



TheEdenPodcast.com

Season 3. Episode 6. 1 Timothy 2:13-15 How Eve and Paul were alike, by Bruce C. E. Fleming

Intro:

Welcome to **The Eden Podcast** where we think again about the Bible on women and men and we start with a correct understanding of what happened in the Garden of Eden back in the beginning.

I'm Bruce C. E. Fleming, founder of the Tru316 Project and a former Academic Dean and Professor of Practical Theology.

The focus of this episode is:

1 Timothy 2:13-15 How Eve and Paul were alike

"What's this Dad?" I asked picking up the flat and pointed piece of chipped stone. "That's an arrowhead son," he replied. "What's it doing here, Dad?" "Ahh. That's a great question!"

"What's this doing here?" is what many ask when they come across the verses that are numbered as 1 Timothy 2:13-15. They ask, "Why do we find *these* words in *this place*?" One could say we have several figurative arrowheads to consider in these verses.

- Why does Paul here bring up the Garden of *Eden*, and Adam and Eve?
- Did *they* have something to do with the wayward women leaders Timothy was correcting in Ephesus? *What?*
- Where in the text does the reference to Eden end in these verses?
- Why does Paul bring up the birth of The Child in verse 15?
- And who are "they" at the end of verse 15b?

These questions can all be answered. We can answer them now because we have asked the right questions.

We can answer them because we have looked at the *context* and the *main actions* Paul is recommending in 1 Timothy 2:8 to 3:16. We can answer them because we are *not off-the-track* wandering in the weeds looking for the answers to the wrong questions, which I'm afraid so many have done.

Let's look at the literary structure of the passage as Paul presented these ideas. As we do we see where verses 13-15 belong in the development of Paul's thought. He has not written a linear progression of ideas in a 1, 2, 3 manner. He has written using a rainbow pattern of parallel ideas. The main idea is in the middle. On either side are ideas that echo and complete each other.

Because verse 9 has no verb and begins with “likewise” we have to start back in verse 8. Then come verses 9-15 which are Paul’s focused advice about correcting-in-order-to-restore-to-ministry the subgroup of wayward women overseers in Ephesus.

In verse 8 Paul gives a command to Timothy. He wishes for the wayward men overseers to preach and pray in public worship with *holy hands* (not tainted by sin) with *sound doctrine*, which is not a source of angry disputing.

In verses 9, 10 and 12, Paul gives a parallel command to Timothy. He wishes for the wayward women overseers to preach and pray in public worship with proper outward dress and behavior.

In verse 11 Paul makes use of this passage’s only imperative verb where he says, **Let these women learn! as good students paying attention.**

Then, Paul opens a parenthesis in verses 13-15^a before he returns in 15^b to advice that parallels his earlier advice. That advice concerned the formerly wayward women overseers Timothy was to retrain and restore to ministry. Verses 13-15^a serve as a digression. In them Paul justifies the course of action he is recommending. He explains *why* he is prescribing such *gentle* correction for them.

Remember, with the wayward leaders Hymenaeus and Alexander back in 1 Timothy 1:20, Paul turned them over to *Satan* to be *taught* not to blaspheme. But with these women wayward overseers he is recommending a very different kind of teaching. They are not being handed over to Satan to taught. They are to be allowed to learn and get retrained as good students from Timothy himself, or by Priscilla or by other faithful overseers in the church at Ephesus.

Here’s my paraphrase of verses 13-15^a in the context of verses 2:11 to 3:1

¹¹Let the women overseers who were wayward learn *in quietness* and with all studiousness. ¹²I am not permitting them to teach men in an incorrect way, but to be retrained *in quietness*.

¹³Why? For, God formed the *two* in the Garden, Adam and then Eve ¹⁴and Adam was a first-degree *eater*. He was not deceived but sinned on purpose. But *Eve* was *deceived* and as a second-degree sinner, to *that* degree, she became a *transgressor*.

¹⁵*But* she, Eve, would be saved through the birth of The Child who was to come, as will the women you are retraining if they persevere in faith, love, sanctification and self-control.

^{3:1}“Faithful is Jesus the Logos, the Word,” so if any one of those you are correcting aspires to oversight, that woman or that man desires a good work!

Like Paul, like Eve

Why? When a child is little, he or she begins to ask “Why?” about everything. The first “Why?” will receive a serious answer. The second “Why?” usually receives a calm response. By the third “Why?” a parent begins to wonder if it isn’t about time to stop asking “Why?” Inevitably, when the child asks “Why?” again, the patient parent will explain again, and again, until what is obvious to the teacher becomes obvious to the learner.

The Gospel of Mark recounts how Jesus’ disciples were slow to learn the lesson of the multiplied loaves. First, Jesus fed the 5,000 from a few loaves and some fish (Mark 6:35-44). A second time, Jesus multiplied a handful of food into enough for four thousand people (Mark 8:1-9). A little while later, Jesus and his disciples found themselves in a boat with just one loaf of bread. The disciples were hungry and began to worry. Oh, what could they do in these dire straits?

Carefully, Jesus talked to them about their cares and about their blindness to His power to provide for them again and again. He reminded them of all that had happened. Yet they still didn’t understand (Mark 8:14-21). They needed to be told again.

In similar fashion, just in case his message has not been fully understood, Paul adds several more verses in 1 Timothy 2 to make sure his instructions about the correction of the errant women teachers are clear.

Why does he recommend retraining for *these* women? In verses 13-15a, Paul calls attention to relevant details from the Garden of Eden.

Because “intent” counts. Paul starts verse 13 with the conjunction “for” in Greek. He gives a reason “for” what he has just recommended. Then, he refers to Genesis 3. In the Garden of Eden there were two kinds of sinners. And in Ephesus, where Timothy was, there were *two kinds* of sinners:

1. sinners who were deceived and sinned, and
2. sinners who knowingly and defiantly sinned.

In verse 13, Paul draws a clear distinction between the first man and the first woman. By referring to their two *distinct* creations, he focuses attention on them as two *distinct* individuals.

¹³For *Adam* first was formed, then *Eve*.

The lesson of verse 13 isn’t *who* was first, but that *there were two* individuals created in the beginning – first one, *then* the other. Paul further distinguishes between these two by using the names, “Adam” and “Eve.”

The use of these names in their historical setting is strikingly anachronistic. The woman was not called by the name “Eve” until Genesis 3:20. Yet, Paul uses that name referring to moments in history (Gen 2) that occurred *before* she was known as Eve.

Similarly, the name “Adam” did not *refer* only-to-the-man at the point in time referred to by Paul in 1 Timothy 2:13. The name “Adam” could refer to them both (Genesis 5:2 – “He called *their* name Adam”). The man *took* the name “Adam” for himself, only after God judged him. Breathtakingly, the man rebelled one more after God spoke to him in Genesis 3:17-19. This was another act of rebellion and self-rule, as opposed to submission to being ruled by the Creator.

The man had named the animals who were subordinate to him in the Garden of Eden. He used the naming formula and called them their names. This is similar to the naming formula used today when the Ruler of England says, “I dub you Sir So and So.” The first chance the man had to respond positively to God’s speeches to the serpent, to the woman and to him, he responded negatively! He called the woman a name using the naming formula he used for the animals. He presumed to rule over her by naming her and treating her like just another one of the animals.

How was she to respond to that? God was her Creator. God alone was her ruler. God was their Ruler. What to do with a husband who presumed to usurp God’s role by ruling over her in this way?

Two kinds of eaters. This is important to understand. In 1 Timothy 2:14, after distinguishing clearly between the first two individuals at Creation, Paul focuses on *why and how* each individual sinned.

While it is clear that each one in the Garden is disobedient to God’s command, the following differences exist between them after the Attack by the serpent tempter:

1. The man was not deceived. He sins deliberately and knowingly (Gen 3:12).
2. The woman was deceived and only then does she sin (Gen 3:13).

In the Garden, God takes these differences into account when imposing judgment on the serpent tempter, on the woman and on the man. God imposes a curse on the serpent. The Hebrew word “curse” is used.

Using words in a way parallel to his words to the serpent tempter, God imposes a curse on the soil. This curse is “because of” the man (Genesis 3:17). The Hebrew word for “curse” again is used. It is only used these two times.

No “curse” is imposed on the man or on the women. Significantly, no curse is imposed because of the woman as had occurred because of the man. In Genesis 3, the Hebrew word “curse” only occurs in reference to the man (and the serpent tempter).

There is something very different between the man's motives and actions. There is something very different in the way God treats the one and the other of these two humans in Eden.

How does Paul know the woman is deceived? In Genesis 3:13, the woman says so, in an accurate admission to God of her wrongdoing. In 1 Timothy 2:14, Paul notes that the man is a different kind of sinner. He "wasn't deceived." This *distinction drawn* between the *two* sinners is a distinction for Timothy to follow in correcting those who had gone astray in Ephesus.

In 1 Timothy chapter 1, Paul referred to how God had judged him gently. Discerning Paul's intent, God dealt gently with him, and even put him into ministry because he had acted ignorantly and in disbelief (1:12).

In modern-day courts, even murderers are judged differently, according to their intent. There is "murder in the first degree" for those who kill on purpose, or "with malice aforethought." And there is "murder in the second degree," or "manslaughter," for those who kill but not with malicious advance planning.

"Murder one" receives the harshest punishment. Manslaughter merits a lighter sentence.

Paul had been a second-degree sinner. The way God dealt with him as a second-degree sinner is the way he wants Timothy to deal with those at Ephesus who also sinned in the second degree. The women described in 1 Timothy 2:9b and 12 are to be treated like Eve, and like Paul, who had *not sinned on purpose*. He is to let them learn and emphatically so.

To underline this, in verses 13 and 14, Paul refers to the two sinners in the Garden in a *different order* from when each one sinned. If Paul had been preoccupied only with details of timing in Eden, he would have referred *first* to the woman and *then* to the man. Instead, he twice refers first to Adam, who sinned on purpose.

Here is my paraphrase of verses 13-14 (italics added):

¹³For, God formed the two in the Garden, Adam and then Eve

¹⁴and Adam was not deceived, but Eve was deceived,
and to that degree became a transgressor.

Don't be deceived! Some people charge that since the first woman was deceived in the Garden, *all* women are more easily deceived than all men! But *Genesis* does not teach this. Neither does Paul.

Even though the man and the woman were co-regents over the earth by the Creator's decree (Genesis 1:27-30), some people claim that *the timing* in the creations of the man and the woman makes the man superior to the woman in some way.

Indeed, this was the position held by rabbis at the time of Paul. They thought that a theological consequence could be discerned behind the sequence of events in the Garden. C. K. Barrett (*Pastoral Epistles*, p. 56) quotes their midrash: “Adam was first in creation, Eve [first] in sin.”

Surprisingly, John Calvin held to this position. Even so, he found himself compelled to argue against it, admitting (*Commentaries*, 21) that any theological conclusions based on the “order of creation, appears not to be a very strong argument in favor of her subjection; for John the Baptist was before Christ in the order of time, and yet was greatly inferior in rank.”

Verse 15a – Closing thoughts on Eden.

It may seem tiresome to work our way over one interpretive “bump” after another. But as every good road builder knows, it is important to keep leveling the roadbed until it becomes flat and serviceable for all those who follow.

In verse 15a, there is one more noticeable bump that needs to be smoothed out before the entire passage in 1 Timothy 2 can be clearly understood. It has to do with Paul’s reference in Greek to “the Childbearing.” According to the Greek in the first part of verse 15, Paul writes:

15aBut she will be saved through the Childbearing...

The singular pronoun – “she” – of verse 15a refers to the woman who is discussed in verses 13-14 just before it. “She” is Eve!

“The Childbearing” of Eve refers to the future birth, for Eve, of the promised Child. Mary was the physical mother of Jesus, but Eve was his ancestor. Eve’s “childbearing” resulted in the eventual “childbearing” of Jesus.

The word “childbearing” is a *collective singular noun*, a single word packed with the promise of many. This way of speaking may seem awkward to the modern reader. But it is used twice in Genesis 3 when God first gives the promise of a Savior.

In Genesis 3:15, God gives the menacing promise to the serpent that the “seed” or “offspring” of the woman will crush his head. The word “seed” is a collective singular noun.

In the Hebrew wording of Genesis 3:16, Line 1, God promises the woman that she will have multiplied “conception.” The word “conception” is also a collective singular noun.

Looking back at the Garden of Eden from the perspective of history, one can identify the promised “seed” of verse 15, and the “conception” of verse 16, as Jesus. Paul’s use of the collective singular noun – “the Childbearing” – in the context of a discussion on the Garden of Eden brings to mind Eve’s promised offspring. This would have been recognized immediately by Timothy and the Jewish Christians at Ephesus, as a reference to the Messiah.

Eve would be eternally saved through her forward-looking faith in the coming birth of the Child. The women in Ephesus are saved through their faith in this same Child as well.

Each one of us today faces the question of this Child. What will we do with Jesus? Because in the Garden of Eden back in the beginning there had been an attack, because the man and the woman were now mortal and hiding from God, because their perfect union with God had been ruptured, God promised the certain conception of the seed of the woman. Why would God promise this? Why would God bother to do so?

We learn over and over again in God's revelation in the Bible that God sent Jesus into the world because we need a Savior who will die in our place. When we ask God to forgive us and to send the Holy Spirit into our heart in new birth and the start of everlasting spiritual life it is like we have one foot already placed firmly in heaven. We have the assurance repeated over and over again in the Bible that when we die God will pull up that other foot too. We instantly will be with Jesus firmly standing in heaven.

The best Bible verse on this is that other 3:16 verse. In the Old Testament, in Genesis 3:16, God promised Eve that truly she would have conception of the Child who would crush Satan's head. In the New Testament, in John 3:16 we have this promise:

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life.

Once again, we see the love of God reaching out to us. We see God helping us return back to Eden in a perfect relationship with God with no break to occur ever again.

This complete summary of Eve's situation in 1 Timothy 2:13-15a – as a deceived sinner in the 2nd degree, *who* is going to be saved because she places her faith in the coming *Child* – allows Paul to *move on* to a *summation* of his instructions to Timothy. He does this in the second half of verse 15 in verse 15b.

In verse 15b, Paul changes subjects. He moves on from a singular subject, "she," to a plural subject, "they." If the first half of verse 15, verse 15a, had been counted as the end of verse 14 we could have seen this more clearly. Perhaps it is best to think of 2:15b as a new verse, or verse 16.

In these words with a plural subject, Paul encourages once again the women who are learning, per his command in verse 11, to follow the wholesome pattern of those who have been right-living overseers all along, as he has described them in verses 9a, and 10.

He names four aspects of right living and teaching that must be evident in their reformed lives:

^{15b}if they remain in **faith**, and **love**, and **sanctification** with all **seriousness**.

The good news is that God gives John 3:16 to us today. It is good news that was promised back in the Garden of Eden. It is good news that actually took place as Jesus hung on the cross and died for our sins, rose again, ascended into heaven and sent the Holy Spirit to live in the hearts of all who believe.

Does that include you? If “Yes” is your answer, then I rejoice with you!

Does that include you? If “Not yet” is your situation then I encourage you to pray to Jesus right away. Ask His forgiveness. Ask to be born again and for the Holy Spirit to live in your heart. Like Eve, you too can be saved through the birth of The Child!