

1 Timothy 2:13

We are continuing this morning with our study of Paul's First Letter to Timothy, picking up where we left off at verse 13 of chapter 2. Now, by way of general introduction, let me just say that Paul's overall goal in this letter has been to promote the good order and functioning of the church. In seeking to do that, he has already addressed the matter of false teachers and false teaching, and has now turned his attention to various matters related to the church - specifically - how God's people are to conduct themselves and relate to one another when they are gathered together as a covenant community. In this regard he has talked about the matter of prayer when they are together, addressing the men in particular on that point. He then addressed the issue of how people adorned themselves when they came together and how they thought about matters of personal appearance. In those remarks he turned his attention from the men to the ladies in the congregation, although the principles behind his remarks can certainly be applied to men and women both. Finally, last week, we looked at verses 11-12 where Paul continues in his remarks to the women, as he will do through the remaining few verses, before he turns to address the men once again in chapter 3.

That's a sort of general introduction to the verse before us this morning. In terms of a more specific introduction, let me just say that as we looked at verses 11-12 we saw how, basically, these verses DO mean what they appear to mean. Paul with these verses is prohibiting women from the activities of teaching men in areas that are doctrinal or exegetical in nature and he is prohibiting women from exercising authority over men in the church. In examining those verses we saw how attempts to say that they mean something other than what they appear to mean are extremely doubtful, highly inconsistent and, at the end of the day, create more problems than they solve because of the irreparable damage that must be done to one's doctrine of Scripture, in order to hold to these other, highly doubtful interpretations.

Now I realize that perhaps not everyone here this morning was present last week to see how those conclusions were reached and so, if that is the case and you are interested, please make sure you get a copy of the message on tape from our tape ministry, the sign up sheet for which is found on the front table to my right, your left.

And let me say again, as I did last week, that I understand that this whole matter of men and women and how they relate in the church can be a difficult subject to talk about. But the reality is that, as difficult as it might be, this issue is not going to go away. And there is nothing to be gained from NOT talking about these things. On the contrary, precisely because there is so much confusion on these issues, now more than ever, we need to be as clear as we can be on these things. We have to talk about them, and we have to get to a place of understanding so that we spend less time trying to work out the meaning of these verses and, instead, devote more energy to actually applying them.

My goal and hope for us all is that we can come to some point of mental resolution

regarding these things. As someone has aptly said, "...the heart cannot rejoice in what the mind rejects..." So, pastorally speaking, I want you to be able to rejoice and be glad for all of God's word - including this part. I want you to "make your peace with the text", so to speak, and to have confidence in what God has to say regarding men and women in the church. With those introductory remarks, let me read the passage we are working with, as a whole, and then I'll pray and we'll begin our study together..... (read I Tim 2:8-15 and pray)

Now, as we saw last week, Christianity, historically, has been one of the great liberators and equalizers between men and women. The implications of the Gospel as seen in the ministries of Jesus, Paul and others were positively radical for women in their day. And yet for many of those women, in their enthusiasm to embrace their new status and new found freedom in Christ, it would appear that some had gone too far - especially in the cities of Ephesus (where Timothy was) and Corinth. In their effort to throw off illegitimate distinctions between men and women (and there were many), they nevertheless went so far in the other direction so as to deny legitimate, divinely established gender and role distinctions. The result in the early church was that practices and attitudes that had previously been regarded as distinctive for women were being questioned and even abandoned and, at the same time, roles that had previously been understood as distinctive to men were being sought by the women as well. Amidst all the upheaval caused by the "over-correction" that was going on, Paul sets out in this letter to re-establish some order within the Body of Christ by addressing these very issues.

And so, after stating what is to be the pattern and practice in the community of faith, in verses I 1-12, Paul then goes on to talk about, in verses 13-14, the bases or reasons for asserting and establishing such a pattern. Now these verses are quite significant as they determine, ultimately, whether or not Paul's words in verses 11-12 can be seen as having any relevance for God's people today. And so, as we begin looking, particularly at verse 13 this morning, the kinds of questions we will be seeking to answer are: 1) Were Paul's words, addressed to this particular situation, only binding on the church at Ephesus, but not for anyone else? 2) Are these words only a reflection of Paul's Jewish upbringing or his cultural conditioning?3) Does the fact that we are now living in a different context - e.g., women are now highly educated as they were NOT in Paul's day - do factors like that change the way we are to respond to these verses? Those are the kinds of questions that we will, Lord willing, be addressing today.

Turning then, to verse 13, we see here Paul's very obvious reference to the Old Testament and, specifically, to the events of Genesis, chapter 2. Notice that, in referring to this text as he has, Paul simply assumes that Timothy is familiar with what he is talking about and so resorts to a kind of "apostolic shorthand" to bring to mind these events from the earliest portions of Scripture. And, of course, we know that Paul's assumptions here are well-founded because of verses like 2 Timothy 3:15, which tell us that, "...from infancy [Timothy has] known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make [him] wise for salvation..." Now, because Timothy has a good understanding of these things, and because Paul knows that he does, then he does not take pains to elaborate on his words - because he doesn't have to.

However, perhaps you may not be as familiar with those parts of Scripture, as was Timothy and, as a result, Paul's "shorthand" here may be lost on you, at least partially. So let's

turn to Genesis 2 and spend a bit of time there, trying to fill in some of the blanks. As we make this elaborate, but necessary detour, the significance of Paul's point here in I Timothy 2:13 should become much clearer. And, as we look at the Genesis 2 passage, let me acknowledge at the outset my indebtedness to Dr James Hurley for his very helpful insights on this passage.

So, keep a finger here in 1 Timothy and turn with me to Genesis 2:4-18 for a moment (Read the text). As you are probably familiar, the opening chapters of Genesis describe the creation of the world and its inhabitants, including the crowning act - the creation of a man and a woman to bear God's image, to be fruitful and multiply, and to exercise dominion over God's world. Genesis 1:1-2:4a describe a general overview of God's creation, ending with the creation of man and woman, but without any great details being given. Chapter 2:4b-25 picks up where the first section left off and, because you have already been given the grand overview of creation in chapter one, concentrates specifically on one aspect of the bigger picture - the man and woman as the center of interest.

Now looking at Genesis 2, the first thing to notice is the simple observation that Adam was formed first, then Eve, which you will recognize as the reality which Paul summarizes with his words in 1 Timothy 2:13. Now upon first reflection you might find this to be a rather curious line of thinking, that Adam's being formed before Eve is justification for the man being in a position of authority as regards the woman. And, one might wonder if this sort of thinking leads to the further conclusion that land animals ought to rule mankind because they were formed first, or even that plants, formed on the third day, ought to rule the whole shooting match since they were formed before even the animals!

However, when you look at how the rest of the Bible deals with the matter of being firstborn or what is called primogeniture, you see that those conclusions are un-warranted and unsupported and, frankly, just plain silly. Nowhere in the Bible is primogeniture ever depicted as applying to creatures or plants - only to human beings and especially, as we'll see later on, does this principle of being "first-born" apply to the person of Jesus Christ. So, let's look at this concept of being "first-born" for a moment.

Even a cursory reading of the OT would leave any person with the impression that there is a special significance attached to the fact of being the first-born son in the family. As Hurley writes,

"...In the Old Testament. ... the first son inherited a "double portion" of his father's goods and became the head of his father's house and leader of its worship upon the event of his father's death. ... This law or right (see Deut. 21:15-17) can be seen in effect in the cases of Reuben (Gen 49:3) and Esau (27:19), and is presumed in the New Testament parable of the prodigal Son (Luke 15.11-32). It appears FIGURATIVELY in Elisha's plea for a 'double portion' of Elijah's spirit (2 Kings 2:9)..... [And so] Paul's appeal to the prior formation of Adam is an assertion that Adam's status as the OLDEST carried with it leadership appropriate to a first-born son..."

This same theme is what lies behind Paul's words about Christ in Colossians 1:15-18 where Paul purposely relates Christ's having authority over the rest of creation with his being temporally prior to the rest of creation, to his being before all things,

"...He [Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the FIRSTBORN over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is BEFORE all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the FIRSTBORN from among the dead, [why?] SO THAT in everything he might have the supremacy... " (c .f Romans 8:29 and Hebrews 1:6)

Again, the connection between being first-born and having authority is explicitly drawn here. And it is a connection which is consistent with the pattern of both the Old and New Testaments. And so, Paul's reference to the prior formation of Adam as something which has direct bearing on the issue of authority is not an idea that is foreign to the Bible nor is it an example of Paul "reading into" the passage something that is not there but, on the contrary, is his reading out of the text a truth that is found all over the Bible, first and foremost in the person and significance of Christ Himself.

Now, while Paul's reference in 1 Timothy is only to the fact of Adam's prior formation to Eve, I want to look just a bit longer at Genesis 2. The reason is because it seems to me that this was the intended purpose of Paul's very brief, almost cryptic, references in 1 Timothy 2:13 and 14. By using a kind of "apostolic shorthand", as we have said, Paul is calling to mind not only the fact of Adam's prior formation but indeed the whole cluster of events concerned with the formation and establishment of humans and human relationships in the Scriptures. Paul says just enough in verses 13 and 14 to make it clear where he is coming from in what he is saying and yet, at the same time, he doesn't spell it out in fine detail because with Timothy he doesn't have to. He knows that what he says here will bring to mind for Timothy the whole background and context for human relationships which is found so clearly in Genesis 2 and 3.

And so, continuing to look at Chapter 2, the next thing to notice here is that after the man is created and set in the garden to look after it, and after he is warned about not eating from a certain tree IN that garden, God then tells Adam that it is not good for him to be alone. Further, God says that He is going to do something about Adam's aloneness by creating a helper suitable for him. And notice God's description of the woman he is about to create: He describes her as a suitable helper and says that she is for Adam.

And then something really curious happens. There's a PARADE. If you want to know where parades came from, here it is, in Genesis 2:19ff,

"...Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found..."

Alright, do you see what's happening here? God says to Adam, "I'm going to make you a helper" and then straightaway there is a parade of all these animals which Adam then proceeds to name. And then, at the end of the parade of beasts, we have the announcement that no suitable

helper was found. Now what's going on here? What's the point of the parade?

Do you suppose the parade was for God's benefit? Was God standing there, hoping that perhaps one of the beasts would be suitable, uncertain as to how things were going to turn out? Of course not! The parade of beasts was not for God's benefit, but for Adam's. But what, then, was the benefit for Adam?

Well, for starters, the mere observation of all the creatures would have highlighted for Adam how very unique he was to everything else that existed. It's as if God was underlining for Adam how truly different and alone he really was in the world, as a human being.

In addition to highlighting Adam's uniqueness and aloneness, the parade of animals would also have had the effect of highlighting the unsuitability of mere animal companionship. In other words, and contrary to popular wisdom, a dog really isn't - and could never be - a man's best friend. As enjoyable and useful as animals are, they are simply not what God had in mind when he promised to provide a suitable helper and companion for Adam. As each creature was presented to him, perhaps even a number of creatures that he had never seen before, it would have been driven home to Adam that he was unlike any of them. It would have been immediately obvious to him that he could not expect to communicate with these creatures in any substantial way. He could not expect to receive any real support or understanding from these creatures. It would have become clear to him through that process that there was a VAST difference between himself as a speaking, rational creature made in the image of God, and the other creatures which did not bear God's image.

But there's something even more significant going on in this "parade" of beasts, and it has to do with the whole matter of NAMING the animals. In the overview of creation in Genesis I we see there, in verse 28, that God blesses the man and the woman he has created and gives them BOTH a unique responsibility: they are to "rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground". In short, they are put in charge of managing God's creation as his vassals, as his vice-regents, in His place. The naming of the animals was an expression of this authority that had been given to humankind.

Now you need to know that in the Bible the concept of "name" or "naming" has a far greater significance than it is typically given today, at least in our particular version of western culture. Certainly, people today will name their children after one of the relatives or perhaps after some person important to them - and there is a certain significance to all of that.

But in the Bible, the name of a person was not just something that caused one to remember another person but was tied to and could even be revelatory of the very essence and significance of a person. We see this sort of thinking, for example, in places like Exodus 6:1-3, which shows the connection between God's own names and the various aspects of His person,

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: Because of my mighty hand he will let them go; because of my mighty hand he will drive them out of his country. " God also said to Moses, "I am the Lord. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as GOD ALMIGHTY, but by my name THE LORD I did not make myself

known to them... "

In that passage, the Hebrew word for "the Lord" is the word YAHWEH. The point of this passage is NOT that the people of God had never heard the name "Yahweh" before but rather that they had not KNOWN God as Yahweh up until now. That is, they had experienced God as a powerful God, which is what is being depicted in the name "God Almighty", but they had not experienced God's fulfilling of his COVENANT promises - which is the specific significance of his name "Yahweh". It is only as God actually delivers them and keeps his covenant promises that the people will come to "know" - experientially - his covenant name - Yahweh.

And so, the concept of "name" is a very important one in the Bible. And precisely because names are important, the giving of names was a major task and carried a certain amount of power behind it. To name something implied a certain understanding OF and authority OVER that which was named. Again, just to use an example, this is what was behind one of the events in the story about Jacob's wrestling match, in Genesis 32. Remember that passage - Here's Jacob and along comes this mysterious stranger who engages him in this fight, this wrestling match of sorts. Regarding this story, Hurley writes,

Jacob cannot prevail against his mysterious opponent, who ends the match by simply touching Jacob's thigh, putting it out of joint. Having thus shown his power over Jacob, God assigns him a new name, Israel, the one who wrestles with God. When Jacob asks God's name, God declines to give it. (This is because I, God is the ruler; he names Jacob but will not be named by him, nor even inform him of his name...

Indeed, even in the NT we can see this similar sort of concept with regard to the whole thing about names and naming. It is significant to note, as a case in point, that in the Gospel of Luke, when the births of John the Baptist and Jesus are foretold, in both cases the parents are told what the names of their children will be. In other words, they do not have the power or authority to name these particular children because to do so would imply their own pre-eminence over their children. So, God tells the parents what the names of these children are to be and in so doing, establishes his authority over them and, at the same time, takes away the privilege from the parents.

This kind of background, I think, helps us to understand better what was going on in the naming of the animals. It wasn't that God was tired and couldn't be bothered naming the animals Himself. He was simply allowing Adam, his vice-regent, to exercise the measure of authority God had given him by name the creatures himself - thus showing his understanding of them and his rule over them so that "whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name".

And this, you see, is precisely where the creation of the woman comes in. Remember what we saw in Genesis 2? No suitable helper has been found for Adam and this has been driven home to him through the parade of beasts. So, Adam knows that whatever his "suitable helper" will be, it will not be someone from the animal kingdom. Where then will this helper come from? The

answer is - from Adam himself. And so it is that God puts Adam to sleep and creates a woman, using Adam's own body as the source. Notice the language of Genesis 2:22-23,

Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib He had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman' for she was taken out of man..."

Do you see the parallel here? God brings the woman to the man, just as God did previously with the creatures. And so, just as Adam named the creatures, he now names the woman. He gives her a name which describes her essence - that she was taken "out of the man." And in that aspect of the story we see the equality of the woman - that she, like Adam, is not one of the beasts of the animal kingdom but is of the same stuff as him.

And yet, alongside the clear picture of equality of substance that we are meant to glean from the woman's creation, there is also another reality being depicted here - the fact that Adam gets to name her and, in so doing, expresses a measure of authority over her. And so, in this little scene we get side by side these concepts of equality and yet very real differences in role and function.

And it is worth pointing out that all of this occurred before the Fall of human kind into sin. Later on, after the fall, the whole naming process is repeated and, again, it is Adam who is given the task of naming the woman - calling her, this time, "Eve" - which recognized her new role as the "mother of all the living". And so, this authority relationship - expressed through the naming function - was not simply something that came into being after the fall but was actually there before sin entered the picture.

As a result, while Paul only specifically refers to one aspect of Genesis 2 - Adam's prior formation - in verse 13, there are other elements in the Genesis passage to which he alludes which he might have also specified and which, at any rate, would surely have been in his mind as he drew Timothy's attention to these opening sections of the Genesis account - an account which reveals, in a number of different ways, both the equality and yet the differences between man and woman as God created them.

And this, you see, is where the argument of Paul in I Timothy is so significant. Many attempts have been made to dismiss Paul's arguments as being hopelessly culture-bound or tied to the specific events of his situation so that the commands of verses I 1 and 12 are not applicable beyond his own day. But you see, those arguments completely ignore the text. Paul does not say that the women are not to teach and have authority over men because they are not educated enough. He does not say they are not to teach and have authority over men because the culture simply won't allow it or that it would be too disruptive.

What's the reason Paul gives? The reason he gives has nothing to do with culture. Culture doesn't enter into it. Education doesn't enter into it. The reason Paul gives is, "Adam was formed first, then Eve". By that reference he calls his readers' minds to the facts about men and women and how they relate which were established in the beginning by God - a beginning which illustrates both the equality of men and women - in terms of their substance - and yet at the same

time it shows that there is a distinction of role and authority between them - with Adam exercising that authority in regards to Eve. You see it in the prior formation of Adam, you see it in the language God uses to describe what he will do to provide a helper that is FOR Adam, and you see it in the whole naming ceremony that takes place. In short, the reason Paul provides in vs 13 of 1 Timothy 2 is not a cultural reason but is a biblical, historical, theological reason. His reasons for his instructions in verses 11-12 are based on something that GOD DID and GOD DECIDED and GOD SET UP and which Paul sees as having trans-cultural significance.

And so, because Paul did not base his statements on cultural realities but on biblical and historical ones, then it is intellectually dishonest to pretend that his statements are culturally derived, and then dismiss them on that basis - especially when his reasons are right there on the page, staring you in the face - and they are not cultural.

I think we'll stop there, and pick up with this again next week, exploring Paul's reasoning here a little further. And let me just say again that we are taking the time to work through these passages at a slower pace because the nature of the subject matter is very timely and relevant in our culture, and especially within our churches, and I want us not to rush through these things but to see as many of the issues as we can so that we can, as I said earlier, make our peace with this text, see God's wisdom and graciousness to us through it, and be spurred on in our pursuit of Him.