands, or than other men. So that's not a universal rule of thumb that we would say that that is always the case, but it seems that Paul is suggesting that. And if it is true, it can be corrected. It can be correct by doing just what Paul advises, by learning, by quietly receiving instruction. In so doing, women can become wiser than their teachers. They give attention to things that they're taught, though without becoming themselves teachers in the meeting of the church.

Still, all of that, I know is not what fits the modern thinking and it is an offense to many modern minds, most modern minds I would think, and some evangelical minds, and they have argued that such a position would be contrary to Paul's teaching in Galatians 3 in verse 28. I say they, I'm not talking about the world at large, but evangelicals within the church and some who are not evangelicals have made this argument where Paul writes, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus," and according to some, what Paul has done in that text is he has eliminated all functional distinctions between the sexes and the church.

Now, that's not what Paul is teaching. The oneness that he describes there is spiritual. It's not functional. He's not describing our function in the church. He's describing our equality before God. Male, female, everyone in Christ is equal before God. We are all believer priests. We are all equally saved. We are all equally the same before God. We all have equal access to God. God does not favor the man over the woman, but that doesn't deny different functions and degrees of authority.

Later on, in, well, in the next section of the book of 1 Timothy, Paul goes on to speak about differences of authority among men within the church. He speaks of the elders, then he speaks of the deacons. There are different offices. Elders have authority in the church. Not every man is an elder. Not every man is a deacon. So there are different levels of authority among men. That text in Galatians 3 has nothing to do with men and women in the church, how they function. It has to do with our relationship with one another in Christ before God.

In the church, there is in one sense, I guess we could say a hierarchy. There's a hierarchy of function; a male authority, a male authority, and Paul is bringing that out here and brings it out in the next verses. Women are equal with men in worth. God values men no more than he values women, and values women no less than he values men, but in the church, it's the men that are to have authority.

Now, if these words of Paul seem harsh, then Paul corrects that with the hope that he gives to women in the promise of salvation that he gives to women in verse 15. "But women will be preserved through the bearing of children, if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint." Preserved or saved through the bearing of children, that is literally the translation. Saved through the bearing of children is the statement that, as I said at the beginning, is problematic in that it's given rise to a lot of interpretations. It's not an easy statement to interpret. Some have said that it means able to be physically preserved through childbirth. I guess that is the sense in which it is translated in the New American Standard Bible, but a woman will be preserved through the bearing of children.

Those who advocate that don't advocate that as an absolute promise because obviously that's not absolute. Many women have died in childbirth, but generally, women do live through childbirth, and so, the idea is that Eve sinned greatly, brought misery upon the earth through the influence upon she had upon Adam, but she will not be destroyed through childbirth is the idea. She will be preserved generally. Now, that's possible, a possible interpretation. The problem is the word saved is consistently used by Paul of spiritual salvation, not physical preservation. So

it's giving a different meaning to the word.

Another interpretation which is popular is that the verse is about salvation through the incarnation. The verse, according to this interpretation, should read, "She shall be saved by means of the child bearing." Child bearing in the Greek text has the definite article with it and it is taken in this interpretation to refer to a specific childbirth, the child bearing, meaning that of the messiah. So the idea is that the woman will be saved through the birth of Christ. Eve was saved through faith in the promise that she would have seed, the seed who would defeat the seed of the serpent, crush the serpent's head. In Genesis 3:15, "And women today are saved through faith in the one who came," who was born through a woman, the incarnation, the messiah.

Now, Homer Kent, who has written a good commentary on the Pastoral Epistles advances this view, and of course, the idea is true, but as Donald Guthrie points out, "If that were Paul's intention, he could hardly have chosen a more obscure or ambiguous way of saying it." If that's what he wanted to say and that really was his intention, he probably wouldn't have said it this way, so that would seem to argue against that being the interpretation. It's a very obscure way of saying what he could've clearly said in other words.

Another view of that of J.N.D. Kelly, also a British commentator, is that Paul is referring to child bearing as a woman's chief responsibility in life. If she sticks to her function rather than try to usurp the function of the man, try to usurp his authority, that of teaching and ruling over the church, she will obtain salvation and happiness, not that child bearing saves. It does not save and Paul makes that clear. He clarifies that at the end of the verse where he writes, "If they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-respect," but as he puts it, her path to salvation consists in accepting her role in life, following God's will, not rebelling against it, but persevering in faith and obedience.

So really, what this is is a statement about the perseverance about the saints. Those who persevere to the end are those who are obedient. Their faith, the genuineness of it is seen to us in the fruit that they bear, in their obedience, and their non-rebelliousness, their submissiveness, submissiveness to their role. We're all to be submissive, male and female, to the instruction and the commands that God's given. So what he is saying is this is something about perseverance, that those who accept their role, who are believing and continuing in faith and sanctity are going to be saved.

There's a parallel possibly to this in chapter 4 in verse 16, Paul writes, "Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will

ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you." So we are to accept our function. Our functions are different. God makes them very clear for us in his word and it's as we accept the function that God has given us that we serve him most faithfully, serve his people most effectively, and we find our greatest joy and fulfillment in this life.

Well, may God help us to do that, male and female, to live in obedience to the role that he's given us and to take the opportunities that he has given us. Well, let's close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we've come to a rather difficult text, and one that's somewhat technical, and far more can be said about it than we have said this evening, but we see enough in this text to know what our roles are in the church, and we pray that we would take them up, and we pray that we would do them with joy, and that we would be effective in the church, that men and women together would minister as you would have them to do, and do so effectively, that the name of Jesus Christ would be spread, and that it would be glorified in this church, and in this community in which we live. And we pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.