

1 Timothy 2:14

Two weeks ago we began a series of messages on 1st Timothy 2:11-15, concentrating in the opening sermon on verses 11 and 12, Paul's command to the Ephesian Church. The command there was that the women were to learn in quietness and full submission and that they were not to teach or have authority over a man. In that study we saw that verses 11 and 12 of chapter 2 could be seen as an expansion of Paul's words in verse 10 where he speaks about women adorning themselves with "good deeds appropriate for women who worship God".

Further, we saw in that message that to learn in quietness and full submission was a good and necessary thing for *all Christians*, men and women both. We also looked at the phrase "I do not permit" and saw that this was customary language for Paul to use and that because it was as an *apostle* that Paul said these things, his words are not to be regarded as mere personal opinion but are an apostolic command.

We then thought about the fact that this letter was addressed to specific circumstances and how this fact, in itself, does not decide anything one way or the other since this was the nature of practically the entire New Testament. Therefore, to dismiss these words because they are directed at a particular circumstance is an approach which is foolish and which, ultimately, leaves you without a Bible.

Next, we looked at the activity of women teaching men and saw that the difficulty here was not so much that these words are hard to *understand* as it is that they are hard, in this day and age, to *accept*. We further saw that there is a *gift* of teaching associated with the *activity* of teaching and that the implications of this are that not only are women prohibited from teaching men in the church, but that also *most men* are prohibited from teaching men in the church. In other words, being male does not, in itself, qualify a person to be a teacher in the Body of Christ.

Even further, we saw that the prohibition on teaching was NOT a *general* one but must be applied in its proper context in 1st Timothy such that it is not ALL teaching that is prohibited to women but only *one kind* of teaching - the teaching of men and that even in this, the prohibition has to do with teaching in those areas which are doctrinal or exegetical in nature and which is done with an authoritative cast. All other teaching and contexts are open to both men and women.

Along with the teaching aspect, we looked at the instructions about not "having authority over a man" and saw that this activity was not to be equated with teaching since not all exercise of authority comes through the act of teaching. Within the structures of the church this meant/means that a woman was not to serve as an elder or pastor or to take any other role, whatever name you use, which was in fact a position exercising authoritative oversight of the men in the congregation.

Finally, last week, we had a look at verse 13 which was part of Paul's reason or *basis* for

his teaching in verses 11 and 12 and saw that his phrase “For Adam was formed first, then Eve” was apostolic shorthand to his disciple and student - Timothy - directing him to go back to the beginnings of Scripture where men and women were first created and see how the *pattern* of relating that God established between men and women at the very start, was the pattern which was to guide their manner of relating in the church in his own day.

As we followed Paul’s lead and looked at the early parts of Genesis, we focused on two main things: 1) Firstly, we focused on the fact of Adam’s being formed first or “primogeniture” and then traced the significance of that through the Old Testament and then on into the NT. There we saw, from Colossians, that the relationship between being first-born and having authority is made clear in the person of Jesus Christ. 2) Secondly, we looked at the matter of *naming* the creatures and what the implications of this naming ceremony were with regard to Adam’s having authority over creation and, as well, over his wife, whom he also named - not once, but two times.. Throughout all of this we saw that the Genesis pattern was one which showed both equality of substance and person and worth and yet, at the same time, made distinctions in terms of roles and function and lines of authority.

At the end of our time last week we saw how Paul’s use of Genesis 2 in this way was not obscure but was, in fact, consistent with the teaching of the whole chapter. Even further, we saw that because Paul, in 1st Timothy, based his commands of verses 11 and 12 on reasons which were not cultural but which were *biblical, theological, and historical* in nature, that attempts to *dismiss* Paul’s words as being *culturally derived or culturally driven* are basically irrelevant and completely ignore the *real* basis for Paul’s commands, which are not cultural.

This week we will take this study one step further by dealing with verse 14 and then next week, Lord willing, we will finish up this series by focusing on the very difficult verse 15 and then make some concluding and summarizing remarks about the teaching of this passage as a whole. Now I am aware that it has been pretty heavy going here for the past few weeks. We don’t normally proceed this slowly through a passage, nor are the treatments always this detailed or involved. And I want to commend you for staying with it and wrestling through what has often been a very specialized and sometimes hard to follow discussion.

But don’t get me wrong, I’m not apologizing for taking this sort of time to deal with this text. I think we needed to do this. And it won’t be the last time we go through a passage with this sort of detail. With those words of introduction, let’s pray and read the passage once again before we dig in. (Pray and read 1st Timothy 2:8-15).

After drawing Timothy’s attention, in vs 13, to his reasons for distinguishing between men and women in the structure and activities of the church, Paul expands on that by his comments in vs 14, speaking of Eve and her deception. And, just as we saw with the previous verse, Paul is *alluding* here to an earlier portion of the Bible, this time from Genesis chapter 3, as the ground from which he draws these remarks.

And so, we will once again be spending some time this morning looking at Genesis with a view to understanding 1st Timothy 2:14 much better. To refresh your memory on these things,

let me read to you from both Genesis 2 and 3 (Read Gen 2:15-18 and then 3:1-13) With those words of Genesis still ringing in your ears, listen again to what Paul says in 1st Timothy 2:14, “*And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner*”.

When you read 1 Timothy 2:14 and compare it with Genesis 3:13b, you see that there is a direct parallel. The woman, *by her own admission, mind you* – Paul is not just victimizing her or making her a scapegoat here - the woman herself says to God that she was deceived and that she ate that which was forbidden. That is, she was deceived and then sinned against God, which is precisely what Paul says in 1st Timothy 2. So Paul is, in a few words, summarizing the events of Genesis 3, from the woman’s perspective and even using some of her own words.

But what is the significance of Paul’s saying this? Is he implying that only the woman has sinned here and that therefore the blame for the fall of humankind can be laid at her feet? Is he saying that because Eve was deceived that, therefore, as a consequence of her actions, women are not allowed to teach men? What’s Paul saying here?

Well, for starters, we can quickly dismiss any notion that the blame for the fall of humankind can be laid at the feet of Eve. The text here, as well as Paul’s own words in other places, make it crystal clear that from *God’s perspective*, the blame for the fall of humankind lay squarely on the shoulders of Adam. See Romans 5:12-21 for details of this.

But look at the text of Genesis 3. When you examine the conversation between the woman and the serpent, you see that she was clearly deceived which, as we have seen, she readily admits to. And simply put, *being deceived* is not, *in itself* a sinful thing. Being tricked and mis-guided and confused by clever words is not necessarily an act of willful rebellion. The sin attached to deception lies more at the feet of the deceiver, not the deceived. So does this clear Eve, then, from being guilty, from being culpable for her actions? Clearly not. As Paul indicates, she “became a sinner”. ***But how?***

Well, in several ways actually. While she was clearly deceived by the serpent, which the serpent has to own, she was not required therefore to begin to doubt the goodness of God or to question the truthfulness of his words, which she did on her own. Nor did any of this give her the right to set herself up as an alternative source of authority, which she clearly did.

But interestingly, Paul does not refer to those things in vs 14. Now, again, I think that part of the reason for that is because he knows well the one to whom he is speaking - Timothy - and he knows that with Timothy, since he taught him, that he can refer to these sorts of things with a kind of theological or apostolic shorthand and without having to fill out every detail of his references. And so, the fact that Paul does not highlight these other aspects of Eve’s sin means that we ought not look there to understand his reference but instead, we ought to go back to the Genesis account and look very carefully at the *circumstances* of Eve’s deception to see if we can discover what Paul is getting at here.

Well let’s look back at Genesis 2 and 3 again. Paul, in summarizing these accounts, highlights the fact that Adam was *not deceived*, but Eve was. Now let’s be clear: Paul is not saying that Adam was not sinful, he is simply saying that for Adam, being deceived was not part

of the equation. Why does Paul highlight this aspect of the account - the fact that Adam was not deceived, but Eve was? Why does he highlight *that*?

Well, if you look at Genesis 2:15-18, you find the instructions that God gives about not eating the forbidden fruit. And the question is: Who is present at this little meeting? There's God, and there's Adam. *And that's it. Eve is not present and, in fact, has not even been formed yet.* Now look at Genesis 3:2, at Eve's response to the serpent. (Read this). Now, ignoring the fact that Eve has added to God's words here, which is another issue altogether, the thing I want you to notice is that Eve is clearly aware of God's commands concerning the fruit of this tree. *But she wasn't there when the command was given.* So how does she know about it?

The natural assumption is, Adam told her about it. Eve was his responsibility. God had provided her as a companion, as a suitable helper. God gave Adam the responsibility for naming her and looking after her and so exercising a measure of authority over her. And so it was his responsibility to insure that she knew and understood the Creator's instructions about "life in the Garden". And so, when she responds to the serpent, she is quoting to him that which was taught to her by her husband - and she gets it *mostly* right, but not completely right.

Now look back at Genesis 3 again. The serpent coaxes and deceives her, wanting her to begin to doubt the truthfulness of God and the goodness of God. And so here Eve stands: On the one side are God's words *relayed to her through her husband* - and on the other side are the serpent's alternative views. What does she do? Or better yet, *what doesn't she do?*

This did not happen. The serpent asks his tricky question. And Eve goes, "Huh, well, that's an interesting question. Can I get back to you on that?" And then she goes off, finds Adam and says, "You know that thing you told me about the trees and not eating and all that? Remember that? Well, I'm having this conversation with the serpent and he asks me this question which kind of puts an entirely different spin on things. And so, before I responded, I thought I'd better come and talk to you about this since, after all, you were the one that God talked to about this in the first place, and I really need to know what your take on all this is."

That didn't happen. *But it should have.*

What *did* happen was that Eve who was "bone of Adam's bone" and was "one flesh" with her husband, nevertheless, chose in this instance to act quite independently of her husband, and on a matter of extreme importance. And so she eats. And because she doesn't "die" straight away, at least not in the way she might have feared she would, she goes off and finds her husband.... Now Adam, unlike his wife, has not been listening to the serpent as he twisted and distorted God's words. So Adam will not have the luxury of claiming *that* as his defense. No, he gets handed the fruit, recognizes it for what it is, notices that Eve has been eating of it, notices she is still breathing, and *out of sheer rebellion*, following the lead of his wife - He eats too.

And then, interestingly enough, it is at *that* point that something happens. Genesis 3:7 says, "...Then the eyes of *both* of them were opened, and they realized they were naked...." All of the sudden shame and fear - two emotions that would have been completely alien to them up to this point - were now very much a part of their experience. So what happens next? Well, God

comes looking for them after they have sinned. And notice what God does here. Who does he call out first? Does he call out Eve - after all she is the one who ate first? No. He comes looking for *Adam*. Apparently, God considers Adam to be the spokesman or representative for the two.

Now all of these things are significant, and point to the same sort of pattern of relating we have seen in Genesis in several different ways already. But there's more to be seen here. Look for a moment at the curses in Genesis 3:14-19 (read this out loud). Now these curses are the consequences of the fall of humankind into sin, consequences which we all - today - still suffer the effects of. And there's a lot that could be said about these curses.

However, for our purposes, I only want to highlight one aspect of them I want to draw your attention to a common pattern that appears in all three of these curses - to the serpent, to the woman and to the man. In all three curses, as Hurley helpfully points out, there are at least two common elements: 1) a painful distortion of an existing relation or pattern and 2) a divine promise that the distortion, despite the pain, will not overthrow the original plan and purpose of God.

Look, first of all, at the curse against the serpent, in verses 14-15. Regarding the creature, the serpent's lowly posture is now to be taken as a sign of God's curse. There will be "enmity" or strife, fear and distrust between the woman and the serpent where there was none before. The woman and her seed will continue to rule over the serpent, but now a painful distortion enters into that relationship. However it is not just the serpent as a member of the animal kingdom that is in view here. As we look closely at the language here we see that God's words are also directed at Satan who had inhabited and used the serpent for his purposes. And so the enmity and strife will not only be between the woman's offspring and the serpent's offspring *in general* but also between Satan and *one particular offspring* of the woman, Jesus Christ. This is what most evangelical scholars take to be the significance of that last bit of 3:15 where the personal pronoun "he" is used to refer to a particular offspring of the woman at some stage of history.

So what we have in this verse is the Bible's earliest reference to the work of Christ on the cross which is, of course, the great *climax* to the warfare between Satan and humankind, to this "enmity" that began in Genesis 3. In that last great confrontation, at the cross, Satan will have a temporary and *seeming* victory in the death of Christ - "striking his heel". But Jesus will have the decisive and ultimate victory in the cross and resurrection. Through the cross, and the on-going proclamation of the cross, the head of Satan will be crushed - as it were - the death blow will be administered. This is the image which lies behind Paul's brief remark in Romans 16:20 that, "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet." As the Christians in the Roman church carry forward the Gospel work, they will be used of God to bring to fulfillment this very ancient prophecy given back in Genesis 3.

And so, the curse on the serpent shows the pattern: 1) that the pre-fall relations between humanity and the serpent (and Satan) will be painfully distorted and yet 2) God will, by his gracious intervention, prevent the distortion from overthrowing his original plan and purpose.

Now skip down to the curse upon Adam in verses 17-19. The consequence of the man's

sin is that the very “stuff” of the earth is itself affected such that it now *resists* his efforts to work the land. True, it would continue to yield fruit but it would only do so *now* through difficult and painful work. Just as in the curse on the serpent, God is NOT introducing a new relationship but rather a new ELEMENT in an already existing relationship. Again, we have a 1) painful distortion of an existing relation and 2) a divine promise that, in spite of the difficulty and hardship, God’s plan and purpose will not be overthrown.

Finally, look at the curse on the woman in verse 16. This curse has two parts, the first having to do with child-bearing and the second to do with her husband. With regard to child-bearing you have to remember that this was part of the *original commission* of Genesis 1 - to multiply and fill the earth - and so was an existing pattern and relation. The *new element* is that this process will now be *more* painful and difficult than it might have been otherwise. However, because of God’s grace, the process of child-birth will not fail and live children will be born. The same pattern appears again: 1) an existing relation and pattern has been distorted painfully but 2) in spite of the difficulty, God will prevent this distortion from over-throwing his original plan and purpose.

Let’s look now at the other part of the curse upon the woman, the one that has to do with her relationship with her husband. She is told by God that “your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.” Now, some have tried to say that these words mean that God is, at this stage, introducing the matter of *subordination* into the relationship where it did not exist before. However, as we have seen in Genesis 2 and 3 thus far, this does not fit at all with the picture that has been painted very consistently up to this point. So, how should we understand these words?

There are two things which are helpful in this regard. Firstly, go over one chapter into Genesis 4, verse 7 - the story of Cain and Abel. In this story God is warning Cain about the anger and jealousy which he feels toward Abel, his brother, and what it may lead to if he is not careful. God tells Cain, “...sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it...” The words translated as “desire” and “master” here are the same words used in Genesis 3:16 and translated as “desire” and “rule”. In Genesis 4:7, the point is that sin’s desire is to rule over Cain but Cain must rule over it. If the same construction is used in Genesis 3:16, then the meaning is clear: The woman’s desire will be to rule over her husband, but he must rule over her.

What strengthens the likelihood of this interpretation, along with the general thrust of chapters 2 and 3, is the fact that this would mean that the pattern seen here would be the same as the pattern in all the other curses. The relation between the man and woman was already in existence but now there is a painful element introduced into it: 1) the relationship is painfully distorted by the woman’s desire to overthrow her husband’s legitimate authority and yet 2) she will not succeed in doing so and he will still rule over her.

Now, to be sure, the history of humanity shows that the pain and distortion that came into the relationship has not *only* been the result of the woman’s desire to rule over her husband but also appears as a result of the husband’s own sin in the form of abusiveness or harshness or unloving, authoritarian leadership. All of those things are no doubt true. But that is not the point being highlighted in *this* text. The point highlighted here is the specific consequences of sin for

Eve in her relationship to her husband.

But the main thing I want you to see in all of this is that as we look at Genesis 2 and 3 we see over and over again a pattern of relating between the man and woman. We see it in the prior formation of Adam, we see it in the way that God describes the woman and why he has created her, we see it in Adam's being given the responsibility for naming all the creatures *and* for naming his wife as well, we see it in the instructions about life in the Garden being given to Adam and then relayed, through him, to his wife, Eve, we see it in the pronouncement of the curses and specifically in the curse pronounced upon the woman.

In all of these things and more we see a pattern of relating being demonstrated over and over again - a pattern in which the man and woman have equal worth, but not identical roles - with the man taking on a leadership role. It is this pattern of relating which Paul has in view when he writes what he does in 1 Timothy 2:11-12. It is this pattern of relating that helps us to understand Paul's point in verses 13-14. In verse 13, Paul is referring to the pattern itself, illustrated by the fact of Adam's prior formation. And then, in verse 14, he strengthens that statement. And now we can *finally* see the reason why Paul has drawn our attention to Eve's deception and the *circumstances* of that deception in vs 14. As one commentator writes,

....verse 14, in conjunction with verse 13, is intended to remind the women at Ephesus that Eve was deceived by the serpent in the garden precisely in taking the initiative over the man whom God had given to be with her and to care for her. In the same way, if the women at the Ephesian church proclaimed their independence from the men of the church, refusing to learn in 'quietness and full submission' (see vs 11) and seeking roles that have been given to men in the church (verse 12), they will make the same mistake as Eve and bring similar disaster on themselves and the church.

You see, it was Adam's role and responsibility, ultimately, to take in and evaluate and deal with this alternative view of reality being presented by the serpent. Adam was the one to whom God had originally given the truth regarding this matter. Eve, in acting independently of him, cuts herself off from this resource within their marriage and, in the process, reverses the roles and responsibilities in that area of their relationship. And so, what we see here is that, in verse 13, Paul alludes to a pattern and in verse 14 he alludes to a disruption of that pattern, and its consequence for the woman. Verse 13 provides a kind of positive motivation for the command of verses 11 and 12 and verse 14 provides a kind of negative motivation for obeying the commands by reminding Timothy of what can happen when patterns established by God are forsaken. Eve's deception is highlighted in verse 14 because it is **THAT** event, and how and why it came about, that underlines the wisdom of accepting and valuing patterns established by God, regarding the roles and relationships of men and women.

We'll stop there for now and, Lord willing, we'll try and draw this to some kind of close next week as we look at verse 15 and then make some concluding summaries and observations on this section of 1st Timothy and its role in the life of God's people today.