

Handling a Bible Difficulty
Women Saved Through Childbearing
1 Timothy 2:15

Here is an example of a Scripture passage that is difficult to interpret, so it is important to apply the basic principles of interpretation that we have learned to determine the intended meaning of this passage. Some of these steps include:

1. Identify special or significant words in this passage. Define these words, and determine how they are related to each other within this sentence. Outline this verse to see the relationships of the phrases.
2. Look at the general purpose of the book of 1 Timothy, as well as the overall flow of thought of Paul as he writes this section.
3. Determine how 1 Tim 2:15 is connected with other points within this flow of thought, as well as how it is related to other passages in the Scriptures.

e-Sword Exercise for Researching a Difficult Bible Passage

1 Timothy 2:15 (KJV)

Notwithstanding *she* shall be saved

in childbearing,

if they continue

in faith and charity and holiness

with sobriety.

- Look at this verse in the e-Sword Bible window. This exercise uses the King James Version (KJV+). Make sure to select the KJV+ tab in your Bible window.
- Use the mouse to hover over the green Strong Concordance number for the word “Notwithstanding.” What is the Strong number for this word? _____
What Greek word is represented by “notwithstanding”? _____
- Click on this green Strong number and look at the Dictionary window in e-Sword. Which tabs have a small blue&white (i) information icon displayed now?

- Click on the “Thayer” tab in your Dictionary window. What are the possible meanings for the word you clicked on? _____, _____, _____, _____
- Check the box below to indicate what “part of speech” this little word represents?
 Noun Verb Adjective Adverb Preposition Conjunction
- HINT: This is a connecting word, which indicates that this verse cannot be properly interpreted without determining how it is connected to what came before it in the text.

- In your Bible window, notice that the next word with a green Strong number is “saved.” This indicates that the entire phrase (*she* shall be saved) is translating a single Greek word. What is the Strong number for “saved”? _____

- With your mouse, hover over the green number and see what the possible meanings are for this word according to Strong’s Concordance:

- Click on this green Strong number and look at the “Thayer” tab in your Dictionary window. What are some of the other meanings and definitions described in this tab?

- Check the box below to indicate what “part of speech” this word represents?
 Noun Verb Adjective Adverb Preposition Conjunction

- It would be very helpful to determine the tense, voice, mood, person, and number for this word. One way to do this is if you have in your Bible window a GNT-TR+ tab. Even if you are not able to read Greek, you can see the Greek characters for this word in the Thayer or Strong Dictionary tabs and find the corresponding word in the GNT-TR+ tab. In small green letters you will see the Strong number for this Greek word, and in small blue letters you will see the grammatical form of this word: σωθησεται⁴⁹⁸² V-FPI-3S

This tells you that this is a Verb in the Future tense, Passive voice, Indicative mood, 3rd person, Singular number.

- With this information you can see why the translators render this Greek word as “she shall be saved” If you click on the “Compare” tab in your Bible window you can see how some of the other Bible version have translated this same verse. Some use “will be saved” while others use “will be kept safe” or “will be preserved.” All of these would be valid possible meanings for this word (according to your research in Thayer and Strong).
- One question that you should answer at some point is “Who does the third person singular pronoun refer to?” You will need to go back into the previous context of this passage in order to determine this (HINT: 2:14).

- The next word which has a green Strong number in this verse (back in the KJV+ tab) is the word “in” – what is the Strong number for this word? _____
- According to Strong and Thayer, what are the possible meanings for this word?

- What would probably be a better translation for this word (rather than “in”)? _____
- Check the box below to indicate what “part of speech” this word represents?
 Noun Verb Adjective Adverb Preposition Conjunction

- The next word which has a green Strong number in this verse is “childbearing” – what is the Strong number for this word? _____ What are the possible meanings for this word? _____
- You should determine how the prepositional phrase “through childbearing” functions in this sentence. Which of the previous words is this phrase associated with – what does it describe? _____
- The next word with a green Strong number in this verse is “if” – what is the Strong number for this word? _____. This is a conditional word, indicating that the fulfillment of the first part of the verse may depend on meeting the condition in the second part of the verse. (HINT: This is a 3rd class conditional clause in the Greek, indicating that which is probable or likely to occur in the future.)
- The next word with a green Strong number is “continue” – what is the Strong number for this word? _____. What are some of the possible meanings for this word, according to Strong and Thayer?

- Check the box below to indicate what “part of speech” this word represents?
 Noun Verb Adjective Adverb Preposition Conjunction
- It would be very helpful to determine the tense, voice, mood, person, and number for this word. In the GNT-TR+ tab locate the Greek word that shows the “parsing” of this verb. In small green letters you will see the Strong number for this Greek word, and in small blue letters you will see the grammatical form of this word: **μεινωσιν**³³⁰⁶ V-AAS-3P
This tells you that this is a **V**erb in the **A**orist tense, **A**ctive voice, **S**ubjunctive mood, **3**rd person, **P**lural number.
- One question that you should answer at some point is “Who does the third person plural pronoun refer to?” It seems unusual that the writer would switch the number from singular to plural in the middle of the verse. You may need to go back to the previous context in order to discover another 3rd person plural word that could be the referent (HINT: 2:9-10).

- The next word with a green Strong number is “in” – what is the Strong number for this word? _____. Is this the same Strong number as you found for the previous “in” of this verse? _____. According to the “Thayer” tab in your Dictionary window, what are some of the possible meanings for this word?

- The next five words all have Strong numbers. Two of these words are connecting words (*and*), while the other three are very important terms which deserve individual word studies of their own. What are these three terms:

<u>Word</u>	<u>Strong number</u>	<u>Possible Meanings</u>
<i>Faith</i>	_____	_____
<i>Charity</i>	_____	_____
<i>Holiness</i>	_____	_____

- You should determine how the prepositional phrase “in faith and charity and holiness” functions in this sentence. Which of the previous words is this phrase associated with – what does it describe?
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- The next word with a green Strong number is “with” – what is the Strong number for this word? _____. What are some of the possible meanings of this word?
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- Check the box below to indicate what “part of speech” this word represents?
 Noun Verb Adjective Adverb Preposition Conjunction

- The next word with a green Strong number is “sobriety” – what is the Strong number for this word? _____. What are some of the possible meanings of this word?
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- You should determine how the prepositional phrase “with sobriety” functions in this sentence. Which of the previous words is this phrase associated with – what does it describe?
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- Determine where else in 1 Timothy this word was used by the writer. With your mouse, hover over the green Strong number for the word “sobriety” in 1 Tim 2:15 and RIGHT-click. On the small menu that appears, click on “**Quick search on 4997**” and then click on “**1 Timothy**” to see other instances of this word in this book. Which other passage in 1 Timothy used this same word? _____. What was the writer describing in that passage when he used the term *sobriety* (self-restraint, self-control)?
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- What are some of your unanswered interpretive questions at this point in your study?
How does this passage connect with what went before? (use of the word “notwithstanding”).
Which meaning for the word “saved” was intended?
Why was there a switch between third person singular (she) and third person plural (they)?
Why was childbearing included in this verse?
Why is a woman’s “sobriety” or self-restraint being emphasized in this verse?
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Looking at the Context Within First Timothy

- First of all, it is important to identify the purpose of the book of First Timothy. Why did the apostle Paul write this book? You could identify the purpose by reading all the way through First Timothy and looking for a clear statement by Paul of his purpose (HINT: 1 Tim 3:15). You might also check with some of your Bible resources such as a Bible Handbook, Bible Dictionary, or Study Bible introduction. In the e-Sword Dictionary window you could type “Timothy” in the small lookup field to see what is contained in the Fausset, ISBE, and Smith tabs. Based on your research, what was Paul’s purpose, and what were some of the problems he wanted Timothy to deal with in the church at Ephesus?

- What is the first topic that Paul addressed in chapter 2? _____ (vv. 1-2)
- If they followed Paul’s instructions in vv. 1-2, then God would be pleased. Paul then includes a brief comment about God Himself and His plan for salvation (v. 4 uses the same word *sozo* that you found in your study of 1 Tim 2:15, so there is a connection). Summarize how Paul describes God’s method for saving people (vv. 5-7).

- Paul then dealt with issues of proper conduct in the church, especially in the public meetings of the church. Notice the order of the groups Paul addressed. Which gender was addressed first? _____ (v. 8) Which gender was addressed second? _____ (v. 9)
- What were the issues of “improper conduct in the church” addressed to women (vv. 9-12) (HINT: notice the word sobriety/self-restraint, as well as the violation of proper authority)

- Notice the Scriptural reasons that Paul listed for addressing the men first, and for specifying that authority within the church falls on the shoulders of qualified male leadership. What biblical event did Paul refer to in verse 13? _____
- In the original account of this event, had Adam already been given primary responsibility and authority for carrying out specific duties within the creation? _____
- What biblical event did Paul refer to in verse 14? _____
- Does the fact that only Eve was deceived mean that men can never be deceived? _____
(In this second biblical event, it is clear that Adam deliberately sinned with full knowledge, but that is only an explanation of what happened during that event).
- In the original account of this second biblical event, what were the consequences for both men and women?

- What relationship does *childbearing* (1 Tim 2:15) have to this second biblical event that Paul listed in verse 14 ?

- According to the wider context of the entire Bible, how is any person “saved” according to God’s eternal plan? For example, the same word Paul used for “saved” is also used by Paul in Ephesians 2:5 and 2:8. Express in your own words God’s plan for human salvation:

- Can any woman be saved in a different way than what you described above? _____
- From what Paul said about women in vv. 9-14, it might give a negative impression of a woman’s place in God’s purpose for the church. This is obviously not an impression that Paul would want to leave in the minds of his readers. So Paul adds verse 15 at the conclusion to his paragraph in order to affirm that women do have a place in God’s purposes.

Insights from Commentaries

Remember that the words of these commentators are not on the same level as the inspired Word that we have recorded for us in the Scriptures. Whenever you read the insights of commentators be sure to carefully evaluate them in light of all of the detailed study you have done yourself.

- In the e-Sword Bible window, click on the verse number for 1 Timothy 2:15. Notice which tabs in the Commentary window have a small blue&white (i) information icon displayed.
- Click on the **JFB** tab (Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown: *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*). In addition to “by means of” what is another way that the word “THROUGH” can be understood? (see the first paragraph)

- In this same tab, what insights are provided about the use of the words *faith, charity, and holiness*? (By “*essential way to salvation*” they mean the essential conduct of one who is saved.)

- In the tab for **BARNES** you will notice that there is a great deal of information. Barnes deals with some of the different views on this verse, and he comes to some important conclusions regarding its meaning. Look for the words that begin with, “The true meaning, it seems to me, has been suggested by Calvin” Beneath this, you will find three points and a concluding paragraph on the meaning of this phrase.
- Notice that not all of the thoughts of the commentators are equally valuable. In many cases you will find no help, and in some cases you will find more hindrance than help. When many of the commentators disagree regarding the meaning of a passage, this is a clear sign that we should not be dogmatic about an interpretation.
- Another resource for “Bible difficulties” (*not in e-Sword*) has this to say about 1 Tim 2:15. “1 Tim 2:15 is the conclusion to the entire paragraph. In 1 Tim 2:9-14 the specific instructions to women are restrictive and negative. Verse 15 begins with the word “but” (or better, “yet”), and what is said is apparently intended as a positive affirmation. The various restrictions imposed on women are now qualified.” (Hard Sayings of the Bible, Kaiser, Davids, Bruce, and Brauch, 671)
- You might consider getting a book specifically on the role of women in church ministry. For example, Women and Ministry by Dan Doriani devotes an entire chapter to 1 Tim 2:15. Doriani affirms that, although women should not have a position of authority – in the sense of a formal office in church leadership – they do have an important ministry.