

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

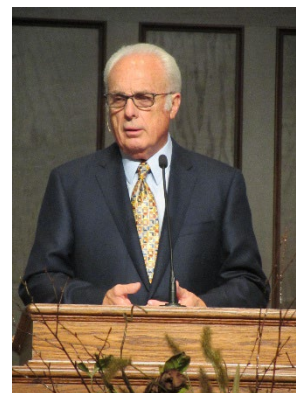
## God's Plan for Women in the Church

JOHN F. MACARTHUR

*Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments; but rather by means of good works, as befits women making a claim to godliness. Let a woman quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being quite deceived, fell into transgression. But women shall be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.*

(1 Timothy 2:9–15)

The role of women in the church is a topic that is hotly debated today. Unfortunately, the debate has left the pages of Scripture to find its resolution. The traditional doctrines are being swept away by the flood tides of evangelical feminism. Churches, schools, and seminaries are rapidly abandoning truths they have held since their inceptions. Dozens of books are being written defending the new “truth” regarding the role of women. Ironically, some of the authors of those books formerly held to the traditional, biblical view. But under the pressure of feminism they have abandoned biblical accuracy in favor of the culture. The biblical passages on women’s roles are being culturally reinterpreted, ignored because of the alleged anti-female bias of the biblical authors, or dismissed as the additions of later redactors.



The ultimate source of those attacks is the archenemy of God, Satan. His goal, as always, is to overthrow God’s plan and corrupt His design. He is behind the effort to entice women away from their God-created roles in society, in the family, and in the church. Such a satanic enterprise is not new—in fact it was an issue in the church at Ephesus, because it was an issue in the Roman world of that time.

In a church plagued with false doctrine and false leaders, it is not surprising to find them struggling over gender roles. Some women were leading impure lives (cf. 5:6, 11–15; 2 Tim. 3:6), and their indecency carried over into the worship service. Under the pretense of gathering to worship God, women were flaunting themselves and becoming serious distractions from worship. Their actions revealed that the intent of their heart was evil.

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Since worship is central to the life of the church, it was high on Paul's list of issues for Timothy to confront.

Following his discussion of the role of the men when the church is called to evangelistic prayer (2:1–8), Paul turns to the subject of women in worship. He addresses their appearance, attitude, testimony, role, design, and contribution.

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## THE APPEARANCE OF WOMEN

**Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing ... not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments; (2:9a, c)**

**Likewise** refers to verse 8, and marks the transition to a new aspect within the same overall subject (cf. 3:8, 11). Having discussed the conduct of men in the gathering of the church, he now turns to that of women.

The verb in this sentence must be supplied from verse 8. As noted in the discussion of that verse, **want** is from *boulomai*, and could be translated “I command,” or “I purpose.” Paul is not expressing his opinion or giving advice. His words carry divine authority. Men are commanded to pray and **likewise** women are mandated to adorn themselves in a manner fitting worship of God.

**Adorn** is from *kosmeō*, from which the English word “cosmetic” derives. It means “to arrange,” “to put in order,” or “to make ready.” A woman must arrange herself appropriately to join God's people as they worship. Part of that important preparation involves the outside, the wearing of **proper clothing**. **Proper** translates *kosmiō*, which, like *kosmeō*, derives from the noun *kosmos*. *Kosmos* is often translated “world,” but it really means “order,” or “system.” It is the antonym of “chaos.” *Katastolē* (**clothing**) encompasses not only the clothing itself, but also the look—the whole demeanor. Women are to come to the corporate worship ready to face the Lord. They must not come in slovenly disarray or personal display because of an unbecoming wardrobe or demeanor. There is a place for lovely clothes that reflect the humble grace of a woman, as evidenced in Proverbs 31:22, “Her clothing is fine linen and purple.” Proper adornment on the outside reflects a properly adorned heart.

From the general principle in the first part of verse 9, Paul moves to specifics in the latter part of the verse. In so doing, he hints at some of the practices that were causing confusion in the assembly. He starts with commenting about **braided hair**, a term that can generally mean “hair styles.” His point is not that women should be indifferent to their hair. That would contradict what he had just said about careful preparation to put oneself in order. Paul's intent is not to forbid certain kinds of hairdos, as if some reflected a more

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worshipful attitude than others. He is confronting any gaudy, ostentatious hairdo that would distract attention from the Lord and the purposes that are holy. Women in that culture often wove **gold, pearls**, or other jewelry through their hairdos to call attention to themselves and their wealth or beauty.

There is nothing wrong with owning jewelry. Solomon's bride in Song of Solomon wore gold and silver jewelry (Song 1:10–11; 4:9), as did Rebekah (Gen. 24:53). There is an appropriate time and place for that, as affirmed by the words of Isaiah 61:10: "I will rejoice greatly in the Lord, my soul will exult in my God; for He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels." But jewelry was (and is) often used as a way of flaunting a woman's wealth or calling attention to herself in an unwholesome way. It is that preoccupation which Paul forbids in the place of worship.

When a woman dresses for the worship service to attract attention to herself, she has violated the purpose of worship (cf. 1 Peter 3:3–4). The fourth-century church father John Chrysostom wrote,

And what then is modest apparel? Such as covers them completely and decently, and not with superfluous ornaments; for the one is decent and the other is not. What? Do you approach God to pray with brodered hair and ornaments of gold? Are you come to a ball? to a marriage feast? to a carnival? There such costly things might have been seasonable: here not one of them is wanted. You are come to pray, to ask pardon for your sins, to plead for your offences, beseeching the Lord, and hoping to render him propitious to you. Away with such hypocrisy! (Cited in Alfred Plummer, "The Pastoral Epistles," in *The Expositor's Bible*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll [New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 1903], 101).

Another way women in Paul's day flaunted their wealth and drew attention to themselves was by wearing **costly garments**. The expensive dresses worn by wealthy women could cost up to 7,000 denarii. Pliny the Elder, a first-century Roman historian, described a dress of Lollia Paulina, wife of the Emperor Caligula, which was worth several hundred thousand dollars by today's standards (*Natural History* 9.58). Dresses of the common women could cost as much as 500–800 denarii. To put that into perspective, the average daily wage of a common laborer was one denarius. Because of the extreme expense, most women probably owned only two or three nice dresses in their lives. For a wealthy woman to enter the worship service wearing an expensive dress would shift the focus of attention to her. It could also stir up envy on the part of the poorer women (or their husbands).

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Such showy displays were criticized even by non-Christian writers. In his sixth satire, the first-century Roman poet Juvenal wrote,

There is nothing that a woman will not permit herself to do, nothing that she deems shameful, and when she encircles her neck with green emeralds and fastens huge pearls to her elongated ears, so important is the business of beautification; so numerous are the tiers and stories piled one another on her head! In the meantime she pays no attention to her husband!

In his work *The Sacrifices of Cain and Abel*, the first-century Jewish philosopher Philo described a prostitute. He portrayed her as wearing many gold chains and bracelets, with her hair done up in elaborate and gaudy braids. Her eyes were marked with pencil lines, her eyebrows smothered in paint. She wore expensive clothes embroidered lavishly with flowers.

The wearing of expensive clothes and jewelry that drew attention away from the Lord was obviously inappropriate for women in the church. They were supposed to be demonstrating humble godliness, not appearing like prostitutes or showy pagan women. To come to church so attired was at best a distraction from honoring God, and at worst an attempt to seduce the men of the church.

How does a woman discern the sometimes fine line between proper dress and dressing to be the center of attention? The answer starts in the intent of the heart. A woman should examine her motives and goals for the way she dresses. Is her intent to show the grace and beauty of womanhood? Is it to show her love and devotion to her husband and his goodness to her? Is it to reveal a humble heart devoted to worshiping God? Or is it to call attention to herself, and flaunt her wealth and beauty? Or worse, to attempt to allure men sexually? A woman who focuses on worshiping God will consider carefully how she is dressed, because her heart will dictate her wardrobe and appearance.

## THE ATTITUDE OF WOMEN

**modestly and discreetly, (2:9a)**

These two attitudes are to characterize a woman's approach to her appearance in worship. *Aidōs* (**modestly**) appears only here in the New Testament. It refers to modesty mixed with humility. At its core is the idea of shame (cf. the Authorized Version's translation "shamefacedness"). A godly woman would be ashamed and feel guilt if she distracted someone from worshiping God, or contributed to someone's lustful thought. A woman characterized by this attitude will dress so as not to be the source of any temptation. The word also has the connotation of rejecting anything dishonorable to God.

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Some would even suggest the meaning of the term as grief over a sense of sin. A godly woman hates sin so much that she would avoid anything that would engender sin in anyone. This is certainly consistent with the words of our Lord, who said,

Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it is better for him that a heavy millstone be hung around his neck, and that he be drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes!... See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you, that their angels in heaven continually behold the face of My Father who is in heaven. (Matt. 18:6–7, 10)

Better to be dead than lead another believer into sin!

The basic sense of *sōphrosunēs* (**discreetly**) is self-control, especially over sexual passions. It, too, is a rare word, appearing twice in this passage (cf. 2:15), and in Acts 26:25. The Greeks valued this virtue highly. Euripides called it “the fairest gift of the gods” (Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1946], 4:224). Plato, in *The Republic*, called it one of the four cardinal virtues. Women are to exercise control so that neither their passions nor anyone else’s are excited.

## THE TESTIMONY OF WOMEN

**but rather by means of good works, as befits women making a claim to godliness. (2:10)**

Those women who profess godliness should support that testimony with their demeanor and appearance. Beyond those areas, they are to support it by being adorned **by means of good works**. *Agathōn* (**good**) refers to **works** that are genuinely good, not merely good in appearance. That **befits women making a claim to godliness**. **Making a claim** is from *epangellō*, which means “to make a public announcement.” **Good works** must mark Christian women, who by virtue of their profession of love to Jesus Christ have publicly committed themselves to pursuing **godliness**. **Godliness** translates *theosebeia*, which refers to reverence to God. To affirm that you are a Christian is to claim to love, worship, honor, and fear the Lord. A woman cannot claim to fear God and yet disregard what His Word says about her behavior. She cannot contradict God’s design for her in the church and yet claim to love Him.

## THE ROLE OF WOMEN

**Let a woman quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. (2:11–12)**



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Paul continues his discussion of women's duties by defining their role as learners rather than teachers during the public worship. While they are not to be the public teachers in that context, neither are they to be shut out of the learning process as was generally the case in ancient times. The verb in verse 11 is an imperative form of *manthanō* ("to learn," "to be informed"), from which the Greek word translated "disciple" or "learner" derives. When Paul says **let a woman ... receive instruction**, he is not requesting, rather he commands that the women be taught. That Paul is here discussing the order of the church (cf. 3:15) shows the learning he speaks of was to take place in that context (cf. Acts 2:42). It should be noted that despite the claims of some to the contrary, teaching and worship are not mutually exclusive. Rather, knowledge of God and His Word helps stimulate worship. Worship is to be in spirit and in truth (cf. John 4:20–24).

It may seem obvious to us that women should be taught God's Word, since they are spiritually equal in Christ and the commands of the New Testament are to all (1 Peter 2:1–2). It was not at all obvious, however, to those who came from a Jewish background. First-century Judaism did not hold women in high esteem. While not barred from attending synagogue, neither were they encouraged to learn. In fact, most rabbis refused to teach women, and some likened it to throwing pearls to pigs.

Nor was the status of women in Greek society much better. William Barclay writes,

The respectable Greek woman led a very confined life. She lived in her own quarters into which no one but her husband came. She did not even appear at meals. She never at any time appeared on the street alone; she never went to any public assembly. (*The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975], 67)

The existence of such a mind-set at Ephesus may have contributed to the reaction of the women against such denigration. Unfortunately, some went too far, overreacting to their suppression by seeking a dominant position. Before Paul confronts that overreaction, however, he affirms their right to learn.

The prevalent Jewish tradition about women did not come from the Old Testament. The Old Testament affirmed that women have a spiritual status equal to that of men. The Mosaic law was given to all Israel, women as well as men (Deut. 1:1). Both were to teach it to their children (Deut. 6:4–7; Prov. 6:20). The protection of the law applied equally to women (cf. Ex. 21:28–32). Women had inheritance rights (Num. 36:1–12). Men and women alike participated in the Jewish religious feasts (cf. Ex. 12:3; Deut. 16:9–15). The single greatest spiritual vow, the Nazarite vow, was open to both men and women (Num. 6:2). Women were involved in spiritual service (Ex. 38:8; Neh. 7:67). Nor did God hesitate to deal directly with women (Gen. 3:13; 16:7–13; Judg. 13:3).

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Spiritual equality between the sexes did not, however, do away with the difference in their roles. There were no queens in either Israel or Judah (Athaliah was a usurper). It is true that Deborah served as a judge (Judg. 4:4–5:31). Her case, however, was unique. Dr. Robert L. Saucy comments,

There may be instances when the regular pattern of God's order may have to be set aside due to unusual circumstances. When, for example, the husband and father is absent, the woman of the house assumes the headship of the family. So it would appear, there may be unusual circumstances when male leadership is unavailable for one reason or another. At such times God may use women to accomplish his purposes even as he used Deborah. ("The Negative Case Against the Ordination of Women," in Kenneth S. Kantzer and Stanley N. Gundry, eds., *Perspectives on Evangelical Theology* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979], 285)

It is significant that Deborah declined to lead the military campaign against the Canaanites, deferring instead to a man, Barak. No women served as priests. None of the authors of the Old Testament were women. No woman had an on-going prophetic (speaking before people) ministry like that of Elijah, Elisha, or the other prophets. While Miriam (Ex. 15:20), Deborah (Judg. 4:4), Huldah (2 Kings 22:14), and Isaiah's wife (Isa. 8:3) are called prophetesses, none had a permanent calling to that office. Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah gave only one recorded prophecy, and Isaiah's wife none. She is called a prophetess because she gave birth to a child whose name had prophetic meaning. A fifth woman mentioned as a prophetess, Noadiah, was a false prophetess (Neh. 6:14). While God spoke through women on a few limited occasions, no woman had an on-going role of preaching and teaching.

The New Testament, like the Old, teaches the spiritual equality and differing roles of the sexes. Galatians 3:28 teaches the absolute spiritual equality of men and women in Christ. While many use that verse to justify women assuming leadership roles in the church, the context shows that Paul is speaking of salvation (cf. Gal. 3:22, 24, 26, 27). Again Saucy writes,

The interpretive question [in Gal. 3:28] is: What is the distinction between male and female which is overcome in Christ? To phrase it another way in light of the apostle's statement "for you are all one in Christ Jesus," what is the "oneness" which male and female share in Christ? We would like to suggest ... that the answers to these questions do not concern the functional order between man and woman at all. Rather the issue, as in the other two pairs mentioned [Jews and Greeks, slaves and freemen], concerns spiritual status before God.... To impart the issue of the functional orders of human society into this passage is to impute a meaning not justified by a valid contextual exegesis. There is therefore no more basis for abolishing the order between man and

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woman in the church from Galatians 3:28 than for abolishing an order between believing parents and children or believing citizens and rulers. For they are all one in Christ in or out of the organization of the church. (Saucy, 281–82)

That interpretation is further strengthened by the use of the general terms “male” and “female.” In every Pauline passage dealing with functional roles, the terms “man” and “woman,” or “husband” and “wife” appear. “Why, if the apostle is speaking of the functional relationship in Galatians 3:28, does he not use the language which he uses in every other passage? Why does he not say, ‘there is neither man nor woman’ in Christ rather than ‘male’ and ‘female’?” (Saucy, 283). Oneness in Christ did not obliterate the distinctions between Jews and Gentiles. Nor did it remove the functional differences between slaves and masters (cf. 1 Cor. 7:20–24). Why, then, should we assume it did so between men and women?

In no way does the New Testament treat women as spiritual inferiors. The first person Jesus revealed His messiahship to was a woman (John 4:25–26). Jesus healed women (Mark 5:25–34; Luke 13:11–13). In contrast to the prevailing practice of the rabbis, He taught women (Luke 10:38–42). Women ministered to Jesus and the disciples (Luke 8:2–3). Following His resurrection, Jesus appeared first to a woman (Mark 16:9; John 20:11–18). Women and men were involved in the prayer services of the early church (Acts 1:13–14). Peter reminds men that women are to be “[granted] honor as fellow [heirs] of the grace of life” (1 Peter 3:7). The fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:21–22) are for both men and women. In short, all the promises, commands, and blessings of the New Testament apply equally to women and men.

As in the Old Testament, spiritual equality does not preclude differing roles. There are no women pastor-teachers, evangelists, or elders in the New Testament. None of the authors of the New Testament were women. The New Testament nowhere records a sermon or teaching of a woman. While the daughters of Philip are said to have prophesied (Acts 21:9), neither the occasion nor the message is defined. There is no reason to assume they had an on-going preaching ministry, or that they taught during the public worship. They, like Mary the mother of Jesus (Luke 1:46ff.), or Anna (Luke 2:36–39), delivered some message of truth elsewhere. As noted in chapter 6 of this volume, a comparison of 1 Corinthians 11:5 and 14:34 indicates women are permitted to pray and speak the Word, but Paul here makes clear that such allowance is not in the assembly of the church.

When the church gathers, however, women are to listen to the men who teach **quietly ... with entire submissiveness**. *Hēsuchia* appears at the beginning of verse 11 (**quietly**), and the end of verse 12 (**quiet**), thus bracketing Paul’s teaching on the role of women with the principle of silence. **Submissiveness** translates *hupotagē*, which means “to line up under.”



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**With entire** emphasizes the complete subjection called for. In the context of the worship, then, women are to be silent and content in the role of the learner.

Some have tried to evade the plain meaning of the text by arguing that *hēsuchia* means a meek and quiet spirit. Women, they contend, can preach or teach as long as they do it with the proper attitude. Some go to the opposite extreme and use this text as a prohibition against any talking during church by women. Neither of those revisionist interpretations is valid, however. The context makes the meaning unmistakable to the honest reader.

In verse 12, Paul actually interprets the meaning of verse 11. He defines exactly what he means by women staying quiet in the worship: **But I do not** (as the apostle of Jesus Christ, who speaks through me) **allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man.** Women are to keep quiet in the sense of not teaching. They are to demonstrate subjection by not usurping the authority of the elder or preacher. That is true not because women are in any sense inferior to men, but because God's law commands it (1 Cor. 14:34), in line with His design for the weaker vessels. Those who insist that subordination and equality are mutually exclusive would do well to consider Christ's relationship to the Father. While on earth, Jesus assumed a subordinate role, yet He was in no way inferior. First Corinthians 11:3 states, "But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ."

*Epitrepō* (**allow**) is always used in the New Testament to speak of permitting someone to do what they desire to do. Paul's choice of words may imply that some women in Ephesus desired to be the public preachers, and thus have authority over the congregation—as in today's church. Paul, however, speaking as the official apostle of Jesus Christ, does not **allow** that. The role of the elder as evangelist or pastor-teacher is only for men.

The present infinitive *didaskein* (**to teach**) would best be translated "to be a teacher." The noted Greek grammarians H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey wrote the following on the distinction between the aorist infinitive and the present infinitive:

It is well to notice particularly the difference between the aorist and present infinitive. The aorist infinitive denotes that which is eventual or particular, while the present infinitive indicates a condition or process. Thus *pisteusai* [aorist] is to exercise faith on a given occasion, while *pisteuein* [present] is to be a believer. (*A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* [Toronto: MacMillan, 1957], 199)

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By using the present infinitive instead of the aorist, Paul does not forbid women to teach under appropriate conditions and circumstances, but to fill the office and role of the pastor or teacher in the life of the church.

Paul also adds the prohibition that forbids women to **exercise authority over a man**. *Authentein* (**exercise authority over**), another present infinitive, appears only here in the New Testament. Some have attempted to evade the force of Paul's prohibition by arbitrarily supposing that *authentein* should properly be translated "abusive authority." Women, according to that view, can exercise authority over men so long as it is not abusive authority. A study of the extrabiblical uses of *authentein*, however, makes clear that the word means simply authority. It carries no negative connotation, such as abusive or domineering authority. Paul, then, in an unqualified directive, forbids women from exercising any type of authority over men in the church. It is the "elders [clearly men, since 1 Tim. 3:2 states they must be 'the husband of one wife'] who rule" (1 Tim. 5:17).

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That does not entirely rule out women teaching. Priscilla and Aquila both instructed Apollos (Acts 18:26), but in private and not in the worship of the church. And women can and must teach other women (cf. Titus 2:3–4). Nor does it mean women cannot pray, merely that they are not to lead the prayers during the public worship of the church. It does not mean that women do not have spiritual gifts in the area of public speaking and leadership. The issue is where they exercise those gifts.

Some question whether women can fill leadership roles on the mission field in the absence of men. It is significant that Paul, who wrote this passage, was himself the greatest missionary the world has ever seen. Yet he made no exceptions for the mission field. God does not violate His principles for the sake of expediency.

Through the years there have been a number of good examples of how to cope with a shortage of men on the mission field. I know missionary women personally who found themselves in a situation where no men were present and they alone were biblically trained to handle the Word. Rather than violate the Scripture, they would prepare the message or lesson and teach it to a native man, who would be the preacher when the church gathered.

Women must stop believing the devil's lie that the only role of significance is that of leadership. People usually desire places of prominence not to humbly serve others, but to boost their own egos and gain power and control. Leaders, however, bear a heavy burden and responsibility, and the subordinate role often is one of greater peace and happiness. Subordination is not punishment, but privilege.

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## THE DESIGN OF WOMEN

**For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being quite deceived, fell into transgression. (2:13–14)**

A popular view today is that woman's subordinate role is a corruption of God's perfect design that was the result of the Fall. Since the effects of the curse are intended to be reversed in Christ, it is argued, differing male and female roles should be abolished. Paul, however, establishes woman's subordinate role not in the Fall, but in the divine order of original creation. **For it was Adam who was first created**, he writes, **and then Eve**. God made woman after man to be his suitable helper (Gen. 2:18). The priority of man's role is obvious.

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Nor was Paul's teaching prompted by some cultural situation at Ephesus and hence not applicable today, as some argue. He not only appeals here to the creation account in Genesis 2, but also taught this same truth to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 11:8–9).

Paul does not derive women's role from the Fall, but he uses that event as further corroboration of God's intention. He points out that **it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being quite deceived, fell into transgression**. Genesis 3:1–7 chronicles the tragic account of what happened when Eve usurped the headship role:

Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, lest you die.' " And the serpent said to the woman, "You surely shall not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.

The whole human race thus fell into depravity and judgment. Eve was not suited by nature to assume the position of ultimate responsibility. When she stepped out from under the protection and leadership of Adam, she was highly vulnerable and fell. And, of course, when Adam violated his leadership role and followed Eve (though **it was not he who was deceived**), the perversion of God's order was complete. The Fall resulted, then, not simply from disobedience to God's command, but from violating God's

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appointed roles for the sexes. That is not to say that Adam was less culpable than Eve, or that she was more defective. Although he was not deceived by Satan, as was Eve, Adam still chose to disobey God. As the head of their relationship, he bore ultimate responsibility. That is why the New Testament relates the Fall to Adam's sin, not Eve's (Rom. 5:12–21; 1 Cor. 15:21–22). Headship by the man, then, was part of God's design from the beginning, and he bears the responsibility for its success or failure. The tragic experience of the garden encounter with the serpent confirmed the wisdom of that design.

## THE CONTRIBUTION OF WOMEN

**But women shall be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint. (2:15)**

**Preserved** is from *sōzō*, the common New Testament word for salvation. The word can also mean “to rescue,” “to preserve safe and unharmed,” “to heal,” “to set free,” or “to deliver from.” It appears a number of times in the New Testament without reference to spiritual salvation (cf. Matt. 8:25; 9:21–22; 10:22; 24:22; 27:40, 42, 49; 2 Tim. 4:18). Paul obviously does not intend to teach that women are eternally saved from the wages of sin **through the bearing of children**. That would contradict the New Testament's teaching that salvation is by grace through faith alone (cf. Rom. 3:19–20). The future tense and the use of the plural pronoun **they** indicate that he was not even referring to Eve. The plural and the absence of any connection to the context show Paul was not referring to Mary, the mother of Jesus, as some suggest.

Paul teaches here that although a woman precipitated the Fall and women bear that responsibility, yet they may be **preserved** from that stigma through childbearing. The rescue, the delivery, the freeing of women from the stigma of having led the race into sin happens when they bring up a righteous seed. What a perfect counter! Women are far from being second-class citizens because they have the primary responsibility for rearing godly children. Mothers spend far more time with their children than do their fathers, and thus have the greater influence. Fathers cannot know the intimate relationship with their children that their mother establishes from pregnancy, birth, infancy, and early childhood. Paul's point is that while a woman may have led the race into sin, women have the privilege of leading the race out of sin to godliness. That does not mean that God wants all women to bear children; some He doesn't even want married (1 Cor. 7:25–40). Paul speaks in general terms. The pain associated with childbirth was the punishment for the woman's sin (Gen. 3:16), but the joy and privilege of child rearing delivers women from the stigma of that sin.

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For women to reverse the blight that has befallen them in the Fall and fulfill their calling they need to raise a godly seed. To do that, they must **continue in faith and love**, where their salvation really rests. And they must continue in **sanctity** (holiness) **with self-restraint** (the same word translated “discreetly” in verse 9). It is the very appearance, demeanor, and behavior demanded of believing women in the church that becomes their deliverance from any inferior status, as they live godly and raise godly children.

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In this passage we see how God has perfectly balanced the roles of the sexes. (For a complete discussion of the design of God for men and women in the church, see my book *Different by Design* [Wheaton, Ill.: Victor, 1994].) Men are to be the leaders in the church and the family. Women are kept from any accusation of inferiority through the godly influence they have in the lives of their precious children. For the church to depart from this divine order is to perpetuate the disaster of the Fall.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). *1 Timothy*. Chicago: Moody Press, 77-90.