

BARREN WOMEN & SALVATION

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“Please explain how 1 Timothy 2:15 affects those women who have never given birth to children, and their salvation.”

1 Timothy 2:15 reads: “*Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.*” To understand this verse, we must note its context. In 1 Timothy 2:9-15, Paul is instructing Timothy in the conduct of “*women professing godliness.*” He speaks both in negative and positive terms (vs. 9-10). He makes it clear that a modest attitude produces modest dress. The converse would be that an immodest attitude produces immodest dress.

In verses 11 and 12, Paul instructs Timothy regarding woman’s sphere of activity and limits of authority. She is to “*learn in silence with all subjection.*” “Silence” translates *hesuchia*. It means she is to have a disposition of quietness in her general conduct. “Subjection” translates *hupotage*. It is the noun form of the verb *hupotasso*. It is primarily a military term. It comes from *hupo*, meaning “under,” and *tasso*, meaning “to arrange.” Verse 12 makes it clear how this feminine disposition relates to man. Woman is not permitted to “usurp” man’s authority; i.e., have dominion over the man. The “suffer” translates *epitrepo*. The word comes from *epi*, meaning “to,” and *trepo*, meaning “to turn.” *Epitrepo* is in the present tense. Present tense in the Greek language means continual action. Thus, a woman “professing godliness” continually manifests a submissive attitude toward the man. How is this attitude seen in woman’s relationship to man? The Holy Spirit had Paul employ the word *authentain*. It means to act on one’s own authority, to exercise authority, to have mastery, to be an autocrat, to be dominating. A woman who dominates a man, sins.

It is obvious, however, that a woman merely speaking in the presence of a man does not, in and of itself, constitute her usurping his authority or having dominion over him. If that were the case, a woman, preceding baptism, could never confess Christ in an audience partly comprised of men. Men are to teach with all authority (Tit. 2:15). Women are forbidden to exercise such authority (mastery) in regards to man. Hence, elders have no authority whatsoever to decide that a woman can exercise authority that God prohibited her from exercising. There are many ways in which a woman can teach and conduct her life, none of which violate God's will regarding women having dominion over men.

In verses 13 and 14, Paul tells us why women are not to have dominion over the man: “*Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.*” Satan approached Adam through Eve in order to get him to sin. Satan knew the disposition of woman as well as the fact that God made Eve an aid suitable (help meet) for man (Gen. 2:20). She is the compliment of man. If man had never been created there would be no sphere for woman to occupy and no reason for her existence.

Though the whole world, and even the church, deny these truths, the Word of God is not altered by such denials and hardened opposition. A woman’s influence over a man, for good or bad, is far greater than most of us realize, but Satan realized it and used it

effectively to plunge all of mankind into sin. Thus, a woman is not to have mastery over a man.

Paul declares in verse 15: "*Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.*" Keeping in mind what we have studied, it is rather obvious that in this verse, Paul is not saying that if women are faithful Christians, they will never physically die in the literal, physical act of giving birth to a child. Neither is he saying that women who never bear children will be lost. There are two possible meanings of "*she shall be saved in childbearing,*" both of which are in harmony with other truths in the word of God.

1. The phrase could mean: even though "the woman" was "deceived," it would be through a woman giving birth to Christ that all the world (including women) would be saved.
2. "Childbearing," which is peculiar to womankind, may be used by Paul (a synecdoche, where a part stands for the whole, or a whole for the part) to stand for and emphasize the sphere of activity in which God has ordained women to function.

We hold view number two, because of the context in which Paul is instructing women regarding their attitude and sphere of conduct. He shows women they are not to exercise dominion over the man, as well as why such is the case. It does not take a Solomon to see that when wives and mothers place themselves in positions that cause them to leave undone what God expects wives and mothers to do, they bring great hurt, not only upon themselves, but all of society and culture in which such conduct prevails.

Just as Satan reached Adam through Eve, one way he destroys the home today is to convince (deceive) wives and mothers that homemaking, and all that it implies, is backward and out of date, as well as a thing to be despised, repudiated and rejected. We urge all to study Titus 2:1-8 and Proverbs 31 in connection with this subject.~