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The Godly Woman (Part 2)

**The Twofold
Glory of
Womanhood**

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Series: I Timothy



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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

The Twofold Glory of Womanhood

It was Jesus Christ who liberated women. Now, I realize that the world in which we live will have a problem with that statement; but prior to Christ's coming to earth, both Jew and Greek had relegated womanhood virtually to the level of a slave. It was only the Messiah who broke through that man-made barrier and set women free. He did not set them free to be *like men*. He did not set them free to *look like men*. He did not set them free to *fulfill the role of men*. That would not be freedom. That would be bondage. He set them free *to be what God in eternity past had designed them to be*.

Today's generation is implying that there is no difference between men and women. They say that to be equal they must be the same. The result is a sick society filled with perversion, characterized by the blurring of distinctives between the genders, and the ensuing decline of the institution of marriage. Thus, many are saying that the family, God's great schoolhouse of faith, is terminally ill. And it is ill partly due to the fact that women have rebelled against the role God designed for them in eternity past.

What was the condition of womanhood prior to Christ's first coming? According to Jewish law, a woman was not a person, but a thing. She was entirely at the disposal of her father or her husband. She was forbidden to learn the law. Women were shut up in a separate section of the synagogue where they could not be seen. Women were forbidden to teach, even in the schools. Women, slaves, and children were classified together. In the Jewish Morning Prayer, each man expressed thanks that God had not made him "a Gentile, a slave, or a woman." A strict rabbi would never greet a woman in public, even his own wife or daughter.

While the Jew had relegated woman to the home, the Greek had classified her even lower. In Corinth alone, there were

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more than a thousand temple prostitutes, and in Ephesus, where Timothy was attempting to apply a little Pauline wisdom to the church's problems, the Temple of Diana had hundreds of women whose role was the same. They were to participate in immorality as an act of pagan worship.

Even the respectable Greek woman led a very confined life. She lived in her own quarters into which no man but her husband came. She did not even appear at meals. She never appeared on the street alone. She was never allowed to appear in any public assembly.

Against this backdrop, Jesus came and began the process of defining, once again, how God created men and women and why. He began to develop in the laboratories of eternity once more, the negatives that revealed the portrait of the ages—the picture men and women depict of God and His people. We must remember that to try to negate God's teachings on the roles of men and women by attributing them to cultural mores that no longer apply, would be to open Pandora's box where Scriptural interpretation is concerned. To ignore the deeper reasons behind those teachings would do an even-greater injustice. So we must walk a careful line here. We must take into consideration the times in which these commandments were given, but we must also go beyond that to the heart of God.

We must also seek to understand from God's word why God made men and women so decidedly different, and why He was so insistent that those distinctives never be compromised. We will find, I trust, that Paul's "so called limitations" on the responsibilities and privileges of women in the church are far more than a throwback to first century customs. They were a God-ordained tribute to womanhood and to the special place in God's Kingdom she has been given.

Our title and our outline for this lesson and the next, an admittedly dangerous study, is as follows:

- I- The Twofold Glory of Womanhood
- II- The Twofold Warning to Women
- III- The Twofold Explanation of Paul
- IV- The Twofold Expression of God

THE TWOFOLD GLORY OF WOMANHOOD

Paul, you remember, embarked on this apparently shark-infested journey across the waters of feminine uniqueness by approaching the issue of how women dress, particularly when they appeared in the church assemblies. He dealt with how they were to “adorn” themselves, a word which implied the “putting in order by decoration”, the way in which a woman dresses. It did not allude to the “no makeup”, “no style” theology, but rather left the impression that the godly woman was practically, personally, purposefully dressed for the particular occasion in question. Never was she to be sloppy or slothful; that would defy the reputation of a God of order. Never was she to dress sensuously or immodestly; that would defy the reputation of a God of holiness. Never was she to dress distastefully or inappropriately; that would defy the reputation of a God whose goals are spiritual in nature. Never was she to dress extravagantly, flaunting her pearls, or gold, or costly clothes; that would defy the reputation of a God of such humility that He “took on the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of man”. A woman’s clothing choices were to be made with an attitude of self-control. They were to be deliberate decisions based on what would honor God, and what would honor the precious calling of womanhood.

Now Paul makes the transition from clothing to character. To study the passage in context, we must go back to verse 8 and proceed from there, and then look at some of the parallel passages in the New Testament that reinforce and elaborate on these somewhat misunderstood, obviously touchy, words. The passage reads:

I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer,
without anger or disputing.

I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes,

but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God.

A woman should learn in quietness and full submission.

I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority

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over a man; she must be silent.

For Adam was formed first, then Eve.

And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.

But women will be saved [kept safe] through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety. (I Timothy 2:8-15 NIV)

Hello? Are you still there? Of course you are. No, I mean are you still with Paul? Or are there a thousand excuses pounding through your brain about how archaic and prejudiced this passage appears to be in the light of today's world? I don't blame you. But rather than try to uncover some ways of excusing away the instructions let's first examine it carefully and see what it *really* says. It really says there is a twofold glory to womanhood. I Peter 3:1-6 further accentuates that truth and then proceeds to give a twofold warning to women. I Corinthians 11:3 and 14:34,35 echo that refrain. Then verses 13-15 add a twofold explanation by Paul and take us on a brief trip back to Genesis three. Finally, we need to look at the twofold expression of God, and why "male and female created He them..." We need to look at who is really the strongest, men or women? We need to define the difference between order and equality; and finally, we need to see why God made women the way He did, and to see what He was trying to say to us, to the world, and to the angels.

First, if you look carefully at the twofold glory of womanhood, you will see that there are two distinctive character qualities that were to be specifically accentuated in women. See if you can guess what they are. The first is the word *quietness*. It is an extraordinary word. It does not simply mean, *without speaking*. In fact, in this phrase, it does not mean that at all. The literal meaning of the word is "making no agitation or disturbance; exciting no disturbance in others; tranquility arising from within."

The quiet spirit is one of two major attributes that is applied specifically to women. In I Peter, chapter three, the Apostle Peter, having used almost the same admonition concerning what women wear, addresses this quality in women as the

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antithesis of one who uses excesses in clothing or jewelry to call attention to herself. It reads like this:

Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes.

Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.

For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands,

(I Peter 3:3-5 NIV)

The Scripture is clearly explaining that there are two ways to be beautiful. One is outward beauty—the putting on of fancy clothes, elaborate hairdos, and expensive jewelry. The other is inner beauty, and in a woman, that beauty is best defined by a spirit that is quiet and gentle. Paul is saying that a beautiful woman is one who is not constantly agitated, upset, or disturbed, nor does she incite that kind of reaction in others. There is a calm about her soul. Wherever she goes, peace follows. Her demeanor is one of a restful spirit. She is not loud or boisterous, nor upsetting. She is neither contentious nor anxious. She is not loud or boisterous or upsetting to be around. Instead, a sense of quiet confidence seems to follow her wherever she goes. Her demeanor speaks of humility, not self-righteousness. She isn't worried about being *right*; she's concerned about being used by God. She isn't fretting about being wronged; she's praying for those who wronged her. She is the quiet, gentle person God designed woman to be. It isn't that men can't be quiet. It isn't that men can't be gentle. They ought to be both. But womanhood ought to be characterized by a higher, nobler demonstration of those qualities. God designed those qualities as a special tribute to the nature of woman. So the first glory of womanhood is her quiet, gentle spirit, which is "unfading" beauty, according to Peter. It won't need facelifts and layers of cosmetics to keep it going in the later years. In fact, the older she gets, the more beautiful she gets, because she has walked with God. She dresses wisely, beautifully, tastefully, sensibly; but not to call attention to

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herself. She does so to keep *anything from detracting from the nature of her God within her*, which reveals itself in quiet, gentle ways.

Be careful. This is not to say that all personalities will reflect these qualities in the same way. It is to say, however, that *in harmony with the way God made each woman*, she will reflect those qualities.

The second attribute of the twofold glory of womanhood is closely related to the first. To a degree, it is the outward working of the first one, but there are some subtle differences. If we were playing a word game, and you had to fill in the blanks, ladies, the word would be: S_U_M_S_I_N.

Can you guess? Yes, it's that dreaded "s" word. The one that insensitive men have been using as a club over the head of their weary wives for generations. S-u-b-m-i-s-s-i-o-n. Just the sound of it strikes fear in the hearts of many a badgered Christian spouse. Strangely enough, however, it was never meant to be a tool in the hands of husbands. In fact, *no place in Scripture that I have found are men admonished* — "husbands see that your wife submits to you in all authority, for by such will you be judged." My Bible says,

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself up for her

(Ephesians 5:25 NIV)

And one of the great deterrents to submission in modern society, and one of the great boons to the "liberated woman" movement has been the autocratic, unloving, insensitive clod known as the evangelical Christian husband.

No, the matter of submission is between a woman and God. The man's role in fostering that attitude is to love her so much and so consistently that she is drawn irresistibly into that holy condition known as submission.

And just what does that word mean? It means to willingly subject oneself to the rule of another. It is a military term, which signifies the yielding of authority to one who has been placed over. It is a twofold process. Step one is the act of submission. It is the refusal in your spirit to usurp authority from another. Step two is the attitude of submission. It is a

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joyful heart that gladly relinquishes control because the “powers that be are ordained of God”, and He cannot make a mistake. You do not wait for the attitude to submit. You’ll be waiting all your life. You submit out of obedience while you pray for God’s perspective. When God’s Spirit begins to take control, the attitude follows. Remember: first the act, then the attitude.

Our text uses the term *full submission*. That means both the act and the attitude. She should *learn* in *full submission*. She is not seeking to instruct the elders or her husband in spiritual matters. She is rather seeking to be taught. Is that because she is inferior intellectually or inferior spiritually? Well, that would defy common sense as well as Scripture. The woman is often the more spiritually sensitive, and often the more intellectually alert. She is not submitting because she is less able; she is submitting because she is portraying a role, that of the church in submission to Christ. Her role requires much more discipline than the man’s. The man is called to lead, something the flesh wants to do. The woman is called to follow, something the flesh rebels against continually. Therefore, for the woman to be what God is calling her to be, she must constantly be allowing God’s Spirit to flow through her and control her. Her natural bent is to resist authority. She is the daughter of Eve, and her sin nature demands recognition and authority.

Our I Peter passage words it this way:

Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words [talk] by the behavior of their wives,

when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.

(I Peter 3:1,2 NIV)

The context of that passage is not confined to the wife’s behavior in the assembly of the church, but has to do with responding to life’s injustices and difficulties. The phrase “in the same way” refers to the responsibilities of men in chapter two to submit to the authority of the government, and then to their employers, even those, and especially those, who were

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unjust and cruel. In fact, the more they were misunderstood and unjustly accused, provided they responded graciously, the more they were pleasing the heart of God.¹

Christ was to be their example.

When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.

(I Peter 2:23 NIV)

And then, of course, comes the “likewise ye wives”, or as the NIV words it, “Wives, in the same way, be submissive”. There is your word again. Be submissive. Place yourself under the authority of your husband. You say, “Wait a minute. That’s okay for Mary or Josephine of whomever over there, but that is not going to work for me. My husband is not a Christian.” Right? Wrong! That’s exactly what the passage is talking about. “So that if any of them do not believe the Word, they may be won over without talk, by the purity and reverence of your lives.”

There is no higher calling in Scripture, and there is no more impossible task in Scripture apart from the divine intervention of God in a woman’s life. But the blessings that follow are incredible. “It is of great worth in God’s sight.”²

So there is a twofold glory in womanhood. There are two distinctives that when evident in a woman’s life bring such glory to God that they are of *great worth* to Him. The first is a quiet, gentle spirit, an attitude of heart that reflects an inner beauty that flows out of a tranquil, peaceful life into the world about her. She is not easily agitated or disturbed, and does not tend to agitate or disturb those around her. She is calm in the storm, quiet and confident even in the midst of screaming children, unjust husbands, unfair laws, inadequate living or working conditions, and the absence of the recognition she so desperately craves. The world about her is promoting the “new woman” who lives like a man, works like a man, and dresses like a man. But that’s not really a “new woman”. It’s the old Eve resurrected one more time. Ahe godly woman eventually, joyfully, submits to the authority God places over her in the

¹ I Peter 2:20

² I Peter 3:4

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home and in the church and in society, even if, and especially, if that authority is unfair.

In fact, the more unfair it is, the more glory she is able to give to God, for the natural Eve who lives in her cannot submit. Therefore, only Christ in her can do so. God's strength is made perfect in her weakness, and she must continually let Him be the Lord He is. So the more she submits joyfully, the more grace she receives; and the more grace she receives, the more quiet and gentle her spirit becomes. It is a cycle that need never end until eternity; and thus the older she gets, the more beautiful she gets. The wrinkles on her face portray lines of kindness. Her eyes become twinkling lights of serenity. Her smile becomes less forced. It becomes a natural expression of a heart that's at rest. That is real beauty in the sight of God. And it is a kind of beauty the world cannot ultimately explain apart from God.

You say, "But that's not the way it is in our world." Exactly. And the more the world redefines womanhood, the more beautiful the Christian woman becomes. She is light alongside darkness. She is peace alongside frustration. She is at rest under authority. While those about her are struggling to "be free", she is the only one among them truly free. In our concluding study on the glory of womanhood, we will look at Paul's twofold warning: "don't teach men, and don't exercise authority over men in the church." Then we will look at Paul's twofold explanation: the "first conceived; last deceived" argument. And finally, we will seek to find out who is the strongest: men or women? And we will find out how that answer fits into the overall scheme of God's witness to the world.

In the meantime, I would remind you that these principles are for "MCWO", which stands for "mature Christian women only". The unbelieving woman cannot assimilate these principles. They are foolishness to her, because they are spiritually discerned. And even if she were able to understand, she does not have the power to obey apart from an encounter with the Living God, whereby Jesus Christ comes to live in her life and thus empowers her to be what He has called her to be. The answer to becoming God's woman is first to

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become God's. So if you are not a Christian, don't struggle with these concepts. Your struggle is with a far greater issue, whether or not to acknowledge your sin and ask Jesus Christ to be your Savior. You can do that right now. You can submit your life to Jesus Christ and make Him your Lord. Then you will have the power to be the woman God designed you to be.

And even believing women will always struggle with these passages unless and until they surrender to the greater plan of God for their lives. The world is at war with the principles of God. And the closer we get to the Christ's return, the more intense the warfare will become; Satan will expose cunningly devised counterfeits to God's plan that will seem to be liberating men and women, but will, in essence, be leading them into an insufferable kind of bondage. Our only source of wisdom is the Scripture. It does not need to be interpreted in the light of current customs. It needs only to be interpreted in the light of the heart of God and what He is trying to accomplish in and through His children. And the tougher it gets, the more opposition it receives, the more important it is that we obey implicitly. There is a twofold glory to womanhood: a quiet, gentle spirit that genuinely, graciously submits to authority. The world can't explain it, but we can.

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