Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ,

A man named John Colenso was the Bishop of Natal in South Africa in the 19th century. He wrote a book that denied the historical accuracy of several things in the Bible. Well, a heresy trial followed and Bishop Colenso was deposed. A great battle ensued with Colenso appealing to a synod, which upheld the deposition, and then appealing to a secular court, which ordered him reinstated. And all this created a great division in the S.A. Anglican church that went on for years.

Well, during this time, Reverend Samuel Stone, a supporter of the truth, became concerned that what happened with Bishop Colenso was a symptom of a wider problem in the church. He was convinced that many people recited the Apostles’ Creed without really understanding it or believing it. So he wrote 12 hymns, with each hymn explaining a line of the creed and defending the truth of the Bible. And his hymn about the line of the Apostles’ Creed that we confessed earlier, “I believe in the Holy Catholic Church,” is called ‘The Church’s One Foundation.’ We are going to sing it after the sermon. The hymn declares that Jesus Christ is the one foundation of the church and several other important truthes about the church. But it also laments the damage that false teaching causes in the church.

And a plain fact of church life is that while Jesus Christ is the church’s one foundation, He is not physically present on earth to to deal with false teachers. And make no mistake about it, the danger of false teaching and ungodly living is as real today as it has been in every age of the church. So how is the church to be governed or ruled or guarded today? What are the Who and the How of preserving and promoting true religion today?

Well, there is no better book of the Bible to help us with such questions than 1 Timothy. And that is because matters like these are precisely why the letter was originally written. Timothy was the minister in Ephesus. And if you look at v3 you can see that there were some in Ephesus who were teaching “*different doctrine*.” And this was causing a lot of damage in the church there, a sit always does. So what we have in 1 Timothy is **Instruction for the Church that preserves and promotes true religion**.

And with such a large text we obviously will not be looking at every verse. Our main focus will be church government and public worship. And I want to tell you why it is important that we think these things together. You may have heard this before but there is an old saying that says – the first generation **does** what it does and it **knows** why it does it, the second generation does what it does but it doesn’t know why it does it, and the third generation stops doing it. It is not enough that we do things, even if they are the right things, if we don’t know why we do them. And we will only do them if we know they are the right things *from the Bible*.

So today we look at ch’s 1-2 and after Paul provides his apostolic credentials and greets Timothy in the opening verses, there are two major divisions that follow: the **problem in the church**, and the **instruction for the church**.

1. So first of all, the **Problem** in the church as it is outlined for us in vv3-17.
   1. As I said a moment ago, we see in v3 that there were some in the church at Ephesus who were teaching “**different doctrine**.” And this issue is hugely significant for all of 1 Timothy. Other English Bible versions translate ‘different’ as ‘strange’ or ‘false’ doctrine. And if I were to tell you that you are using a different hymnal, you would straight away want to know what the right hymnal is? So an obvious implication of the existence of ‘different doctrine’ is that there is doctrine that is not different; i.e. true/sound doctrine.
      1. For example, look at **1 Timothy 3:9**: There we read that Deacons “*must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience*.” So the obvious question is: What is the mystery of faith that they have to hold? And we get an idea of what this is just a few verses along in v16 where it says, “*Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory*.” It’s one of the first confessions of faith and it is about the person and work of Jesus. So if the deacons *confessed* these truths, they and Timothy and the congregation knew that they were holding the mystery of the faith, but if they *denied* these truthes or *added false ideas*, then they did not hold the mystery of the faith.
      2. And because we see elsewhere in 1 Timothy that ministers are to preach and teach, and that the elders are to be able to teach, it is clear is that ministers, elders, and deacons have an *official* responsibility to know and teach the body of sound doctrine.
      3. And this is one of the reasons that we are a confessional church. The content of this book is what the church holds to be a faithful summary of the body of sound doctrine taught in Scripture; this is what ministers and elders and deacons today must know and teach and defend against.
   2. Now, there is one other thing about the false teacher problem in Ephesus that is very relevant for us and the wider church today. It only becomes plain in **chapter** **2:11**, where Paul says, “*Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet*.” And we will say more about those verses in our next point but we can infer from these words that even apart from *what* was being said, another part of the false teaching problem in Ephesus was **the sex of the person saying it**. If you look at **1:3**, Paul says there, “*Charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine*.” If it were just men who were the false teachers, Paul would have said, “*Charge certain men*…” because he is very sex-specific throughout his letters. But his use of the word ‘persons’ reveals that men *and women* were false teachers, which prepares us for what he will say at the end of ch. 2 But as I said, we will return to this topic in our second point.
   3. But before we get there, **vv8-17** give us more about the body of sound doctrine. If you look at v7 Paul speaks about the false teachers “*desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions*.” And then in vv8-17 he explains **the right use of the law and the gospel**. And he does this by using himself and an example of how the gospel works. He calls himself the foremost or worst or chief of sinners, and he rejoices that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners like him. And as you read this it is as though Paul cannot believe the grace that he has been shown. And he is so full of thankfulness for Christ and his calling from Christ as an Apostle that the way he lives and what he preaches is all about the gospel. So we might say that what Paul says here flavours everything that he says about church government – it is to be gospel government; it is to be Christ-exalting government. And that is not what characterized the false teachers.
2. So false teaching was and is a big **problem** in the church, and it is only remedied by the gospel of God’s grace in Christ, preached and taught by the officers that Christ gives to the church. But secondly, from 1:18-2:15, we see **Instruction** *for* the church.
   1. And first off, it is important that we understand that what is said here and in ch. 3 is instruction **about office in the church and public worship**. At the end of this section, Paul says, “*I am writing these things to you so that … you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God*.” These words are not universal words for home and work and school, they are about church office and worship.
   2. And this comes through also in that the words come in the form of a **charge**. Have you ever been given a charge? A charge is words about official duties/instructions from a senior to a junior. Office-bearer ordination. So Paul gives Timothy this charge, and he surely expected Timothy to pass it on to the other elders and deacons. And that means that a lot of what is to follow is for church officers.
   3. And notice from the end of v18 that the work of the officers is described as “***good warfare***.” And just that term is very instructive.In **2 Timothy 2**, alongside the imagery of an Olympic athlete and a hard-working farmer, Paul calls Timothy to work like a good soldier. Why does he use this language?
      1. Well, **Ephesians 6:10-12** says thatallbelievers battle with “*the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places*.” And the Bible also makes it clear that there are ranks in the angelic realm and in the demonic realm. So if it there is perhaps a ‘lowly private’ demon assigned to tempt your average church member, then there is probably a lieutenant assigned to tempt each office-bearer, and maybe a captain assigned to each congregation. And I am not trying to say that the Bible lays out this exact demonic work assignment template, but to illustrate the reality of the spiritual battle we are in.
      2. And this is important because we have office-bearers in the church. We have men training for the ministry. Do you understand what men who accept the call to serve in office are signing up for? **Warfare**. What the church of Christ needs is soldiers. If we were looking for men to serve in the regular army, we would want those willing to fire a bullet or plunge a knife into the enemy. And in a similar way, while elders need to be able to speak the truth with love and teach, patiently, they must be soldiers. And this is why we must avoid the temptation to vote for nice men to be elders or deacons or ministers.
      3. And we have case in point in **V20**: There we read that Paul handed Hymenaeus and Alexander “*over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme*.” Excommunication. And H&A might have been nice guys, wealthy benefactors, elders in the church, even. But clearly they were false teachers who needed to be disciplined and General Paul was ready to do it. And that’s the type of man we want in office for the sake of the purity and wellbeing of the church.
   4. Well, chapter 2 begins with a call to **prayer**. Before everything else that Paul says to men and women and elders and deacons about church office and public worship, he says, “*First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be made for all people*…” And there is plenty that we could say about this instruction but it is why we have what we have the congregational prayer in our worship services, it is why we pray at our Bible studies, and it is why we have prayer meetings. The church of Christ must be a praying church and office-bearers must be ‘prayer warriors.’
   5. And that is the perfect segway to **v8** and what Paul says to **men**: “*I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling*.” And as a general rule, when the Bible commands something, it is usually because we would naturally do the opposite. So the command to pray and not to angry quarreling suggests that we men are more inclined to quarrel than to pray. And I hope that most of us are honest enough to admit that. Have you noticed this dynamic at Bible study? Someone makes a controversial point or asks a tricky question, and the guys lean forward and they are eager to chip in with their opinions. And then at the end of the night the Bible study leader says, “Volunteers to pray?” and there is folded arm silence.
      1. And the fact is that office brings with it lots of opportunities for debate. So it’s likely that there was angry quarreling *instead* of prayer in the session room in Ephesus. And it can be the same today. So office-bearers need to be on their guard against anger and quarreling and faithful and regular in prayer.
   6. And that brings us to vv9-15 and what Paul says about **women** and office and public worship.
      1. And straightaway it is obvious from v9 that there was a problem with the women treating worship services as a high fashion show. And this did not honour the Lord and it was proving to be a distraction for men. So Paul said, “*Women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire*.” And this is not Paul being anti-beauty; this is Paul saying don’t come to church with a ‘Look at me’ appearance!
      2. But the problem was not just about appearance, it was also about attitude. V9 includes reference to self-control, v10 says that good works are what should adorn women who profess godliness, and vv11-12 explain that those good works must not include the desire for office or a public teaching role in the worship services. Instead, says Paul, “*Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet*.”
         * Let’s begin with positive – v11 – **Women are to be learners**! Their desire to learn is not the issue. Of course they should be eager to learn!
         * But in the official and public worship of the church they are to “*learn quietly with all submission*.” ‘Quietly’ is about worship and ‘with all submission’ is about office. They are not to *lead* in worship, whether that be preaching or Bible reading or prayer, and they are not to be the office-bearers in the church.
         * **1 Corinthians 14:33-35** says the same thing, “*As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission … If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church*.”
      3. Now let me quickly say that we are referring here to church office and public worship. None of this is to say that women cannot teach or pray or read the Bible in public, ever.
         * At our Bible studies and prayer meetings, for example, we may all read the Bible and pray and contribute to the discussion.
         * The most recent issue of Faith in Focus had excellent and instructive articles by ministers and Nancy DeMoss Wolgemuth. We have regular articles by Sally Davey. And they are instructive and tremendously helpful.
         * In **Acts 18**, we read that a husband and wife heard a preacher and realized that he didn’t know some aspects of Christian doctrine, so “*they took him and explained to him the way of God more accurately*.” And I can tell you that I have learned so much from faithful sisters in Christ who have taught me.
         * But church office and the pulpit activities of public worship God has assigned to men.
      4. And I hope you can see and agree that this instruction is very clear and plain. So of course, we have to ask: Why do so many churches today permit women to lead in worship and serve in office? Well, they argue that these words were just for Paul’s day because women were less educated or it was a patriarchal culture. And we must respond: Says who? The Bible or you? Because this passage and the one I read in 1 Corinthians 14 **ground the instruction in creation and the Fall**. So the point is that because God created man first and woman second, and because it was the woman who was deceived, men are to be the officers and the leaders in worship, not women. So the Bible says this is a *creation* thing, not a *cultural* thing. And this is how it is to be *always* in the church of Jesus Christ.
   7. But that brings us, lastly and necessarily and beautifully, to **v15**. For having said that women are not to be the officers or worship leaders, because of creation and the fall, Paul continues, “*Yet she will be saved through childbearing – if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control*.”
      1. And first of all, this is **a general truth**. Just as not all men will serve as ministers/ elders/deacons, not all women will marry and have children. Some women will choose to remain single to serve the Lord with total devotion, which Paul esteems highly and wishes that more would choose in **1 Cor. 7**, and not every married woman is able to have children, which in no way minimizes their fruitfulness or usefulness in the church community. But most women will marry and have children.
      2. And when the text says “*she will be saved by childbearing*,” it is not talking about salvation from sin but from the idea that she is somehow defective or less than a man or that she can’t make a meaningful contribution to the church of Christ. Think of it as a compensation statement. God is saying, there are roles in the church that are not open to you, my daughters, but I am going to give a tremendously important role that is not open to men, which is to bear children. I mean, just imagine if we men got office, leading in worship and marriage, and having the children. And I know that is impossible to imagine because we men are too weak to handle child-birth, but if that were the case that would put males and females at a complete imbalance. But God says, daughters, they can have office and leadership, but childbearing is just for you. And you know what? In the church, this is massively important! It brings the scales right into balance (and maybe even tips them a bit in your favour, ladies, just between you and me). How is this so?
         * Well, pretty much every minister and elder and deacon who serves well in the church has a mother who was and/or is enormously influential in his life. Mums, I am sure you are happy just to get to the end of each day. Phew. Made it! But your example of hard work, your willingness to put your needs behind those of your children, the Bible stories you read to them, the prayers you pray *for* them and *with* them, are the soil of the church.
         * **G. Campbell Morgan**, a very great preacher said, “My dedication to the preaching of the Word was maternal.  Mother never told it to the baby or the boy, but waited.  When but eight years old I preached to my little sister and to her dolls [set out] in orderly form before me.  My sermons were Bible stories which I had first heard from my mother.”  And Campbell Morgan had four sons, all four of whom became preachers.  And on one occasion when he was explaining all the preachers in his family, someone said to him, “Who is the greatest preacher in your family?”  And he replied without hesitation, “My mother.”
         * So Mums, you may not be elders or preachers or deacons, but your work is massively *important for the church*.
         * And let me say here that this is why it is so sad that feminism is working so hard to convince women not to have children or to value their career over staying home to raise the children. This beautiful thing that women have exclusively is being devalued. But when it rains in the world it drips in the church. We must teach our daughters *and our sons* that office and leading in worship is for men, and that motherhood is valuable and worthy and desirable and important, also for the church of Jesus Christ!

When I preached this in Avondale a young woman spoke to me at the door and she said when we read the text she thought, uh oh, where is this going to go? Who is here, listening? Let’s be honest, most people would hate and despise 1 Timothy 2:12-15 as sexist and misogynistic. But it is God’s design. It is beautiful. It ought to be celebrated. It is how true religion is promoted and preserved and propagated. The church’s one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord. And He has assigned roles to men and women – the men are to serve as office-bearers and to lead in public worship, and women bless the church through bearing children and in many other ways. All this is from Christ and it is to glorify Christ. May the Lord bless His word to His people. Amen.