

1 Timothy 2:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.

Analysis

I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. Paul transitions to specific instructions for corporate worship, beginning with men's prayer. "I will therefore" (boulomai oun, βούλωμαι οὖν) indicates authoritative instruction based on preceding theology. "Men" (andras, ἄνδρας) specifically means males, not generic humanity (anthrōpous), suggesting Paul addresses male leadership in public prayer.

They are to pray "every where" (en panti topō, ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ)—in every place Christians gather for worship, not merely in one location. This universality reflects Christianity's transcendence of Judaism's temple-centered worship. "Lifting up holy hands" (epairontas hosious cheiras, ἐπαίροντας ὁσίους χεῖρας) describes a common prayer posture (Psalm 28:2; 134:2), but the qualifier "holy" indicates moral requirement—hands must be clean, lives pure (Psalm 24:3-4; James 4:8).

Prayer must be "without wrath and doubting" (chōris orgēs kai dialogismou, χωρὶς ὀργῆς καὶ διαλογισμοῦ). "Wrath" (orgē, ὀργή) indicates anger, hostility, or bitterness that hinders prayer (Matthew 5:23-24; 1 Peter 3:7). "Doubting" or better "disputing" (dialogismos, διαλογισμός) suggests contentious arguments or skeptical questioning. Effective prayer requires reconciled relationships and confident faith, not suspicion or controversy.

Historical Context

Raised hands in prayer was standard Jewish and early Christian practice, expressing dependence on and receptivity to God. However, Paul's emphasis falls not on posture but on moral purity—the heart condition matters more than physical position. This corrects formalism that assumes correct ritual ensures acceptable worship regardless of heart attitude.

The mention of anger and disputing likely reflects actual problems in Ephesian worship. Perhaps men were leading prayer while harboring bitterness toward others or engaging in contentious debates over doctrine. Public worship torn by division and controversy dishonors God and hinders genuine prayer. Paul insists that corporate worship requires relational reconciliation and doctrinal peace.

The specification of male leadership in public prayer reflects the created order Paul will shortly elaborate (vv. 11-14). While women prayed publicly (Acts 21:9; 1 Corinthians 11:5), certain leadership roles in corporate worship were reserved for qualified men. This complementarian understanding of gender roles in church leadership has been contested but remains the plain sense of the text and historic Christian practice.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How seriously do you take the connection between moral purity and effective prayer in your personal and corporate prayer life?
2. What anger or disputing might be hindering your prayers or your church's corporate worship?
3. How can churches better encourage men to embrace spiritual leadership while maintaining biblical teaching on gender roles?

Interlinear Text

Βούλωμαι οὖν προσεύχεσθαι τοὺς ἄνδρας ἐν παντὶ
I will **therefore** **pray** ^{G3588} **that men** **every** ^{G3956}
^{G1014} ^{G3767} ^{G4336} ^{G435} ^{G1722}

τόπῳ ἐπαίροντας ὁσίους χεῖρας χωρὶς ὀργῆς καὶ
where **lifting up** **holy** **hands** **without** **wrath** **and**
^{G5117} ^{G1869} ^{G3741} ^{G5495} ^{G5565} ^{G3709} ^{G2532}

διαλογισμοῦ
doubting
^{G1261}

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 134:2 (Parallel theme): Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the LORD.

Psalms 63:4 (Parallel theme): Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name.

Hebrews 10:22 (Parallel theme): Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

Titus 3:8 (Parallel theme): This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.

Isaiah 1:15 (Prayer): And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.

Luke 24:50 (Parallel theme): And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them.

James 4:8 (Parallel theme): Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.

Acts 10:4 (Prayer): And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.

Acts 10:2 (Prayer): A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.

Acts 7:60 (Parallel theme): And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

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