

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

### **“Our Conduct as the Church”**

#### **1 Timothy 2:8-10**

1 Timothy 2:8-10, "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 befits women making a claim to godliness." Here's a passage that speaks to both the men in verse 8 and the women in verses 9 and 10. We are all covered in this passage; so, no one is escaping this morning.

This text has one hurdle we need to cross first and foremost and that is what context this is addressing. There is sort of a common view, if you will, that this is dealing with the corporate worship service. Some people view this as only dealing with the church as we gather together. I suspect one reason for this is because of the following verses that we won't deal with this morning, but we will get to with the next chance I get to speak on 1 Timothy 2. It deals with women teaching, one of the roles that women have in the church, so perhaps in that instance some people would want to limit this to the church service.

There's this phrase 'men in every place to pray' and some will try to view 'every place' as being limited to the church assembly, but as you look in other places that Paul uses this phrase its hard to do that. It seems to me that 'every place' means simply that, every place. So, wherever we are, men should pray and women should adorn themselves with proper clothing.

When we look at the context, the word therefore links us back to the prior section which has to do with prayer and praying for kings and all who are in authority, and for what we should pray. We should pray regarding the salvation of people, that God desires all men to be saved, that there is one God and one mediator between God and man, and that the man Christ Jesus gave Himself as a ransom to all.

This desire, that this knowledge will go forth, really happens as men are in every place praying. If men are praying, as they come in contact with people, they will be coming across people that need salvation and can pray for them. It really makes sense then that this is dealing with people, wherever they may be.

The instructions that Paul is giving us in this passage are for the church body, for all of us, not necessarily inside the church building, when we are here, but where ever we are. These words are instructive to us, 'men in every place to pray.'

This becomes significant also, because some will want to say that this passage is speaking of men praying, not women, and that men should be the ones praying in the assembly and not women. It really doesn't say that. Men should pray, but men should have a proper appeal before God. The first thing that is necessary in order to do this is to have a good relationship with God. In the first half of verse 8, Paul instructs the men in every place to pray. Men should seek to pray and have a good relationship with God in prayer. This is very straightforward. This is a command for us, we should pray.

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There are things that hinder our prayer. The first thing that hinders our prayer, most fundamentally, is not praying. Our prayers are hindered by our lack of prayer. James 4:2 puts it this way, "You lust and do not have; you commit murder. And you are envious and cannot obtain; you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask."

If we are going to be successful in fulfilling this command, we need to be praying before the Lord. "*I want the men in every place to pray.*" Matthew 7:7-8 says, "Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it shall be opened."

When we pray, we should pray with holiness. This is the next phrase, '*lifting up holy hands.*' We will have a good relationship with God, an appeal before Him if we are praying with holiness. If we are not praying with holiness, if we are regarding sin in our hearts, then our prayers are hindered. Psalm 66:18 says, "If I regard wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear." So, our personal holiness has a direct effect on the success of our prayer. Paul says he wants the men of every place to pray with holiness, lifting up holy hands, not with sinfulness in their hearts that would hinder their prayer.

This phrase, 'lifting up holy hands' is another one that people use to say that we should actually, physically, put our hands in the air. That's what it says, 'lifting up hands' so, let's do that. A congregation, such as ours, that doesn't tend to do this would then be seen as being woefully deficient. Well, are we or are we not woefully deficient?

As we look at prayer in the Bible, we find that there are various prayer postures. Not one, or a few, but many. If you were going to rank these, there are two that, by far and away, are the top prayer postures in the Bible. Number two would be standing, and number one would be kneeling or bowing. We don't typically stand, or kneel, nor do we typically lift our hands up when we pray. We may bow our head, but we don't kneel or lift up our hands. Should we or shouldn't we?

My background makes me much more comfortable with kneeling than raising my hands. When I raise my hand, I feel like I'm going to ask a teacher a question or something like that. But, I grew up in the Catholic Church, and kneeling is more familiar with me; I'm more comfortable with doing that.

Now, does that mean I should kneel because that's even more popular in the Scriptures? Well, when I'm in the service here, I don't kneel, because you don't kneel. None of us kneel. It would be kind of odd if I started kneeling and you were not kneeling. It might cause you to wonder 'what in the world is he doing over there.'

Well, I don't kneel because of this reason. The emphasis in prayer is not upon the body, but on the heart, and this is why there are many prayer postures in the Scriptures. There is no one posture that is being directly specified over any other.

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The focus is really much more upon our heart, than on our body. Whatever form or posture we chose to take is really rather irrelevant although some people might want to make a big deal over it. This only serves to take the focus off the heart attitude by putting it on the body. The body is secondary, the heart is primary and we should think about how our heart attitude is when we approach God in prayer.

This is what the focus of ‘lifting up holy hands’ is all about, holiness, coming to God with holiness. Some people might see hands as being a figurative of work in life. Maybe this is actually the form that they took, and it was something they were more familiar with doing in prayer. The point being, whatever form we take is more of a cultural thing of how we happen to pray in our society. The focus that God has is on our heart; that’s the emphasis. We should have a good relationship with God in order for our prayers to be successful.

We need to have a good relationship with others in order for our prayers to be successful. We should be holy in our heart, not being wrathful. If we have wrath in our heart, or anger, or outbursts, it hinders our prayer. We find this spoken about. Men should avoid wrath; wrath is sinful. Our prayers are hindered by conflict. 1 Peter 3:7 says, "You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered."

If we are praying without having a peaceful attitude with those people around us, then our prayers become hindered. What’s true with a very close relationship, as with husband and wife, is also true, on a lesser scale, with others that we could have conflict with. In fact Matthew 5 says that if you are bringing your offering to the altar and remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and then go and be reconciled to your brother. Our prayers are hindered by conflict so we should be at peace with those around us so that our prayers will not be hindered.

We should not be wrathful, we should pray in every place lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting. Men should avoid doubting. Some of your translations have dissention, and some have doubting. This word, in this verse, can mean either dissention or doubting. The word originally means thoughts or thinking, then it came to be thoughts within us and now, thoughts against one another as we discuss our thoughts and disagree and dissent. It can be either just doubting, having a double mindedness, or dissention against one another.

How do we determine what this means here? Well, it could mean dissention because we see wrath directly connected with it, or it could be one more way that men should pray; with holiness, without wrath or without doubting. And the Scripture actually speaks to our need to not doubt when we pray.

James 1:6 shows that our prayers are hindered by our faith or our lack of faith. Remember James 1 verse 5 says, "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him." But, verse 6 gives this qualification, "But let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind."

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If we doubt, we are hindered in our faith. Jesus talked about asking in faith without doubting and you will be able to do great things in Matthew 21:21. We should not doubt in prayer.

This is what men should do. They should pray in every place, lifting up holy hands. Now, what should women do? The passage goes on to say, "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 befits women making a claim to godliness." I could have just glossed over this and moved onto the next section but then this wouldn't be Valley Bible Church would it, so, we will pause here and look at this for a moment.

Some of you are thinking, well it's about time we talked about modesty and others are looking a little nervous about now. I'll put you at ease by saying I hope to catch everybody in this verse not just some of you. I'm not going to speak about entertainers or people that you might want me to highlight in terms of their modesty. They are not with us this morning, but you are, so I'll deal with you.

"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 befits women making a claim to godliness."

Incidentally, when we looked at verse 8, it spoke to the men. Do you suppose that prayer in every place is only for men to do or do you think women ought to do it as well? Women ought to do this as well even though this is specifically addressed to men. I think likewise we could say that though women are specifically addressed with regard to proper clothing, men can learn something from this passage as well so we should all pay attention.

What should we do? We should have good adornment. "Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly," we should have good adornment. The key words here are modestly and discreetly.

Modest is this, from the dictionary, having a disinclination to call attention to oneself; observing conventional properties in speech, behavior, or dress. Free from showiness. Having a disinclination to call attention to oneself, that's modesty.

Discreet is this, showing prudence and wise self-restraint in speech and behavior, circumspect. Free from ostentation or pretension. To put it very simply, modesty is free from showiness, from showing ourselves off. When we dress we should dress properly not seeking to show ourselves off.

As we look at this passage, Paul doesn't just speak of modesty; he actually gives specific examples of how we should be modest. "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 befits women making a claim to godliness." He gives a list. If he just stopped at modesty, I could stop at modesty and say we should be modest, but he doesn't he gives specific things.

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When you look at this list you have to conclude that he is not only speaking of attire. This list goes beyond our attire even speaking of braided hair. I can say that now, in these days, since we have accumulated much more in terms of adornment, we have now added things to our lives with which we adorn ourselves. It's not just limited to attire.

For example, what we drive adorns us; this is to get the men involved here. Some people buy cars to go from here to there while others buy cars that adorn them and communicate something to others. How about this baby right here. Did you know, and this is true, that the number one vehicle that millionaires drive is the F150 pickup truck. 30% of all millionaires drive the F150 pickup truck. I kid you not, which just goes to show you that even millionaires can sometimes have a sense of modesty about them and not be self-aggrandizing. What we drive can reflect our value. I drive a Honda Civic, by the way, which is sixteen years old. I thought this was being modest, but now that it gets 44 miles to the gallon, and gas prices being what they are, it is being coveted by some people.

We can adorn ourselves with houses. This hits close to home. This home is right across the street from me. This used to be modest, but now as the price of houses have shot through the roof it's become more than what it's been. As we build houses to adorn ourselves, we should do the very same as with attire or cars, we should be modest, proper, and discreet. Some people will build houses, not just to live in, but surrounding themselves to project an image to build themselves up. Even churches can be built to give grandeur to ourselves, so, we need to be careful. However we adorn ourselves, it is to be modest and discreet and not to build ourselves up.

As we go through this list we will look at braided hair, gold, pearls, costly garments and we may wonder, what's wrong with braided hair? I am wearing a golden ring. Does this mean that I'm immodest and that I shouldn't be wearing one on my finger? The only thing the gold ring is communicating is that I'm married.

There is something here that we need to deal with and that is this; modesty is culturally biased. What was considered to be an issue of modesty, at that time, might not be considered an issue of modesty now. We have to study the Scripture carefully, understanding what it is saying and also study our culture and understand what culture is inferring when we do certain things.

Now, as we live life, we see people adorn themselves in ways that they didn't use to adorn themselves. Last year, as I was watching my daughter at soccer practice, other kid's mothers who are in my peer group that had tattoos, were actually having a conversation in front of me about their tattoos. They were comparing them and discussing what tattoo they were going to get next, and I thought, my, these times are changing.

I remember not too long ago, that a woman would not have been caught dead with a tattoo. Tattoos were only for old sailors, but now things have changed and time has moved on. Now, not only do women get tattoos; women who are my peers have tattoos. Not just one, but more than one, and they have discussions about it very openly and freely in front of me.

I think I concluded that the culture is now changing around me, and what at one point in time seemed to be shocking is now no big deal. What should we think about these things? Does this mean that these women are immodest or not?

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Look at piercing. People are pierced in different ways than they used to be. It used to be that only women could be pierced, and they could be pierced in only two places, the left ear and the right ear. That was it. Now, I can't for the life of me figure out any fundamental difference between whether you are pierced in one ear or another ear or in some other place. A body part is a body part, but culture views the piercing of the ears by women as modest, no problem. Some people, that would consider other people as being immodest, have earrings, pierced ears, looking down perhaps at other people for other types of piercing as being immodest. How do we discern all of these things?

As culture moves along it becomes challenging, especially as we get older, to then look at other people and be able to understand these things. I'm going to try to help us all out here. There's form and then there's the function that the form takes, and those two things are important as we look at the Scripture.

When we look at our culture we have to say what is being accomplished, and then, what form does it take as what we are trying to accomplish gets done. People will choose to adorn themselves in various ways and in and of itself it's nothing. It is just a piercing, just a tattoo, garment, braided hair, or piece of gold. It is only stuff, in and of itself, it is nothing.

What is determinative here is how people view it. As time goes on, people are changing and viewing things differently. We need to understand this and accept it.

When we consider how we are going to adorn ourselves, whether one way or another, we also need to consider what we are trying to accomplish. We are not to think of what the person next to us is doing, but what is the goal of my adornment. I'll leave that for you to consider.

In keeping with modesty and being discreet, whether you have braided hair, gold, or pearls is really fundamentally irrelevant. What becomes very relevant is how people will view you and what are you trying to get people to view you as. Are they going to be looking at you and saying wow, or are they going to be looking at you and go "ugh?" Or will they even notice you. I would say that you probably don't even notice my gold wedding ring because it is so common. At some point in time, these piercings and tattoos will be so common that nobody will even notice and it won't be a big deal.

The challenge is when we are in that cultural change where you have some people responding to it in one way and other people responding to it in another way. Then you really have to think about it all. The Scripture instructs us to be modest but recognize that modesty is culturally based, and we are a part of a culture.

There's one part here that is different, it's costly garments. I would suggest that one cross-cultural indicator of modesty is cost. There really is an economical value that people place on things that are desirable, and the more expensive garments get or other things get, the more they can show us as grandiose, and we need to be careful of that.

Fundamentally, modesty is what is being instructed to women, and I think by implication, men as well. Fortunately, we have a model. Our model is Jesus. God could have sent His Son, 6'8", 250 lbs, and chiseled, and really impressive, but the Scripture tells us that didn't happen.

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Isaiah 53:2 says, "For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him." There's no way that Jesus was created by God so that people would look at him and go wow, now that's impressive. We should be humble, modest, and discreet like Jesus.

The point of this verse is to emphasize the importance of internal adornment not external adornment. There's a parallel passage that helps us; it says almost the same thing. 1 Peter 3:3-4 says, "And let not your adornment be merely external-braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God." Our adornment should be internal.

When we are concerned about our internal adornment, about whether we are holy before the Lord, how will that be manifested? It will manifest itself according to verse 10 this way, "but rather by means of good works, as befits women making a claim to godliness." Our lives will be full of good works and helping others.

If we are adorning ourselves on the inside in terms of holiness, we will be moved to try to serve other people. We are in fact created for good works. Ephesians 2:10 says, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." God created these good works that we are to walk in, uniquely for us, before hand; and we should walk in them. We are created for good works.

These good works that we are created for are not something that just comes naturally, they are something that we actually learn to do. This comes from Titus 3:14, "And let our people also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, that they may not be unfruitful." We are learning good works.

As we go along, we develop our helpfulness and we learn how to serve others better. We can help others to do good works according to Hebrews 10:24. It says, "And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds." We are to encourage one another to do good works from the heart. We can have a role of being a help to one another by not adorning ourselves with great grandeur, but rather serve one another with good works.

2 Timothy 3:16 says, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." He inspired His Word. It's profitable for a series of things including making us adequate, equipped for every good work. Our good works come from knowing God's Word and knowing it better. We will learn good works better by knowing God's Word which equips us to carry out those good works. When we seek to serve and help people, we will be able to do that better as God instructs us from His Word itself.

Our good works bring praise to God. Matthew 5:16 says, "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." Our good works glorify our Father in heaven. We don't hide them but they bring glory and praise to God as people see them according to Matthew 5:16.

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Lastly, our good works will be rewarded. 1 Timothy 6:18-19 says, "Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed." As we are serving one another, that service is rewarded. That's what the scripture says about good works. They come from the heart, and they are really necessary for good adornment.

Finally, let me ask you this question. What is the connection between 1 Timothy 2:8 and verses 9 and 10? There's a connection. What is that connection? The connection is humility. When men pray they are evidencing humility.

Rather than living life in their own strength and desires, they are able to come before the Lord, humbly asking Him to accomplish His will without wrath or doubting. The wrath comes about because we become prideful in believing that our way is the best and wanting something from somebody else and that creates friction. The same goes for women who adorn themselves with humility rather than great grandeur. The connecting bond of these verses is humility.

I want to end with a story. Lately, I've been reading *Frog and Toad Together*. I don't know if you read Frog and Toad, but I do. Now you will know what age my children are. In *Frog and Toad* there is a chapter called 'The Dream' and I'm going to read 'The Dream' to you.....

Toad was asleep, and he was having a dream. He was on stage, and he was wearing a costume. Toad looked out into the dark. Frog was sitting in the theater. A strange voice from far away said, "PRESENTING THE GREATEST TOAD IN ALL THE WORLD!" Toad took a deep bow. Frog looked smaller as he shouted, "Hooray for Toad!" "TOAD WILL NOW PLAY THE PIANO VERY WELL," said the strange voice. Toad played the piano, and he did not miss a note. "Frog," cried Toad, "can you play the piano like this?" "No," said Frog. It seemed to Toad that Frog looked even smaller. "TOAD WILL NOW WALK ON A HIGH WIRE, AND HE WILL NOT FALL DOWN," said the voice. Toad walked on the high wire. "Frog," cried Toad, "can you do tricks like this?" "No," peeped Frog, who looked very, very small. "TOAD WILL NOW DANCE, AND HE WILL BE WONDERFUL," said the voice. "Frog, can you be as wonderful as this?" said Toad as he danced all over the stage. There was no answer. Toad looked out into the theater. Frog was so small that he could not be seen or heard. "Frog," said Toad, "where are you?" There was still no answer. "Frog, what have I done?" cried Toad. Then the voice said, "THE GREATEST TOAD WILL NOW..." "Shut up!" screamed Toad. "Frog, Frog where have you gone?" Toad was spinning in the dark. "Come back, Frog," he shouted. "I will be lonely!" "I am right here," said Frog. Frog was standing near Toad's bed. "Wake up, Toad." He said. "Frog, is that really you?" said Toad. "Of course it is me," said Frog. "And are you your own right size?" asked Toad. "Yes, I think so," said Frog. Toad looked at the sunshine coming through the window. "Frog," he said, "I am so glad that you came over," "I always do," said Frog. Then Frog and Toad ate a big breakfast. After that they spent a fine, long day together.

That's Frog and Toad. Like Frog and Toad, the more we focus on ourselves the smaller and smaller and smaller other people get and in particular, the smaller and smaller God gets. It gets so we cannot see anybody else or God because we have become so big. Instead, we should, in the words of John the Baptist, say He must increase and I must decrease.

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Let's bow in a word of prayer together. Lord we thank you that you have given us the opportunity to see you more clearly and see the size of you and the smallness of us. That we can be humbled before you and look to you as being great and to be able to see what you have done for us in giving yourself to us and be in awe and amazed at your magnitude in your grace. We pray that we could reflect this grace, in Jesus' name. Amen.