

CHARGE CONCERNING PUBLIC WORSHIP

I Timothy 2:1-15

I. Prayer In Public Worship. 2:1-8.

Here we have an earnest exhortation which has to do with responsibility in respect to prayer. Paul was certainly faithful in his personal prayer life. He knew that prayer must have an important place in the life of any obedient and useful child of God.

There are at least six elements of prayer:

a. Adoration.

This is the act of approaching God with a becoming sense of His goodness, greatness, majesty and glory. Adoration includes reverence, esteem and love.

b. Confession.

Particular confession is more frequently used in private praying. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9).

c. Thanksgiving.

In thanksgiving the thoughts are turned to what God has done for us and there is an expression of appreciation to Him for His gifts.

d. Intercession.

Intercession is the act of talking with God in behalf of another or others. This is both a privilege and an obligation, the neglect of which is sin.

e. Supplication.

This means making definite requests for specific blessings. "Let your requests be made known unto God."

f. Dedication.

Prayer is more than merely asking God for something. It is putting ourselves at God's disposal to do what He wills in, with and through us. In real prayer we dedicate ourselves to more faithful obedience to Him.

It is as if the Apostle had said, "The most important point in my exhortation concerns the universal scope of public prayer." His most important request concerned the prayer life of the church members.

1. The kinds of prayer. 2:1a.

(1) Supplications.

This word means petitions for the meeting of certain definite needs which are felt keenly. In this case the word refers to requests having to do with one's personal needs as they are related to the government under which he lives.

(2) Prayers.

This word refers to the act of coming to God with a request for the fulfilment of needs which are always present, like the need for more wisdom or a more complete dedication of life.

(3) Intercessions.

Ordinarily an intercession means "a pleading in the interest of others." In this particular verse it contains rather the idea of "falling in with," or having "freedom of access." A person finds himself in the very audience-chamber of God the Father.

(4) Thanksgivings.

Thanksgiving should be an element in every prayer. No matter what his immediate condition may be, every Christian receives numerous blessings from God which have not been merited. Thanksgivings are expressions of gratitude. If we cannot be grateful for some people for whom we pray, we can be thankful for the privilege of praying for them. The giving of thanks is an element of prayer which is lacking too often in our praying.

2. The objects of prayer. 2:1b-2.

(1) All men.

As used here, this expression means "all men without distinction of race, nationality or social position."

(2) Our rulers.

This group is singled out as being in need of our prayers. We should pray that our leaders may be led aright. They have great burdens to bear, big problems to solve and high ideals to fulfil, and we can help them tremendously by earnestly praying for them. Christian citizens can greatly influence the course of national affairs by praying for their rulers. Far too often we neglect to do this except in times of special crisis. The purpose of such praying is that we may enjoy a tranquil and quiet life. The word tranquil refers to a life which is free from outward disturbance and the word quiet or calm refers to a life which is free from inner perturbation.

3. The reasons for prayer. 2:3-7.

(1) It is good for those who pray. 2:3a.

(2) It is pleasing to God. 2:3b-4.

This in itself should be a sufficient reason.

(3) It accomplishes so much. 2:5-6.

Nobody is so deep in sin that he is beyond the reach of prayer.

The conditions for effective prayer are stated in verse 7. One of these conditions is that of "Holy hands." "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psalm 66:18). Another condition is that one be "without wrath." The harboring of a grudge will rob your prayer of all effectiveness. A third condition is that one pray "without doubt." We are commanded to ask in faith.

II. Women In Public Worship. 2:9-15.

No distinction is made between men and women in the blessings and privileges of grace. But in public worship God imposed certain limitations upon women. This passage reminds us of three things about women.

1. Their charm. 2:9-10.

God's Word teaches that when Christian women go to public worship that they should adorn themselves in becoming attire, expressive of modesty and good sense. Modesty means a shrinking from trespassing the boundaries of propriety. Good sense means soundness of mind. In getting dressed for church-going Christian women should practice sanity and dress in sensible attire. They should not try to show off, to be "all the rage," wearing flashy apparel in order to make others jealous of them. Tendencies to ostentatious adornment must be resisted by Christian women. Outward ostentation is not in keeping with a prayerful and devout approach.

Christian women do not have to balk at fashion, unless a particular fashion happens to be indecent. Good sense implies avoiding extremes. The adornment should be expressive of inner modesty and of a sane outlook on life, the outlook of a Christian. Pope's well-known words contain food for thought:

"Be not the first by whom the new is tried,
Nor yet the last to lay the old aside."

Christian women should be concerned about maintaining harmony between inner character and outward appearance. Showy clothes ill befit broken and contrite hearts, which is the kind of hearts that God desires in the services of His churches. After all, a woman's apparel is a mirror of her mind. A Christian woman's apparel should be congruous with, appropriate for and consistent with what she is, a child of God.

The greatest asset a woman possesses is a devout and godly life. Genuine adornment is attained by means of the performance of good works. The Pastoral Epistles stress the necessity for good works, perhaps because current specifications tended to divorce doctrines and deportment. In the final analysis, a woman's adornment does not lie in what she wears, but in the loving service which she renders for her Lord to others.

2. Their church. 2:11-14.

Church membership is one of the vital matters in the life of a Christian. Sensible and wise is every child of God who dedicates self and substance to God for service in and through one of His churches. God's Word is very positive in insisting that the place of leadership in the public worship of the churches must be filled by Christian men. These verses do not forbid any Christian woman to take an active part in the work of the church in her own sphere. These words do mean, let a woman not enter a sphere of activity for which by dint of her very creation she is not suited. Let not a bird try to dwell under water. Let not a fish try to live on land. Let not a woman yearn to exercise authority over a man by lecturing him in public worship. For the sake both of herself and of the spiritual welfare of the church such unholy tampering with divine authority is forbidden. Neither does this passage mean that a woman cannot teach. She should teach women, girls and children, but God's Word does forbid her assuming the role of authoritative preacher or teacher of scripture in the worship service or in a class of adults which is composed of men.

3. Their chance. 2:15.

The unparalleled opportunity to serve the Lord is in the sphere of rearing their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. This verse seems to assure them that they will get safely through childbirth, and then through their Christian influence and instruction will lead their children to become believers in Christ.