

THE MISSION-LIFESTYLE SETTING OF 1 TIM 2:8–15

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Literature on both sides of the issue of women in marriage and ministry continues to grow, with scholars espousing variations of traditional hierarchical, complementarian and egalitarian positions on this difficult subject.¹ In view of a recent study on 1 Tim 2:9–15 and the role of women in the Church² I thought it worthwhile to give the matter my open-minded attention in the spirit of the scholarly “once more” in the hope that it might shed some additional light on a perplexing passage that continues to cause considerable discussion among evangelicals. While the book itself did not move beyond a restatement of the hierarchical position, it did force me to go back to the Biblical text and reconsider exegetical options. In this article I will focus on what now seems to me to be the critical point in Paul’s³ use of the creation/fall/promise theme in 1 Tim 2:13–15, which has allowed me to appreciate in a better way the valid insights of the competing positions. Paul’s

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¹ Some hierarchicalists wish to be known as complementarians and define the term in a hierarchicalist sense, while some egalitarians also wish to lay claim to the word, defining it as complementary function within the context of equality. The literature on the relation of man and woman in Scripture is large, and readers are referred to comprehensive articles and bibliographies that have appeared in recent issues of *JETS*: G. P. Hugenberger, “Women in Church Office: Hermeneutics or Exegesis? A Survey of Approaches to 1 Tim 2:8–15,” *JETS* 35 (1992) 341–360; D. R. Kimberly, “1 Tim 2:15: A Possible Understanding of a Difficult Text,” *JETS* 35 (1992) 481–486; R. W. Pierce, “Evangelicals and Gender Roles in the 1990s: 1 Tim 2:8–15: A Test Case,” *JETS* 36 (1993) 343–355; R. L. Saucy, “Women’s Prohibition to Teach Men: An Investigation into Its Meaning and Contemporary Application,” *JETS* 37 (1994) 79–97. For a succinct summary of the “complementarian” hierarchical view that 1 Tim 2:12 disallows women from the higher levels of leadership and teaching, with indications of a new Mishna of criteria for recognizing their gifts up to certain points in graded scales, see W. Grudem, “But What *Should* Women Do in the Church?,” *CBMW NEWS* 1/2 (November 1995).

² *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9–15 in Its Literary, Cultural, and Theological Contexts* (ed. H. S. Baldwin, A. J. Köstenberger and T. R. Schreiner; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995).

³ I am assuming Pauline authorship of the pastorals, being persuaded of the greater evidence for Paul as author than for non-Pauline or fragments-of-Paul theories. One cannot scientifically distinguish between genuine and nongenuine fragments in the pastorals, given the simple and general directions Paul adduces here. Arguments that an early catholic episcopacy appears in his criteria for leadership are weak in light of the fact that Paul does not go beyond what is found in his earlier letters—although, as we shall see, the fact that he is writing near the end of his career with additional experience of the practical problems of churchly life would explain his concern for quality of leadership in the Church. As for stylistic and vocabulary differences from the earlier letters, sample data are too brief for definitive conclusions. The lateness at this point in Paul’s career, and his plea for a more effective missionary witness, would lead to the view that the pastorals are a last will and testament. This would account for Paul’s pastoral style of address.

argument is based on Genesis 1–3 and belongs to the immediate sense unit of 1 Tim 2:8–15, which in turn lies within the larger context of the pastorals as a mission genre with specific exhortation to effective Christian lifestyle. I suggest we look first at the difficult text of 2:13–15 and try to answer the question, “Why would Paul be saying this?” We will then work outward to the larger sense units that lie in concentric circles around our problem text. My view will be that Paul’s foremost concern in the pastorals is founded on (1) the mission work of Christ as the ground, (2) the mission mandate to the Church as the consequence, and (3) a Christian lifestyle that will maximize the mission witness both outside and within the Church as the believer’s responsibility. Hence the directives to men and women in 1 Tim 2:8–15 are addressed to those whose lifestyle is out of order in the hope that they will choose to become faithful in their mission responsibilities as did Eve after the fall when she reunited with her husband and began the faithful bloodline that led to the Messiah and his offspring. Since similar failures and restitutions in regard to godly lifestyle occur in every time and place in this mission age, and in view of the fact that Paul’s letters generally utilize the language of gentle suasion rather than fiat, his appeal would not be limited to first-century Ephesus but would address every generation, including our own.

I. INITIAL OBSERVATIONS ON 1 TIM 2:13–15 AND GENESIS 3

In dealing with the question of women in ministry at Ephesus, Paul follows very closely the theological pattern of Genesis 3 and reprises its authoritative truth for Timothy and his Ephesian audience. He emphasizes several principal points in the Genesis narrative. First, “Adam was formed first, then Eve” (1 Tim 2:13), reflecting the order of creation in Gen 2:7–22. Adam’s historical priority should be understood in the larger context of the creation narrative, for a new unity has been constituted in the creation of the first man and woman as they become united in one flesh: “The Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.’ . . . The man said, ‘This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called “woman,” for she was taken out of man.’ For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh” (2:18, 23–24).

This leads to the observation that the sin of the serpent in Genesis 3 (assuming his prior rebellion against God and subsequent fall) was his assault on God’s interpretation of the family unit. He addressed the derivative and dependent Eve in isolation as an independent and autonomous individual apart from Adam. It was Eve’s sin to accept the serpent’s deconstruction of God’s creative design by choosing to act independently of her husband. Eve’s deception and sin lay not in the fact that as the second to be created (“woman”) she was somehow inferior in moral discernment and character, for Adam was also deceived and sinned, since all sin lies in deception regarding the truth of God the Creator. Paul implies that the woman was deceived directly by the serpent, whereas the man allowed himself to be deceived indirectly by his wife as a secondary agent of the serpent. Accord-

ingly Eve's sin lay in making an autonomous decision apart from the family unity of husband and wife, the "one flesh" of Gen 2:23-24. Adam and Eve were intended as a unit to uphold the image of God who created them. Their sin lay in not maintaining the unity of God in whose image they had been created: "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness.' . . . So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (1:26-27).⁴ This passage implies that "man" is to be defined as "male and female" in interrelationship, for together they reflect ectypally or derivatively God's archetypal social nature of plurality in unity ("Let us make") and together are to rule over creation ("and let them rule," 1:26, 28).

Paul makes this point in 1 Cor 11:11 when he asserts that "in the Lord" man and woman are not independent of one another: "In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman," for each is dependent on the other. An autonomous desire on the part of one for personal fulfillment at the expense of the other must never take precedence over mutual consultation and agreement, for these flow from the ontological unity of husband and wife.

Viewed in this light, Paul's word of remedy for Eve's generic offspring at Ephesus and their sins of individualism is consistent with the Biblical sense of the Gen 3:15 remedy: "But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety" (1 Tim 2:15). Assuming Eve's repentance of her assertion of independence from God and Adam and her resumption of marriage responsibilities and desire to live henceforth as a godly person, evidence of her salvation lay in exercising her unique gift to bear the covenant line from which would issue future believers and the genealogical faith line leading to the Messiah (Gen 3:15) and his offspring. That was to be her mission and proper lifestyle. Accordingly, as Eve's redemption lay in her repentance and godly faithfulness in beginning the covenant line leading eventually to Christ and his lineage as well as the undoing of the serpent's deception with the crushing of his head, the Ephesian women who are flaunting their autonomy and refusing to marry are urged to see their mission and lifestyle in the manner of repentant Eve. This seems to be Paul's inference in 1 Tim 2:15 where marriageable women in the church will actually marry: "If they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety," and so "work out" their eternal salvation (cf. Phil 2:12), they will exhibit in public view the reality of their salvation, and thus "through child-bearing" they will continue the covenant line wherein the divine word of blessing and cursing can be heard and accepted or rejected by the next generation of children. This is a godly woman's high and irreplaceable contribution to evangelism and her legitimate fulfillment of Christ's and the apostles' mandate to mission, as it was at the beginning with Eve.

⁴ See R. G. Gruenler, *The Trinity in the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986) esp. 13-15. See also Saucy on the family model and the complementary relationship of husband and wife ("Women's Prohibition" 93-97).

God decreed by his sovereign grace that neither the serpent nor Eve and Adam who did the serpent's bidding would have power to make the first generation the last. God has desired to draw his elect from future generations of humankind in order to fulfill his plan of salvation. Christ as the second Adam has crushed the head of the serpent in his inaugural redemptive work by faithfully upholding the reproductive image of God, whereas the first Adam and his wife failed in their fall. At his second coming, when the last generation of this mission age has been born and has had the opportunity to respond to the gospel, Christ will bring to completion his redemptive and "crushing" work. At the beginning of the human race and God's first unfolding of Biblical history, a repentant Eve joined with her husband and gave birth to the seed line that led to Christ and future generations of believers. Similarly, says Paul, women who become wives and faithfully bear children are crucial evangelists and missionaries who bring new lives into being and nurture them, as Timothy's godly mother Eunice and grandmother Lois nurtured Timothy (2 Tim 1:5; 3:15). Timothy in turn is encouraged by Paul to take up his calling with renewed vigor and to "fan into flame the gift of God" by nurturing the church according to his divinely given gifts (1:6-7).

Accordingly at the heart of Paul's argument in 1 Timothy 2 is the theme of evangelism and missionary witness, reflecting the mission work of Christ in the believer's godly lifestyle. Only as heresy hinders sound doctrine and evangelism does Paul address its false claims and influence, but only in a secondary sense. In the context of chap. 2 false teaching encourages the flouting of mature teaching by the immature, who flaunt their individual autonomy through claims to across-the-board celibacy. In view of Paul's emphasis on mission lifestyle in the pastorals we may understand him to be saying that faithful childbearing wives manifest one of the highest callings for evangelism in God's creation design. It is not a second-class calling, as false teachers in the Ephesian church are instructing single women (1 Tim 4:3). What Paul says to the women of Ephesus he says to the women at Corinth: "For as woman came from man" originally, so also from Eden onwards "man is born of woman. But everything comes from God" (1 Cor 11:12). That is, God's plan in Biblical history is for the elect to be born and to come to faith in successive generations. That happens only where there is marriage and a sense of reproductive equality between a husband and a wife, in the complementary sense of the "one flesh" doctrine of creation, when husband and wife faithfully fulfill their God-given gifts and do not reject them by a rebellious desire to act independently, as was the serpent's deception of Eve in the fall.

The underlying message for Christian women and men in 1 Timothy 2 conforms consistently with the NT pattern of servanthood, whose exemplar is Christ, the great servant who faithfully fulfilled his role as Savior. Paul reminds his Philippian readers of this fact: "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus [who] made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant" (Phil 2:5-11). This exemplary model of the Christian's mission also lies behind Paul's sustained exhortation to the Corinthians not

to flaunt their individualism but for each believer to fulfill his or her designated role as sovereignly assigned by the Holy Spirit for the good of the whole body: “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. . . . All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines” (1 Cor 12:7, 11). As the servant bridegroom, Christ expects his bride the Church to take her marriage to him seriously and to produce offspring in the genealogical mission, which lies behind the positive declaration of Paul in 1 Tim 2:15.

In light of Paul’s understanding of the wider implications of the “one and the many” relationship, we may observe that the creation line of authority may be seen to be downward, from higher to lower. It proceeds from God to creation and, within the creation order of Adam and Eve and their progeny, from the spiritual to the cognitive to the appetitive. Each level operates according to God-given covenantal laws, the higher taking precedence over and informing the lower.⁵ For Adam and Eve and their offspring the line of respect and obedience must begin with the spiritual, as the creature honors the Creator by bringing into covenantal control both intellectual thought and physical appetites. In creation before the fall the hierarchy of families is covenanted socially by appropriate language as God places divinely established covenantal parameters on every level. God’s single warning to Adam and Eve is that they are not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This word is spoken by a benevolent Creator for his glory and for the good of his creatures. God knows that man and woman will know evil inappropriately by stepping outside divinely determined parameters and committing evil, and that self-willed evil will lead inevitably to separation and death because of God’s holiness (Gen 2:16–17; 3:3). Autonomous action apart from responsibility to God’s covenant will not lead to life, as the serpent implies in his false teaching (3:4–5).

The wisdom of God’s warning is borne out in the description of the fall narrated in Genesis 3. The serpent reverses the order of creation by assuming the form of a serpent, thereby symbolizing the doing of theology from the bottom up rather than from the top down (from the physical, not the spiritual). He normalizes the physical kingdom as authoritative in defiance of God’s mandate to Adam that as God’s highest creation, image-bearer and vicegerent he is to work from the top down by naming and exercising authority over the animal kingdom (1:27–30; 2:19–20). In defiance of God’s created order the serpent works upward from the animal level, redefines the order of things and deconstructs God’s interpretation by tempting the loyalty of the second created human, Eve, when pride of place and propriety of address belong to the first person created, Adam the firstborn, from whom

⁵ See R. Hooker (ca. 1554–1600), *Treatise on the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, and his view of the temptation in Eden. The fall of our first parents lay in relinquishing the higher and distinctive image of God in their created makeup and falling into unconstrained animality. As C. S. Lewis summarizes Hooker’s image: “To disobey your *proper law* (i.e., the law God makes for a being such as you) means to find yourself obeying one of God’s lower laws: e.g., if, when walking on a slippery pavement, you neglect the law of Prudence, you suddenly find yourself obeying the law of gravitation” (*The Problem of Pain* [New York: Macmillan, 1973] 82 n. 1).

Eve has been formed as a complementary helpmate. Adam is *primus inter pares*, "first among equals." This is Paul's point in 2 Tim 2:13 ("For Adam was formed first, then Eve"). Adam deserves respect as the first created. The serpent proceeds in his reversal of the creation order to work upon Eve in isolation from Adam, ignoring her unity with her husband. The serpent moves upward from the lowest level of physical appetite (the forbidden fruit) to the level of mental cognition and volition (the forbidden proposition), employing distorted logic to contest God's sovereign right to name what is right and wrong, thus invading the spiritual domain. At the same time he undermines Eve's responsibility to respond in unity with her husband as God's representative, which would lead to their condemning the serpent's propositions and upholding the holiness of God. The serpent lures her, and through her her husband, to choose according to the lowest animal level that is now infected by spiritual, intellectual and physical rebellion.⁶

Had Eve been faithful to the image of God by which she was created and covenanted she would have deferred to her husband as the source of her life and consulted with him, and together they would have named the serpent as evil and rejected his wicked appeal. They would then have successfully passed probation and crushed the head of Satan then and there at the beginning of human history. Later in the historic line of redemption the offspring of Eve's seed, Jesus the Messiah, will be tempted along the same lines as Eve and Adam, where sensual appeals to food and power are again presented by the same serpent through a distorted use of God's word. There, however, the appeals are properly judged to be evil by Jesus through his faithfulness to the words of God in Scripture (Matt 4:1–11). Jesus the Messiah successfully passes probation through his active work of righteousness, whereas Adam and Eve did not. Consequently Jesus becomes the life-giving progenitor of the redemptive line as the second Adam (Rom 5:12–21). It is the continuation of this Christ-centered genealogy by marriage and child-bearing on the part of eligible Christian women for which Paul is pleading in 1 Timothy 2.

In the original Eden temptation of Eve, the fallen serpent infects paradise and the family of humankind with the virus of autonomous pride and effectively atomizes the first human family, reversing the created order by working from the bottom level of physical appetite to the intellectual level of the false proposition. Highlighting the woman's role in the original fall through the great reversal, Paul in 1 Tim 2:13–14 implies that Eve arrogated to herself the right to determine autonomously what was good rather than rejecting the serpent's blasphemy in union with her husband in light of God's authoritative word. She refused to confer with her husband regard-

⁶ This rebellion lies at the heart of the controversy between a Christian view of creation and contemporary naturalism. Naturalism maintains that the ultimate meaning of life is defined by a self-contained natural process without reference to God, whereas the Christian view of man and woman sees them as bearers of the divine image who have responsibility for naming and superintending creation for the service and glory of God.

ing the serpent's redefinition of God's word and therefore failed to represent the holy image of God with one voice and as one flesh with Adam in a final and definitive condemnation of the tempter's proposition. Instead Eve compounded her autonomous rejection of God's word by speaking to her husband after, not before, the evil spell came upon her. Thus, ironically, she became an evangelist for the serpent rather than serving as an evangelist to the serpent. The autonomous women at Ephesus whom Paul is addressing are acting in a similar manner because they have listened to the serpent who is speaking through false teachers that they are not to marry, thus becoming false evangelists with an improper message and lifestyle.⁷

Paul's central point in the immediate passage of 1 Tim 2:13–14 seems to be that, since Eve allowed herself to be deceived by the serpent's spell and did not consult with her husband with whom she was one flesh and who had temporal precedence over her, she demonstrated her unwillingness to discern the importance of theological truths that were taught her by her husband (perhaps the implication of Gen 3:2–3, to which she adds a phrase), who was in turn taught directly by God (2:16–17).

II. ESTABLISHING THE LARGER CONTEXT

We now have to ask what Paul means when he strongly urges marriage and childbearing as a means of salvation for the women of Ephesus (and generally for women who reprise the sin of Eve). An answer to this question requires a closer look at the judgment God places upon Adam and Eve after the fall. First, they were warned by God that if they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil they would die (Gen 2:17; 3:3). Having eaten in disobedience they were driven out of the garden of Eden, away from the tree of life, and condemned to die in fulfillment of God's warning (3:19, 22–24). Second, Adam was cursed with toil and sweat in working the ground, while Eve was cursed with the pain of childbearing that extended to the pain of childrearing (3:16–19). At the same time, by an act of grace that would eventually ameliorate the curse of the fall she and her husband were allowed to propagate and to produce the redemptive line that would lead to the One who would crush the head of the serpent (3:15) and inaugurate the worldwide missionary work to follow.

A third curse falls upon Eve and her husband: "Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you" (3:16b). In the first clause, desire is not a woman's passionate desire for her husband, which is a continuing common-grace attraction implicit in the lineage prophecy of 3:15 and in the "be fruitful and increase in number" order of creation (1:28). It is rather the fallen woman's desire to control her husband. Evidence for this translation of *těšûqātēk* ("your desire") in 3:16 is to be found in 4:7 where the Lord says to Cain, "But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it

⁷ On Eve's role in the fall and its implications for Adam and creation see M. G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue* (South Hamilton: Gordon-Conwell BookCentre, 1991) 78–79.

desires to have you (*těšūqātô*), but you must master it.” “Sin is crouching (*rôbēš*) at the door,” coupled with the expression “desires to have” (from *šūq*), is related to the ancient image of the evil demon at the entrance of a building who threatens to seize and control those inside.⁸ In the Genesis context the evil demon is the serpent of chap. 3. In the curse of 3:16 God implies that the serpent will attempt to control the woman through her effort to control the man. In her new and fallen nature she will be cursed to continue her role as autonomous controller because she acted autonomously in the original fall. As the sin, so the curse—an early instance of God’s ironic justice in the unfolding of his holiness in Biblical history.⁹ The implied curse upon Adam in the second clause is that he and his male offspring will be tainted with suspicion of women as designing and controlling and will be cursed to try to rule over them. Yet both man and woman will be impelled by God’s grace to seek marriage and multiply, especially to preserve the redemptive line. The special calling of believing husbands and wives in the OT period, beginning with repentant Adam and Eve, is to bear the redemptive lineage that will lead to the appearance of the serpent-destroyer foreshadowed in 3:15. The Messiah’s genealogy in the NT age will be generated through marriage and children as an integral part of the Christian mission.

The judgment on the woman in Gen 3:16 adds a negative dimension to male precedence. His priority will no longer be only temporal (“Adam was created first, then Eve,” 1 Tim 2:13; 1 Cor 11:8) with the power to name (“She shall be called Woman,” Gen 2:23; cf. 1 Cor 11:9). Now within the newly fallen world the relationship will be smitten by enmity between male and female: “And he shall rule over you” (*yimšol-bāk*, Gen 3:16d; cf. 4:7d). Prefall Adam with temporal and naming priority becomes tainted in the fallen order. The man will attempt to enforce a mastering authority over the woman, while the woman will try to control the man. An inescapable tension enters into the relation between man and woman that will erupt into gender and marital warfare as a consequence of Adam and Eve not having stood together to resist the temptation of the serpent. As the sin, so the curse. The curse works against the natural sexual attraction between a man and a woman, an attraction that nonetheless persists in the created order by the common grace of God to ensure the continuance of the race until the fulfillment of prophecy. False teachers in the Church who demand the celibacy of all marriageable Christian women and encourage autonomous behavior like Eve’s actually repeat the original temptation of the serpent (1 Tim 4:1–3).

In this light we may understand why Paul employs the Genesis reference in context of his broader appeal to mission and godly lifestyle. The larger contexts of Genesis 3 and 1 Timothy 2 are generically similar. The original sin of Eve is revisited in new church settings, Paul implies, where an im-

⁸ LXX and Vg read this as *těšūbātēk* from *šūb*, “turn,” giving the weaker *apostrophē* (*conversio tua*), “your turning.”

⁹ An example of ironic divine justice, where the punishment fits the crime, is God’s description of Isaiah’s mission to his people that will result in their becoming just like the idols they worship, idols that cannot see or hear or feel (Isa 6:9–10; 44:9–20; cf. Ps 115:4–8).

mature woman,¹⁰ whether single or married, listens to false teaching and insists on acting autonomously against wiser counsel. Such a woman is urged to learn “in quietness” (*en hēsychiq*, 1 Tim 2:11–12) and “in full submission” (*en pasē hypotagē*, v. 11). Training is necessary for a woman who is out of order in regard to godliness and spiritual maturity. Paul does not permit such a woman to teach a man (*didaskein*) or to exercise authority over him or to domineer (*authentēin*, v. 12). In 2:13–15 Paul focuses on the relationship between believing husbands and wives and on what Eve had to do and what must be done by her marriageable daughters to redeem a sinful situation. Having repented, single women who have rejected the prospect of oneness with a man are to marry, become one flesh with their husbands and, as God intended from the first, to create and raise children (Gen 1:28: “Be fruitful and multiply”). From the inception of the human race this is a woman’s greatest mission, all the more so in view of the fall and God’s gracious continuance of a messianic, redemptive line.

Accordingly it is not only married couples Paul is addressing in 1 Tim 2:9–15. It is also those women who ought to be married but are arrogantly refusing to do so on the grounds of false teaching about celibacy. Adam and Eve are husband and wife, but Eve is also the mother of all women, young and old, unmarried and married. It is this larger and inclusive group of women Paul is addressing in the setting of 1 Timothy. A clue to the wider context that addresses women generally at Ephesus is the triplet of appeals in 1 Tim 2:8–10, which is integral to the larger sense unit of 2:8–15: (1) In 2:8 the men are enjoined to remedy their angry and sinful disputation through a godly lifestyle of holy prayer (“I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing”). (2) The women are enjoined in v. 9 to a lifestyle of propriety in apparel and appearance (“I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes”). They are to adorn themselves with “good deeds appropriate for women who profess to worship God” (v. 10). (3) Finally, Paul makes his appeal to those women who are out of order as regards maturity and marriage (2:11–15). Paul’s ground appeal to the Christian men and women of Ephesus is that they are to present a godly aspect, like Paul, to those outside and within the church that will be maximally effective in witnessing about Christ, the great servant Savior (2:1–7). The overriding theme in the pastorals is missional, a theme we need to examine more closely.

III. PAUL’S CONCERN FOR MISSION LIFESTYLE THE KEY

In his commentary on the pastorals Gordon Fee remarks in the preface that he has taken 1 Tim 1:3 as the reason for the letter and sees it as

¹⁰ Since the immediate setting of Genesis 3 is the relationship of Adam and Eve as husband and wife, the singular *gynē* in 1 Tim 2:11 may be translated “wife” and *andros* “husband” in v. 12 (cf. Hugenberger, “Women” 350–360). As we shall point out, the genealogical prophecy of Gen 3:15 and the larger sense unit of 1 Timothy 2 that includes vv. 8–9 address men and women in general. Hence Eve as primary matriarch should be seen not only as the wife of Adam but as the mother of all subsequent women, unmarried and married, as well as the mother of all men (hence the significance of 1 Cor 11:12).

reflecting the *ad hoc* situation of the church in Ephesus. Timothy is directed to address the overriding problem of false teachers. Fee remarks that this point of view “is exactly how one makes the best sense of *all* the earlier letters of Paul” as well as the pastorals.¹¹ While it is true that Paul addresses doctrinal and practical aberrations at Ephesus, these are in fact only secondary to his main purpose. Building on the ground of Jesus’ saving work, he always encourages his readers to evidence in their lifestyle the two positive ideals of every believer: (1) personal holiness (vertical lifestyle), and (2) fervent witness for Christ in the wider world and within the Church (horizontal lifestyle). These two concerns also lie at the center of Jesus’ training of disciples. The sermon on the mount, which functions as a manual for mission, is an early and ready reference to the vertical and horizontal content of Jesus’ teaching and modeling that permeates the NT letters. In 1 Tim 2:8–9 this double agenda explains Paul’s specific address to men and women in the Ephesian church who are spoiling an effective witness to their Lord by un-Christian behavior. Some of the men are angry and disputatious; they need to engage in godly prayer. Some of the women display immodest dress; they need to “dress” in godly good works (v. 10). Men and women who are guilty of such disorderly and destructive deportment are being exhorted not to hinder effective evangelism inside and outside the church but to reform their patterns of living.

This concern of Paul for godly lifestyle establishes a theme for the verses that follow (2:11–15). He addresses the women in the church who will not listen quietly with full submission to true apostolic teaching when they lack maturity in godliness and spiritual discernment. These women are like Eve. They listen to false teaching and in so doing assert authority over those who represent wiser apostolic counsel. They display a lifestyle with little sensitivity to the wider mission of winning souls to Christ and nurturing them by godly example. How will such behavior affect their own spiritual growth, their brothers and sisters within the fellowship? And how will such haughtiness appear to the unconverted? These are Paul’s immediate concerns.

That proper missional deportment is a first-line item in Paul’s agenda to Timothy and Titus is evident in several of the larger sense units throughout the pastorals. In 1 Tim 1:3–7, which is an abstract of the letter that follows, Paul makes it clear that “false doctrines” and “myths and endless genealogies” that “promote controversies” are not his first concern. Rather it is “God’s work—which is by faith. The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.” Since that is the positive goal of the letter, those who “have wandered away from these and turned to meaningless talk,” who “want to be teachers of the law, but . . . do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm,” need to be corrected and persuaded to follow the patterns of proper servanthood. This is what Paul is doing in 2:8–15 when he addresses the aberrant behavior of those at Ephesus who apparently are not bearing fruit in regard to proper deportment.

¹¹ G. D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus* (San Francisco: Harper, 1984) xii–xiii.

Again, Paul's concern is with "the sound doctrine that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me" (1:10–11). This is a strong mission statement, and it is poignantly heightened by Paul's autobiographical remarks in 1:12–17: "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service (*diakonian*)." It is *diakonia* that characterizes Paul's outlook, and it is this attitude of servanthood for the sake of Christ and his gospel that Paul wishes to promote among his Ephesian friends. He humbles himself by reviewing his own rebellious past in a brief narration, spelling out how he personally was the object of the Lord's saving mission: "Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus" (1:13–14). This personal missional statement is followed by a general mission declaration, a summary of the *kērygma*, which in turn is followed by a double repetition of his own unworthiness that is redeemed by Christ's display in him of unlimited patience as an example for future believers: "Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might show his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life" (1:15–16).

The missional passage of 1:12–16, not 1:3, asserts the real intent of Paul in 1 Timothy and the pastorals as a whole. Corrections of false teaching will be made by the persuasive example (*hypotypōsis*) of what Christ has done in his life in fashioning such a sinner as a model for others. Modeling Christ for those within the Church and for the unconverted in the outer world is Paul's top priority. Good credentials are crucial in carrying out God's redemptive mission, among the most important being character that bears the fruit of sound doctrine. Paul is so overwhelmed by the grace of what Christ has done in his own life that he breaks into a paean of praise to God in 1:17, as he does in Rom 11:32–36 when he describes the cosmic scope of God's redemptive plan. Hence for Timothy to "fight the good fight" (1:18) means orthopraxy as well as orthodoxy, right living as well as right thinking.

That Christian character and behavior are a preeminent missional medium for Paul is evident in 2:1–4: "I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."¹² In this larger

¹² "All men" is a generic genitive (*hyper pantōn anthrōpōn*) and should be translated "all human beings" or "all persons." It is a principal mission statement that assumes the responsible agency of believers to get the message of salvation out to the lost. The question of God's intent in light of election texts is best resolved by understanding the immediate context, since God's prescriptive intent for Christians is that the gospel be proclaimed to all, which is Paul's concern here. The mystery of God's decretive intent is not the focus in this immediate text. For the two side by side cf. Rom 9:1–29 (decretive); 9:30–10:21 (prescriptive-missional).

context of worldwide mission Paul is urging himself and the Ephesians to live in such a manner that their behavior not get in the way of the message of salvation but rather convey and enhance it. Thus the admonition in 2:2 “that we may live a peaceful and quiet life (*hēsychion bion*)” is also enjoined of women’s learning in 2:11–12 (*en hēsychiq*) and of idle and undisciplined busybodies in 2 Thess 3:12: “Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion (*meta hēsychias*).” Paul enjoins this generally of all Christians in 1 Thess 4:11–12 with a missional thrust: “Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life (*hēsychazein*), to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.”

Similarly, Peter in 1 Pet 3:1–6 argues for the conversional effect of good behavior on the part of Christian women in a passage parallel to 1 Tim 2:9–12. Holding up Christ as the archetypal example of quiet suffering he urges his readers: “To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example (*hypogrammon*), that you should follow in his steps.” He then specifically addresses the women: “Wives, in the same way [as Christ suffered quietly and left an example] be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet (*hēsychiou*) spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight.” For Peter, as for Paul, Christian servanthood means being at the disposal of others, as Christ was for us, in order to win others to him for the long view, rather than demanding one’s rights for individual fulfillment and personal adornment in the short view.

That character for mission is Paul’s primary concern in 1 Timothy is further confirmed by the standards by which leaders in the church are to be selected (1 Tim 3:1–16). Since Acts 20:17–18 gives evidence that elders were already present at Ephesus, Paul repeats the criteria for their selection. The setting of 1 Timothy would indicate that as some men and women are not showing proper deportment in the church and are damaging its reputation, so standards for leadership roles need to be reviewed in order that “you will know how people are to conduct themselves in God’s household” (1 Tim 3:15). There are influential leaders in the church who are also damaging its reputation and hindering the gospel. This is a ground missional exhortation and crystallizes Paul’s reason for writing the letter. Most of the items in the list of credentials for the “overseer” (*episkopos*, 3:1–2 = *presbyteros*, “elder,” Acts 20:17, 28), and for deacons (*diakonoi*)—“women likewise” (1 Tim 3:11)—are not exclusively Christian virtues but describe what Greco-Roman society expected of the upright civic leader, as summed up in 3:7: “He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil’s trap.” Otherwise he too, like Eve in 2:14, will suffer disgrace by succumbing to the devil’s temptation by failing to uphold

the image of God in speaking and doing what is true and witnessing to the gospel of salvation that Christ has completed. The little hymn to Christ in 3:16 indicates that the secret (“mystery”) of true piety (“godliness”) is Christ himself and emphasizes the missional importance of Christian piety: Christ has been and must be “preached among the nations” and “believed on in the world.”

1 Timothy 4 continues the theme of godliness (“train yourself to be godly,” 4:7b) with a view to setting an example (*typos*) for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith, and in purity” (v. 12), “so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save (*sōseis*; cf. 2:15, *sōthēsetai*) both yourself and your hearers” (4:15b–16). These personal words to Timothy are to be relayed as exhortations to everyone in the congregation. They stand solidly against the “deceiving spirits and things taught by demons” (4:1), which are being perpetrated by unconscionable and hypocritical false teachers who are teaching, among other falsehoods, that God’s created gifts, like marriage and certain foods, are forbidden (4:2–3). Here lies a compelling clue to the issue Paul is addressing in 2:9–15, for it is the false teachers’ prohibition of marriage that is evidently affecting some of the marriageable women of the church. To this Paul replies with a general affirmation of the goodness of God’s creation: “For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer” (4:4). This is the kind of godliness, not across-the-board celibacy and abstinence, that Paul wants Timothy and the men and women of Ephesus to demonstrate to the fellowship and to the world. Paul’s major theme is that godly Christians are to be an example to others for their salvation and benefit. False teachers are a diversion from this primary goal and are dealt with firmly but secondarily.

Paul’s advice in 1 Timothy 5 as to the proper behavior of widows, elders and slaves pivots around the formula of the missional message: “These should learn first of all to put their religion into practice” (5:4) “so that no one should be open to blame” (v. 7). A genuine widow who is mature and has paid her dues during a lifetime of faithfulness to her husband (v. 9) “is well known for her good deeds, such as bringing up children, showing hospitality, washing the feet of the saints, helping those in trouble, and devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds” (v. 10). In this passage Paul’s concern is for the Christlike servant who in her deportment does not stand in the way of missional ministry and building up the body of Christ but rather is constantly at the disposal of others in the name of her Lord.

In contrast, however, are some of the younger widows who are not mature enough to be on the list of genuine widows because they are driven by sensual desires and want to remarry (v. 11) when evidently they have previously made a pledge to be celibate to Christ as their spiritual husband and therefore “have broken their first pledge” (v. 12). Here lies a clue to the complex relationship between marriage and celibacy in the early Church, the clarification of which may suggest a solution to Paul’s strong advice to certain women in the Church that they should not refuse marriage but should ea-

gerly seek it as an expression of their salvation ministry (1 Tim 2:9–15). Paul's statement in 5:12—"Thus they bring judgment on themselves, because they have broken their first pledge"—refers to celibate or eunuch servanthood described by Jesus as a God-given gift that is given to those who can accept it (Matt 19:11–12). When Jesus speaks of the requirements of faithfulness in marriage where a man and a woman "become one flesh" and "are no longer two but one," and where no divorce is permissible before God "except for marital unfaithfulness" (19:5–6, 9), the disciples find this too difficult and incorrectly conclude: "If this is the situation between a husband and a wife, it is better not to marry" (v. 10). Jesus replies: "Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men; and others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it" (vv. 11–12).

This saying of Jesus positions marriage and sexuality in the new period of inaugurated eschatology that Jesus embodies as the bridegroom who has come to marry his bride (Mark 2:19). Overlapping the old created order of human marriage is the new eschatological order of spiritual marriage with Christ. It is this eschatological sense of urgency based on Jesus' dominical warrant that compels Paul to speak of sexual options for the Christian in 1 Corinthians 7. In his life and ministry Jesus was the consummate celibate who chose to sublimate the marriage of the old order to the higher marriage of the new order, where he is the bridegroom and the Church the bride. Paul himself has been granted the gift of celibacy and commends it ideally for every believer but realizes that it is not God's gift for everyone: "I wish that all were as I am. But each has his own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that" (1 Cor 7:7). This accords with the description of gifts in 12:1–31, which is not exhaustive and yet illustrates the fact that "to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good" (12:7).

Paul is writing the pastorals in the early 60s AD near the end of his ministry when the question of marriage and celibacy continues to be problematic in the life of the churches. In the Ephesian setting of 1 Timothy the sovereign freedom of the Spirit to assign complementary gifts is resisted by false teachers who mandate one option over others, as in 4:3 ("They forbid people to marry"). Or it is resisted by those who repudiate their initial pledge to celibacy and are unable or unwilling to sublimate their sensual desires but now want to marry, as in 5:11–12. Meantime they create a bad image and "get into the habit of being idle and going about from house to house. And not only do they become idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying things they ought not to" (5:13). This is a serious infraction of Christian character in the body of Christ, for whatever one says and does should be Christlike, build up the fellowship and present a good image for outsiders who need to hear the gospel and see it in action, that they may come to faith in Christ.

"So," Paul writes, "I counsel younger widows to marry, to have children, to manage their homes and to give the enemy no opportunity to slander. Some have in fact already turned away to follow Satan" (5:14–15). The

enemy here is Satan, the same deceiver who deceived Eve to choose autonomy and death rather than life. Yet in the providence of God the serpent's head is to be crushed by mother Eve who will bear a faithful lineage whose historical centerpiece is Christ. The generic temptation of Eve is reprised in all women, Paul is implying, and their character is tested by their response to the enemy's temptation. If some truly have been given the gift of celibacy for Christ's service, then their first pledge must be kept. Otherwise "they bring judgment on themselves, because they have broken their first pledge" (5:12). If they reject marriage and the godly raising of children and become idle busybodies, they give the enemy opportunity for slander by turning away and following Satan, thereby hurting the missional witness of the church by bad example. But if they marry, have children, and manage their homes in a godly way they overcome the deadly effect of Satan's temptation and so follow the order of Eve's restitution (the implication of Gen 3:15 and 1 Tim 2:15).

Accordingly in 1 Tim 2:9–15 there are several kinds of women who are resisting the free work of the Spirit and harming the image of the church within and without. Such women as a whole need to receive instruction quietly with complete submissiveness and are not allowed to teach or exercise authority. Among these are two groups of women whom Paul is exhorting to marry and bear children: (1) Some, who are under the influence of false teachers who forbid marriage across the board, are as arrogant and uncooperative as their teachers. They are not quiet, not submitted, they insist on their right to teach and lord it over mature teachers of the word (so 2:11–12). They repeat the deception of Eve (so 2:13–14). (2) Others never had the gift of celibacy to begin with but now have abandoned all pretense and have become idle, troublesome, and wanton (5:11–13; perhaps 2:9). For both types who are out of order and have become a hindrance to the mission of the church Paul prescribes marriage and childbearing and persevering "in faith, love and holiness with propriety" (2:15; cf. 5:14). This is the manner in which a woman who has not been called to celibacy is to "work out her salvation"—that is, with Christlike humility and servanthood for the sake of others and to the glory of God (cf. Phil 2:12–13 and the practical responsibility of "working out one's salvation").

The concluding statement among Paul's charges to Timothy in 1 Tim 5:25 is another reminder that the primary focus of Paul in this pastoral letter is on bearing the Christian image to others so that the mission of Christ may be advanced and not hindered: "Good deeds are obvious, and even those that are not cannot be hidden."

1 Timothy 6 brings to conclusion Paul's exhortations concerning proper imaging of godliness to Church and world, with a word to slaves who are to show their masters due respect "so that God's name and our teaching may not be slandered" (6:1–2). As regards the getting and using of money, "godliness with contentment is great gain," while avarice is a fall into temptation and a trap that "plunges people into ruin and destruction" (6:6, 9). It is the flight from avarice and the pursuit of "righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness," fighting the good fight, holding on to eternal life in light of the good confession of faith, that genuinely mirrors Christ

Jesus' good confession before Pontius Pilate (6:11–13). Indeed the theme of the entire letter of 1 Timothy may be summed up in Paul's words: "Make the good confession." The believer is to live eschatologically, "without spot or blame, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 14), "to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share" and so to "lay up a treasure . . . for the coming age" (vv. 18–19). This mission and trust must be guarded and godless chatter and false knowledge avoided (vv. 20–21).

Paul's short letter to Titus, which was written about the same time as 1 Timothy (ca. AD 63–65), reflects a similar concern "to further the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness" (1:1). Like 1 Timothy the criteria for appointing leaders in the church in Crete highlight blameless character (Titus 1:5–9) in contrast to those who have been morally defective (1:10–16). Paul spells out in detail the qualities of Christian character that accord with the missional activity of the church (2:1–15). Character formation is to be based on "what is in accord with sound doctrine" (2:1). Older men are "to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance" (2:2). Older women are "to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God" (2:3–5). Young men are similarly encouraged "to be self-controlled" (2:6).

Paul exhorts Titus: "In all things show yourself to be an example (*typon*) of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, sound in speech which is beyond reproach, in order that the opponent may be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us" (2:7–8, NASB). The missional attitude that places oneself at the disposal of others in the image of Christ the supreme servant is also enjoined of slaves who work for masters. Christian slaves are to try to please their masters, "not to talk back to them, and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive" (2:9–10). In sum, Paul exhorts Christians to witness to the world with an eschatological zeal for good works: "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good" (2:11–14).

The apostle's final words to Titus concern the character image of Christians before rulers and authorities. Believers are to be obedient and "ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all" (3:1–2). Christian image-bearing in the civic arena of the world is grounded in Christology and soteriology. The world is where we were once, Paul says, but we were saved by the work of Christ. How then can we do less than share that message and its life-

transforming power by doing what is good, and so profit everyone by giving them opportunity to hear and see the message of hope in action? “At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone” (3:3–8). Paul’s next-to-last word in Titus repeats this same theme: “Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing good, in order that they may provide for daily necessities and not live unproductive lives” (3:14).

These observations on the prominent mission theme of Titus should temper the view that the major interest of the pastorals is church order and a later non-Pauline milieu (“early catholicism”), or the view that Paul’s major concern is with false teachers. In respect to the latter, Paul considers extensive verbal controversy “unprofitable and useless” (3:9): “Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him” (3:10). Paul’s concern is not for prolonged argumentation but with the positive theme of getting the message of Christ out to a needy world with effective and profitable words and deeds. One of the first credentials of the genuine Christian is character. This relates in a direct way to the text of 1 Tim 2:9–15, to which we shall return presently.

The last of Paul’s letters, 2 Timothy, is his last will and testament, likely written during his final imprisonment under Nero (AD 66–67): “For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure” (4:6–8). This intimation casts a special eschatological urgency over his letter, heightening the eschatological sense of his other letters (e.g. 1 Cor 7:29–31). In 2 Timothy Paul pulls no punches as he lays before Timothy the alternatives of genuine Christian character that is faithful in witnessing to Christ, on the one hand, and false teaching that profits nothing, on the other. All of the false teachers, betrayers and troublemakers he mentions by name happen to be men (Phygelus and Hermogenes, 1:15; Hymenaeus and Philetus, 2:17; Jannes and Jambres of old, 3:8; Demas, 4:10; Alexander the metalworker, 4:14). But for all who have deserted him he prays that it “may not be held against them,” praying like the Lord himself (Luke 23:34) and Stephen (Acts 7:60), since his calling as a Christian in this missionary age is to be a proclaimer of grace, not judgment, and to serve as a model of Christ: “But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it” (4:17). Paul’s principal concern to the very end, while there is yet time, is to get the gospel out by words and acts appropriate to this present age of grace.

To this end he has already recalled the faithful witness of Timothy's grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice (2 Tim 1:5; 3:14–15) who passed on their sincere faith to Timothy by godly family influence, a fact not to be overlooked in assessing Paul's advice to the women at Ephesus: "But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety" (1 Tim 2:15). Paul also claims a part in Timothy's godly gift through the laying on of hands and encourages him to fan this gift into flame so that it may have its maximum missional effect on others: "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline" (2 Tim 1:7; cf. Rom 1:16). Accordingly Timothy is to follow the example of Paul and not be ashamed to testify of Christ but be empowered by suffering for the gospel: "So do not be ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace" (2 Tim 1:8–9). Paul sees his Christian calling in missional terms (1:11–12) and implies that his proclamation, teaching and example are to be a "pattern" (*hypotypōsin*) for Timothy and the Ephesian community (1:13). In contrast to the desertion of Paul's cause by many in the province of Asia, he blesses Onesiphorus as an example of unashamed service to Paul while he is in prison, at the risk of life and reputation (1:16–18). The citation of names brings the matter of commitment to Christ down to the level of practical lifestyle. Who are the real servants of Christ? Those who are not ashamed and will not flinch under suffering.

Accordingly doctrine, character and lifestyle are inseparable, a point Paul makes clear in his instructions in 2 Timothy 2. Timothy is enjoined to "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus," to entrust Paul's teachings to others who are reliable, who in turn will be qualified to teach others (2:1–2). Hardship is to be endured like "a good soldier of Jesus Christ," or like an athlete or farmer, each of whom focuses on one goal (2:3–7). Paul offers "Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David" as the preeminent model of victorious servanthood and as the central figure of the gospel for which he is suffering. Though chained, he does not proclaim a chained gospel (2:8–9). On the ground of this powerful gospel Paul reiterates the principal mission theme that characterizes this letter and the other pastorals as well as the Pauline writings in general: "Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory" (2:10). Thus the Christian is to be a servant whose goal is to see that the elect obtain salvation at whatever cost to personal convenience.

The confidence that underlies Paul's teaching on mission servanthood is expressed in a quatrain of parallel third-class conditionals (2 Tim 2:11–13)¹³ that imply that everyone who claims Christ must bear fruit in appropriate behavior and lifestyle. This "trustworthy saying" is not so much a creedal hymn as a challenge to those who claim to be Christians and who must give evidence of their claims to faith by faithful and enduring servanthood:

contradict the sense of v. 12b. This is supported by his further exposition of what defines the approved servant of God (2:14–19). In this unit Paul warns again against the danger of “quarreling about words” and “godless chatter,” illustrated by the false teaching of Hymenaeus and Philetus who are upsetting the faith of some by saying that the resurrection has already taken place (overrealized eschatology). Rather, Timothy is to encourage each believer to seek approval from God by being “a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth” (v. 15), knowing that “God’s solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: ‘The Lord knows those who are his,’ and, ‘Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from evil’” (v. 19).

Paul emphasizes the importance of personal choice in this matter of Christian behavior and mission responsibility. One must choose to cleanse oneself from ignoble purposes in order to become a noble and holy instrument “useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work” (v. 21). The Lord’s servant must choose to pursue righteousness with a pure heart, avoiding foolish arguments, using gentle persuasion, as Paul does in his letters, to those who oppose repentance, “leading them to a knowledge of the truth” so “that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will” (2:22–26). This passage sheds further light on Paul’s agenda and method of persuasion in 1 Tim 2:9–15, especially his reference to the Genesis temptation and its consequences, for he sees the Eden temptation reprised whenever the Christian is tempted to despoil the salvation lineage by inappropriate behavior. Here in 2 Timothy he speaks generally to all believers, whereas in 1 Tim 2:9–15 he is referring specifically to women who are under temptation to be gaudy, vaunting, and resistant to teaching, marriage and family. The genre and the agenda are the same, however.

In 2 Tim 3:6–7 Paul mentions “weak-willed women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires, always learning but never able to come to acknowledge the truth.” They have become pawns of false teachers who pose as godly persons but deny the power of godliness (3:1–5, 8–9). This passage probably describes the kind of women Paul addresses in 1 Tim 2:9–15. It implicitly serves notice that such behavioral weaknesses hinder the wholesome life of the church and the effectiveness of evangelism. No specific women are mentioned, but false teachers are likened to Moses’ opponents Jannes and Jambres and are described “as men who oppose the truth—men of depraved minds, who, as far as the truth is concerned, are rejected” (2 Tim 3:8).

Paul uses himself as a suffering-servant model to make the point that “in fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (3:12). This characteristic of Christian mission has dominical warrant in the life and teaching of Jesus and is summarized in the final and controlling motif of the beatitudes: “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me” (Matt 5:11–12). In the enemy’s camp, Paul says, “evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived” (2 Tim 3:13). These

are the emissaries of Satan who repeat the serpent's seduction of Eve by tempting her offspring in the Church, men and women alike, for they themselves have been deceived.

The positive mission theme of the pastorals takes precedence again in Paul's personal word to Timothy as the apostle reviews Timothy's sound teaching from infancy by those who have been concerned to see that he knows "the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ" (3:15). Paul's persuasive appeal is solidly kerygmatic, emphasizing the teaching of Scripture and discipling necessary for the process to be repeated in the convert, who in turn becomes equipped to pass on the message of salvation: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (3:16–17).

Accordingly Timothy is to preach the Word, patiently and carefully opposing those who will not endure sound doctrine, this in full view of the eschatological urgency of the missionary enterprise, the appearing of Christ Jesus and his kingdom, and the coming judgment (4:1–4). The mission of this age calls for appropriate Christian behavior: "But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry" (4:5). Paul the servant evangelist can claim to have done this as he finishes the fight and the race and awaits the crown of righteousness that all the faithful will receive (4:6–8). He is most grateful for having given forth the saving message: "But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message (*kerygma*) might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth" (4:17).

Paul's concluding word highlights his consummate concern in the pastorals. Against the serpent's influence ever since the deception of Eve in Eden, the first goal of the faithful believer is to maintain a consistent and effective witness before those who need to hear of the salvation of Christ. The apostle gives a missional word to Timothy and the Church: No false teaching and no vaunting of personal lifestyle must get in the way of Jesus' mandate to give out that saving message. This is the key to 1 Tim 2:8–15. Reading between the lines and keeping in mind the missionary theme we have traced through the three pastoral letters, we are to view the unit as a correction of unacceptable lifestyles in the Christian community. Paul intends that this will produce a more effective evangelism in a pagan world that is closely watching Christian behavior. Servanthood subordination for the sake of evangelism is accordingly the overriding theme of the pastorals, and it is in this context that 1 Tim 2:8–15 is best understood. As with the men who are out of line, so with the women. Paul seeks to persuade them to follow unselfishly Jesus' mandate for mission in the present missionary age that Jesus inaugurated as Servant Messiah. This requires that Christian men and women proclaim by word of mouth and exemplary lifestyles the good news of salvation in Christ before the lost of the world, and before other believers in the Church so that they may be edified.

When the text of 1 Tim 2:8–15 is taken as a unit, it is possible to imagine the problem Paul was facing and those he was addressing. Among the men of 2:8 are the angry and disputatious who are like the false teachers. Godly correction will come from lifting up holy hands in prayer, a shorthand way of saying that they must pursue a holy and missional life. Among the women of 2:9–15 are those who dress immodestly, lack Christian propriety and are argumentative and rebellious. They, like the men, are enjoined to become appropriately performative. Those who are flaunting their individual freedom do not fully appreciate the fact that Christian freedom in Christ assumes responsibility to be at the disposal of others, to see that they are nurtured in faith if they are new Christians or won to Christ if they are not already Christians. Adding to and building up the body of Christ, getting in and staying in, defines how individual freedom is to be expressed.

Accordingly we may read between the lines of 1 Tim 2:8–15 and assume that the advice Paul is giving men and women is directed to actual persons who are out of order in their Christian behavior. There are men who are angry and disputatious and do not offer holy prayer, women who are ostentatious in dress, those who are unwilling to learn and who vaunt themselves over others, some refusing to marry. Paul is not simply stating hypothetical possibilities (e.g. “If sometime there might be angry and quarrelsome men who will not offer holy prayers” or “If possibly there might arise an occasion where women dress inappropriately and fail to exhibit good deeds befitting godly worship”). These are actual people who are behaving inappropriately, and the mission of Christ is hurting at Ephesus because of their misbehavior, both within the fellowship and without.

As for the identity of the women who are addressed in 1 Tim 2:9–15, they may be neophytes in faith who are lacking instruction but are resistant, or more mature women who nevertheless vaunt their roles over men, or young widows who have yet to settle down again in marriage and raise their families.¹⁵ Whoever they are, in view of 2:15 they have been tempted by false teaching on the matter of celibacy and are in danger of repeating the sin of Eve. Viewed in this way, the women addressed are in need of warning and correction. Paul is addressing actual Ephesian women, just as he pleads with the Corinthian women to seek unity in fellowship and not to exploit individual gifts (1 Cor 11:1–22; 14:20–40). Paul’s address of specific situations in Ephesus and Corinth does not make his teaching on the matter of men and women merely situational, however, in the sense that it is relevant

¹⁵ It is not necessary to go beyond the three pastoral letters for clues as to who these women are. Their lifestyles may have reflected pagan influences in Ephesus associated with the Diana cult (cf. C. and R. Kroeger, *I Suffer Not a Woman* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992]). There also may have been a lingering dualism in the middle-Platonism of the time that deprecated the body and sexuality and foreshadowed more radical expressions in second-century neo-Platonism and gnosticism. Body/soul dualism had a long history going back to eighth-century Indian philosophy, common features of which filtered into Greek speculation by way of the pre-Socratics and Plato during this axial period. The possibility of influence from this direction is secondary, however. The central focus of the pastorals is on effective Christian lifestyle, and Paul’s specific exegetical context in 1 Tim 2:9–15 identifies the women who are out of order as those who reprise the sin of Eve.

only to those contexts and times. His behavioral exhortations are addressed to any who vaunt their individuality over the well-being of the fellowship of the Church and its continuing mission and are in danger of repeating the fall of the generic Eve and Adam of Genesis 3.

Paul's introduction in the larger sense unit of 1 Tim 2:1-15 spells out his primary missionary agenda that "requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone" and that Christians are to "live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness" so that the unsaved may be saved (2:1-6). This is the goal to which Paul has devoted his own life (v. 7). Accordingly his specific grievances in 2:8-15 deal with those who are not acting appropriately in fulfilling the mission mandate. Paul presents creative patterns that will correct unacceptable performance on the part of men and women claiming to be Christians. Verse 8 gives practical advice to men. Verse 10 appeals for "good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God." Verse 15 forms an *inclusio* with v. 10: "if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety." Paul's assumption is that these women can exercise the will to change their lifestyles if they choose to do so. His rhetoric is persuasive, not condemnatory. He comes down hard on bad behavior but counterbalances criticism with the possibility of redemptive choice and action.

IV. CONCLUSION

Our conclusion is that Paul is addressing the men and women of the church at Ephesus, and those of every age up to our own, who are out of order as to proper mission lifestyle. In regard to the women in particular, some are arrogant toward their teachers and vaunt their individualism over men. Some who are unmarried (whether from wantonness or a false understanding of celibacy) refuse to marry and raise children, or if married they act as if they were celibate. They refuse to learn from mature teachers. Yet the women are remediable, as was Eve, and will find correction by learning in a quiet manner, being servant Christians as Paul himself has been and as all Christians must be, marrying and finding their mission in the family if they are not among the few (like Paul) who are genuinely called to a life of celibacy. In this passage Paul is addressing "such women" as are out of order in their behavior, which is clearly the case with the men and women of 2:8-9. However, he is not addressing all women generically in what follows in vv. 11-15, as though every Christian woman is forever to be a learner and can never be trusted to lead or to teach anyone anything theologically, or that every Christian woman must marry and have children if she is to work out her salvation appropriately. Paul is speaking to "such women" as are improper in their lifestyle, either because of selfish preoccupation or because of misguided religiosity as a result of false teaching and who are hurting the Christian mission in the outer world as well as within the Church.

This interpretation of 1 Tim 2:8-15 focuses on Paul's instructions for proper mission lifestyle and weighs the Eve model of marriage and family and of humble learning from the more mature, without doing injustice to

Biblical evidence that mature Christian women played important roles in the NT churches, both in teaching and leading. The positive implications of the passage are significant. Paul is implying that the women in question can become like the redeemed Eve if they give themselves to corrective instruction and knowledge. They are to work out the implications of the redemptive seed-line prophecy in Gen 3:15 and assume responsibility for producing potentially good seed, both physically and spiritually, in children and converts. This is their Christian missionary responsibility. The out-of-order Ephesian women need mature instruction about how to produce potentially elect seed. They are to refuse to be at the mercy of deceivers acting as agents of the serpent who urge them not to marry because of a false overrealized eschatology. Eve's was not the last generation, nor was theirs at Ephesus, nor is ours. God's redemptive plan depends on new generations of children, among whom will be some of God's elect. Satan desires to destroy God's image-bearers and aims at so distorting sexuality as to make each generation the last. The Eve model perdures, both negatively and positively.

Genesis 3:15 is both a prophecy of hope to Adam and Eve and a curse on the serpent and his death wish. The nurturing behavior of faithful men and women in the course of Biblical history is designed to ensure that each new generation will hear the good news of God's salvation. Without godly women and their priorities in the family the redemptive seed line would have ended prematurely. Such might have happened had Eve not taken up God's promise and devoted herself to her husband Adam to create a birth line that led to the Messiah and to the eventual crushing of the serpent's head. Paul infers in 1 Tim 2:9–15 that each Christian woman may become a creative agent, like redeemed mother Eve, in the great missionary work of nurturing the family of God while there is yet time.