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Conducted by  
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**“1 Tim. 2:15 says that women shall be saved in child-bearing. What can this mean, and what about women who don’t marry, or physically can’t bear children?”**

This is a difficult question (as seemingly most are that come my way), and I believe that if we are to make any sense of it then we must look at the context from verse 8.

In vv8-15 Paul gives instructions to Timothy as to what he, Paul, would like to see in the Church. His first mention is of men, as distinct from women. **“I will therefore**

that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting." The Apostle is undoubtedly referring to public worship 'in every place,' and it seems that the men who should pray should have 'clean hands,' and that they should be without anger and doubting. People who consider themselves to be not guilty of any dubious practice have a saying, "Well, my hands are clean," so Paul seems to be saying that the men who pray should be morally and spiritually unblemished.

'In like manner,' i.e., with the same moral and spiritual implications, women should pay attention to their dress. Women are to 'arrange' and 'to put in order' their dress, and not to 'adorn' as the scribes and Pharisees did. They even went to the extreme in giving an outward impression of cleanliness by whitening the sepulchres, and they were roundly condemned by Jesus, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness" (Matt. 23:27). Women are to dress modestly and soberly as becoming those who profess godliness; they are to be 'adorned' with good works.

Paul now turns to an instruction which has caused a great deal of confusion, and seems not to be very clear. "Let the women 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." He then goes on to give his reasons for this instruction, "For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression." Now this argument by Paul, I contend, is crucial to our understanding of the whole passage, so let us explore it in a little more detail. I refer you to Gen. 3.

The first point we notice is that Satan tempted Eve, not Adam. It has to be said that Eve was God's secondary creation, Adam being the primary creation. It can be argued with some logic — and feminists may not like this — that Eve was dependent on Adam for her existence. It is true that God could have taken dust from the ground and formed woman if He had so desired, but He didn't; it is not ours to reason why. Nor can we say with certainty why Satan attacked Eve. Did he see her as the more vulnerable one; did the idea of being 'as gods' appeal to her ego? We do not know. What we do know, and Paul makes it abundantly clear, is that it was Eve who was deceived, and it was Eve who was in the transgression.

It was Eve who listened to Satan; it was she who succumbed to his lies; it was she who partook of the forbidden fruit; and it was she who passed it on to Adam, thereby causing him to fall. There are some — particularly feminists — who will say, "Well, if the male is so dominant, why did not Adam refuse what was offered to him, and also prevent his partner from transgressing?" There are a number of reasons which could be adduced but all of them would be speculative because we are simply not told.

I mentioned earlier that there had been, and still is, a deal of confusion regarding women teaching. It is true that in the Church women do teach, particularly during Women's Meetings and also in Bible School. We in the Church seem to have been exclusively concerned with preserving male dominance in preaching and teaching during worship and public meetings, and I suppose this is in line with Paul's teaching. However, the very fact that women do teach Bible classes, and speak and teach at Women's Meetings, must mean that they have been given permission to do so by the Oversight or Leadership of the local church concerned. That being the case, they have not usurped authority over the men in the assembly, because the verb 'to usurp' means "to wrongfully seize or assume power or right." I will make no further comment except to say that the whole question of the 'usurpation of authority' in the Church ought to be studied quite closely and to some depth, always keeping to the forefront of our minds the record in Gen. 3, and the subsequent teaching of the Lord and the Apostle Paul in the N.T.

Having established the context, we must now turn our attention to the crux of the question in v15. Having seemingly placed woman in a somewhat invidious position, the Apostle turns his attention to a function which is peculiarly and gloriously feminine, i.e., the function of childbearing. The scripture at this point reads, **“Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.”** (A.V.). It is here that we must take note of a few translations.

#### TACKLING THE EXPLANATION

The word for ‘child-bearing’ is **TEKNOGONIA**, this from **TEKNON** and root **GENO**, ‘to beget’, and denotes bearing children and implies motherhood (W. E. Vine). Consequent upon this, The R.S.V. reads, **“Yet women will be saved through bearing children”** (marginal ref. ‘by the birth of the child’). The N.E.B. reads, **“Yet she will be saved through motherhood”** (margin, or, saved through the ‘Birth of the Child,’ implying the birth of Jesus). As I have indicated, both these translations would make it appear that the birth of the Saviour is referred to; this could further imply the glorifying of womanhood and motherhood.

It should be pointed out that spiritual and eternal salvation is **not** meant here. The verb ‘to save’, **SOZO**, is used of ‘material and temporal deliverance from danger, suffering, etc.’ An example of the use of this word is found in John 12:27, recording the words of Jesus, **“Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.”** It seems fairly obvious that Jesus is thinking about **physical suffering**, that which He was to endure on the cross, and it is this type of physical suffering which is envisaged in 1 Tim. 2:15 relative to ‘child-bearing.’ But why should this be linked with **“if they continue in faith, love, holiness, and sobriety?”** Well, viewing child-bearing from the purely physical standpoint (as we must do in this case), isn’t feasible to think that a life lived in accordance with those spiritual directives would reduce quite considerably the complications which might be associated with child-birth? I am well aware that **other** complications could arise, but so far as the mother’s general health is concerned I consider it to be a valid point. After all, living a wholesome Christian life must mean non-abuse of the physical body. The reverse is also true, as we shall see if we read Paul’s words in Rom. 1:24-27.

It would seem that Paul has also another thought in mind. He realises, as he has said, that the ultimate separation from God in the Garden was caused by the woman’s perfidy. He also knows that God chose the woman as the vehicle whereby his Lord and Master came into the world. Therefore, he seems to be telling Timothy to instruct the women in the Church that they have a glorious function in bearing and bringing up children in the joys of motherhood. Tell them, he seems to say, that they should not be hankering after the work of public speaking, and trying to seize power in this respect, but to work out their ultimate salvation **through** their function – not **by** it – in faith, love, holiness, and sobriety. Leave the men to **their** function.

We must realise, I think, that Paul has in mind **Christian** women. You will no doubt recall that the whole objective of Paul writing to Timothy is stated in 1 Tim. 3:15, **“But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”** It is quite obvious that Paul is not writing to Timothy as just an **individual** Christian, but as one who is instructing and directing **other** Christians, in the absence of Paul himself. The point I am making is that the teaching given to women in this letter would refer to Christian women, those who would have already achieved their eternal salvation by faith, repentance, confession, and immersion in water for the remission of sins. The only consolation for non-Christian women (and indeed for any non-Christian) is that Christ has been born into the world, and their eternal salvation depends on their acceptance of Him through the Gospel, the terms of which I have just referred to.

As regards women who don't marry, and those who cannot bear children, then the points regarding pain and risk during child-birth would not apply. I cannot emphasise too strongly that Paul's instructions to Timothy, and consequently my comments, are intended for women in the Church.

As I have often said, I believe that no one can give definitive answers to many questions. I am always conscious of the words of our brother Peter when he said, **“Even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction”** (2 Peter 3:15,16). I pray that I haven't erred in that respect.

(all questions, please, to Alf Marsden, 20 Costessy Way,  
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