



Conducted by
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“Would you please comment on the difficult passage (so far as I am concerned) contained in 1 Tim. 2:15, ‘Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.’ ”

As our questioner says, this is indeed a difficult passage, and I have seen various explanations of it, but we will return to those later. It is my view that we should not consider this verse in isolation, but that we should try to understand it in the context of the teaching given concerning women in the verses nine to fifteen, and this we shall do.

In Decency and Propriety

I am well aware that I have mentioned this before, but it seems to me that Paul is genuinely concerned that the hierarchical structure of the Church should be maintained. He himself had taught, and he was very conscious of this, that in God’s sight, regarding salvation, that there was no distinction between male and female; all had become free in Christ Jesus. He knew also that his freedom was likely to become misinterpreted, and that *in all things* women would tend to see themselves as the equals of men; this he seeks to correct.

Furthermore, it is obviously true to say that due attention in every age must be paid to the environmental scene. God has deliberately created the polarity of sex and down through the ages women have chosen to adorn themselves in many ways with the express intention of drawing attention to themselves. Paul knew that Roman women, particularly, were very fond of parading in public wearing expensive clothes, elaborate hairstyles, and much jewellery. As we studied a short while ago, Paul had made it plain at Cornith that he did not wish the head covering to be dispensed with, and here also he seems most concerned that the outward adorning of the Christman women should reflect their inner Christian character. Peter seems to

sum it up when he says, "Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewellery and fine clothes. Instead it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful." (1 Pet. 3:1-6 N.I.V.).

We must appreciate, of course, that as regards dress 'modest' and 'decent' might vary in degree in succeeding generations, but so long as Christian women accept the principle that the outward apparel should reflect the dignity of the inner spirit then they should not go wrong.

In Quietness and Submission

'Silence' in the A.V. has the meaning of 'quietness,' and quietness has the meaning of tranquillity arising from within. In 1 Tim. 2:11-14 Paul is speaking about the aspirations of women to have authority over men in the teaching role in the assembly. He puts it this way, "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence" (vv 11, 12). It seems quite clear to me that Paul is here speaking about instructing or edifying the Church, and this, he says, he will not permit a woman to do. It is also clear that Paul does not forbid women to teach in *all circumstances*, for he instructs Titus to teach the older women how they ought to conduct themselves so that "they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children" (Titus 2:3-5). In this context, I hold the view that women's meetings held in our churches should have limited application in the subject matter taught, and that doctrinal matters which may affect *the assembly as a whole* should be avoided by them and left to the teaching of the men in corporate assembly.

The phrase to 'usurp authority' as used in the A.V. needs a little explanation. According to W. E. Vine, the verb AUTHENTEŌ signifies to exercise authority on one's own account, to domineer over, and it is so used in 1 Tim. 2:12. Teaching or preaching implies authority, and the woman is not to 'dominate' man in this respect (or in any other, if it comes to that) but to learn quietly and submissively. Paul goes on to explain why, in God's scheme of things, this should be so, and it takes us back to the fundamental point in scripture that man should not violate the headship of Christ, and that the woman should not violate the headship of man. Paul is merely re-affirming what he knows God's view to be, and the penalty that He had pronounced on Eve when she had dominated Adam. Genesis states that Adam sinned of course, but it was Eve who was *deceived* and this deception had led to the downfall of the human race; consequently God said to her, "Thy desire shall be to thy husband and he shall rule over thee" (Gen. 3:16).

We are aware, of course, that there are many talented women operating in many spheres of life, but because this is so in society as a whole, some women have concluded that their role in the Church should change as well; this Paul does not accept and neither should we. The many talents of woman ought to be used in the God-ordained function for her, and she can surely express her God-given glory in these.

In Childbearing

This is the difficult part of Paul's teaching, but I feel sure that what he has taught just prior to this has some bearing on it.

The word 'childbearing' comes from two Greek words, TEKNON, a child, and the root GENO, to beget, and consequent upon this some have concluded that what is meant here is that woman brought salvation to herself and to the world by making the means of the Incarnation possible; thus woman made salvation possible.

Others teach that what is meant here is the general promise that women will be brought safety through the natural process of child-birth. The general argument adduced here is that some women were trying to lay aside their natural function of

bearing children and concentrating on becoming teachers. Perhaps here there is an echo of our present day society.

A third view, and one that I would subscribe to, is that Paul here has in mind that child-bearing, not public teaching, is the peculiar function of the woman and that this will invest her with a dignity and glory of its own. Child-bearing has the all-embracing scriptural warrant of the woman's place as wife, mother and manager of the home. I think it is undeniably true that woman will gain her blessings by keeping her own place in God's scheme of things. However, woman's salvation from sin is like other peoples salvation and consequently the latter part of verse 15 should not be ignored, "if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety." The plain inference is that if she has 'to continue' in the things mentioned then she must have previously started in them. This, I believe, is the crux of the whole matter; what Paul seems to be saying is, "christian woman, continue in those things you have learned, and even in the extremes of pain and travail associated with childbirth your salvation will still burn bright."

(All quotations are from "The Message", 277 Billings Road, Highfield, Wigan)