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**PROHIBITION OF WOMEN FROM TEACHING IN WORSHIP: AN EXEGETICAL STUDY OF 1 TIMOTHY 2:8-15**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The prohibition of women from teaching in worship, particularly in 1 Timothy 2:8-15, has long been a source of controversy. Verses 11-12, which demand women to learn in silence and refrain from teaching, have sparked various interpretations that influence the roles assigned to women in Christian worship. This paper examines Paul's statement to assess whether it represents a general and timeless prohibition or addresses a specific historical context. Using a historical-grammatical approach, this study analyzes the text's setting, context, and grammar to uncover Paul's intention. Learning in silence likely pertains to maintaining decorum and order during worship rather than enforcing female subordination. Paul's reference to the order of creation does not imply women's inferiority to men, as is evident from Galatians 3:28, where gender distinctions are irrelevant in Christ. Since teaching is a spiritual gift granted to both men and women, it is unlikely that Paul would permanently forbid women from exercising this gift. Instead, the restriction is likely to address a specific situation in the Ephesian church rather than imposing a universal, timeless ban on women's teaching roles in worship.*

**Key words:** Worship. Women prohibition. Silence in worship. Authority, and Subordination

**INTRODUCTION**

The prohibition of women from teaching in worship is a controversial issue. Paul, in his epistle to Timothy states, "Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet." (1Tim 2:11-12 ESV)

This text has been considered as “one of the most controversial texts from within the history of biblical interpretation relating to the participation of women in church leadership and decision-making processes.” Benjamin Merkle asserts that women are not allowed to hold a pastoral post in many places because of Paul’s argument in 1 Timothy 2:13-14. Likewise, Jamin Hübner affirms that 1 Timothy 2:12 plays “a defining role in the Christian debate about the role of women in ministry.”

According to Paul in 1 Timothy 2:11–15, women are neither permitted to teach nor have authority over men in the church. He alludes to the order of creation of Adam and Eve in Genesis 2 as the basis for this instruction. Another reason given is the deception of Eve according to the account of the Fall in Genesis 3.

In the pericope under study, Paul calls unto men to pray without anger and quarreling (1 Tim 2:8); he mentions what should be the demeanor of women in worship (vv. 9-10); he gives the injunction about women’s participation in worship (vv. 11-12); and provides the theological basis for his argument (vv. 13-14). He then provides a word of hope about the salvation of women (v.15).

First Timothy 2:8-15 has been adjudged a problematic text. Verses 11-12, the focus of this paper, has engendered some arguments and some interpretations have influenced the roles assigned to women in worship. It is therefore pertinent to engage Paul’s statement to ascertain if it communicates a general and timeless prohibition. What does it mean for women to learn in silence? By alluding to the order of creation, does Paul mean that women are inferior to men?

This paper will attempt to provide answers to these questions. Although, several efforts have been made to study the text theologically and exegetically, it appears there is yet to be a consensus regarding issues such as whether Paul gives a general principle for Christian churches or for a particular local congregation. An attempt will be made in this study to move the discourse further in the direction of reasonable resolution.

Almost every verse in First Timothy 2:8-15 seems controversial. It is not the intention of this work to discuss all the issues in this pericope in details. Emphasis will be placed only on the issues which will bring about a better understanding of the prohibition of women to teach. Other controversial issues embedded in the text will be discussed as they relate to the subject matter. In order to achieve the purpose of this research, a historical-grammatical method will be employed. This will allow the text to speak for itself as the setting, context, and grammar are carefully examined.

## **REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE**

In this section, there will be a succinct review of literature around the scholar's views on the issue of women's prohibition to teach in 1 Timothy 2:11-12. Effort will be made to examine the status of women in both the Old and New Testaments. This will help in providing a relevant background for the interpretation of the text under study.

### **Major views on Women's Prohibition to Teach**

There have been various interpretations given to 1 Timothy 2:11-12. According to Elna Mouton and Ellen van Wolde, Paul's statement is to be viewed in the context of the fundamental issue discussed throughout 1 Timothy, such as the false teachings that have infiltrated the Christian community in Ephesus. They explain that "the call is probably not for a prohibition of all (female) speaking as such, but rather of speech that interrupts and disturbs." Russell L. Huizing asserts that the women, who probably have been receiving teaching from false teachers (perhaps those mentioned in 4:1-5), had found these new teachings difficult to accept. This made them raise questions in the midst of meetings, which ultimately led to distraction for all learners. In his own view, Stenschke Christopher posits that Paul does not imply that female Christians are called to remain silent in all circumstances (my translation).

In his article, *Divine Blessing and Order in Marriage and the Church*, Adam D. Hensley writes that;

Women are not to be among those who publically (sic) teach or exercise authority over men, hence the whole congregation at worship. They ought instead to fit themselves into God's ordering of the church at worship as disciples alongside other (male) congregants.

Also, Fergus J. King and Dorothy A. Lee reason that Paul's statement "does not condemn the female exercise of teaching authority but rather restricts it in a way that will prove beneficial to the community." They explain that Paul's injunction does not cancel women's teaching authority as such, but instead "ensures that men do not suffer public shame or dishonour as a consequence of the way in which women teach as a whole, to men and women alike."

From the above, it is revealed that scholars have diverse views regarding 1 Timothy 2:11-12.

This calls for more study of the text to understand Paul's intent and apply the message accordingly.

### **The Old Testament Context**

In order to have a broader understanding of the text under study, there is the need to examine the status of women in both the Old and New Testaments. Hence, this section succinctly considers what the nature of women were before and after the fall.

#### **Status of Women at Creation**

Genesis 1:26-28 says;

26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

It should be noted that in Gen 1 man is created as both "male and female" (vs. 27). "There is no distinction between the sexes in terms of superiority or subordination." Gerhard Hassel points out that "in the definition of mankind as bisexual the Creator established complete equality between male and female" stressing that "woman is not subordinated to man. She holds no inferior place nor is her role lower than that of the male."

It is observed that woman like man is created in the image of God. Also, both receive the mandate to have dominion over the created things. Both were blessed by their Creator to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, subdue it, and have dominion over the animals.

More so, Genesis 2:18-22 says,

18 Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him... 20 The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. 21 So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. 22 And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.

Woman is also created as a helper for Adam. Frank B. Holbrook states that the woman is of the same flesh and substance as the man. Also, she is man's counterpart and equality of person is supposed by the part of the man's body which was used to create the woman - she is derived from his side. He buttresses that her name implies an equality. Adam's statement upon receiving the woman indicates that he recognized her as a true complement to himself.

Hence, it seems that at creation, man and woman share the same status. They were equal with each having his/her distinct features and roles. At creation, they both have intrinsic value before God.

### **Status of Women after the Fall**

It seems that the fall of man in Genesis 3 led to the change in nature and status of Adam and Eve. Hassel posits that the "position of woman as an equal of man as a divine ordinance of creation

(Gen 1-2) is not maintained much longer after the entry of sin.” In pronouncing judgment against the woman for the act of disobedience, God says, “... I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.” (Gen 3:16). It appears that the status of woman is affected only in the context of marriage. Hassel explains that God’s declaration to Eve centers on what occurs in the sphere of marriage – the multiplying of travail in pregnancy, pain in childbirth, the woman’s desire being for the husband, and the ruling of the husband over the wife.

Holbrook puts it this way;

Now in the judgment on the first woman that headship is fixed. She is not thereby made inferior to the man, nor he superior, as far as their quality is concerned. Rather, the relationship between the two has been fixed. In this Judgment woman is placed under the care, protection, and government of the man. A certain right of independent action has been forfeited by Eve’s sin. Her status is now one of dependence; man is charged with her care.

Thus, it could be inferred that man and woman still maintain an equal status after the fall but that there is a paradigm shift in their marriage relationship.

### **Role of Women in Worship**

While women could function as a prophetess and song leader (Exod 15:20; etc.), yet she could not serve as a priest. There is no record of a priestess in the Old Testament. This might be as a result of woman’s periodic ritual uncleanness (Lev 12), and the abhorrence of cult prostitutes in the Canaanite religious practices. However, Jerry A. Gladson notes that “women did contribute

to the tabernacle (Exod 35:22-29; 38:8), joined David in joyous procession (2 Sam 6:19), and were allowed to participate fully in the activities at the great festivals such as; Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles (Exod 12:3; Deut 16:14; Ps 68:25).” Not only that, “They could go on pilgrimages to holy places (1 Sam 1:3-5, 24-28; 2:1-11, 19-20; 2 Kgs 4:23), and apparently served in a special temple choral group (2 Chr 35:25; Ezra 2:65; Neh 7:67).” Women, including daughters, maidservants, and widows, are specifically mentioned along with “all the congregation of Israel” (Exod 12:3; Deut 16:14). It is observed that the major role the women performed in the religious life was in instructing and training the children, and instilling in their tender hearts basic spiritual principles and truths. In addition, as the family took part in the major feasts at the tabernacle, they participated in song, praise, prayer, and heart preparation of themselves and their children.

### **The New Testament Context**

In the New Testament time, record shows that women played significant roles in the ministry of Jesus and in the early Church.

### **Jesus and Women**

Prior to the time of Jesus, it is noted that women were relegated to the background, to a position of marked inferiority. More so, in religious life, in contrast to the Old Testament practice, women were largely excluded from participating in public worship because they were deemed unfit to learn and inappropriate to teach. Quoting Rabbi Eliezer ben Azariah, Samuele Bacchiocchi points out the rabbinic attitude towards the role of women in the temple or



synagogue: “The men come to learn, the women come to hear” (bHag. 3a). The women could listen to the reading of Scripture but were not expected to gain any deep understanding.’

However, when Jesus began his ministry, his attitude towards women was different. He views them as persons for whom He had come. He relates with them not on the basis of sex, age or marital status, but in terms of their relation to God. He states, “Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother.” (Matt 12:50)

On many occasions in the Gospels, Jesus is pictured as working miracles on behalf of women. This willingness to help women distinguishes Him from the rabbis. For instance, when he visited the home of Simon Peter in Capernaum, He was told of the illness of Peter’s mother-in-law. Although it was the Sabbath day, Jesus made her well (Matt 8:14-15; Mark 1:29-31; Luke 4:38-39). Jesus’ action disregarded not only the Pharisaic rules of Sabbath-keeping but also the norms of propriety in dealing with women.

Bacchiochi explains that;

The encounters of Jesus with women illustrate not only His respect for them as persons but also His appreciation for their intelligence and faith. His conversation with the Samaritan woman (John 4:7-30) shows His willingness to dismiss the cultural conventions of His time. According to rabbinic thinking Jesus should not have talked with her for three reasons: she was a Samaritan, a woman, and immoral. Jesus refused to be restricted by such cultural conventions in revealing to her His Messiahship.

During Jesus’ ministry, he taught women. This is in contrary to the position of Rabbi Eliezer, who would prefer to burn the Scriptures to teaching its truth to women. Jesus did not only teach Mary; he also praises her for having laid aside all other concerns so as to listen to Him (Luke

10:41). Bacchiocchi submits that “The consequence of Jesus’ teaching was a significant change in the spiritual and social status of women - a change that made it possible for women to be treated with the same “brotherly love” as men, and to participate actively in the life and mission of the church.”

### **Paul and Women**

There are evidences to prove that Paul has respect, appreciation, and love for womanhood in general, and for Christian women in particular (1 Tim 5:1-2). Paul labored for the salvation of the women he encountered. The record shows that his first labors in Europe were among a group of women who met for prayer on a riverbank. From this group he baptized Lydia (Acts 16:13-15). In the book of Acts, it is recorded that among Paul’s converts in Thessalonica and Berea were “leading women” and “Greek women of high standing as well as men” (Acts 17:4, 12). These records indicate clearly that the apostle Paul did not dislike or despise women. His personal relations among them were in all respect clear examples of Christian kindness and consideration. He worked for their salvation as Christ did, and considered them equal to men as candidates for salvation.

The Apostle Paul speaks concerning Christian women speaking in public services of the assembled congregation or functioning in administration (1 Cor 14:33-35 and 1 Tim 2:11-14). Paul says,

“the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. If there is anything they

desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. (1Cor 14:34-35).

In another instance, he says,

Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. (1Tim 2:11-14)

According to Holbrook, Paul recognizes the relation between man and woman which God had fixed subsequent to the Fall. The man is to exercise headship, govern, care for, and protect the woman - his trust. On the other hand, the woman is dependent upon man's care, and is to be submissive to the governing authority (1 Cor 11:3; 14:34). In addition, in terms of husband-wife relationships, Paul sought to elevate the position of Christian wives. Wives were to respect their husbands and be submissive to their headship. However, this was a voluntary submission, for they were to submit just as the church chooses to be submissive to the will of Christ.

### **THE CONTEXT AND EXEGESIS OF 1 TIMOTHY 2:8-15**

This section focuses on the exegesis of the text under study. Efforts will be made to study the text in its context and consider the grammatical data in order to arrive at the authorial intention.

#### **The Historical Context**

The location in which Timothy has been assigned to minister is Ephesus (1 Tim 1:3). "Originally a seaport, modern Ephesus is located several miles inland. History has it that the Greeks came to occupy the city and surrounding environs from very early times, and made the place known for

the worship of Artemis.” Historically, “in the late first century B.C.E., Augustus’s quelling of rebellion in Rome brought the *pax Romana* to Asia. He visited Ephesus and recognized the city as the provincial capital. By the time Paul came on the scene, among Asian cities Ephesus was in the ascendancy. Its population numbered about 100,000, and its economy was robust.”

Philip H. Towner records that;

The life of Ephesus was as religiously complex as that of any other Imperial Asian city. Emperor worship had come to the fore after a long and complicated period of gestation throughout the Greek and Roman eras.... Consequently, the city in which Timothy was assigned to represent the apostle was a large and diverse one.

In the epistle to Timothy, it is revealed that the apostle Paul did not have the time to address in person the problems that had arisen in Ephesus during his absence. Thus, he asked his colleague Timothy to deal with the problems in his behalf (cf. 1 Tim 1:3; 3:14-15).

### **The Purpose of Writing**

Nancy Vyhmeister points out that Paul’s purpose of writing his epistle to Timothy could be found in 1 Tim 1:3 and 3:14-15. The passages contain the instructions which would help Timothy and the congregations in Ephesus to “know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God” adding that one would know the full impact of Paul’s purpose by studying the whole epistle.

Being aware of the challenges Timothy encountered in Ephesus, Paul wrote 1 Timothy with the aim of not only “encouraging his younger colleague in his task, but also as a way of providing him with the instructions and the authority he needed to carry out his duty. Paul did this by

writing Timothy a personal letter that he clearly expected the Ephesians would also read (1 Tim 6:21).” Paul exhorts Timothy to “conduct himself in a manner pleasing to God and helpful to the flock over which God has placed him.”

Timothy is charged with the responsibility of opposing the false teachers whose contentious and misguided teachings were weakening the genuine work of the gospel in Ephesus (1:3). Having done this, Paul then provided Timothy with practical instructions for actually addressing the problems within the church. (1 Tim 2:1-3:15)

### Structure of the Text: 1 Tim 2:8-15

- A. Instruction for men:
  - i. Pray everywhere lifting up holy hands without wrath – v.8
- B. Instruction for women:
  - i. Modest adornment – vv.9-10
  - ii. Learning in silence with subjection – v.11
  - iii. Prohibition from teaching – v.12
- C. Basis for women’s prohibition
  - i. Adam was created first – v.13
  - ii. Adam was not deceived but Eve – v.14
- D. Salvation for women through child-bearing – v.15

It seems that the above structure indicates that the central issue in the passage is the prohibition of women from teaching. This outline will be followed in this exegetical analysis.

### The Literary Context

Progression of thought is observed in the pericope under study. Verse 8 begins with the verb “Βούλομαι” (indicative present middle). This verb denotes “wish”, “to be willing”, “want”, or “desire.” Thus, at the beginning of this passage, the writer expresses his desire or wish which he

directs to the men. In verse 9, Paul continues with the use of ὡσαύτως. With this adverb, Paul links verse 9 to his earlier desire (v.8). So, ὡσαύτως translated as; (in) the same (way), similarly, or likewise relates the message of the two verses together. As Paul desires that men should pray, in the same way, he admonishes the women to put on modest apparel.

However, Paul begins the next verse with ἀλλά, an adversative particle translated as “but”. This particle is said to be stronger than δέ: most frequently used after a negative (e.g., Matt 5:17; Mk 9:37; Eph 1:21). It negates the list in v.9b (μὴ ἐν πλέγμασιν καὶ χρυσίῳ ἢ μαργαρίταις ἢ ἱματισμῷ πολυτελεῖ, not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array).

In verse 11, Paul uses a present active imperative verb, μανθανέτω to convey his message to the women. This implies that it is not a wish but a command. This is stronger than “Βούλομαι” he uses in verse 8. In continuation of this command, Paul declares in verse 12, διδάσκειν δὲ γυναῖκι οὐκ ἐπιτρέπω (I permit not a woman to teach). This prohibition stresses his earlier command (v.11).

Further, the use of the coordinative conjunction γάρ, expresses and explains the cause, or reasons for Paul’s command in verses 11-12. More reason is added with the use of καὶ in verse 14. In the concluding verse, the adversative particle δὲ is introduced as Paul concludes his thought.

The following section covers other verses in the pericope as they contribute to the understanding of the texts under study.

### **ἄνθρωπος and Public Prayer – 2:8**

Βούλωμαι οὖν προσεύχεσθαι τοὺς ἄνδρας ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ ἐπαίροντας ὁσίους χεῖρας χωρὶς ὀργῆς καὶ διαλογισμοῦ. (1Tim 2:8 BGT)

I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; (1Tim 2:8)

In this pericope, the first instruction is directed to men. Paul enjoins men to pray, ἐπαίροντας ὁσίους χεῖρας. The idea of lifting hands in prayer may not be literal. It is figurative signifying their spiritual state.

Sakae Kubo comments that the basic content of 1 Tim 2 centers on prayer and worship. In verses 1-2 Paul asks for prayers for kings and all those in authority; he continues in verse 8 to urge men to pray without anger or disputing. This invitation to pray is not limited to a specific location, but is intended for all places where Christians gather. The lifting of the “holy hands” is viewed as an expression of a sanctified lifestyle. Furthermore, the inner attitude in prayer is considered beyond the speech (“without anger and quarreling, see Psalm 24:3-4) Thus, the believing men are urged to take special care to avoid disputing or a quarrelsome spirit at their prayer meetings (everywhere), so as to cause no further division and conflict.

### **γυναικας and Demeanor in Worship – 2:9-10**

**1 Timothy 2:9-10 says;**

<sup>9</sup> Ὡσαύτως [καὶ] γυναῖκας ἐν καταστολῇ κοσμίῳ μετὰ αἰδοῦς καὶ σωφροσύνης κοσμεῖν ἑαυτάς, μὴ ἐν πλέγμασιν καὶ χρυσίῳ ἢ μαργαρίταις ἢ ἱματισμῷ πολυτελεῖ, <sup>10</sup> ἀλλ’ ὃ πρέπει γυναῖξιν ἐπαγγελλομέναις θεοσεβειαν, δι’ ἔργων ἀγαθῶν.

Likewise, also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or

costly attire, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness - with good works.

The connective word ὡσαύτως used in verse 9 links this verse to the previous one. However, Paul here directs his injunction to women. It seems his concern is the proper conduct of worshipers before God. This conduct includes both inner and outward attitude. Paul contrasts the inner adornment with the outward one. Thus, instead of braided hair, gold, pearls or costly attire, women are urged to adorn themselves with respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control. The use of the reflexive pronoun, ἑαυτάς indicates that women are responsible themselves for this choice. It is observed that the purpose of costly adornment in any of its form, is to attract attention to self. It is viewed as an expression of selfishness and probably of a desire for improper attention from the opposite sex.

Bacchiocchi affirms that extravagant outward adornment obviously shows a woman's independence from her husband. He stresses that in most of all the Jewish and pagan texts, the rejection of external adornment shows a woman's submission to her husband and a recognition of her place among men in general. The use of outward adornments such as pearls, gold jewelry, hair styling and expensive, provocative clothing implies two objectionable characteristics - material extravagance and sexual infidelity.

### **γυναῖκας and Participation in Worship – 2:11-12**

There is a shift in the topic from verses 11–15. The writer changes from dealing with the Ephesian women to the topic of leadership, however, the two are related. The women's bid to gain positions of leadership engenders disruption; thus, the connection with the previous verses.



Meanwhile, the disruption is resulted from issue of gender roles. Broadly speaking, there is a link also between verses 11–15 and chapter 3, which describes the leadership qualities expected of overseers and deacons, specifically the ability to teach. Paul says,

<sup>11</sup> Γυνὴ ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ μανθανέτω ἐν πάσῃ ὑποταγῇ· <sup>12</sup> διδάσκειν δὲ γυναικὶ οὐκ ἐπιτρέπω οὐδὲ αὐθεντεῖν ἀνδρός, ἀλλ’ εἶναι ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ. (1Tim 2:11-12)

Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet (1Tim 2:11-12)

Mounce observes this outline of vv 11–12:

- |       |   |
|-------|---|
| v 11a | A woman should learn in <i>quietness</i> ,          |
| v 11b | in all submissiveness;                              |
| v 12a | but I do not permit a woman to <i>teach</i> ,<br>or |
| v 12b | to exercise authority over a man,                   |
| v 12c | but [she is] to be in <i>quietness</i> .            |

Based on the above outline, Mounce explains that,

V 11a is the main point and is repeated in v 12c for emphasis (*inclusio*). ἐν πάσῃ ὑποταγῇ, “in all submissiveness” (v 11b), defines ἡσυχία, “quietness.” V 12ab further defines in practical terms what learning in quietness/submissiveness means. διδάσκειν, “to teach” (v 12a), contrasts specifically with μανθανέτω, “should learn” (v 11a); the woman is to learn, not to teach. If Paul intends the two parts of v 11 to parallel the two parts of v 12ab, then ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ μανθανέτω, “should learn in quietness,” parallels διδάσκειν ... γυναικὶ οὐκ ἐπιτρέπω, “I do not permit a woman to teach,” and ἐν πάσῃ ὑποταγῇ, “in all submissiveness,”

parallels αὐθεντεῖν ἄνδρός, “to exercise authority over a man.” If the parallelism is not intended, then all of v 12ab defines what it means to learn in quiet submissiveness. The relationship of v 12a to v 12b is debated, but it will be argued here that v 12b is a general principle and v 12a is a specific application of that principle.

Further, Paul addresses γυνή here. γυνή can be translated as “wife” or “woman.” Meanwhile the context of this passage suggests congregation or worship setting (vv 1, 8). Thus, Paul may be referring to women in general and not necessarily wives. Also, Paul uses the imperative verb, μανθανέτω (1Tim 2:11) to express his mind. The imperativeness of the verb implies the seriousness and intensity of the command. Women are commanded to learn in quietness in all subjection.

From the undisputed Pauline writings, it is discovered that Paul uses the verb μανθανέτω with various connotations and nuances. Such meanings include; “learn” (Rom 16:17; 1 Cor 4:6; Eph 4:20; Phi 4:9, 11; Col 1:7; 1 Tim 5:4, 13; 2 Tim 3:14; Tit 3:14), “become informed” (1 Cor 14:31), “acquire knowledge” (1 Tim 2:11), “find out” (Gal 3:2), and “learn by inquire” (1 Cor 14:35). The context determines the apt meaning of the usage of μανθανέτω. However, it seems in all, the learners are not passive but active in the process of learning either directly or indirectly. This is also the view of Towner who opines that “the immediate literary context, ‘in quietness’ describes the posture and attitude of appropriate difference to the teacher. It does not exclude wives from participation in certain speaking activities such as praying, prophesying, or speaking in tongues...” Hence, learning in quietness with all submission implies appropriate attitude in learning setting and with the instructor.

It is noted that the command to learn in quietness is “a radical movement from within the cultural context of Judaism where men were the public speakers in any assembly, and where it was forbidden, that women should learn and interpret the Torah.” Meanwhile, it is observed that Paul does not give his instruction in a vacuum. It is on record that some affluent women (married and widowed) flouted traditional belief systems regulating adornment and dress and sexual propriety. History has it that Augustus issued a legislation against this movement as it became disturbing to the status quo. The emergence of the “new woman” in Roman society influenced some Christian women as they were drawn to this movement. Their notable features include; outward adornment and apparel, and the violation of the “traditional dress code of respectability.” Thus, Towner asserts that 1 Tim 2:9-10, 15 (cf. 11-15; Tit 2) address a group of wealthy women who have disregarded the acceptable dress code. With this, it appears that what Paul is confronted with is the “cultural development influencing the behavior of well-to-do Christian women in worship that posed a risk to the church’s public image.”

In verse 12, Paul commands, διδάσκειν δὲ γυναῖκι οὐκ ἐπιτρέπω (I do not permit a woman to teach). Gordon D. Fee affirms that teaching is the major problem of the Church in Ephesus. “The straying elders are teachers (1:3; 6:3); the “worthy” elders, for whom Timothy is probably to serve as something of a model (4:11-16; cf. 2 Tim. 2:2), are “those whose work is teaching” (5:17). Indeed, Paul calls himself a teacher in these letters (2:7). But he is here prohibiting women to teach in the (house-) church(es) of Ephesus, although in other churches they prophesy (1 Cor. 11:5) and probably give a teaching from time to time (1 Cor. 14:26), and in Titus 2:3-4 the older women are expected to be good teachers of the younger ones.”

According to Towner, the noun “the teaching”, in its different forms refer to the authoritative apostolic gospel. So, the verb “to teach which occurs in the text under study is a reference to the authoritative activity of teaching in the worship setting. He stresses that teaching, as a gift, like that of apostle, prophet, and evangelist, was said to be limited to certain persons (see 2 Tim 2:2). Fee explains that teaching is a spiritual gift as evidenced in 1 Cor 12:28. Some in the community are known as teachers (Rom 12:7) and there are private instructors (Acts 14:6, 26). Based on this, he reasons that the teaching in 1 Timothy 2:11 most likely has to do with instruction in Scripture, that is, Scripture as pointing to salvation in Christ (cf. 2 Tim. 3:15- 17). Fee submits that if this is what women are being forbidden to do, then it is probably because some of the women have been so terribly deceived by the false teachers, who are specifically abusing the OT (cf. 1:7; Titus 3:9).

It can be inferred that since teaching is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, it is not restricted to a particular gender. Then, the prohibition in 1 Tim 2:12 might be to address a particular situation.

It is not unlikely that Paul would deny women the exercise of their spiritual gift of teaching.

Bacchiochi, likewise posits that the nature of teaching women are prohibited from in 1 Timothy 2:12 is the authoritative teaching restricted to the pastor or elder/overseer of the congregation. He explains further that the restrictive meaning of the teaching ministry is especially clear in 2 Timothy 2:2 where Paul charges Timothy saying, “what you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” Bacchiochi asserts that the “faithful men” are possibly the elder/ overseers of the congregation. Paul gives ability to teach as the qualification for such an office (1 Tim 3:2). Besides, he admonishes that special

recognition should be accorded to “the elders who rule well... especially those who labor in preaching and teaching” (1 Tim 5:17).

Fee submits that “some kind of disruptive behavior, which perhaps included boisterous affirmation of the heresies, seems to lie behind these instructions.”

### **γυναῖκας and the Theological Basis for their Participation in Worship – 2:13-14**

<sup>13</sup> Ἀδὰμ γὰρ πρῶτος ἐπλάσθη, εἶτα Εὗα. <sup>14</sup> καὶ Ἀδὰμ οὐκ ἠπατήθη, ἡ δὲ γυνὴ ἐξαπατηθεῖσα ἐν παραβάσει γέγονεν· (1Tim 2:13-14)

For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. (1Tim 2:13-14)

The use of conjunction γὰρ (v.13) first connects this verse with verses 11-12 and also provides the theological basis for Paul’s argument. First, he reasons that Adam was created first, and it was Eve that was deceived. Paul seems to imply that chronological precedence indicates superiority (cf. 1Cor 11:8-9). Likewise, Fee asserts that “the priority of Adam in creation is apparently seen as support of a woman's needing to dress modestly and behaving ‘in a quiet demeanor:’

Even though, Adam was created first, they both have equal status before God since they were both made in the image of God (Gen 1:26-28). Thus, Adam seems not to be superior while Eve is inferior. In addition, when Eve was deceived, Adam made his choice to sin also. They both became transgressors, not only the woman.

Paul later writes, “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.” (Rom 5:12). In another instance, Paul

states that, “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Gal 3:28)

Thus, being made first may not confer a special privilege on the man since they were both made of the same materials and both fell to become transgressors. Only in the order of marriage, man seems to have headship. More so, the cross of Christ has made all equal before God.

### **γυναῖκας – A Positive Encouragement – 2:15**

σωθήσεται δὲ διὰ τῆς τεκνογονίας, ἐὰν μείνωσιν ἐν πίστει καὶ ἀγάπῃ καὶ ἀγιασμῷ μετὰ σωφροσύνης· (1Tim 2:15 BGT)

Yet she will be saved through childbearing--if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control. (1Tim 2:15)

After establishing that Eve was deceived and fell into sin, Paul, then declares, “But she will be saved (v.15). What Paul probably intends is that woman’s salvation from the sin caused by similar deception, which is to ultimately qualify her for eternal life, could be found in her “being a model, godly woman, known for her good works (v. 10; cf. 5:11). And her good deeds, according to 5:11 and 14, include marriage, bearing children (the verb form of this noun), and keeping a good home. The reason for his saying that she will be saved is that it flows directly out of his having said “the woman came to be in transgression.”

From the context of the passage, Cornelius Stam posits that Paul teaches that in motherhood, such as, “in taking her place in the home, living with her husband in faith, love and holiness, with sobriety, the Christian woman will be saved from the pitfalls that have wrecked the lives of so many women.”

Paul may not intend a literal interpretation and application. If women are saved through child bearing, it then suggests that salvation is only meant for the child-bearing women. It is doubtful that Paul who even encourages singlehood (1 Cor 7:25-28) would teach such. The Scriptures do not teach anywhere that salvation of women is connected with their child-bearing ability. Hence, the text should not be taken literally.

First, the pronoun “she” refers to Eve, the representative of all men. Just like Paul makes an allusion to the creation order (vv. 13-14) as the basis for his argument, he equally alludes to the instance of God’s judgment on Eve (Gen 3:16). Ángel Manuel Rodríguez suggests that if the preposition “through” is translated as “despite”, then, 1 Timothy 2:15 would mean that “the woman will be saved despite the fact that she continues to experience pain in childbearing - a reminder of her sin.” He explains that the use of the passive verb (“she will be saved”), implies that God is the One who saves (the implied subject of the action) and not through the child-bearing.

### **Intertextuality**

Paul, in his message to Timothy gives the injunction on what the attitude of men shall be in worship (1 Tim 2:8) and what should constitute the attitude of the women (1 Tim 2:9-10). While men are to avoid anger or quarreling in prayer, women are urged to adorn themselves with modest apparel. However, Ephesian’s women are told to learn in quietness with submission as Paul does not permit them to teach. Considering similar texts in the Scriptures could shed more light on the prohibition.

In 1 Cor 14:34, Paul writes, “Let the women keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but let them subject themselves, just as the Law also says”. Paul says further that any woman who desires to learn anything, should ask her own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church. Study reveals that Paul is addressing a specific situation in the Church of Corinth and his message should not be taken as a prescription for the entire Christian Church.

In Paul’s ministry, evidence shows that women “prayed”, “prophesied” and exercised a teaching ministry (1 Cor 11:5). In Acts 18:26, Priscilla and Aquila taught Apollos the word of God accurately. Paul also acknowledged women who labored side-by-side with him (Phi 4:3, cf. Rom 16:3, 12). This could include teaching. Paul also encourages the Colossians to teach one another – both male and female (Col 3:16).

In addition, Paul himself names teaching as one of the gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor 12:27-30). There is no indication that this gift is exclusively reserved for men. Galatians 3:28 says, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Gal 3:28 ESV)

## SUMMARY

This study reveals the following:

- Both man and woman share the same status at creation as they are both created in God’s image. Thus, woman is not subordinated to man. She holds no inferior



place nor is her role lower than that of the male. However, after the fall, there is a paradigm shift in their marriage relationship.

- In the Old Testament era, women participated in the tabernacle activities, festivals but none played a priestly role.
- In the New Testament time, Jesus respected women and treated them as people who also deserve to be saved. Women even played a major role in his ministry. Likewise, Apostle Paul gave due regard to women. He worked for their salvation as Christ did, and considered them equal to men as candidates for salvation.
- From the text under study, it is discovered that women learning in quietness describes the posture and attitude of appropriate deference to the teacher. The injunction does not exclude wives from participating in religious activities. Hence, learning in quietness with all submission implies appropriate attitude in learning setting and with the instructor.
- It is also noted that since teaching is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, it is not restricted to a particular gender. So, the prohibition in 1 Tim 2:12 might be to address a particular situation. It is not unlikely that Paul would deny women the exercise of their spiritual gift of teaching.
- The study also clarifies that the nature of teaching women are prohibited from in 1 Timothy 2:12 is the authoritative teaching restricted to the pastor or elder/overseer of the congregation.

## CONCLUSION

From this exegetical study, it appears that Paul's injunction in 1 Tim 2:10-11 which requires women to learn in quietness and forbids them to teach is not a general and timeless prohibition. Paul addresses the Ephesian women because of the situation of the church in Ephesus at the time. More so, learning in silence appears to do with decorum, order in worship and what should constitute the attitude of those being taught within the context of corporate worship. Besides, the issue of the false teachers in Ephesus seems to be one of the reasons for forbidding women from teaching as they have been exposed to it. As it has been established, the nature of the teaching women are prohibited from in 1 Timothy 2:12 is the authoritative teaching restricted to the pastor or elder/overseer of the congregation. Men as well as women can receive the gift of teaching and they should be free to exercise it. More so, woman is not inferior to man. In Christ, there is no male or female (Gal 3:28).

## Endnotes

xxxix Unless otherwise stated, all the English Scriptural texts are from English Standard Version (ESV).

xxxix Elna Mouton and Ellen van Wolde, "New Life from a Pastoral Text of Terror?," *Scriptura* 111 (2012): 583. See also, Jamin Hübner, "Revisiting the Clarity of Scripture in 1 Timothy 2:12," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 59, no. 1 (March 2016): 103.

xxxix Benjamin L. Merkle, "Paul's Arguments from Creation in 1 Corinthians 11:8-9 and 1 Timothy 2:13-14: An Apparent Inconsistency Answered," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 49, no. 3 (September 2006): 527.

xxxix Jamin Hübner, "Revisiting the Clarity of Scripture in 1 Timothy 2:12," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 59, no. 1 (March 2016): 99.

xxxix Abiola I. Mbamalu, "'The Woman Was Deceived and Became a Sinner' - a Literary-Theological Investigation of 1 Timothy 2:11-15," *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 70, no. 3 (2014): 1.

xxxix Mouton and van Wolde, "New Life from a Pastoral Text of Terror?," 589.

xxxix Ibid.

xxxix Russell L Huizing, "What Was Paul Thinking? An Ideological Study of 1 Timothy 2," no. 2 (2011): 16.

xxxix Christoph W. Stenschke "Einer Frau gestatte ich nicht, dass sie lehre" (1 Timotheus 2:12): Exegese – Hermeneutik – Kirche," *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 75, no. 3 (2019), <http://dx.doi.org.koha.aua.ac.ke:2048/10.4102/hts.v75i3.5364>.

xxxix Adam D. Hensley, "Divine Blessing and Order in Marriage and the Church," *Lutheran Theological Journal* 54, no. 1 (May 2020): 56.

xxxix Fergus J. King and Dorothy A. Lee, "Lost in Translation: Rethinking Words about Women in 1–2 Timothy," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 74, no. 1 (February 2021): 57, <http://dx.doi.org.koha.aua.ac.ke:2048/10.1017/S0036930621000053>.

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xxxix Gerhard F. Hasel, "The Relationship of Man and Woman in the Beginning and at the End" (PhD Dissertation, Berrien Spring, SDA Theological Seminary, Andrews University, n.d.), 3, <https://www.adventistarchives.org/the-relationship-of-man-and-woman-in-the-beginning-and-at-the-end.pdf>.

xxxix Hasel, 4.

xxxix Frank B. Holbrook, "A Brief Analysis and Interpretation of the Biblical Data Regarding the Role of Woman," n.d., 2, <https://www.adventistarchives.org/brief-analysis-of-biblical-data-regarding-role-of-women.pdf>.

xxxix Hasel, "The Relationship of Man and Woman in the Beginning and at the End," 13.

xxxix Hasel, 17.

xxxix Holbrook, "A Brief Analysis and Interpretation of the Biblical Data Regarding the Role of Woman," n.d., 1.

xxxix Jerry A. Gladson, "The Role of Women in the Old Testament Outside the Pentateuch," in *Symposium on the Role of Women in the Church* (USA: Biblical Research Institute Committee General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1984), 8.

xxxix Gladson, 19.

xxxix Kenneth L. Vine, "The Legal and Social Status of Women in the Pentateuch," in *Symposium on the Role of Women in the Church* (USA: Biblical Research Institute Committee General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1984), 33.

xxxix Ibid., 34.

xxxix Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Women in the Church: A Biblical Study on the Role of Women in the Church* (Berrien Spring: MI: Biblical Perspectives, 1987), 43.

xxxix Bacchiocchi, 43.

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xxxix Walter F. Specht, "Jesus and Women," in *Symposium on the Role of Women in the Church* (USA: Biblical Research Institute Committee General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1984), 68.

- xxxix Bacchiocchi, *Women in the Church: A Biblical Study on the Role of Women in the Church*, 44.
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- xxxix Bacchiocchi, 81. Women plays significant roles in the life of Jesus Christ, from birth to his death and resurrection. See also; Ben Witherington, ed., *Women in the Earliest Churches* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 128–55.
- xxxix Frank B. Holbrook, “A Brief Analysis and Interpretation of the Biblical Data Regarding the Role of Woman,” in *Symposium on the Role of Women in the Church* (USA: Biblical Research Institute Committee General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1984), 101.
- xxxix Holbrook, 102.
- xxxix Holbrook, 102.
- xxxix Philip H. Towner, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 37.
- xxxix Ibid.
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- xxxix Carl P. Cosaert, “Leadership and Gender in the Ephesian Church: An Examination of 1 Timothy” (Theology of Ordination Study Committee, Columbia, MD, 2014), 3.
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- xxxix Cosaert, “Leadership and Gender in the Ephesian Church: An Examination of 1 Timothy,” 4.
- xxxix Francis D. Nichol, ed., *The Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7 (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1980), 285.
- xxxix Cosaert, “Leadership and Gender in the Ephesian Church: An Examination of 1 Timothy,” 4,5.
- xxxix Sakae Kubo, “An Exegesis of 1 Timothy 2:11-15 and Its Implications,” in *Symposium on the Role of Women in the Church* (USA: Biblical Research Institute Committee General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1984), 1.
- xxxix Stenschke, “‘Einer Frau gestatte ich nicht, dass sie lehre‘ (1 Timotheus 2.)”
- xxxix Mouton and van Wolde, “New Life from a Pastoral Text of Terror?,” 587.
- xxxix Nichol, *The Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 7:295.
- xxxix Bacchiocchi, *Women in the Church: A Biblical Study on the Role of Women in the Church*, 131.
- xxxix William D. Mounce, ed., *Word Biblical Commentary: Pastoral Epistles*, vol. 46 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 129.
- xxxix Mounce, *Word Biblical Commentary: Pastoral Epistles*.

- xxxix Ibid., 134.
214. xxxix Towner, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 196.
- xxxix Mouton and van Wolde, “New Life from a Pastoral Text of Terror?,” 588.
196. xxxix Towner, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 196.
- xxxix Ibid.
- xxxix Towner, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 196.
- xxxix Gordon D. Fee, *New International Biblical Commentary: 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc, 1988), 72–73.
- xxxix Fee, 23.
- xxxix Bacchiocchi, *Women in the Church: A Biblical Study on the Role of Women in the Church*, 136.
- xxxix Ibid., 137.
- xxxix Fee, *New International Biblical Commentary: 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 73.
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- xxxix Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, “What Did Paul Mean “when He Wrote: ‘Women Will Be Saved through Childbearing’ (1 Tim. 2:15, NIV)?,” *Seventh-Day Adventist Church Biblical Research Institute*, n.d., <https://adventistbiblicalresearch.org/materials/1-timothy-215/>.
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