

1 Timothy Chapter 2 (vv.9-15)

The *first* section of chapter two (vv.1-8) focuses on *supplication*, especially in relation to the **males** (v.8). The *second* section (vv.9-15) deals with *sobriety*, *silence* and *subjection* in relation to the **females** (v.9). Scripture presents no thought of the inequality or inferiority of women to men. In fact, Christianity vastly improved the status and dignity of women. Among the Gentiles, women were often degraded. Among the Jews, the rabbis (in their liturgy) thanked God they were not born women. There is nothing in these verses that *degrades* women, but rather *exhorts* them as those who are *jointly* responsible for the standard of godliness expected of God's house.

The Sobriety of the Women [vv.9-10]

v.9: It seems that some women were dressing in an ostentatious, even sensual manner that was in keeping with their former pagan lifestyle but was totally inappropriate for the house of God. Hundreds of prostitutes lined the vicinity of the temple of Diana, and the dress of Christians was in no way to resemble them. In addition, Ephesus was a rich banking city and some of the saints (probably a minority) were wealthy (6.17-19). As such, some sisters may have been dressing in a way that reflected their superior social status. Dress conveys a message! Saints should avoid making statements with their *outward* adornment. Nothing should be worn that provokes temptation or savours of indecency.

'In like manner' (*hosautos*) suggests that v.9 is a continuation of vv.1-8 and is therefore a further development of the *content* of sound doctrine. The subject is not now public *prayer*, but the dress and deportment of women at the assembly's (public) gatherings. *Hosautos* also implies that these instructions are part of the apostle's authoritative desire of v.8, i.e. a vital part of the proper ordering and functioning of the house of God. It is not only the public prayer of the males, but the dress and spiritual deportment of the females that contributes to the godliness of the house. Women are to 'adorn' (*kosmeo*) themselves in 'modest' (*kosmios*) apparel. The word 'adorn' means to 'put in order' or 'appear neat and well organised'. Slovenly dress is unbecoming. The word 'modest' signifies 'decent', 'appropriate' and 'respectable' (tasteful). It is the opposite of what is provocative, seductive and revealing. Whilst Paul clearly has *outward dress* in view, the word 'apparel' has a wider meaning of *external deportment*, whether in appearance, manner or dress – so it is *clothing* (v.9) and *conduct* in view here (v.10). Both the physical and moral adorning of the woman is accessorised by 'shamefacedness' (reverence, reserve, a shrinking from dressing or acting in a way which dishonours God and brings shame on oneself) and 'sobriety' (self-restraint, one who has control of fleshly-passions from sound inner judgment produced by the word and Spirit of God).

There are a further *four* 'accessories' not in keeping with the well-arranged deportment of godly women. By using the term 'broided hair' Paul is not referring to any form of 'plaited' (lit. 'twisted') hairstyle, but the *extravagant* and *elaborate* arrangement of hair decorated with gold or pearls. The braids were used to hold the jewels in place. Ephesian prostitutes "wore their hair in numerous small pendant braids with gold droplets or pearls or gems every inch or so, making a shimmering screen of their locks" (Stott). Their motive was to attract attention to themselves and to artificially enhance their own glory for immoral purposes. 'Pearls' were most valuable, being worth three times more than gold. 'Costly array' (singular) suggests the purchasing and flaunting of a single, very expensive garment to make a social statement. The word 'costly' is used of Mary of Bethany's 'very precious' alabaster box of ointment (Mark 14.3), and the word 'array' (fine clothing) of the *inner vesture* of the Lord Jesus (Matthew 27.35; John 19.24). "Christian women should adorn themselves with clothing, hairstyles and jewellery which *in their culture* are inexpensive not extravagant, modest not vain, and chaste not suggestive" (Stott). Paul is not insisting on the display of drabness!

v.10: But, the principle and fitting decoration of a woman who professes godliness is 'good works', i.e. deeds not dress! Christianity is not a matter of *saying* but **doing**. The word 'profess' means to make a *public announcement*. So, though a woman is to 'keep silent' in the assembly (v.11), she still conveys a message! She pronounces her 'godliness' (i.e. fear of the Lord) or exhibits her beautiful Christian character by the way she behaves. Her dress must not muffle the message! The 'good (*agathos*, morally and spiritually beautiful) works' she displays are *expanded* in 5.10 and *contrasted* in 5.11-14. In short, she is not 'idle' (lazy), 'wandering about from house to house' engaging in malicious gossip, but rather gives herself to the dignity of motherhood (raises children), 'lodges strangers' (given to hospitality, Acts 12.12; 16.14-15), 'washes the saints' feet' (displays a humble spirit, prepared to do the most menial service for others, Romans 16.2) and seeks to 'relieve the afflicted' (ministering to those in difficult circumstances). **Mary** of Bethany (Mark 14.6) and **Dorcus** are primary examples (Acts 9.36).

The great principle of these two verses is that *outward physical* adornment is important, but *inward spiritual* adornment is of greater value (1 Peter 3.3-4). Those who wear extreme fashions in the house of God only draw attention to themselves, and, thus draw glory away from the person who is Head over the house (Hebrews 3.6).

The Silence of the Women [vv.11-12]

v.11: The subject now changes to the woman's *position* in the assembly rather than her *appearance*. The verse literally reads, 'woman (singular), in silence learn'. Silence in teaching does not mean that sisters have no appetite to **learn!** They are commanded to do so attentively. Given the influence some false teachers had gained, especially over women (cf. 2 Timothy 3.6-7), it was essential they were well instructed in the scriptures. The sisters must learn in the sphere (environment) of 'silence' and 'all subjection'. Elsewhere, Paul uses a stronger word for 'silence' (1 Corinthians 14.34, the absence of all talk), but the word here means 'quietness' (cf. Acts 22.2; 2 Thessalonians 3.12). It signifies an attitude of quiet focus that is attentively fixed on that which is being taught. She also takes the *willing* (voluntary) attitude of 'complete subjection' to the headship of the male in his responsibility to teach publicly, but more importantly, to what is being taught, i.e. the word of God (cf. 2 Corinthians 9.13). This is not *subjugation*, which is forced on unwilling hearts creating resentment and bondage, but a willing *submission* to divine order. *Note. In that culture, it was not important if women learned, and in fact, they were often not allowed in a religious gathering at all. With these words, Paul shows himself to be a great liberator of women. His words are not shocking because they are so oppressive, but because they are so permissive.* **v.12:** The *positive* statement of v.11 (i.e. a woman *should* learn) is now contrasted with a *negative*. The apostle does not allow a female to 'teach' or 'exercise authority' (NET) over a male. The present infinitive denies the place of a 'teacher' to a woman in the formal gatherings of the assembly. However, in an informal or private sphere, like the home, *older* sisters are to teach *younger* sisters (Titus 2.3-4) and instruct their *children* in the faith (2 Timothy 1.5; 3.15). *Priscilla* also joined with *Aquila* in explaining the truth of God more accurately to *Apollos* (Acts 18.26). For a woman to assume the role of a teacher would be to take a place of authority (dominion) over the man – a place which is contrary to divine creatorial order (cf. v.13). The verse raises a secondary point especially relevant for husbands and wives. The single Greek word translated 'usurp authority' (*authenteo*) also signifies 'to control' or 'dominate'. Though many a wife would seek to dominate her husband (cf. Genesis 3.16) this is not divine creatorial order. Whilst it is the responsibility of the wife to 'manage' the daily activities of the home (Titus 2.5), the husband is divinely directed to *lead* the home (and his household), providing for their *spiritual* and *material* needs (cf. 3.4).

The Salvation of the Women [vv.13-15]

v.13: The explanation for the prohibition of v.12 is not based on local, temporal or cultural considerations in Ephesus, but the order established by God in creation. God 'formed' (moulded) Adam *first*, thus giving him *priority* in time and authority (leadership). This established Adam as *head*, and Eve, created second, as *helper* (Genesis 2.18). They were created to *complement*, not *compete* (!) with one another. Therefore, for a woman to take the role of a teacher would be to subvert this order. **v.14:** Secondly, though it seems Adam was present with her (cf. Genesis 3.6), Eve stepped out of her place (headship) and acted independently of her husband. Consequently, disaster followed as Eve 'fell' (*past* action with *abiding* results) into 'transgression' (overstepping the divine requirement). Paul tells us that Eve was completely and utterly 'deceived' by the serpent. Adam, however, was not deceived – God gave him, as head, the clear commandment, and the consequent responsibility to ensure it was upheld (Genesis 2.17). Adam deliberately chose to follow the lead of his wife and disobey God. The Fall therefore demonstrates the inherent danger of reversing the creatorial order of headship. So, in the public gatherings of the assembly, males should take the lead and exercise their God-given authority in the matter of teaching. *Allen: "Both Adam and Eve violated their God given status; Eve by an assumption of authority or dominion she did not rightly possess, and Adam, in a renunciation of authority he had no right to make."* **v.15:** But, the woman's deliverance (salvation) from sin in stepping out of her position of submission to the male is 'through' or 'whilst' (*dia*, attendant circumstances) bearing children in motherhood (standing for her whole domestic responsibility), i.e. accepting the role (sphere) assigned her by God. What a contrast to the false teachers who were seeking to destroy the family unit (and home) by 'forbidding to marry' (4.3). The faithful acceptance of such a role contributes to the godly order of the house of God and constitutes part of her 'good works' (5.10). Consequent upon the entrance of sin, Adam was burdened with work (toil) to save him from sinful indolence (Genesis 3.17-19). So the woman, by attendance on those duties accompanying marriage and motherhood will be saved from rebelling against God's order in headship. This evidence of submission and consequent display of 'godliness' (cf. v.10) is also dependent on *their* (i.e. the believing women, cf. v.9) continuing (abiding) in 'faith' (personal trust in God), 'love' (agape) towards God, their husband and children (Titus 2.4) and 'holiness', i.e. moral purity and separation from the evil society around them. This will be attended by 'sobriety' (same word as v.9) involving self-control in matters spiritual and moral.