

I Timothy 2.11-14  
**23 May 2010**

Beloved brethren,

This text is the hotspot of the battle of the role women in the church. We live in day of the liberated women, women's rights and the feminist movement. Women are clamouring for equality with men and are seeking fulfillment not in the home, not in raising a family but in their profession and career. And therefore, it is not surprising that there is a parallel movement in the church. The sharpness of this text has been smoothed to allow for more freedom for women for them to take up the office offices in the church – ministers, missionaries, elders and deacons. Reformed synods have caved in to these intense pressures to allow the ordination of women into office. It is also common to see women enrolling themselves in bible seminaries to be trained to be in the pastorate.

What does Scripture has to say about the calling of women in the worship of God? The word of God to us is woman's calling is not to preach the Word of God in the pulpit but to learn God's Word from the men. This teaching is not grounded upon cultural reasons, which changes from time to time but on the fact of the creation order of Adam and Eve, and Eve rebelling against Adam, her head.

The theme is woman learning in silence. Two points: the meaning and the ground.

First, the meaning. The apostle says, "I do not permit a woman to teach nor to usurp authority over the man". To teach is an act of power, authority, rule and government. And so to teach is to occupy in the special office of minister. We must remember that the apostle is still addressing Pastor Timothy on what is proper behaviour of godly women in the public worship of God. And in the context of the public worship of God, the office of preaching and expounding the Word of God belongs to the minister. And to preach and to teach is to exercise authority of the Word of God over the congregation in the name of Christ. Furthermore, that Word is the Word of Christ to the congregation and therefore has authority over the congregation. And so this means that it is unlawful for the church of Christ ordain women ministers. Why does the apostle address this matter? Historically, there were women in the congregation at Ephesus who were exerting themselves to teach the congregation in an official way. And the apostle had to instruct Timothy on the unlawful of their action. Today this text is under severe attack from the devil so that many would soften the sharpness of this passage by teaching that the reason why Paul is forbidding to women to teach is because they were teaching false doctrine and so it is alright for women to teach in the worship if they are teaching the Word of God. The issue is not what they taught or the content of their teaching but the manner of their teaching. He also addresses this matter in I Timothy 3 where the apostle lists the qualifications for office. He deliberately and clearly states that the bishop or elder is male, "if a man desires the office of a bishop, he desires a good work. And he is the husband of one wife". And so that is why there are no female apostles and no prophets though there a few exceptions like Deborah and Huldah. Deborah was a

prophetess when Israel was in a backslidden state and Barak the judge was very spiritually weak. He was a coward and dared not lead the army of Israel against Sisera, the general of Jabin, king of Canaan, without Deborah going with him. Huldah was a prophetess at a time when Israel had set aside the law of God. And she was consulted when Hilkiah the priest found a copy of the law of God and gave it to Shaphan, the scribe. And he passed it to the king after reading it. He wept for the sins of Israel for Israel had not walked according to the law of God. Remember these prophets were exceptions and at a time when Israel was spiritually bankrupt. And to have women ministers today is not a blessing but a curse upon the church because there are no man to serve. The point is that do not make the exceptions the norm. The norm is still for man to occupy the office and this is confirmed by the qualifications for the office, which are for male and not female. And he makes it clearer what he means when he says that he does not permit woman to teach when they usurp the authority that belongs to man.

Then the apostle says, “nor to usurp authority over the man” (verse 12). To usurp is to take possession unlawfully or by force of authority that belongs to man. As an illustration: Absalom usurped the throne of David when he seized the throne when David was still king. And so for women to teach men in the public worship in the preaching and teaching of God’s Word is to usurp man’s authority. This means that she is not to teach man. But “is it not a waste that gifted women cannot exercise their gifts of preaching and teaching in the worship service”. First, Scripture teaches that women have the gifts of teaching and that is why she teaches her children. And secondly, having these gifts does not mean that she has to exercise it in the worship service. God’s place for you to exercise your gifts is not in the worship service but in the home or with other women in a one to one or a group setting. But she definitely may and must teach children. She may teach her own children. Together with her husband, she is to bring them up in the fear of God and in the knowledge of the Word of God. This is her calling. And she may teach other women. She may teach “younger women to be sober, to be love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their her own husbands that the Word of God be not blasphemed” (Titus 2.4, 5). She also teaches in a one to one bible study or in a ladies fellowship where the portion of Scripture is discussed. And she, together with her husband may teach another man. Acts 18.26, “And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto *them*, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly”.

The apostle says, “I do not suffer”. Literally, the apostle says, “I do not permit”. There are those who would soften this teaching by saying that the apostle is giving his own opinion on this matter and therefore this teaching is not binding today. They say since the word, “suffer” is not an imperative or a command but in the present indicative so it is not binding. But we reply that the force of the present tense is not lessened by the lack of a command. In fact, it is s present reality that will continue to be when women are not to teach or to usurp authority over the man. Now let me give you a bit of insight. The word, “permit” is always to mean to allow someone to do what he or she desires to

do. It has the basic idea that someone has the desire to do something and the apostle is saying to her, I do not permit a woman to teach or to usurp authority. And by his choice of words he is saying, in effect, even though they desire to teach, I do not permit. And that is the problem today when women desire to teach and preach in the church and to seize authority over the man. They have the attitude of wanting constantly to assert themselves or make themselves heard. They seem to have an opinion over anything and they want to be in control.

Positively, she is to learn in all silence in all subjection. This is a point “for women” and not against women. We learn from the Jewish and pagan culture when women are put on second class and their status is a slave, and in some cases, beasts of burden. And there was little concern in the minds of the Jews of that day whether the women learned anything or not, since they were really not an important part of the population. The men were responsible to teach and it was unimportant to them whether the women showed up at the synagogue or at the feasts and festivals. The same was in the Greek culture where women were not thought to be worthy in the learning process. And with that background in mind, the apostle says, let the woman learn! This is not a negative statement which is anti-women but a very affirmative statement, confirming the equality of spiritual privilege, the equality of spiritual rights, blessings and promises for men and women. And as a learner she is to increase in knowledge and grace of God. She is to grow spiritually. To learn in silence does not mean that you are to be perfectly silent, ask no questions, and take in everything that is taught but to use your mind to understand the teaching and to make a sound judgement on what is being taught. In a parallel passage in I Cor. 14.34, 35, when the Corinthian women gathered for worship, they are to be silent for they are not permitted to speak but to be in silence. Two reasons are given: this is according to the law or Torah which refers to Gen. 3.16, that Eve’s desire would be towards Adam and he will rule over her. And it is shameful for her to speak in the church. This is as shameful as a woman who is bald (I Cor. 11.6) and as shameful as speaking of unfruitful works of darkness which are done in secret (Eph. 5.12).

And the apostle qualifies their learning by saying, “in silence with all subjection”. And in the learning and subjecting herself to the preaching and teaching of the gospel lies her salvation. She takes the good part of Mary, the sister to Martha and to Lazarus. When Christ came to her home, she took her place at the feet of Jesus and heard his word. And that is the place of women as learners. There, she will hear of the great love of God for her. God’s love for her is no lesser than God’s love for man. Christ died for her and gave her all the spiritual blessings no lesser than man. She is not second class in the kingdom of God but she is made heirs together with the grace of life. She receives the forgiveness of sins and inherits eternal life. And therefore, she is the daughter of the king –she is royalty. And she is to learn in all subjection. This does not refer to subjection to her own husbands but rather they are to bring themselves under the preaching and teaching of the Word of God. This involves, listening attentively, putting the teaching into practice. The opposite of it is rejecting the Word, rebelling against it and finding fault with the Word or

teacher. And now we come to an important part of the sermon; the ground for such an apostolic teaching.

The first ground is “for Adam was first formed, then Eve”. Notice that the reasons are not cultural and therefore not based on time. Many justify the ordination of women whether as ministers, elders and deacons that the reasons for this instruction is cultural and it is applicable to that time only. Today women are more educated unlike in the past. Today, they are not dependant men unlike in the past. But note the ground given by the apostle is rooted in fact of creation. Does the fact that Adam was created then Eve ever change? Definitely not. So the calling of women to learn in silence in all subjection does not ever change, not in the first century nor in the twenty-first century. Thus the church ought always to teach that women are not to teach men but to learn in all silence in all subjection. Woman’s place in the church is ordained according to the order of creation: Adam was made first, then Even. She was made for the sake of Adam and to be his help suitable for him. In I Cor. 11.7-9, she is man’s glory and man is the glory of God. And by God’s sovereign wisdom he made it natural for him to lead, for her to follow, for him to be aggressive, for her to be receptive, for him to invent, for her to use the tools which he invents. A woman should be discouraged to do things contrary to her nature: her very body was taken out of man. Her name is Isha, in the Hebrew, which is derived from his name Ish. The tendency to follow is embedded in Eve’s soul as she came forth from the hand of the her creator and hence it is not right to reverse the order and so she is not to teach men but to be taught and to be a learner in silence.

The second ground is, “Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression”. The word, “transgression” in the original can be translated as “overstepping”. This means going over, disregarding, violating, breaking the law. The whole phrase must mean that Adam was not deceived in the manner in which Eve was deceived. She listened directly to Satan; he did not. She sinned before he did. She was the occasion of his sin. She was the leader and he was the follower. She led when she should have followed; that is led; she led the way to sin, when she should have followed in the paths of righteousness. She usurped to herself authority that was not hers and she played a crucial role in the fall of Adam. And as a result, she shall not teach men, rather she should be the beautiful women who takes her place as a learner with all subjection for this is well-pleasing in the sight of God. Amen.