

## Women in Church. Different Roles?

### 1. Timothy 2:8 – 12 is used to claim different roles for women in church, that they can't be leaders or pastors/priests.

However, in this passage it is much more likely that Paul is giving instructions on how men and women should Worship in church, not who should be pastors and who not. This is established in v8 where “men everywhere” are given instruction on how to pray in worship. Paul cannot be said to be addressing only pastors here or talking only to pastors, or saying only men can be pastors. The text does not support that unless “men everywhere” are all pastors or being somehow told they can be pastors, or if only pastors are being told how to pray and other men are not included. Paul first addresses men as a whole, then turns his instructions to women.

On the face of it, v12 seems to support the claim that women cannot be teachers or take up a pastoral role. But does it really? “I will not permit women to teach men or have authority over them” seems pretty straight forward.

### **BUT**

There are problems that a simplistic reading of this verse generates. HUGELY, it puts the Bible into conflict and contradiction with itself. This cannot be. It also has Paul contradicting himself which is quite unreasonable. There must be something more which explains the apparent contradiction.

In direct contrast with this verse, Luke, in Acts 18:26 records that Priscilla, and her husband Aquila, BOTH taught Apollos in their Home. Other Scripture reveals that Priscilla and Aquila's Home was in fact a Home Church. Apollos was being taught (instructed) by Priscilla in an acknowledged Home Church setting. Both Priscilla and Aquila were leaders in their Home Churches over several years, both in Ephesus and in Rome, as well as leading the Ephesus Church. Paul was well aware of this and there is no mention anywhere that he objected to Priscilla's role. More than that, In Romans 16:3 – 5, Paul acknowledges Priscilla as a “Co-worker” or “Fellow worker” (depending on translation) and comments on the “Church that meets at their Home”. Paul refers also to Priscilla and Aquila's Home Church in 1 Cor.16:19 naming both Priscilla and her husband Aquila. From this it is quite obvious that Paul was not unhappy with Priscilla's teaching of men in a Church setting. Far from it. Worth noting too, and perhaps of substantial significance, is that Paul usually places Priscilla's name first when referring to her and her husband.

(Dictionary definitions of Co-worker show the following meanings:-

A partner or helper, a person at the SAME level of AUTHORITY.

A fellow. – one equal with another

A Colleague. -- member of one's class or profession.

An Associate – joins with another in the same activity or endeavour.

A Fellow worker. – works with you in similar position or status.

A Workfellow. – one engaged in the same work with another. A companion in like work.)

This surely indicates that far from being unhappy with Priscilla, Paul welcomed and respected her valuable work.

Yet furthermore Paul goes on in v7 of Romans 16 to send greetings to Junia, a woman relative who he says is “Outstanding (or ‘of note’) among the **APOSTLES**”, and a Christian before him (Paul). Some say that Junia, being a name with feminine and masculine form would indicate that the Junia here was a man, but this is not proven. The masculine form is Junias. Those who would support Junia being a man do so only on the supposition that the status of women at the time would make it unlikely for Junia to be a woman. This is purely only supposition and is negated by the facts of Priscilla, Euodia and Syntyche. In fact the masculine name Junias appears in some later texts added by scribes who thought that earlier copyists had made an error in using the feminine name, Junia. So if Scripture is to lead thought, rather than thought leading Scripture, then there is no valid reason for not accepting that Junia is the correct rendition of the name and that Junia was a woman.

Paul refers too, to other women including the already mentioned Euodia and Syntyche, as Church Leaders.

There is a large body of evidence that Paul happily accepted, welcomed and respected women in leading, teaching, pastoral roles. Paul spoke very strongly against anything he believed to be against God's Will. In stark contrast, his (and Luke's) complete lack of any negative comment and full acceptance of these Women Leaders, significantly proclaims in favour of women having such roles in Church.

So what of 1 Timothy 2:12?

How can such apparent contradiction be resolved?

Perhaps the clue can be found in the words “to have authority”. The Greek verb translated here can also mean to ‘Domineer’ or to ‘Usurp authority’. There is no way Paul would have allowed that!

Jesus actually spoke to the Disciples about that kind of domineering authority, “lording it over”, to be found in gentile leaders, Mark 10:41 -45 and Luke 22:24 - 26. He told them they had to be different and follow His example of Servant Leadership.

There is another clue to be found regarding what was in Paul’s mind if indeed he was thinking and writing ‘domineer’ –‘usurp authority’. It is found in Genesis 3:16. God said in His Judgement of Eve that “your DESIRE shall be for your husband”. This is no loving sentiment. The Greek could better be translated “longs to have mastery over” your husband as in Genesis 4:7 where sin’s desire is for Cain. This possibility is quite in harmony with Paul’s comments from Genesis in 1 Timothy 2:13 – 15.

In modern times this kind of ‘desire’ by women for men has been thoroughly demonstrated.

If Paul was indeed disallowing this kind of behaviour on the part of women, that there should be no hint of it in worship, in 1 Timothy 2:12, it would not be at all surprising. It could readily explain and resolve the apparent conflict between his writing there and his writings in other places in his Epistles. Also it would explain the complete calm and normalcy around Priscilla’s role as recorded by both Luke and Paul.

## **2. 1 Corinthians 14:34 – 35 is also used to claim that scripture prohibits women from being Pastors.**

Here again though, if the context is looked at carefully it is a parallel to 1 Timothy 2:8 – 12. Paul is setting out rules for congregational behaviour in Worship, not who should, or should not, be Pastors. There is nothing explicit or specific said about pastoral leadership roles here at all.

Again, bearing in mind that Scripture cannot contradict Scripture, a simplistic reading of v34 cannot hold up as an all-encompassing blanket rule banning women from speaking in church under any circumstance. If it was to be that, then “Women should remain silent in churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission” would most definitely involve the contradiction and conflicts which have already been referred to in discussing 1 Timothy 2:8 - 12.

It would also most definitely again have Paul being in conflict with himself, this time within this same epistle. He has already made it clear in 1 Corinthians 11:5 that it is totally normal for Women to pray and prophesy in public worship. While it might be maintained that prayer can be silent, the same can’t

be said for prophesy. While the common understanding of prophesy is generally limited in current thought to saying something about the future, this is not only what is meant by “prophesy” in Scripture. There, much prophesy is “Forth telling” rather than “Foretelling”. It is very much the Telling Forth, or Proclaiming of God’s Word. Whichever way it is taken, prophesy is quite obviously something that can’t be done silently, and Paul was in favour of it being done, in Church, by women. Once again, it would be thought leading Scripture to say that women could not be, here in v5, being referred to as proclaiming God’s word, a normal aspect of prophesy, which in Public Worship (Church) is usually a Pastoral role. As a perfectly normal flow on from 1 Cor. 11:5, the references Paul makes to prophesy and those speakers prophesying, in the verses immediately preceding v34 - 35, (14:29 -33) would quite normally include women speakers.

So here is an apparent contradiction within 7 verses of scripture. Women speaking in v29 – 32, but not speaking in v34 – 35. That definitely can’t happen.

The clue to avoiding confusion is to accept that Pastoral roles, which are not specifically mentioned, are not being discussed by Paul in v34 -35.

Then v35 can be seen to hold the key to understanding what Paul is saying. Enquire, Ask, are the true indicators. Paul says this is to be done at home rather than breaking up the orderly flow of the worship service by discussing there and then, what has been heard. Women are simply being told not to disrupt.

The words “but must be in submission” v34 do not of themselves indicate that Women cannot be Pastors. Paul, in Ephesians 5:21 gives the command for ALL Christians, Pastors not excluded, to “SUBMIT to one another out of reverence for Christ. “ \* When Christian Submission is correctly understood, Paul, in these verses, is encouraging edifying, mutual exploring of God’s word together, IN LOVE, by husband and wife, at home.

So when properly examined, neither 1 Timothy 2:8 -12, nor 1 Corinthians 14:34 - 35, can be used to justify women being banned from Pastoral roles.

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Paul’s instructions to Timothy and Titus, 1 Tim. Ch.3. V 2 – 12 and Titus Ch. 1. V. 5 – 9 seem, in saying Pastors must be the husband of one wife, to offer a “deal clincher” to the banning of women Pastors.

BUT:

These verses must be weighed against both Paul, and Luke, calmly accepting the Leadership, Teaching Role of Pricilla, and other women. As seen above, Paul valued Pricilla so much that he gave her fully equal status to himself. So to use these verses as “proof texts” to deny women pastors just causes another CONTRADICTION. Paul is forced into the self contradiction of doing one thing while saying another. This contradiction is probably a bit harder to resolve, but it must be done. It cannot be left in the situation of God’s Word contradicting itself. Following is a possible resolution.

When all of the instructions in these texts are properly examined, what Paul is doing is laying out the moral standards needed for Leadership. Within this context, in saying “husband of one wife”, could it be that Paul’s main thought is that polygamy is not to have any place in the Christian Life, let alone among its Leaders? Polygamy was not unusual in Paul’s time. Polygamy, then and now, is usually a husband having more than one wife. Extremely rarely, is it the other way round, Polyandry. Polyandry was probably completely unknown to Paul, so the thought of advising that women should be the “wife of one husband” would most probably not have even crossed his mind. Again, Paul fully accepted Pricilla. She was the wife of one husband, Aquila.

\*(For a further understanding of “but must be in submission” [V. 34.] see the separate Discussion Paper on “Submit”)