

1-2 Timothy – 1 Timothy 2:8-15

Review

Last time, we looked at Paul's admonition for us to pray for all people, noting that Paul made special mention of those who are in high positions. In our discussion on prayer, we found that prayer isn't commanded per se, but is a blessing through which we draw closer to God. So, in God's Word the habit of prayer among believers is simply assumed. We concluded with Paul's declaration that Jesus is the only mediator between God and man – examining in some detail Jesus' declaration that He is the only way through Whom we can come to the Father. We also briefly looked at Peter's declaration before the judges of Israel that the Name of Jesus is the only Name given by which we must be saved.

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Let's continue now in our study of the text of 1 Timothy 2.

⁸I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; ⁹likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, ¹⁰but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works. 1 Timothy 2:8-10 (ESV)

Last time, we didn't look at verse 8, although it clearly belongs with Paul's call for prayer in the beginning verses of the chapter. There is no contention whatsoever about verse 8. We can all agree that churches should emphasize prayer within their fellowships, and that we must discourage and combat contentions and fractiousness within the fellowship. But verse 8 is inextricably linked with the remainder of the chapter by that little word "*likewise*" at the beginning of verse 9. Paul's call for us to pray is inseparable from his recommendations regarding the conduct of women in the church. For most of church history, there was little contention about this latter half of the chapter either. But in the past fifty years or so, Paul's recommendations here have raised considerable rancor because they are seen as encouraging repression of women within the church while fostering an outmoded, patriarchal social framework in the world at large.

As with *all* study of God's Word, proper understanding of this difficult passage requires careful consideration of its biblical context. Remember that this letter is a pastoral epistle from Timothy's mentor in church ministry to his beloved protégé, containing Paul's recommendations for how Timothy should nurture and lead God's flock at Ephesus with whom he had been entrusted. By the time Paul wrote this letter, he had over twenty years of experience in pastoral ministry. He had witnessed the best and worst of human interaction within the Church of Jesus Christ, and in society at large. Consequently, Paul wrote his pastoral letters to Timothy and Titus (and indeed *all* his epistles) to warn the flocks he had established and their leaders about the pitfalls he had encountered in Christian life.

Of course, false doctrines and teaching within the Church were Paul's primary concern as we have already seen. But Paul also wrote extensively about maintaining good order and camaraderie within the fellowships. For example, Paul chastised the church in Corinth for their disorderly and irreverent practices in partaking of the LORD's supper...

¹⁷But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. ¹⁸For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are

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divisions among you. And I believe it in part, ¹⁹for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized. ²⁰When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. ²¹For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. ²²What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not. 1 Corinthians 11:17-22 (ESV)

In fact, Paul devoted an entire chapter (1 Corinthians 14) of his first letter to the Corinthians exhorting them to good order in their worship gatherings. Paul's intent was twofold. First, he desired that the manifestation of the more visible and spectacular gifts of God's Spirit (like prophecy and speaking in tongues) be used for the discipleship and edification of God's children, not for putting on a show. But just as important, there is a real danger that otherwise those who aren't yet Gospel believers might be led astray or even driven away by disorder, shameless exhibitionism, and dissension in the Church. As my pastor in Tucson once said, "We have a 'no whacko' policy here at Calvary Tucson. I don't want strangers who come in to see us acting crazy and go out the door without ever hearing the Gospel. So, you won't find me going around slapping people on the forehead and then passing around an empty Kentucky Fried Chicken bucket!"

But what does all this have to do with the passage at hand here in 1 Timothy? Paul recognized that sexual immorality within the Church was a danger – particularly its potential to destroy the Gospel witness of the Church to outsiders. God clearly condones (for our own good) only one form of sexual behavior among human beings – between exactly one man and exactly one woman within the confines of a lifelong marriage covenant. Yet we – particularly men - are continually tempted to stray from God's perfect ordinances for us in the realm of sexuality despite our best intentions.

Of course, this tendency for men to stray didn't start in Paul's time. The Old Testament is rife with examples. King David was an adulterer, and the prospect of being caught in his adultery led him to also become a murderer (2 Samuel 11-12). Judah consorted with prostitutes including his own daughter-in-law Tamar (Genesis 38). Solomon led his nation into idolatry and eventual captivity in Babylon after being led astray by his many foreign wives and concubines (1 Kings 11). The trend of mankind toward sexual immorality has only worsened since the time that Paul wrote this letter. Hardly a day goes by without a new headline about some Church leader being caught in sexual immorality. Consequently, whole congregations have disintegrated and countless thousands if not millions have rejected the Gospel of Jesus Christ due to their personal revulsion at the reprehensible behavior of these church leaders.

Being a man himself, Paul recognized men's weakness in the area of sexual temptation. Therefore, here in 1 Timothy 2:9 Paul encourages Timothy to discourage the women of his flock from adorning themselves in a sexually provocative way.

⁹likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, 1 Timothy 2:9 (ESV)

To the modern reader, 1 Timothy 2:9 seems quaint – written for another time and place. Some have proposed that Paul's advice to Timothy regarding women in this chapter was applicable to an emergency situation in Ephesus at the time, but no longer relevant. But I heartily disagree. Our pastor

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at one fellowship we attended said that what was once outrageous becomes tolerated, and then becomes the norm. Sadly, that same pastor asked one of the mothers in the church and her older teenaged daughters to please dress more modestly in church. The family took such offense to this that they left the fellowship abruptly. It is certainly understandable that ladies wish to look their best, and not appear frumpy when they come to church. But it should be possible to do so while still maintaining physical modesty and respectability.

Practically all clothing for women and men alike today seems purposefully designed to be sexually provocative. The same is true of our entertainment. When we speak out about this cheapening and sullyng of God’s creation and plan for human sexuality, we are deemed prudish, old fashioned, hopelessly out of touch, and repressive of personal expression. Firstly, I feel compelled to say that being old-fashioned isn’t necessarily wrong. Not every change to the fabric of society is an improvement. The sexual revolution brought about by the widespread availability of the birth control pill in the 1960s had an extremely disruptive and destructive effect on the family unit which had previously formed the very foundation of civilized society for millennia. The advent of so-called “casual” sex was an enormous detriment to the human mind and spirit. One might even go so far as to argue that the prior so-called sexual “repression” was a beneficial strengthener of the fabric of society.

But all of this begs the question, what about the men? Why does Paul place the onus for avoiding sexual temptation solely upon the women? After all, Paul **did** write to the Corinthians about overcoming temptation by God’s provision.

No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. 1 Corinthians 10:13 (ESV)

Yes. Certainly, we all bear the responsibility for our own failings. Yet God calls upon us to love one another. Paul himself in his letter to the Galatians calls upon us to bear one another’s burdens (Galatians 6:2). All of us – men and women – have freedom in Christ. In his instructions to the church at Corinth about eating meat that had been offered to idols, Paul reminded them that since we who belong to Jesus know that idols are powerless and meaningless, we are free to eat such meat without guilt. But Paul went on to say that not everyone has this strength of faith. Therefore, he instructed them...

But take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. 1 Corinthians 8:9 (ESV)

So it is with sexual temptation. Out of love for their brothers in Christ, Christian women should take heed to their appearance to help us resist sexual temptation. Far from repressing women’s freedoms, Paul encourages them here with the opportunity to strengthen and serve their fellow believers in this way.

Paul also makes specific mention of expensive clothing and adornments in 1 Timothy 2:9. This is also an opportunity for sisters in Christ to help one another. Those who can afford such things naturally want to show them off for others. But doing so might bring sorrow and jealousy among their sisters who don’t have fine possessions. This in turn can spiral into serious contentions among sisters in Christ. Paul says here that our sisters should take care to avoid such strife by not wearing ostentatious clothing and jewelry. Instead, Paul advises women of the church to clothe themselves with what is

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proper for Christian women – good works. Of course, this applies equally to Christian men, reflecting Jesus' own teaching in the Sermon on the Mount.

¹⁴“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. Matthew 5:14-16 (ESV)

Showing off has no place in Christian fellowship. Doing so can hurt our fellow Christ followers without our even knowing. Furthermore, it demonstrates poor stewardship of the gifts God has provided us to those who don't know Jesus and strive to make ends meet day-by-day. This applies not only to clothing of course, but to all the earthly blessings the Church enjoys. They should be shared for the furtherance of God's Kingdom, not hoarded for our own benefit.

¹¹Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. ¹²I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. 1 Timothy 2:11-12 (ESV)

It is easy for most to agree that Paul's advice to women regarding modesty and respectability in their dress and appearance is beneficial to the Church. But the remainder of this chapter has been the subject of ongoing controversy for decades and even centuries. The first thing we need to make clear is that this exhortation concerns the roles various members of the Body of Christ are assigned, not our positions relative to our God or to each other. Paul stated this clearly in his letter to the Galatians.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. Galatians 3:28 (ESV)

In the eyes of Jesus, each of us is an individual heart – devoted to His calling and indwelt by His Spirit. Therefore, none of us is inherently inferior or superior to any other. Yet at the same time, we are not identical – far from it. God's Spirit has endowed each Christian believer with a specific set of His gifts – given for the purposes ordained by Him since before the universe was ever created. The healthy life and function of His Church Body is enabled by the total interdependence of its individual members with their unique gifts.

⁴Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; ⁶and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. ⁷To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills. ¹²For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members

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of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12:4-13 (ESV)

Yet with all that said, Paul is clearly applying specific roles to an entire class of people (women), not to individuals with specific spiritual gifts. This immediately begs some hard questions:

- 1) Does Paul actually have this authority? Recall that Paul was an apostle of Jesus Christ – sent forth under orders by Jesus Himself. Therefore, Paul had authority granted from God Almighty. Furthermore, we believe that 1 Timothy is part of the very Word of God Himself – written by His apostle by the inspiration of His indwelling Spirit.
- 2) Are these instructions applicable to the Church in general throughout the age, or specific to the ancient church at Ephesus when Timothy was pastor there? Some have argued cogently that Paul wrote this specific direction for Timothy's flock alone due to the nature of the pagan worship present in Ephesus at the time.

The city was home to the Temple of Artemis – the Greek goddess of the hunt, nature, childbirth, and chastity. In fact, the rumor that Paul's Gospel testimony at Ephesus was intended to undermine the worship of Artemis there caused the riot reported in Acts 19. Artemis was said to be a virgin goddess, and her temple was administered on a rotational basis by virgin maidens. The chief priest in the temple of Artemis in Ephesus was a male eunuch.

Paul clearly saw the Artemis worship conducted mostly by virgin women as a potential source of false doctrine and teaching that might find its way into the nascent Christian church at Ephesus if women were allowed to teach there. So, Paul encouraged Timothy not to allow women to teach or to have authority over men in his church. But the question remains whether Paul intended these instructions strictly for Timothy and the ancient church he led in Ephesus, or that they should be applied to the Church of Jesus generally. That question in turn is tied to the question whether Paul intended for Timothy to share the letter publicly or to keep its content private. We must assume that Paul intended for this letter to be shared, and for its instructions to be followed by all Christians everywhere, since otherwise we trust that God would not have allowed 1 Timothy to enter into the canon of His Word.

NOTE – Last time in our discussions, I mentioned temple prostitutes in conjunction with the Artemis worship at Ephesus. But Artemis was purportedly a virgin goddess, so there was no sexual aspect to the worship in her temple. The women who ministered in the temple of Artemis were virgins themselves, and remained so until the terms of their service in the temple were completed.

- 3) Is this admonition directive in nature or merely a report of how Paul had administered his own flocks? It should become apparent when we look a little deeper into the Greek wording of the passage that these verses are neither suggestions nor a report of how Paul had done things in the past. They are imperative direction to Paul's spiritual son Timothy and (if the answer to question 2 above is correct) to all Christians.
- 4) What exactly does this passage mean? How should these verses be translated and interpreted?

CAVEAT – I am certainly no Greek scholar. So, I'll wing it and pray God will help me rightly divide the text. There are only minor differences between English language translations of this

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passage. I assume the English Standard Version translation is substantially correct. First, we'll look at what the Greek text says,* then try to sort out what it means.

1 Timothy 2:11

- γυνή *gynē* - a woman
ἡσυχία *hēsychia* - quietness (description of the life of one who stays at home doing his own work, and does not officiously meddle with the affairs of others)
ἐν *en* - in
μανθάνω *manthanō* - learn
ἐν *en* - in
πᾶς *pas* - all
ὑποταγή *hypotagē* - obedience, subjection

1 Timothy 2:12

- δέ *de* - but, moreover
οὐ *ou* - no, not
ἐπιτρέπω *epitrepō* - turn to, transfer, commit, entrust, permit, allow, give leave
γυνή *gynē* - a woman
διδάσκω *didaskō* - teach, hold discourse to instruct, deliver didactic discourses, be a teacher, impart instruction, instill doctrine, explain or expound
οὐδέ *oude* - not, neither, nor, not even
αὐθεντέω *authenteō* - act on own authority, be autocratic, be an absolute master, govern, exercise dominion over
ἄνθρωπος *anēr* - a man, any male
ἀλλά *alla* - but, rather, moreover
εἰμί *eimi* - be
ἡσυχία *hēsychia* - quietness (description of the life of one who stays at home doing his own work, and does not officiously meddle with the affairs of others)
ἐν *en* - in

* - Meanings of Greek words quoted from Blue Letter Bible Lexicon -
https://www.blueletterbible.org/esv/1ti/2/8-15/s_1121008 (May 30, 2023)

So, it seems that once we apply proper English grammar, the various English translations of this passage are substantially correct. Furthermore, since there is no apparent figurative sense for the meaning of the passage, we should take it at its literal meaning and avoid reading anything into it. Finally, we find that the passage is directive in nature and intended for the entire Church throughout its history, not just for the ancient church at Ephesus.

So then, we are left with the task of coming to grips with how we should apply these instructions to our present-day Church conduct. To start, let's remind ourselves that we are talking about roles – not status – among Christian believers, as mentioned above. Furthermore, subordinate roles are not inherently inferior roles. Paul wrote at length about this in 1 Corinthians 12. The healthy functioning of the Body of Christ is founded on the interdependent functioning of its individual members. No

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member of the Body is any more or any less essential than any other member to the wellbeing of the whole.

God clearly assigns to Eve a role of subordination to her husband immediately after the fall of man in the Garden of Eden.

*To the woman he said,
“I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing;
in pain you shall bring forth children.
Your desire shall be contrary to ^[כַּס'עַל] your husband,
but he shall rule over you.”* Genesis 3:16 (ESV)

NOTE – The Hebrew word כַּס'עַל translated in the ESV as “contrary to” here in this verse is translated as “for” in most other English translations. The word may also mean “against” in the sense of being up against something or bonded to something, and it may also mean “according to” in the sense of being in conformance to the will of another person (your husband in this case). Therefore, I believe the ESV renders this word incorrectly in this verse. I also find no justification for the way the NLT renders the word in this verse either...

...And you will desire to control ^[כַּס'עַל] your husband,...

CAVEAT – I know practically nothing at all about Hebrew, so my analysis here may be fuller of crap than the proverbial Christmas goose. Let the reader beware.

Conversely, God clearly assigned to men the role of leadership over their wives. Paul writes at length regarding these roles in his epistles. For example, he delineates a succinct universal hierarchy of leadership and subordination in his first letter to the church in Corinth.

But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God. 1 Corinthians 11:3 (ESV)

NOTE – Virtually every other English language translation renders the Greek words that the ESV translates as wife and husband as woman and man respectively. The Greek words can mean either.

So clearly, God has ordained specific roles of leadership and subordination within the home and within broader society to men and women respectively whether we might agree with the plan or not. In 1 Timothy 2:11-12 Paul extends the ordination of these roles to life in the Church. This is all well and good just as God has ordained.

ASIDE – There must be a clear distinction in our thinking between the ideas of leadership and voluntary subordination and the ideas of domination, repression, and involuntary enslavement. God created woman out of man as a helper, not a thrall. God recognized that it was not good for the man to be alone. He created woman to fill that void.

Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” Genesis 2:18 (ESV)

The roles of leadership and subordination within the home, in global society, and in the Church must be a partnership recognizing the strengths and weaknesses of all parties, working together toward a common goal – the furtherance of God’s Kingdom here on earth, and throughout eternity. In his epistles, Paul repeatedly makes this point using the allegory of the Church as the Body of Christ

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reliant for its healthy function upon the interdependence of all its members working together in their individual God-ordained roles.

Before we move on let's quickly look at the instructions in 1 Timothy 2:11-12 for women to learn quietly and to remain quiet. The salient Greek word here is **ἡσυχία *hēsychia***. Indeed, it can mean verbal silence. But Paul isn't saying here that women must remain completely silent in church. In fact, Paul himself refers to women praying aloud and prophesying in church in his first letter to the church in Corinth (1 Corinthians 11:5). **ἡσυχία *hēsychia*** carries with it a connotation of gentleness and peacefulness of mind and spirit, not just in voice. The instruction is that women are not to partake in contentious verbal disputes in the Church. Of course, this is a good idea for men as well, and can be applied with equally desirable results outside the church walls in our general social interactions. Paul evidently made this special admonition for women because there was a history or a threat of such contentions in the church at Ephesus or in other congregations with whom Paul and Timothy had ministered. Remember that this is a pastoral epistle in which Paul warns Timothy about things to watch out for.

Most of us can avow and attest that the trend continues to this day in our very own fellowships, not only among women but among men as well. So let us determine to put an end to it among ourselves here and now. We are brothers and sisters in Christ – set apart by Him for the good works He has ordained for us since eternity past. Let's act in the power of God's Spirit like the saints and children of God that we are.

¹³For Adam was formed first, then Eve; ¹⁴and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. 1 Timothy 2:13-14 (ESV)

So, we understand God's ordained roles for men and women even if we may not completely agree with them. Here in 1 Timothy 2:13-14, Paul makes a brief apologetic about why God chose these roles for us. We know and trust that God's will and plan for us is perfectly righteous and founded upon His abiding love and care for us. Problems and suffering arise when people disregard and disobey God's will and plan. The fruits of this are all around us in our fallen world – brought about through Adam and Eve's disobedience. Certainly, Paul is correct. It was Eve – not Adam – whom the serpent deceived. But why? God had assigned to Adam the roles of leadership and protection over his helper Eve. Yet Adam abrogated his responsibilities at the critical juncture, and left Eve exposed to the temptation of our enemy.

So the trend continues down through the ages. Repeatedly, and increasingly men are reneging on their God-given roles leaving the women to take up the slack. This is nothing new, of course. Adam himself fell down on the job he'd been given as we have seen. Later in the time of the judges (Judges 4), we find the prophetess Deborah as the leader of Israel. Despite God's clear command, Barak refused to lead his army to battle against the Canaanites at Mt. Tabor unless Deborah went with him to lead him. In times of crisis if no man is willing to shoulder his God-mandated responsibilities to lead, a woman must necessarily step into the gap.

Every ship must have a single skipper. Otherwise, the ship will go astray, and might possibly sink killing everyone aboard. God has ordained men as the leaders of His people. But if no man is willing, women must often step in to take over despite God's clear instruction otherwise. Thus, today we increasingly find women as the heads of churches simply because no men are willing to step up to the

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plate. The excuses men give for this shameful spinelessness and rebellion are manifold – mostly that men don't feel comfortable or qualified in leadership roles. This in turn reflects an utter lack of trust in and reliance upon God. Our pastor in California calls this “the wussification of America.” Strong, God-ordained, Spirit-reliant, manly leadership is on the decline around the globe, and it's a crying shame. The real tragedy is that young boys no longer have proper masculine role models of godly leadership, so they never learn their proper God-given roles. Instead, young girls are taught that they should be the leaders rather than the subordinate partners God ordained them to be. Therefore, the “wussification” cycle continues becoming what my dear friend Tony calls a “self-eating watermelon.”

***Yet she will be saved* [σῶζω sōzō] *through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.* 1 Timothy 2:15 (ESV)**

Paul concludes this admonition about women's roles with another brief statement that's hard to understand. Perhaps Paul is referring back to God's pronouncement against Eve in the Garden.

***To the woman he said,
“I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing;
in pain you shall bring forth children...”* Genesis 3:16a (ESV)**

Some Bible commentators have said that Paul's statement in 1 Timothy 2:15 is symbolic of the salvation received by all mankind through the birth of Jesus of Nazareth from the virgin Mary. More likely though, I think Paul is once more giving Timothy some specific advice about his ministry in Ephesus. The key to understanding this verse is the Greek word σῶζω sōzō. It doesn't only mean salvation out of eternal condemnation in our sins as Christians typically think of the word “saved.” Rather, σῶζω sōzō means to save, keep safe and sound, to rescue from danger or destruction. σῶζω sōzō applies to rescue out of present, earthly dangers as well as eternal salvation out of death.

Throughout most of history and indeed continuing today in many parts of the world, childbearing was a risky undertaking. The incidence of stillbirth, miscarriage, infant mortality, and maternal death during gestation and childbirth was high – the prospect fearful. Thus, women dreaded becoming pregnant and bearing their children because the process was fraught with danger for both mother and child.

As previously mentioned, the temple of Artemis was the center of religious activity in Ephesus at the time of Timothy's ministry there. Artemis was not only the goddess of the hunt, of nature, and of chastity. She was also the goddess of motherhood and childbearing. The women of Ephesus and the surrounding area brought sacrifices to Artemis seeking her protection from the dangers of pregnancy and childbirth. Paul therefore foresaw that the Christian women of Ephesus might do the same – partaking of pagan idol worship rather than relying on the One True and Living God for provision and protection. Thus, Paul sought to encourage the Christians in Ephesus and their pastor Timothy to rely upon God in faith, love, holiness, and self-control for their protection in childbearing rather than the pagan rituals of the false goddess Artemis.

One question that springs to mind from this verse is exactly who Paul means by “she” and “they.” The answer isn't crystal clear from the text itself, but it seems likely that Paul means not just one particular woman when he writes “she,” but all Christian women. Likewise, by “they” Paul likely means not only the women, but their husbands as well. But I could certainly be wrong about this.

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Looking Ahead

Next time, God willing we will continue our study of Paul's first pastoral letter to Timothy with Paul's instructions to Timothy regarding the appointment of church leaders.