

## **"Saved Through ... Childbearing"**

*"And Adam was not beguiled, but the woman being beguiled hath fallen into transgression: but she shall be saved through her childbearing, if they continue in faith and love and sanctification with sobriety"* (1 Tim. 2:14-15).

Few verses baffle Bible students more than these two. Paul has shown that in God's order of headship that man is the head of the woman (just as Christ is head of man and God is head of Christ, 1 Cor. 11:3). He has shown that the woman is not to teach nor usurp authority over the man but to be in subjection (1 Tim. 2:11f). He gives two reasons for this: man was first created and woman, not man, was beguiled in the transgression and first fall. Having so spoken, the above cited words appear. Several questions arise. What is the childbearing to which the apostle refers? What is it woman is to be "saved from"? Who are the "they" of the conditional phrase, "if they continue in faith ..."?

Some understand the salvation of the woman is a redeeming grace of the dignity she fell from when she succumbed to Satan's lie -- then she lifts herself up in dignity by rearing upright and godly offspring. Perhaps. But, it appears to me that the "salvation" considered is redemption from sin, not simply elevation in respectability.

To what does "her childbearing" refer -- to all women who bear children? But not all women bear children. Are they excluded from salvation because they do not? A footnote of the word "her childbearing" renders it "the childbearing." It appears that just as Eve was really the first transgressor (although her sin was "different" from Adam's), so through the birth of Jesus, redemption is possible, for the Christ was truly "her seed" through the virgin birth (Gen. 3:15; Isa. 7:14).

But to whom does "they" refer; the children she bears or herself ("saved through her childbearing if they continue in faith," etc.)? If one understands "saved" a reference to salvation from sins, and "they" refer to the woman's personal offspring; the inescapable conclusion drawn from this is that women can be eternally saved only if their children remain faithful to God. But, while such a conclusion is inevitable, that conclusion is in direct conflict with other passages which teach very much the contrary (cf. Ezekiel 18:20ff).

So, who are the "they" in the text? It appears to me that "they" is a reference to the subject, "women." Yes, "women" is singular and "they" is plural, but "women" (plural) led into this exposition. Vs. 9 says that women

are to subject themselves but which become women professing godliness, through good works (2:10). A rule of grammar is that a pronoun modifies the noun of the same number immediately preceding it; which in this instance would refer to "*childbearing*." However, another rule of interpretation is that when a natural explanation will not work; a different explanation must be sought. And if "*saved*" is freedom from sin, and childbearing a reference to children the woman bears herself, we have a natural explanation which cannot follow. Is there an alternate explanation?

The clearest explanation is that although the woman was the first to fall into sin, it was woman who delivered the Savior into the world and she, and all other women ("*they*") shall be saved if they continue in faith, love and sobriety, a word which is identified with the woman in vs. 9: "*with shamefastness and sobriety*."

Such an explanation seems "forced" with some, but so do other explanations of the text. And, if the explanation is not the true one, at least it has the redeeming quality that it is true, elsewhere clearly set forth. One thing is certain, given the uncertainty of the passage, we must be careful how we treat it; and others who have a different interpretation of it than we!

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