

Title: That “awkward” thing that Paul says, pt.2
Text: 1 Timothy 2.8-15
Theme: The role of men and women
Series: 1 Timothy
Prop Stmt: When men don’t do what they should do, women tend to do what they shouldn’t do because they feel as if they have no other choice.

Last Sunday, I did not finish the sermon, not because I did not have enough time, but because I had too much sermon. Nice, well-meaning and encouraging people will say to me, “Bob, it’s okay, we don’t mind, just finish it out.” To which I reply, “Yea, but you are not in the nursery.”

This morning, I want to finish the sermon without repeating everything I said last week. So, I am preaching another sermon, from the same text. I will focus on the verses I did not get to complete, while helping you see another angle on the truths I addressed last Sunday. So, here is how it is going to play out. 1) Long introduction that helps you see the value and importance of this issue and the bigger picture. 2) A chart I came up with to help us understand Paul’s point. 3) Finish the text and 4) see how this relates to this issue of elders and deacons which is addressed in chapter 3.

Read Text:

1. Long introduction

Our recent presidential election was fairly close with Donald Trump getting 306 electoral votes to 232 for Hillary Clinton and yet, the latest figures that I read this week, still have Hillary receiving about 1-2 million more votes than Donald. How can one candidate receive more votes and still lose the election fair and square? The answer is, in a word, polity. Polity means, “*a form or process of civil government or constitution.*” Part of our polity as it relates to the election of a president is called the Electoral College. In some cases, people who have never paid any attention to government class are now realizing that presidents are not elected on the basis of popular vote, but on the basis of electoral votes.

This illustrates a familiar scene in any group where formal governance takes place, whether it is a union meeting, a stockholders meeting, a homeowners or condo association meeting, a church, PTO, city council or school board. People tend to be bored and apathetic until a problem arises. All of a sudden, polity matters. People say stuff like, “wait a minute, you can’t do that” only to find out that there are written policies and procedures that they agreed to, but never read, or never paid attention to. Now, they are scrambling for the constitution, or organizational by-laws to find out what the rules are.

One of my goals in preaching through the books of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus is to raise the level of our congregational awareness of our polity. Polity is not simply important for when a problem arises, but good polity helps to prevent problems in the first place. But, until a problem arises, so many people are indifferent about it. In fact, it is very common for people to view church polity as being irrelevant. In other words, in some churches, the

pastor runs everything. In other churches, the deacon board runs everything. In some churches the congregation runs everything. In some churches, the elders run everything. Some churches emphasize membership, others don't. Hey, as long as things get done, I really don't care. Well, you need to care. I want to help you discover some of the things that I have discovered so that your care of polity will grow, like my care about polity has grown. So, let me give you a pragmatic argument for why you need to care about polity and then I will give you a biblical argument for it.

Here is the pragmatic argument. Ten years ago, the Episcopal Denomination ordained a practicing homosexual as a bishop. A number of episcopal churches began to say that this was too much and some of these episcopal congregations moved to leave the denomination and join another. One of the churches that did this was the Falls Church Anglican in Falls Church, Virginia. For 280 years they have met in the same location. These many years later, and many building programs later, their building and property are valued at \$26 million. This 4,000-member congregation voted 90% in favor of leaving the Episcopal denomination and joining another. At this point the denomination officials said, you can vote to leave, but we own your building, your bank accounts and everything in your buildings. Now, those stuffy, technical church constitution documents that no one has time to read, because they contain all of that polity stuff, all of a sudden became very important. The members thought, "you can't do that. We paid for this building. We raised the money for it. The money in those bank accounts is from the offerings that we gave. This is our building and our money and if we want to leave the denomination, we can leave. But, that is not what their written polity said. The polity of the Episcopal denomination is that there is one church (the Episcopalian church) that is run by denominational officials, and they own everything. Congregations have limited authority. So, yes, you can leave, but you cannot have your building, or anything else.

Four years ago now, this 4,000 member congregation left the denomination, and lost their building, all of the contents of the building, and about \$3 million in the bank. Now, I applaud them for being willing to pay the price for the courage of their convictions. That cost them something. At the same time, I am guessing that the members of the congregation are realizing that polity matters. Do you know who actually owns the buildings? Do you know who is authorized to spend money? Do you know who is liable for things if things go wrong? How are decisions made? Who is actually in charge? What are the elders? Can they do whatever they want? How much authority does the congregation have? Are we owned by a denomination (no). Who reports to whom? What happened to the Falls Church Anglican also happened to The Good Shepherd Church in Binghamton, NY. They also voted to leave the Episcopal Denomination and the Denomination moved in and took their building. But, the denomination could not afford to keep the building. So, the Good Shepherd Church offered to buy their own building back from the denomination. The denomination refused and the building was turned into a mosque.

Ok, do I have your attention now? That was my pragmatic example for why polity matters. Here is the ultimate reason why polity matters. The Bible talks about polity for the local church. In 1 Timothy 3.14-15 Paul tells us why he is writing this letter. He is telling us how we are to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the

living God. He then describes the church as a pillar and buttress of the truth. This entire letter is written so that we, professing believers and followers of Christ might know how to behave and function as a church. Now, you may be thinking, wait a minute, the Bible doesn't say that much about these things. Actually it says more than what many of you realize and I want you, the members of this church to recognize the calling that you have and be informed, stay informed and carry out our mission together. By the way, as part of this process I want you to see that there is no category in the NT for a person who claimed to be a follower of Christ who was not a member of a local church. So, according to I Timothy, how are we to behave? 1) We are to be on guard against false teaching and false teachers. 2) We are to pray. We are to be a people who pray and the men of the church are to take the lead in prayer. The men of our church are not to be known by anger, but are to be known by prayer. The women of our church are not to be known for immodesty or ostentatious appearance, but by modesty, self-control and good works. The men of the church are to lead and their leadership is formally and publicly displayed through their teaching of the Word. Something else about the men of the church. You are to designate certain men as elders. These elders lead the church. They are qualified for leadership by character and competency. They must meet the biblical qualifications for being an elder which I summarize the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 like this. They must be able to teach the Word and, because of the integrity of their lives, they must be able to teach all of the Word, without anyone who knows them well, rolling their eyes or grimacing because what they are saying and what they are polls apart. Chapter 3 goes on to talk about deacons and their wives, or deaconesses. That is polity stuff. Chapter 5 addresses how a church is to care for the widows in the church and gives some directions for the elders. All of these things are matters of polity and every bit of the polity is rooted in the character of God and the gospel. Therefore, good polity helps to protect the message of the church and the people of the church.

So, when we read 1 Timothy 2.8-15, some people feel uneasy. It is natural to feel uneasy because we are not against women. I unpacked that in much detail last week. We love, cherish and esteem women and we fear being misunderstood. So, our temptation is to minimize a text like this. But hold the phone. This text is part of helping us understand good polity which protects the message of the church and the people of God. This text is good for us. But we get uneasy because we do not read the entire book and because we tend to read contemporary issues into it. We breathe the air of militant feminism and we tend to be intimidated by its loud, angry, shrill and hostile screams. But, if you listen carefully, you will hear the emptiness in their cries and if you look carefully, you will see the hollowness in their eyes. Feminism has promised power, value, and significance to women and it has betrayed 2 generations of women. Why should we be intimidated and apologetic to our culture when our culture is such a failure?

How many stories do we hear of women who climbed the ladder, got to the top and found out, that it wasn't what they were hoping for? Sure, there was a lot of money, clothes, cars, gadgets, etc. but, there was a hole that wasn't filled. And they are puzzled, then almost afraid to admit that what they really want is to be a mom. They see little children and they are drawn to them. And time after time, these women shock their world when they resign in order to be a stay at home mom. And those who have children, and leave

them day after day with nannies or at a daycare talk of the anguish and unsettledness of that and the desire of just wanting to be a mom. And now, we have this group of women who waited to have children and now find it difficult to conceive and are tempted to feel like a failure. This text is not against women. It is for them. It is saying to men and to women, to live out your role and stay in your lane. Not every woman is a wife and not every wife is a mother. Not every man is a husband and not every husband is a father. But leadership in the home and in the church is for the men. When the men do this well it serves the women well. And godly men will want to serve women well.

Do you realize what we are? We are the church. We are the people of God. We are citizens of another kingdom and people of another nation. We are ambassadors of another kingdom and gather as an embassy or an outpost of that kingdom. We assemble in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have authority because he has shared it with us and we operate according to the polity that he has established. Part of our polity (form or process of government) has to do with elders. We are an elder-led, yet congregational-ruled church. I am hopeful that by the time we complete this series, that you will see the biblical argument for our form of governance and will love it and the wisdom of it. Part of our polity is that we are elder-led. And we are convinced from the Scriptures, that the office of an elder is limited to men. Men are to lead the church. Women are not permitted to be in charge over the men, nor are they permitted to be the teachers over men. That polity is all tied to who God is and to the message of the gospel. In fact, our polity is rooted in the Trinity and in creation as I explained last week. That polity is good. That polity is reasonable. That polity has purposes. We are a people and our polity (the forms of governance) reflects the kind of people that we are.

2. The Graph

Here is what I want you to see: submission is part of the normal Christian life. Men submit to God when they pray (2.8). Women submit to God when they dress modestly and exercise self-control, and, if married, do not try to control or dominate their husbands. This reflects the kind of people that we are and the kind of people we should aspire to be: 2.2.

3. Working through the text

A) **Here is what men are to do:**

They are to lead in prayer; they are not to be angry because they are called by God to be the leaders in the church.

B) **Here is what women are to do: (9-15)**

- 1) *They are to adorn themselves with modesty. (9)*
- 2) *They are to be characterized by their good works. (10)*

3) *They are to function in keeping with their role.*

a. A woman is not permitted to teach men. (12)

In the church, the role of teaching is for men because of the nature of what is being taught. The Word is authoritative and the person who is teaching the Word to the church is functioning in a position of authority. That is fine for a woman to teach other women. In fact, it is wonderful. But, it is out of order for a woman to be in a position of teaching a man in the church gathering because that position of teaching (preaching) is a position of authority. This would be very problematic for a woman to be in authority over her husband in the church. Women are to stay in their lane and men are to get in their lane and drive.

I have talked with ministry leaders who believe that it is okay for a woman to be an elder and to preach in the church. I ask them if they believe that is okay for a woman to be in charge of the home. They say no. Do you see the disconnect in that? The home is to be the little church. The home is where a man learns to lead with those who know him best so that his leadership in the church is more effective and consistent. Marriage is an illustration of the church (Eph.5). The limiting of this position of leadership to men is protecting the roles that God assigned to the genders. We will see when we get to chapter 3 that being an elder is for men. To have a woman follow her husband in the “little church” (home) and to lead her husband in the church is out of order.

b. A woman is not permitted to be in authority over men. (12)

This clearly precludes women from serving as elders, which is why in the very next chapter when Paul explains the qualifications for elders, he talks specifically about men and limits the office to men. This limiting is not a slap at woman; it practically forces the men to step up.

4) *Here is why* (13-15)

This prohibition is rooted in creation and is a consequence of the fall.

a. Adam was formed first. God placed man in charge.

God made man to image the glory of God by reflecting God’s character as leader, provider, lover, defender and supporter.

b. Adam was not deceived, but the woman was. When she stepped out of her position, she got into trouble. The point is, don’t keep doing that.

Part of the curse is reflected in the fact that our God-given roles are not changed, but the curse of sin makes them so much more difficult. Men are still called to lead. They are still called to be the primary provider for their family, but because of sin, it is harder. Women

are the gender that God called to bear children, but because of sin this calling will be fraught with danger and difficulty. Men will struggle with leadership because they will tend to abuse it, or neglect it. Women will struggle with submission because they will tend to resent it, resist it, and even reject it.

Now, I know a man who, because of a disease, is unable to provide for his family. He has no strength to work. He is tempted to think of himself as a failure because he cannot carry out this God-given role. Now, in his case, he cannot carry it out, due to no fault of his own. He finds comfort in the fact that his ultimate identity is not threatened because his ultimate identity is not driven by whether or not he can lead his family by providing for them, but his identity is in Christ. He can still rejoice over the successes of other men in their work, but he feels the weight of his condition, most acutely in not being able to lead as he longs to. I know women who have not been able to bear children. They are godly, gracious, faithful, competent and caring women, but have not been able to bear children on their own. Some have adopted, some have not. They are most tender to this issue because they are vulnerable to feeling like a failure. The issue of leadership and provision for men and bearing children and submitting for women is hard.

Therefore, in our unredeemed world, we should expect a great deal of abusive leadership, a great deal of confusion over genders, roles, and angst over our identity. But, praise God, this tension is not forever.

c. This is not forever. She will be saved.

What does this mean? She will be saved through childbearing? Does having babies make you holy? Many mothers can say, “no”! Seriously, the context is about the fall. The woman was Eve and (15) she will be saved (passive – meaning she will be saved by the actions of another) through childbearing, which I take to be a reference to the promise given to Eve in Genesis 3.15 of the Messiah to come. Meaning, Eve (notice the singular (15a) will be saved through the bearing of the child, that is through the Messiah (who brings salvation) and this salvation is for all women (switch to the plural in 15b).

Living in this sin-cursed world means that we live with the consequences of Adam and Eve’s sin. Part of those consequences are physical (childbearing for women and working for men) and part of those consequences are relational, she will struggle with submission and he will struggle with his leadership. Right now, followers of Christ are given a new nature and can change the way they relate to one another. Men can lead differently and women can follow differently than the world does. Already we have new natures, not yet do we have new bodies. This is ours now and later because of Christ.

So, I take this last phrase to be a promise that is assured for those women who truly come to faith in Christ because the evidence of their salvation will be seen in their continuing in faith, love, holiness and self-control. Women are to exercise good works, love, holiness and self-control. And as we will get into next week, men are to lead and their leadership is rooted in the integrity of their lives.

So, how are to understand this polity that women cannot teach men or be in authority over them? I think that it is pretty straightforward. When the church gathers together as the church, a woman cannot be placed into a position where she is teaching men, nor be in a position of authority over men. Ok, but what about an ABF, or an elective class, or what about an exercise class, etc.? If you mean by that, how can we find loopholes to make ourselves appear to be women-friendly, you've missed the entire point. Now, it is true that Paul does not write about ABF's, elective classes, etc. He is talking about when the church gathers together as the church. Each church has to figure out what that looks like in their setting. We have many areas of service where women and men work together and where women are organizing an event. That event is an event, not the recognized, weekly gathering of the church. If a group of ladies are organizing an event and I ask them where they want the tables to be set up, or I ask them to put me to work in helping out, they are not violating this, anymore than when I go home and walk into the kitchen and ask Cathi to put me to work. The greatest way for our church to be women friendly is for the men to be godly men and to lead the church by being genuine, loving, godly, patient, spiritually sound, consistent leaders, who lead with knowledge, humility, compassion and care and who make hard decisions and do right things without anger. That is what the elders are to be, model and help the men of the church become.