

1 TIMOTHY 2:8-15: SITUATIONAL OR GENERAL?

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Interpreters have proposed several ways for removing from present observance of New Testament directives about male-female role relationship in the church and the home: 1 Timothy 2:8-15; 1 Corinthians 11:2-16; 14:33b-36; Colossians 3:18-19; and 1 Peter 3:1-7.

One way has been to (1) consider female deference a fallen condition (Genesis 3:16). Now that Christ has removed the curse, the principle no longer obtains. But the New Testament injunctions appear after Christ would have removed this supposed “curse.” Besides, “rule” (מָשַׁל, *mashal*) in Genesis 3:16 does not mean “rule” in some unwholesome sense as in a “cursed” estate; elders are to “rule well” in the church (1 Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:7, 17) and in the home (1 Timothy 3:4; cp. deacons in 3:11). Paul argues for female deference because the man was created first and the woman was deceived. In 1 Corinthians 11:7-9 the apostle adds that she was created from man and for man, and that Adam was created in the image of God (in some sense, degree, directness, or manner that Eve was not (cp. Genesis 2:21-23, 18)).¹ The five observations pertain to events that occurred before any fallen condition existed.² Moreover, the other elements of the “fallen situation” in Genesis 3:14-21 have not been removed. Lastly, it is not a fallen condition that God is the head of Christ and that Christ is the head of every man, observations that Paul lays parallel to the man as the head of the woman (1 Corinthians 11:3; cp. Ephesians 5:23-24).

A second way has been to (2) see inconsistency between the principle of equality enunciated in Galatians 3:28 and the call for female deference. Equality and deference are incompatible because inferiority is supposedly the only reason for deference. (See, for example, Virginia Mollenkott’s comment in the “Foreword” to Paul King Jewett’s *Man as Male and Female*, p. 8.) New Testament writers did not see an implicit contradiction between their Christian impulse toward interpersonal equality and their cultural impulse toward male responsibility.

There are at least four difficulties with the inconsistency proposal. **First**, in the apostolic witness precisely, inspiration surely has the purpose of avoiding such a situation as this. Otherwise, we wonder what practical value the doctrine would have. **Second**, inferiority is simply not the only reason for deference. A division of labor can be assigned for practical purposes, period. Faculty members are not inferior to the dean; a dean has responsibility assigned—as well as authority appropriate to that responsibility—for the harmonious working of the academic enterprise. Even if men and women were totally interchangeable, by positive commandment³ God could still assign responsibility in a way that avoided neglecting important aspects of the work.⁴ Finally, Paul’s subject in Galatians is salvation; moving the sameness principle beyond his subject loses the apostle’s authority for that move. (See the essay in *Evangelical Hermeneutics: Selected Essays from the 1994 Evangelical Theological Society Convention*. Ed. by Michael Bauman and David Hall. Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, Inc., 1995, pp. 123-45.)

Third, leadership rank does not correspond with relative worth. The seven chosen in Acts 6 to serve tables were not inferior to the twelve apostles, who did not want to turn aside from “*the ministry of the word*” to serve tables (6:2, 4). Neither was serving tables a task inferior

to proclaiming the word of God. James uses “*visiting the fatherless and widows*” as a prime example of “*pure and undefiled religion*” (1:27). Confusing rank with worth represents a serious error in egalitarianism. Being in charge is not a “perk,” and not being in charge is not a “put down.” Leadership is responsibility for accomplishing purpose, not position for indicating worth or stroking self-esteem. (See comments in “Ministry Before Consensus on Women’s Roles in the Church,” pp. 2-3.)

Roles in the home and the church are to be understood in terms of Paul’s body figure (Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:12-31; cp. 1 Corinthians 10:17). Good-bad, superior-inferior is always to be figured relative to purpose. Who is to say whether seeing or hearing is superior or more important? Eyes are not very good substitutes for ears and *vice versa*. Which organ is most significant depends on the need in given cases, but the given cases differ, and they involve many different functions simultaneously. Christians are not to view leadership the way the world views it (Luke 22:24-30). The world’s tendency to base self-worth on success in competition—success at gaining rank over others, in this case—is the specific aspect of “worldliness” that does so much damage when it comes into the church and the Christian home.

Fourth, we suspect that God has correlated his assigning of fundamental role emphases with his relative gifting of men and women. So, it is not just a positive commandment that impacts the division of labor—a sufficient explanation in itself, but a divine diversity that by complexification raises the potential for success and makes human interaction more interesting and fulfilling at the same time. The Christian response to differing gifts and roles is neither pride nor abasement, but celebration and mutual appreciation, because the male cluster of strengths no more correlates with superior worth than the female cluster correlates with inferior worth.

We might (3) regard these directives as generalities rather than absolutes. A tendential present could translate 1 Timothy 2:12: “*I [tend] not to allow a woman to teach.*” Such a rendering assumes that “man/husband” is not the common object of “*teach or exercise authority over,*” because exercising authority over men/husbands is elsewhere proscribed. Since male-female role relationship in the home cannot be handled that way, however (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:23), it does not appear likely that we should understand Paul that way in church matters.

In a statement like “*I do not allow a woman . . .*” (1 Timothy 2:12) we might (4) suppose that the writer is being descriptive rather than prescriptive (cp. 1 Timothy 2:8; 1 Corinthians 7:7-9, 12-40). He would be giving “advice” rather than “commandment.” Commandment prescribes the one approach that arises from the nature of the case and/or the authority of the Lord. Advice chooses one possibility because it seems wisest under typical circumstances. Advice corresponds with the area in wisdom that lies beyond law, wisdom being a larger category than *torah*.

Another way to put the idea is that Paul states a personal preference based on, say, social propriety rather than a theological mandate. We could read “*I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man*” (1 Timothy 2:12) on the analogy of “*I want younger widows to remarry*” (1 Timothy 5:14) or “*I would that all men were like me*” (1 Corinthians 7:7). Paul uses similar expressions, however, for matters other than personal preference. As to what is lawful and what is expedient, he says, “*I will not be brought under the power of any*” (1 Corinthians 6:12). Moreover, throughout his discussion of various marital issues, he distinguishes between divine revelation and personal preference or private judgment (1 Corinthians 7:1-40). Even more to the point is the immediately preceding comment in 1 Timothy 2:8, “*So I want men pray in*

every place, lifting up holy hands without wrath and disputing,” obviously not a statement of personal preference (as to holiness, wrath, and disputing, but not with holding up hands).

We could (5) suppose that Paul meant 1 Timothy 2:12 as a restraint on extremes rather than an outright prohibition, but that would not work with other comments about female deference.

Interpreters (6) adjust word meanings in several texts to remove concepts that grate on contemporary American sensitivities or to introduce ideas more consonant with equalitarian views. In differing ways and with varying likelihood and acceptableness, they do that with ήσυχία/σιγάω/σιγή, “quietude” or “deference” vs. “silence” (1 Corinthians 14:33a-35; 1 Timothy 2:11-12); λαλεῖν, “to badger” or “prate” vs. “to speak” (1 Corinthians 14:34); κεφαλή, “source” vs. “head” (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:23); γυνή, “wife” vs. “woman” (1 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Timothy 2:11; 3:11); ἀνὴρ, “husband” vs. “man” (1 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Timothy 2:11); προστάτις “presider” vs. “helper” (Romans 16:2); διάκονος “deacon” vs. “servant” (Romans 16:2); διδάσκω, “teach authoritatively” or “teach publicly” vs. “teach” (1 Timothy 2:12); μανθάνω, “learn officially” vs. “learn” (1 Corinthians 14:13; 1 Timothy 2:11); αὐθεντέω, “usurp authority” or “domineer” vs. “exercise authority” (1 Timothy 2:12); πρεσβυτέρα, “woman elder” vs. “older woman” (1 Timothy 5:2); πλάσσω (ἐπλάσθη), “inform” vs. “form” (1 Timothy 2:13); ὑποτάσσομαι ἀλλήλων, “mutually submit” vs. “submit one to another” (Ephesians 5:21).

More to the point in this document is whether New Testament comments on male-female role relationships are situational in a way that does not require compliance in modern cultures. Evangelicals may (7) regard passages as situational in either a local or temporal sense. The idea is that Paul was dealing pastorally with first-century issues, which called for incorporating an element of practicality into his directives. It is not that he and other apostles failed to see the implicit contradiction between fundamental principles and social evils (female subordination); they did not want to throw unnecessary stumbling blocks in the way of the missionary enterprise by introducing customs that would label them as social subversives. They encouraged Christians to forgo personal rights for gospel progress (1 Corinthians 9:3-23). Paul’s handling of the slavery issue serves as an instructive analogy.

Paul was indeed concerned about the impression Christian behavior might have on non-Christians. In reference to the misuse of language speaking in Corinth, he did not want unbelievers to think believers were crazy (1 Corinthians 14:23-25). In front of unconverted Jews, Gentile Christians were to abstain not only from immorality, but were to avoid transgressing certain ceremonial taboos as well (Acts 15:19-21, eating things strangled—and blood?). More related to our subject are Paul’s comments that wives should defer to their husbands so God’s word would not be blasphemed (Titus 2:5) and that slaves should obey their masters so God’s name and the teaching would not be blasphemed (1 Timothy 6:1-2; cp. Romans 2:24). Peter admonished wives to respect their unconverted husbands to gain them for Christ (1 Peter 3:1-2, 5-6; cp. 1 Corinthians 7:17?). Paul circumcised Timothy to remove hindering his ministry (Acts. 16:1). Concern for adverse effect on weaker Christians was to guide Christian behavior even on matters of opinion: shamle meat (1 Corinthians 8; 10:23-11:1), unclean meat (Romans 14:14-15, 20-21), and wine (Romans 14:21). For this very reason, Paul earned his own living lest even Christians get the impression that he was another sophist philosopher teaching for personal gain (2 Corinthians 12:13-18).

Particularly with 1 Timothy 2, some interpreters have suggested that Paul's remarks were situational in that they addressed a local problem. This passage is the clearest one that specifically addresses the church situation as to women's not teaching and exercising authority, although in 1 Corinthians 14:34 Paul does talk about women/wives being "quiet, or "giving deference," in church assemblies. Other passages address female deference in the home (Ephesians 5:21-33; Colossians 3:18-19; 1 Peter 3:1-7). With 1 Timothy 2:9-15 could be removed from present-day application, it would enhance the case for women serving in every church role.

We may infer from the following considerations, however, that 1 Timothy 2 was not due to peculiar circumstances in Ephesus. (a) 1 Timothy has several indicators that its content did not represent local policy. "*I do not permit*" (1 Timothy 2:15) is itself a generality statement. In the same paragraph, people "*in every place*" were to hold up holy hands (2:8). Later on in the letter, he explains that he wrote in order to show (people/Timothy) how to conduct themselves/himself in the church (3:14-15). Perhaps he wanted to provide confirmation that Timothy was acting on Paul's behalf in ordering the Ephesian church according to "traditions" Paul himself had been following (cp. 1 Corinthians 11:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 3:6). 1 Timothy 2:12 is comparable to his practice of encouraging younger widows to remarry (5:14).

(b) Paul's letter to Titus (1:5) lays down for churches in Crete teachings and procedures similar to those in 1 and 2 Timothy, which were delivered to Ephesus.

(c) Several times Paul tells the Corinthians that his policies were general ones: "*so I ordain in all the churches*" (1 Corinthians 4:17; 7:17; 14:33-34; 16:1; cp. 11:16; 14:36). One of these policy statements deals with male-female role relationship in the church.

(d) Many New Testament documents circulated from the first. Paul tells the Colossians to exchange letters with the Laodecians nearby (Colossians 4:16). He did not consider that letter applicable to just its original destination, which would be all the more so with pastoral letters. Ephesians itself may have been an encyclical among the churches of Asia, and might be that Laodicean letter under a different name. Galatians and Revelation were designed for circulation. One explanation of the textual confusion in Romans 15-16 has been that the epistle existed in more than one recension, being used as a circulating treatise for didactic purposes. By the time 2 Peter was written, the letters of Paul were known even in the provinces of northern Asia Minor, where Paul himself had never evangelized (2 Peter 3:15-16; Acts 16:7). The general epistles as a group testify to the intentional broad destination and distribution of New Testament writings (James; 1 & 2 Peter; Jude). Even the little missive to Antioch from the conference on circumcision was recopied and distributed among the Gentile churches during Paul's second tour (Acts 15:15-29; 16:4). With so much literary circulation going on from the very inception of the Gentile mission, it is hardly plausible to suggest that items of practical content were intended for parochial use.

(e) New Testament writers understood that they were writing scripture (cp. 2 Peter 3:15-16). New Testament scripture naturally addresses the scope of the apostolic mission—all people groups till the end of the age (cp. the principle of apostolicity in canonical theory). Since apostolic writings were the functional equivalent of the apostolic witness and authority, presumption argues against a culture-bound New Testament. While not eliminating culturally referenced advice for original audiences, such an observation hardly prepares us for assuming at every turn that we are reading someone else's mail on matters as basic as male-female relationship. We expect culture-bound material to be at least recognizable for what it is.

(f) The kinds of reasons Paul gives for male-female order in the church and the home are not localized reasons. They are broader than what would apply just to Ephesus, Asia, or the Mediterranean world of Jews or Gentiles: man's being created before woman (1 Timothy 2:13), his being created in the image of God (1 Corinthians 11:7),¹ the woman's being created from the man (1 Corinthians 11:8), her being created for him (1 Corinthians 11:9; Genesis 2:18), the sequence of the fall (1 Timothy 2:13), Eve's being deceived in the fall (1 Timothy 2:14), woman's being the weaker vessel (1 Peter 3:7), the husband's being the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:23), and agreement with the Law (1 Corinthians 14:34; Genesis 3:16?). At least the historical and natural reasons in that list are not subject to the place-time variable.

For a control case, (g) readers would like to see how Paul dealt with cases that were local difficulties. As a matter of fact, we have no clear example of such a thing. In one instance Paul strongly objected to a cultural-religious custom. The way he handled circumcision is useful because it was ethnically limited, or "localized." Though circumcising Timothy to remove practical hindrances to Christian ministry (Acts 16:1), Paul did not allow the Judaizers to force circumcision on Gentiles for religious and national (which includes cultural) reasons. In cases of personal preference, he labeled them as matters of opinion and enjoined—yea, insisted on—tolerance: vegetarianism (Romans 14:2-3), special days (Romans 14:5-6; contrast Colossians 2:16-17). In cases of custom, he dealt with them pragmatically without appealing to theological, historical, or natural reasons; giving a daughter in marriage *vs.* letting her give herself in marriage is an example (1 Corinthians 7:36-38). In short, there is no case of using theological, natural, or historical arguments in *post facto* fashion to enjoin an obvious matter of culture or preference.

From a negative standpoint, (h) there are no cues in the text that 1 Timothy 2 addresses a local situation.

(i) The principle of female deference appears in more than one author. While all the materials relevant to the church setting come from Paul, in household teaching the principle of female deference appears in Peter as well (cp. 1 Peter 3:3-7). Church and home must operate by compatible principles. So to speak, there cannot be a situation where "the buck stops here" in the home and somewhere else in the church; the two institutions cover the same full range of faith and practice and address many of the same issues.

Finally, (j) early Christian communities were rather mobile. In Romans 16 Paul greets twenty-six people he knew before they moved to Rome. Phoebe was going to Rome from Cenchrea to work at least for a while in some Christian endeavor. A large entourage of workers traveled back and forth as part of the Pauline circle. With such an interchange of both ministry and membership personnel, significant differences on something as basic, important, and universal as male-female roles would have caused considerable confusion.

To show that a certain practice was universal in the Christian community of the then-known world does not necessarily show that it was meant to be permanent throughout history. That raises the question of whether New Testament directives on male-female roles were temporary because they were given within the implied limitation of first-century Mediterranean culture. That possibility throws a different light on wives deferring to husbands (Titus 2:5) and slaves submitting to masters (1 Timothy 6:1): both were to submit so the word of God would not be blasphemed. Outside that first-century setting, wives not deferring to husbands might no more

cause non-Christians to blaspheme than slaves not submitting to masters would. In that case, wives would not need to defer any more than slaves would.

However, enjoining deference to avoid blasphemy is a different thing from enjoining deference only for that reason. We have to ask whether other reasons are given for wives and slaves submitting—reasons that lie in the nature of things, the theory of things, the divine order of things, the purpose of things. Our observation is that the New Testament gives no such reasons for slaves submitting. Slavery is dealt with only in practical-pastoral terms (Ephesians 6:5-9; 1 Timothy 6:1-2). Paul never says, for example, that the master is the head of the slave as Christ is the head of the church. In fact, he apparently encourages slaves to gain their freedom if they can (1 Corinthians 7:21).⁵

But on female deference there are other reasons given. As already noted, man was created before woman (1 Timothy 2:13); man was created in the image of God (1 Corinthians 11:7);¹ woman was created from man (1 Corinthians 11:8); she was created for man (1 Corinthians 11:9); man is the head of woman as Christ is the head of the man and God is the head of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:3); man is the head of woman in the sense that Christ is the head of the church (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:23); Eve was deceived but Adam was not (1 Timothy 2:14),⁶ and perhaps woman is the weaker vessel (1 Peter 3:7).

Like slavery, veil-wearing is often put forward as a parallel with the first-century female deference principle. But the custom of wearing a veil is not itself tied to historical, natural, or theological reasons in the New Testament. It is tied to the female-deference principle, which veil-wearing expressed—“*having authority on the head* [ἐξουσίαν ἔχειν ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς]” (1 Corinthians 11:10). Paul even says in 1 Corinthians 11:16, “*If anyone seems to be contentious, neither we nor the churches of God have such a custom* [Εἰ δέ τις δοκεῖ φιλόνηκος εἶναι ἡμεῖς τοιαύτην συνήθειαν οὐκ ἔχομεν οὐδὲ αἱ ἐκκλησίαι τοῦ θεοῦ].” Apparently “custom” refers to veil-wearing rather than “not veil-wearing.” (It does not seem likely that “being contentious” would be called a “custom,” or “practice,” a third option some commentators like Grosheide here proposed.) We take it that veil-wearing was not itself a custom of churches as such; it was not a Christian practice. So, the Corinthians should not insist on veil-wearing to the point of causing dissension in the church. (For additional comments on that context, see the document entitled “1 Timothy 2:9-15.”)⁷

We have noted the reasons for female deference three times before. Some interpreters have taken at least some of them as *post facto* reasons to reinforce merely practical directives. The sense in which the reasons are reasons is an appropriate question to raise, but we need to raise it in a way that it does not beg the question or call for a negative burden of proof. In exegesis we should not let the unacceptableness of an idea serve as a basis for making its stated reasons *post facto* and then asking for proof that they are not *post facto*. There ought to be a positive basis for reducing their value in that fashion.

Although it is often not possible to shoulder successfully the negative burden of proof, we may note the absence of any clues in 1 Timothy 2 or elsewhere that reasons for female deference were meant “after the fact.” For slavery, veil-wearing, dress code, and the like, Paul does not give the kinds of reasons he gives for female deference, nor does he use *post facto* reasons on these other matters. The manner of handling Paul’s reasons is part of the descriptive vs. prescriptive viewpoint itself addressed earlier; so, arguments given there against the descriptive/personal-preference viewpoint also speak against seeing those points as *post facto* reasons for it. 1 Timothy 2:8ff. has other teachings that are not personal preference so as to be reinforced by confirmatory evidence.

Finally, we wonder whether most reasons given for most things could be handled as *post facto* reasons. Having raised that control question, however, we may still ask how likely it is to regard that way all the reasons listed under (f) above. Does not God's creating man first imply his actually ranking him first? Does not God's creating woman for man and from man provide actual reasons for believing that God did give man primacy over woman in the final level of responsibility? Why would God create man and woman in the sequence and format that he did and why would the account of it say what it says except to communicate that very thing? Even if Paul did appeal to these factors only as confirmatory reasons, would they not, in fact, be primary ones? With no clue in the text of 1 Timothy 2, the reader has no reason to opt for a *post facto* status for these facts except by the nature of the case, but the nature of the case cannot help the proposal here, because the nature of the case is the point at issue. Unless something favorable to the approach can be brought forward, we take the reasons as actually *a priori* evidence for male-female role relationship in the home and the church.

Having come this far in the discussion, we are left with one other proposal: the Genesis account is ahistorical, and the text that reports occurrences there does not represent the actually happened. It was put together by patriarchal writers in a patriarchal society as a way for them to talk about a likely backstory. The "account" is etiological, informed by current customs. The same mentality that Paul and Peter illustrate in their directives was the mentality that originated the presentation in Genesis that Paul draws on for his "reasons." One is not a reason for the other; they are simply alike, refer to each other, and are at best merely consistent.

In other words, to avoid the female deference principle, we would be setting aside scripture as a reliable guide for interpersonal behavior between people and between people and God as reflected in the account of origins. We would be doing it to fit in with a contemporary social consensus. But doing that removes the church's prophetic role in society and changes it into a reinforcing advocate of society's intuitive inclinations. To say anything pertinent to this last proposal, we must look at scripture's claims for itself and decide whether the phenomena fit the claims. (See essays about scripture on this website to get started in that topic.) Meantime, adopting such a viewpoint would remove us from having any basis for faith and practice other than what society is willing to hear.

Conclusion

The appropriate conclusion seems to be that the texts do not envision a local or temporary application in addressing female deference in the home and the church. Much of the confusion in our contemporary setting comes, not from some degrading implication in such an arrangement between the sexes, but from misunderstanding what deference is, what formal Christian leadership is to be like, and how the arrangement is modeled after Christ's loving relationship to the church. Correcting these confusions goes a long way toward reducing the current controversy. For suggestions in that direction, see our other documents on women's studies, especially "Prolegomena to Men and Women in Christ."

Endnotes

¹Paul does not explain himself when he says that man *vs.* woman was created in the image of God (1 Corinthians 11:7). Whatever he means about man here is not true of woman.

His comment is surprising because everywhere else being created in the image of God applies equally to men and women: Genesis 1:26-27; 5:1-3; 9:5-6; James 3:9-10. The apostle could hardly be denying such an obvious point. We understand “*the image of God*” and “*the likeness of God*” as references to the interpersonal capacity, which both forms of mankind share equally. Since in 1 Corinthians 11 Paul does not appeal to the sequence of creation as a reason for female deference—as he does in 1 Timothy 2:13, perhaps he is playing on the fact that Adam was directly created in God’s image while Eve was created in God’s image by being created from Adam. She had the image by being created from Adam who had it first, rather than by being created directly from nothing into God’s image.

An added point may apply as well. One implication of being in God’s image is having dominion over creation (Genesis 1:26, 28; Psalm 8). Again, that factor applies most originally to man because he was created before woman and exercised that responsibility by naming the animals before God created woman from him. As responsible being, mankind is like God; in exercising that role before woman was formed, man was most like God in the sense of responsibility. In saying that man vs. woman is in the image of God, Paul presumably means it in the sense of directness (Eve created from Adam) and degree (relative dominion, Adam created earlier). Furthermore, scripture uniformly refers to God in masculine terms even though sexuality cannot be the reason; so, more ultimate responsibility must again be the point. Priority in time combined with woman’s being created from man implies his priority in operational order.

²Another aspect of the Genesis account may relate to male-female order even though no New Testament writer appeals to it. Before the fall Adam called his wife “woman” (cp. Genesis 3:20). Naming implies something about relative order and responsibility (cp. Genesis 2:19-20).

³“Positive commandment” means enjoining one option when more than one could work. It contrasts with “moral commandment,” which arises from the nature of the case as the one way to act or at least the best one.

⁴One problem many middle-aged feminists face is the realization that they cannot “have it all.” Originally, they were told that they could have a career right alongside the men and have a family too. Many of them did not marry, many who married did not have children, and now it is getting too late to experience the good things that come from having a home, and they feel cheated. A woman cannot work eight to ten hours a day and still have enough physical and emotional energy to give primary attention to children. Men cannot do it either. Who then is left to take care of that important task? Children are the ones who end up suffering for the misguided energies of adults.

⁵Grammatically the text can carry opposite ideas: “*Were you called as a slave? Let it not be a concern to you. But although/even-if you can be free, use [it/liberty/slavery/your-calling] instead/more.*” The verse has three points of variance as indicated by underlining. Uncertainty comes in the last compound sentence: ἀλλ’ εἰ καὶ δύνασθαι ἐλεύθερος γενέσθαι, μᾶλλον χρῆσαι. The most crucial of these is the first. Εἰ καὶ can mean “although” or “even if,” in which case Paul could be encouraging slaves to remain slaves, depending on what the reader supplies as the object of χρῆσαι. “*Don’t worry about being a slave; but even if you can gain your freedom, use [your slavery] instead.*” They could use their slavery to fulfill their Christian calling by making it more possible to win their masters to Christ or to remove a source of criticism for the church (cp. 1 Timothy 6:1?). Word order is against taking ἀλλὰ . . . καὶ together (instead of taking εἰ καὶ together) to create a strengthened adversative: “*But if you can get free, use [your freedom] instead.*”

We prefer taking the sentence as encouraging slaves to get their freedom if they can, because surely in most cases they could do more for Christ as a freeman though they could do something as a slave. The translation could run: “*But if you can even/also gain your freedom, use [your freedom] instead [or, “all the more” for Christ’s work].*” That rendering does not take εἰ καὶ as an idiom for “although,” but separates the words conceptually and regards καὶ as an adverb for “even,” even such a thing as gaining freedom. The “using” would be using freedom for their calling even more than they could use their slavery for.

⁶This last reason is difficult to assess because Paul does not explain the connection with his subject. Presumably he does not mean that all women are “punished” for Eve’s sin. More likely, her being deceived reflects something in her nature—some tendency that Satan took advantage of in taking advantage of her. What that tendency might be is experientially and experimentally hard to get at either by male or female “researchers.” Neither of them can easily get outside their own subjectivity and sexuality in designing experiments and interpreting data. Could it be that women do have a greater tendency to trust, which the unscrupulous can exploit? If being deceived connects with “weaker vessel,” could it relate to a woman’s greater sense of vulnerability, hence, being more prone to believe suggestions about deprivation and exploitation? Is there some truth to the notion that women are more affectively and intuitively driven, and that such a trait, healthy in itself, predisposes them to certain kinds of mistakes that need to be minimized in religious leaders, especially in the teaching and ruling ministry? Could having a more affective-intuitive orientation relate to Paul’s not wanting women officially “teaching” (vs. prophesying) because the exegetical process calls for a more rational orientation than a tendency to respond to one’s “sense” of things? These questions seem to be the right kind to ask regardless of how confident we feel about answering them. Werner Neuer’s *Man & Woman in Christian Perspective* provides a helpful entry into considerations of male-female differences.

⁷In 1 Corinthians 11:14 Paul does appeal to “nature” in a confirmatory way as he discusses reasons for observing the custom. After a comparison between not wearing a veil and having the head shaved, he asks, “*Does not even nature teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him*” [οὐδὲ ἡ φύσις αὐτὴ διδάσκει ὑμᾶς ὅτι ἀνὴρ μὲν ἐὰν κομᾷ ἀτιμία αὐτῷ ἐστίν;]? We have taken “nature” in the sense of “what is natural,” which can be something based in perception more than reality, culture rather than nature. Comparable usages are Ephesians 2:3 and 2 Peter 1:4.