

Examining the theological basis for 1 Timothy 2:12

Examining the Controversy of 1 Timothy 2:12: Part 3

*For (gar) it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve.
And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.*

1. Study Paul's justification for his prohibitions in 1 Timothy 2:13-14. What do you observe? From your observations, are Paul's prohibitions intended specifically for the problems of the church of Ephesus? Do they apply to the church today and tomorrow? Why or why not?

Paul employs a common rabbinic teaching method called a *summary citation*, where a reference serves as an accurate summary of the whole periscope or subject. In his citation of Adam and Eve, Paul purposely uses the verbs "create" and "deceive" to correspond to the verbs "formed" and "deceive" in the Genesis accounts (Gen 2:7; 3:13) and leaves no doubt that he is referring to the whole narrative of Creation and the Fall of man as the theological basis for his prohibitions.

Paul begins the first of his reasons with the Greek word for "for" (*gar*), which can be taken to indicate either an illustration or a reason.

Some scholars believe that the term should be taken to indicate an example; Paul's reference to Eve is a historical example of what happened when a deceived woman taught a man. According to this interpretation, Paul's reference to Creation is not a reason for the prohibition of women teaching or exercising authority over men; instead, it is a historical example comparable to the immediate and local problem of the church of Ephesus.

However, when consulting reference lexicons and grammars, "gar" is rarely used to indicate an example or illustration. When following a verb or idea of command or prohibition, Paul uses "gar" to indicate a reason.

Furthermore, if "gar" is seen as indicating an example, the context of the whole verse runs askew. How does the priority of Adam's creation illustrate Paul's prohibition of women not teaching or having authority over men? Thus by Paul's historical use of grammar and context, "gar" can only be understood as indicating a reason.

Because of the strength of the evidence substantiating "gar" as indicating a reason, scholars who dispute Paul's prohibitions, overlook or gloss over "gar."

There are a couple possible reasons why Paul cites Creation in Genesis 2 as justification for his prohibitions.

Paul saw the priority and method of Creation, man first from dirt and woman second from a part of man, as symbolic of the leadership role that God intended for man in the home and church.

The emphasis on the temporal sequence of Creation is noteworthy. Paul emphasized that man was created "first" (*protos*), "then" (*eita*) Eve.

In a parallel passage found in 1 Corinthians 11:3-10, the priority and functional difference in the order of Creation (1 Cor 11:9 – woman was created for man's sake) is indicative of the headship that man is to have over woman.

Although it contrasts with contemporary cultural values and rationale, the assignment of leadership by priority was not by accident or convenience; Creation was by and for God's divine purpose and design.

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Paul's prohibition clearly recognized that subordinating woman to man was essential for establishing the leadership role that God purposely designed for the home and church.

Another possibility with Adam's chronological primacy in creation was that it entitled him the privileges of the Firstborn (law of primogeniture), and Paul identifies Adam as "the first man" (1 Cor 15:45-49).

Some scholars dispute this idea of chronological primacy arguing that Genesis 1 records the simultaneous creation of man and woman. They contend that if chronological primacy determined a form of hierarchy, then animals, which were created first, would be higher than man.

However, this is an inaccurate portrayal of the biblical accounts. While animals were created before man, man was not created from animals as woman was created from man. Furthermore, of all of His living creations, God only blessed man and gave him dominion over every living creature (Gen 1:28-29).

Paul's justification is twofold. On one hand, he establishes God's created order (Creation) as the primary reason for prohibiting women from teaching and having authority over man, and on the other, he juxtaposes the Fall in Genesis 3 as the consequence when the created order is not observed.

Paul saw that Eve was deceived, because she took the initiative to assert her independence or leadership of Adam on God's word. Eve chose to answer the Serpent's challenge of God's command (Gen 3:1-2). She chose to ignore her uncertainties of God's word (Gen 3:2-5). She chose to eat the fruit and encouraged Adam to do so as well (Gen 3:6). Her actions resulted in sin entering the world.

Despite Eve's culpability, God clearly held Adam accountable for the original sin, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, ..." (Gen 3:17). Adam had been disobedient.

Scholars have attempted to historically reconstruct the problems facing the church of Ephesus. Some believed that Paul's mention of the woman in the Fall was a reference to Ephesian women teaching false doctrine or doctrinally sound female teachers usurping the authority of male elders of the church.

However, while the Bible mentions false male teachers (Acts 20:30, 1 Tim 1:20, 2 Tim 2:17-18), there is no ancient literary source that mentions the existence of false female Christian teachers in Ephesus or doctrinally sound female teachers usurping the authority of male elders of the church.

Furthermore, the attempt to connect this form of historical reconstruction with Eve is tenuous. Eve was deceived; she was not a false teacher.

While historical reconstruction is important for the understanding of the early church, there are those who seek to identify a local or temporary circumstance that Paul was addressing so that one can conclude that his prohibitions had only limited application. Even so, this conclusion has no basis. While circumstances are what prompt Paul to write many of his epistles, his teachings are usually not limited to them.

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Paul's reference to the woman in the Fall was to remind people that Eve was deceived, because she did not submit to Adam's leadership on God's word.

Within the context of the church assembly and authorized doctrinal instruction, a woman, who does not "receive instruction with entire submissiveness" (1 Tim 2:11) or seeks to "teach or exercise authority over a man" (1 Tim 2:12), would make the same mistake as Eve.

Are Paul's prohibitions temporal or permanent? Douglas Moo sums it up best, "For by rooting these prohibitions in the circumstances of creation rather than in the circumstances of the fall, Paul shows that he does not consider these restrictions to be the product of the curse and presumably, therefore, to be phased out by redemption. And by citing creation rather than a local situation or cultural circumstance as his basis for the prohibitions, Paul makes it clear that, while these local or cultural issues may have provided the context of the issue, they do not provide the *reason* for his advice. His *reason* for the prohibitions of verse 12 is the created role relationship of man and woman, and we may justly conclude that these prohibitions are applicable as long as this reason remains true."

References:

1. Piper, J, Grudem, W, eds, *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood*, Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books (1991), p.179-193.
2. Bacchicocchi, Samuele, *Women in the Church. A Biblical Study on the Role of Women in the Church*, Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives (1987).

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