

Scott's Thoughts

Attempts at explaining various
subjects of Scripture
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Roger Chambers once said that if a preacher wants to get into trouble all he has to do is preach on one of three subjects: the Holy Spirit, prophecy or the role of women in the Church. So I thought as I begin this e-venture that I would try to tackle, in a small way, one of those three hot topics.

It's not that I have a need to straighten out any particular situation in the Church I serve or anywhere else, but I remember a time in Bible college when I was reading 1st Timothy 2:9-15 and it really had me confused. Especially verse 15 which reads: "But *women* will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint."

Being the father of 5 children made me think that my wife might be a super-saint. I think she is, but not due to her bearing children (putting up with me for more than 25 years qualifies her for that). But after further study we can see that's not what Paul was telling Timothy.

Let's look at the text (NASB Updated):

⁹ Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments,

The word "modestly" is actually the Greek word αἰδοῦς (aidous) and means "bashfully". "Discreetly is the word σωφροσύνης (sophroountes) and means "sanely" or "soberly". Paul is telling Timothy that the women in the Church are to dress in a bashful fashion, but with some common-sense. This does not mean a woman should wear a burka but it also demands that anything that could create lustful thoughts in someone else is to be avoided. A woman's beauty should come from the woman herself, not her accessorizing.

¹⁰ but rather by means of good works, as is

proper for women making a claim to godliness.

This is to be a godly woman's adornment, not fancy hair styles or expensive jewelry.

¹¹ A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness.

Does this mean that a woman cannot even ask a question in a Bible study? No it doesn't. However, God has placed the responsibility of authority and leadership upon the shoulders of godly men. This does not mean that women do not have vital roles within the Church. They have many. The issue here, as will become clear in the next verse, is authority and submissiveness.

¹² But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.

OK. There it is. He said it. Some would say that this was part of his cultural heritage so in his day this is how people would expect things to be done. But we in the 21st century know better and our culture lets women do more. Some would say that but they would be wrong.

Keep in mind that this command comes from an apostle. Paul is using his authority as an apostle when he says "I do not..." What authority did the apostles have? Well, in John 20, which is where the 12 (minus Judas) are ordained as apostles, Jesus tells them that they have the power to forgive or to retain sins (v. 23). No one has that authority except God Himself, yet Jesus gives these men, His representatives, this authority. This is what Paul meant when he wrote in 2nd Corinthians 5:20, "we are ambassadors of Christ." By that he meant that he and the other apostles were the representatives of Jesus. As an ambassador the apostles spoke with the

authority given them by Jesus Himself, that is, the absolute authority of God.

When Paul says “I do not allow...” we should take that as the very word of Christ, which is what it was (See 1st Thess. 2:13). It is not Paul stating his opinion. He is stating what is to be done.

Paul now tells two reasons why women are not to teach or have authority over a man. By the way, if Paul’s reasons are cultural ones that change then when the culture changes so can this rule about women.

13 For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve.

The first reason goes back to creation, not culture. Man was created first, then woman.

14 And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.

The second reason also goes back to creation. It was the woman who was deceived by the serpent, not Adam. Notice that what Paul tells us here implies that Adam knew what he was doing when he took and ate of the fruit. Knowing this also helps us to have a clearer understanding of passages like Romans 5:12 (Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned). Man was the head of creation and when he chose to sin, sin entered into the world.

Both of Paul’s reasons go back to creation. Since his reasons for women not teaching or having authority over a man have not changed, we have no reason for changing anything about this command. Someone may or may not like Paul’s reasoning, but if we are to be faithful to what God’s teaching, we must humbly submit to it.

I have a friend who is a tremendous scholar. He once wrote that Jesus, the fullness of deity in bodily form, descendant of David, the Lion of Judah, Born of a Virgin, the Hope of all mankind, was restricted from serving in the Temple, from offering a sacrifice upon the Temple altar, and several other things. Yet that did not detract from who He was/is. That kind of service was not His role and it would have been sinful for Jesus to perform those tasks reserved only for the descendants of Levi. In the same way, man and woman have their different

roles to fulfill. Just because there are restrictions upon certain things does not make man or woman better than the other.

This next verse is the one that always gave me problems and is the reason I chose this text for this small article.

15 But women will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.

It almost sounds as if a woman bears children she gets a free pass to heaven. However, if we truly want to get a handle on this we must keep it in it’s context. Paul has just stated that the reasons women are not to have authority over men in the Church is a result of creation and the events soon after. Pain in childbirth was a result of Eve’s being deceived. Genesis 3:16 says, “To the woman He said, ‘I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth, In pain you will bring forth children; Yet your desire will be for your husband, And he will rule over you.’”

As a Christian our sins have been completely forgiven. However, since the pain of childbirth was the result of Eve’s sin, if a Christian woman experiences pain in childbirth, does that mean that she is still being held accountable for that sin and hasn’t been completely forgiven?

Even though the pain is result of sin, women who experience pain in childbirth will have their salvation *preserved*. The Greek word used is σώζω (*sōzō*) which is the word for “save”. The woman, even though going through the consequence of Eve’s sin, she is “saved” as long as she continues in faith, love, sanctity and self-restraint. This word “self-restraint” is actually the same word used in verse 9 and means “discretion.”

To sum it all up: The curse of Genesis 3:16 is a shameful and painful reminder of the sin of the first woman. Even though a Christian woman has to bear this curse it does not mean she does not have salvation. Salvation resides in faith, love and sanctity.

I hope this can help in your understanding of this text. I truly encourage some feedback, comment and suggestions for other passages of Scripture.

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