

1 TIMOTHY 2:15

SAVED THROUGH CHILDBEARING

“Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.”¹

The role of women—in society and especially in churches—is a topic fraught with grave danger. The man who dares speak on the biblical role of women among the churches had better pledge his head toward heaven; the topic generates great heat—few congregants are truly neutral. Preachers don’t particularly enjoy controversy for the sake of controversy. Consequently, many of my ministerial colleagues, to say nothing of myself, will make a valiant effort to avoid conflict. This is not surprising, as among character traits that disqualify from eldership are pugnacity—a tendency to bully, and contentiousness—and a quarrelsome temper.

Having stated what should be obvious, I must hasten to say that controversy will come. If the servant of Christ fulfils his duty before God and to the flock of the Lord, he will generate opposition and stir emotions. When opposition comes, and be assured it shall come, it is often accompanied by animosity. The man of God must avoid responding in kind. The minister of Christ must be guided by the Word of God. “The Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will” [2 TIMOTHY 2:24-26].

Elsewhere, Paul has admonished all Christians concerning the appropriate response to outsiders. “Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person” [COLOSSIANS 4:6]. And though it is true that all believers are to be gracious in their speech, servants of Christ, especially, are to be gentle, but firm.

This point is sufficiently important that I must appeal to Peter’s words to reinforce this truth. The Apostle to the Jews wrote, “In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame” [1 PETER 3:15, 16].

Having stated this truth, which should be apparent to anyone even casually conversant with the Scriptures, the text for the message this morning does require our attention. In preaching through these Pastoral Letters, we have come to this portion of the Word. And though the issue of women’s ministries has become problematic among the professed people of God in this day, we dare not invest an inordinate amount of time addressing what should require but passing attention. The fact that the issue must be considered in depth is less an indication of the complexity of issues arising from the discussion than it is our own fallen and perverse nature.

The verse that serves as text for the message this day is controversial for what it says. Even if there were no broader dissention about the role of women, the verse itself qualifies as difficult to understand and fraught with potential to lend itself to being misunderstood. Accordingly, because the text is before us and because I want you to be thoroughly informed, we shall consider this verse, asking what it says and seeking to apply it in our lives.

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible, English Standard Version** © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

TEXTUAL ISSUES — “She will be saved through childbearing.” Superficially, this statement creates some difficulties for the interpreter of Scripture. The heart of the controversy over Paul’s meaning centres on the word that is translated “saved” in my translation. The word is translated “salvation,”² “delivered”³ or “preserved”⁴ in other translations—the latter two efforts likely reflecting concern about the soteriological impact of Paul’s choice of words.

The usual meaning of the word as used in Paul’s writings speaks of eternal salvation. However, the word can also speak of rescue in other senses; the context determines what is meant. Underscore in your mind that Paul was speaking of salvation—but it was the salvation of the lost and not the salvation of those who professed Christ as Lord when he wrote these words. The Apostle’s concern has been that the people of God at worship not offend the propriety of lost people by advancing their own agenda and calling it worship.

Paul has urged “supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings” for all people. The purpose of this admonition is for the glory of the Master. As we enjoy peaceful and quiet lives, living a godly and dignified lifestyle, we will have greater opportunities to witness to the grace of God. We know that God desires all people to be saved, coming to the knowledge of the truth that Jesus Christ is the One Mediator presented for fallen mankind.

The Apostle continued by pointing out that the men were responsible to lead in congregation prayer and that women were not permitted to occupy the place of congregational teacher nor were women to be placed in eldership. He based this admonition and proscription on priority in creation and on the fact that though Adam sinned, Eve was deceived. Then, as though to soften the prohibition against women functioning as elders, he provides this fifteenth verse.

Multiple suggestions have been advanced to explain what Paul might have meant. Here are some that can still be found among the various commentaries available today.

1. She will be kept physically safe through childbearing.
2. She will be kept safe eternally.
3. She will be kept safe through the Child bearing, referring to the birth of Jesus.
4. She will be kept safe from a meaningless life in which she must compete with man for usefulness and uniqueness.
5. She will be kept safe from seeking to live a totally independent life.
6. She will be kept safe from an inappropriate relationship with her husband.
7. She will be kept from an out-of-balance prioritising attention given to herself.

Several of these suggestions can be quickly dismissed as unsuitable explanations. Obviously, believing women are no safer when being delivered of children than unbelieving women. Childbirth has attendant dangers, many of which have been mitigated in modern times. However, no physical protection is granted to believing women. If childbirth has inherent danger, believers are not shielded merely because they believe.

The second suggestion is quite blatantly errant—childbirth is not a substitute for the Cross of Christ. While most people think well of their mothers, we are assured that Heaven will not be populated by mothers, many of whom would have but one claim to eternal salvation—bearing a child in her womb. Childbirth is not sufficient to lay claim to God’s mercy.

² Revised English Bible

³ NET Bible First Edition (Noteless)

⁴ NASB, 1995 Update

The third suggestion has a fatal defect—we are saved by Christ’s death, not by His birth. It is instructive to observe that though several sermons are recorded in the Book of Acts, each speaking of Christ’s death and resurrection, the birth of Christ is not the subject of any of the sermons that were recorded in the New Testament. It is not that the birth of Christ is unimportant to the Faith; it is that His sacrifice and resurrection from the dead are vital! The sermons recorded by the Spirit of God reveal what God esteemed as essential; the issues addressed by the Apostles as they preached reveal what was vital to their theology.

This particular suggestion persist to this present day because of the use of the definite article in the original language—“she will be saved through *the* childbearing” (*tês teknogonías*). “The childbearing” is taken by some commentators as referring to the birth of the Christ. Some translations make it clear that this was the understanding of the translators. For instance, one translation reads thusly, “She [and all women] will be saved through the birth of the child, if they lead respectable lives in faith, love, and holiness.”⁵

There is another problem arising from the language Paul employed. The word translated “childbearing” cannot refer to the single birth of a child. It speaks of the continuing act of bearing a child. Of course, the birth of Jesus the Messiah was a singular event in history; there will be no other birth of a Saviour!

This thought that Paul had the birth of Christ in view when he wrote these words has gained traction among many evangelical Christians in this day. However, one further matter arguing against the thought that passage points to the birth of the Master must be noted. While “she” in the opening words of the verse is singular, the plural pronoun “they” is used in the latter portion of the verse. Also, what is written in the latter, explanatory portion of the verse is future tense and not past tense—the birth of Christ was already in the rear-view mirror for the Apostle, as it is for us. Obviously, the verse could not refer to Mary as some have suggested!

Again, the greater problem with this suggestion is that we are assured that salvation is through the sacrifice of Messiah and His resurrection from the dead—not through His birth. Recall the manner in which Paul opened the Letter to Roman Christians. “Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord” [ROMANS 1:1-4]. Such an effort seems stilted at best; moreover, it leaves the impression that women, in particular and in contradistinction to men, are saved through the birth of Messiah!

The next four possibilities that have been advanced by commentators have more to recommend them as approximating the meaning of the Apostle’s words. In some measure, each of these suggestions overlaps; each speaks as though the word “saved” refers to something other than salvation from sin or salvation to life. In light of Paul’s appeal to Eve’s deception and subsequent exclusion from exercising dominion over the man, these concepts of the apostolic meaning share a measure of comity. Let me remind you of what these suggestions are.

1. She will be kept safe from a meaningless life in which she must compete with man for usefulness and uniqueness.
2. She will be kept safe from seeking to live a totally independent life.
3. She will be kept safe from an inappropriate relationship with her husband.
4. She will be kept from an out-of-balance prioritising attention given to herself.

⁵ The Word

Because Paul has already referred to Eve, noting in particular that she was deceived. It seems apparent that this verse should not be divorced from the previous thought. While Adam sinned through his choice to rebel, Eve became a transgressor because she was deceived, as the Apostle has stated [see **1 TIMOTHY 2:14**]. When God pronounced the curse on Eve, he said:

“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.”

[**GENESIS 3:16**]

Therefore, childbirth is not a curse; but the pain of childbirth is the curse that was pronounced.

In the text, Paul teaches that although Eve became a transgressor through being deceived, and though she bears the stigma of having led the race into sin, yet in the act of childbearing women are preserved from that very stigma. Women are freed from the stigma of the pain accompanying childbirth as they invest their lives in the lives of their children, thus raising godly seed! Restating the matter, it is as though the Apostle is saying that while a woman led the race into sin, women have the privilege of leading the race out of sin and into godliness through investing their lives into raising godly children.

No one should conclude from what I’ve said that God wants all women to bear children. For some women, the will of God precludes marriage [see **1 CORINTHIANS 7:25-40**]! What is written is in general terms; the Apostle has painted with broad strokes. The pain associated with childbirth was punishment for the woman’s sin; but the joy and privilege that attends raising righteous children frees women from the stigma of that sin.

To this day, women do tend to find their worth in their children. Men, rightly or wrongly, tend to equate their worth with the ability to provide for the family. Women, and especially Christian women, esteem children; and they are exalted in their children. This accounts for our admiration of well-behaved children and the reason we commend the mother of such children. Perhaps Paul is implying with this statement that women need not compete with men for meaning in their lives. This particular suggestion has great merit. If one is egalitarian, arguing that we are all equal in ability and roles, then the suggestion I have just made will likely be offensive. However, for the complementarian who believes that men and women are to complement one another, this suggestion becomes quite reasonable.

If the complementarian view is correct, and I believe it is, then the remaining suggestions for Paul’s meaning immediately align themselves. The woman who sees herself as God created her is not driven to seek a totally independent life; she rejoices in the mutual dependency that is enjoyed by both husband and wife. Moreover, she is not jockeying for position or power over her husband; their relationship builds one another and blesses all who know the couple. Finally, that woman is secure in who she is—a woman fulfilling the divine role assigned by the Creator.

Let me state quite clearly that women are not second-class citizens of the Kingdom of God. Born from above, a woman occupies the same position as an heir of Christ as does any male born from above through faith in the Son of God. Graciously accepting her position as a woman ensures that she both honours God and fulfils the divine appointment she has received. Because of our fallen natures, I am compelled to note that nothing I have said precludes a woman working outside of the home. Nevertheless, her primary role is raising godly children.

The Apostle does inform readers that women fulfil a divine role that mitigates the pain of the Fall through raising godly children. To accomplish this goal, God states that women must “continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.” This is continuation of the Apostle’s theme evident throughout the chapter on men and women at worship. The principle must be stated again—**HOW WE LIVE AFFECTS OUR WORSHIP**. Our appearance, our demeanour and our behaviour determines the way in which we are viewed by outsiders. Consequently, our lifestyle dictates to a significant extent whether we will be effective in evangelism or not. As we have previously witnessed as holding true for men, so the manner in which a woman dresses, conducts her life or behaves, determines whether she is seen as godly or worldly. Whether we are godly, according to God’s standard, determines whether we actually worship or merely perform rituals.

I am also compelled to stress, so that no one need feel hurt by what has been stated; the Apostle is stating a principle and not giving to us a command. There will be exceptions, but the principle stands that women assert great influence on the Faith through being godly mothers. Some women have been unable to bear children, and there is a deep wound on their heart. I would not ever suggest that a woman so wounded is in any respect inferior. I cannot tell such a precious soul why she cannot bear children. I am responsible before God, however, to declare the principle as stated in His Word.

THE BROADER CONTEXT —I have presented again the concept that the conduct of God’s people at worship has an impact on their witness to those outside the Faith. Whether we embrace God’s gift of sex as males and females, or whether we rebel against His sovereign choice, will either draw others to the Faith or repel them from considering the Faith we profess. Whether we embrace the role God has assigned us as men or as women will either serve to make the doctrine of Christ attractive or it will detract from the message of life!

The context of the apostolic instruction is men and women at worship. The broader context implies a great deal about a given church. One of the grave concerns I have for the Faith in this day is we preachers place so much emphasis on an amorphous, indefinite entity we call “the church,” that we excuse unrighteous lives among the professed people of God. I don’t mean to say that we all seek out grossly evil acts to perform; but I do mean that we fail to live our lives to the glory of Him whom we call “Lord.”

Long years before the Apostle wrote the words of our text, a Prophet of God penned a scathing condemnation of God’s people. “Son of man, say to her, You are a land that is not cleansed or rained upon in the day of indignation. The conspiracy of her prophets in her midst is like a roaring lion tearing the prey; they have devoured human lives; they have taken treasure and precious things; they have made many widows in her midst. Her priests have done violence to my law and have profaned my holy things. They have made no distinction between the holy and the common, neither have they taught the difference between the unclean and the clean” **[EZEKIEL 22:24-26]**. Until confronted by the words of the LORD God, Ezekiel’s condemnation doesn’t seem so terrible in our estimate. However, failure to make a distinction between the holy and the common is a grave sin in the eyes of the Living God. The man who will stand in the place of the Lord, preaching His prophetic message, must draw bright lines distinguishing between the holy and the common.

To make the point stronger still, Ezekiel later wrote, “[The priests] shall teach my people the difference between the holy and the common, and show them how to distinguish between the unclean and the clean” **[EZEKIEL 44:23]**. It should be abundantly obvious that God expects His people to live lives that are distinct from those living for world about them.

Lest you imagine that this was an Old Testament principle without application to us in this Age of Grace, consider something that Paul wrote. “This I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. But that is not the way you learned Christ!—assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” [EPHESIANS 4:17-24].

That passage mirrors what Paul wrote to the Colossians. “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

“Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator” [COLOSSIANS 3:1-10].

I’ve cited these passages to demonstrate an ongoing battle with our fallen nature. Though we are redeemed by the blood of Christ the Lord, we still struggle against the sinful nature. Tragically, Christians frequently surrender to the draw of the world, slipping back into the comfort of a lifestyle more appropriate to the world than to the life of a saint. Since we are specifically focused on the issue of women at worship in this message, I will focus on several matters that are related to women in today’s world. This is not to imply that men don’t require adjustment in their chosen lifestyles! They do require confrontation in areas such as language, entertainment, misuse of strength and other areas that are justly said to apply specifically to men.

Let me begin by speaking of the issue of *CHILDBEARING*. I mention this in part because of attitudes concerning children that have become well-nigh regnant in our world. Children are often seen as a bother. There are too many instances to cite of mothers opining openly that if they had the chance again, they would not have children.⁶ The figures cited speak of anywhere from one-quarter to over two-thirds of mothers who say they would not have children given the opportunity. I suspect the statistics are a reflection of the way in which the question is framed.

While I am not particularly concerned with the way in which the world views children, I am deeply concerned when the professed people of God imbibe from polluted wells of this dying world. The world must not stipulate an agenda for our lives; and especially must Christians resist permitting the world from dictating a philosophy of life for us as men and women of God. We must neither slip into the attitudes of this world nor approve of them.

⁶ E.g., “The Top 100 Reasons Not to Have Kids (and Remain Childfree),” <http://childfreedom.blogspot.ca/2009/03/top-100-reasons-not-to-have-kids-and.html>, accessed 3 August 2013; Piper Hoffman, “Ten Really Good Reasons Not to Have Kids,” Mar 07 2012, <http://piperhoffman.com/2012/03/07/ten-really-good-reasons-not-to-have-kids/>, accessed 3 August 2013; Tim Skillern, “‘Family is who you choose’: Stories from women who don’t want to have children,” <http://news.yahoo.com/blogs/lookout/family-choose-stories-women-don-t-want-children-222709158.html?.tsrc=sun?date=3000100030003000300>, accessed 3 August 2013

Scripture is quite clear in stating:

“Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD,
the fruit of the womb a reward.
Like arrows in the hand of a warrior
are the children of one’s youth.
Blessed is the man
who fills his quiver with them!”

[PSALM 127:3-5]

However, modern couples appear to see children as an intrusion on their plans, a threat to the acquisition of things. Isn’t it true that we value things more than children? Too often, we who profess Christ are not much different from the dying world about us, unfortunately. When over 100,000 infants are murdered *in utero* in our nation each year,⁷ aren’t we making a statement about what God calls a gift? Our abortion rate mirrors that of the United States, which witnesses the slaughter of between 1.21 and 1.5 million infants *in utero* each year.⁸

The concept of **COMPLEMENTARITY** exposes our hypocrisy within the churches. We Christians insist that we believe husbands and wives are to build one another. However, we are trending toward insistence on equality. The motto of the modern Christian woman seems to be, “Anything you can do, I can do better.” When did marriage cease to be a union designed to make one another stronger and become an opportunity to advance our individual agendas?

We should remember that Eve was created as a complement. “The Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper as his complement’” [GENESIS 2:18, HCSB]. Naming the animals, Adam realised his uniqueness. Thus, the Word of God says, “For the man no helper was found as his complement” [GENESIS 3:20, HCSB].

Husbands are to love their wives as they love their own bodies [see EPHESIANS 5:25-31]; they are to live with their wives in an understanding way [see 1 PETER 3:7]. Men are not to be abusive or demanding; rather, men are to esteem their wives, treating as partners in life. Likewise, wives are to have a respectful attitude toward their husbands, endeavouring to build them and honour them as their husbands [see EPHESIANS 5:22-24; 1 PETER 3:1-6]. In short, we are to treat one another as heirs of life, as we lend our strength to one another to build each other, to encourage and to comfort one another.

Perhaps it will be helpful to say something about the term, “complementarity.” A complement makes up a whole or brings to perfection. If I say, “His tie complements the suit he is wearing,” I am not saying that the suit is incomplete. The suit is a complete unit, as is a tie. What I am not saying is that the tie is supplementary. A supplement is that which is added to make up a deficit. Let me now apply that concept to men and women. A single man or a single woman fully bears the image of God. Each is equal in terms of dignity, personhood and value. Neither is superior, though they have differing functions. Thus, a man and a woman do not supplement one another, though when united in marriage they do complement one another.

⁷ “Abortion Statistics,” <http://www.unmaskingchoice.ca/training/classroom/challenges/stats>, accessed 3 August 2013; “Society, the Individual, and Medicine,” http://www.med.uottawa.ca/sim/data/Abortion_e.htm, accessed, 3 August, 2013

⁸ “October Baby,” <http://www.octoberbabymovie.net/ministryresources/factsaboutabortion>, accessed 3 August 2013; “Abortion in the United States,” Economic Expert.com, <http://www.economicexpert.com/a/Abortion:in:the:United:States.htm>, accessed 3 August 2013

There is also the issue of *CONTROL* arising out of the text and observed in contemporary life. Church leadership is not about power—it is about dying. The Apostle testified, we are “always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you” [2 CORINTHIANS 4:10-12].

The divorce culture in which we live provides the most obvious signs of men and women in conflict with one another. Marriages are ripped apart and children become pawns in an evil game fought out through the law courts. Reverberations of the sexual revolution are built on self-protecting mechanisms for men and women seeking to exploit one another. Divorce courts, abortion clinics, the collegiate hook-up culture, porn sites and chick flicks all reveal men and women who, far from merging into a unisex utopia, find it impossible to give themselves fully to one another.⁹ Unfortunately, the struggle for control and tyranny that marks the world is too often brought into the church with disastrous results. Rather than endeavouring to surrender our rights for the benefit of others, we focus on securing power and position over others.

Sexual differentiation is not simply a matter of genital architecture; humanity was created “male and female” [see GENESIS 1:27] from the very beginning. In the home, God speaks of the union of husband and wife as head and body for a reason. Just as the body cannot function without the head, so the head cannot function without the body—there is complementarity. Scripture uses this same example to illustrate Christ and His church. Therefore, male leadership in the home is meant, not to be a tyranny, but rather a self-sacrificing leadership that looks to Christ as a husband discerns what is best for the family. Similarly, a wife’s submission to her husband is not that of a cowering beggar; her submission reflects that of the church submitting herself to Christ. And within the assembly of the Lord, if we will do as the Word teaches, women will joyfully seek fulfilment in the position Christ has assigned and men will gladly accept responsibility to lead in prayer and praise.

I will point to one final area of concern in the broader context of what Paul has written—*CONTENTMENT*. I don’t mean to imply that there is no contentment within the membership of the churches of the day; however, it is apparent that there is significant discontentment in many quarters. The struggles to alter the face of the churches through appointment of women to pastoral oversight, through elevating to eldership individuals who are living in open rebellion to God’s created order, through the demand that pastors ensure that congregants are not discomforted by negativity from the pulpit and through endeavouring to hire those who will speak as they are directed are evidence of significant discontent with the divine order of things.

Society appears intent on encouraging children to self-identify what they wish their sex to be at whatever age. This must assuredly be symptomatic of a serious societal malady; the heart of this present culture is diseased and draining the energy from the culture. That this same attitude is brought into the churches where it is embraced as normal ensures that influence for good from the churches will continue to decline and morality will become whatever the individual wishes to say it is. Likewise, ethical standards will continue to decay while the churches witness doctrinal confusion and while spiritual lassitude becomes the new normal.

Does not the restless attitude of people demonstrate discontent with society as a whole? Similarly, does not the restless nature of those within the churches demonstrate that same discontent? Isaiah stated a disconcerting truth when he wrote:

⁹ See Russell D. Moore, “The Gospel and the Gender Wars,” *Tabletalk Magazine*, October 2012, pp. 82-3

“The wicked are like the tossing sea;
for it cannot be quiet,
and its waters toss up mire and dirt.
‘There is no peace,’ says my God, ‘for the wicked.’”

[ISAIAH 57:20, 21]

This truth is disconcerting primarily because it reflects the current situation within society.

Contentment looms large in the life of the godly individual. To all who would follow Christ Jesus the Lord, Paul writes, “If we have food and clothing, with these we will be content” [1 TIMOTHY 6:8]. The writer of the Letter to Hebrew Christians writes, “Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you’” [HEBREWS 13:5].

The Apostle would say, “I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need” [PHILIPPIANS 4:11, 12]. Though the statement refers to his financial condition, or his immediate supply, the statement can and should be readily applied to one’s sex and one’s marital status.

DRAWING A CONCLUSION — Admittedly, I have painted with a large brush in suggesting the broader context of the Apostle’s words. Nevertheless, each of the areas addressed—childbearing, complementarity, control and contentment—speak of a condition reflecting significant conflict in the battle between the sexes. Women in this new age of rights are restless, and that restlessness has been brought into the churches. Men respond by withdrawing from leadership, folding like a cheap knife when confronted by women demanding their rights.

Whatever you believe the initial words of the text to mean, fulfilment is contingent on a woman’s willingness to abide in the four virtues named—faith, love, holiness and self-control. In the chapter we are just concluding, Paul has demonstrated God has perfectly balanced the roles of the sexes. Men bear responsibility to be leaders in the church and in their family. Women are preserved from any accusation of inferiority through the godly influence they exert in the lives of the children whom God gives. Whenever a congregation departs from this divine order, the disaster of the Fall is perpetuated.

Remember that for the entirety of the chapter, Paul has focused attention on Christians at worship. I have stated already, and I will state again for emphasis, the manner in which we conduct our lives has an impact on those who observe us. People will not long remember what we may say; but people cannot forget how we live. If we push and shove in a vain attempt to advance some cause that has no scriptural support, the world will surely conclude that we are anything but godly. Underscore in your mind that the world is dying; in no small measure, it is dying because of an absence of saints. In a world that alternates between viewing Christianity with a sneer and a yawn, only godly living will make an impact on society.

Men who fail to lead in praying will make no lasting impact on society. It is doubtful that men who do not lead in prayer will make a lasting impact in their own home. Similarly, women who buy into the bright, shining lie that they are disadvantaged if they are not holding power within the church or within their home will never make an impact on the lives of the lost. Candidly, such women will not have an impact in their own family. The Word of God calls us to humble acceptance of who we are. Then, knowing who we are and confident in the love of the Saviour, we are appointed to live in such a way that our lives draw others to the cause of Christ.

We are living in the last days. No one can say when Christ will call His people out of this world. None of us know how many days are left until He calls us home. What is certain is that because He has left us here, we are charged to glorify Him through living godly, righteous lives. Part of that righteous living anticipated of believers is responding to one another as servants of Christ the Lord rather than striving as contenders for ecclesiastical office.

Women of the Faith have a vital role to fulfil, just as the men of the Faith have a vital role to fulfil. Together, both men and women can advance the cause of Christ, win the lost and glorify the Name of the Saviour. May God make us such a godly congregation. May God make us godly families. May God so work in each life that together we fulfil His will for our lives. Amen.