

Saved in Childbearing – by Rev. Tom Aicken

It is generally agreed that the expression “saved in childbearing” (1 Tim. 2:15) is one of the most difficult to understand in all the pastoral epistles. Once we see, however, that saved in childbearing has nothing to do with being born again or becoming a Christian, and also has nothing to do with mothers living through the event of childbirth, a pathway to understanding begins to open up.

V. 14 says that “the woman (Eve) being deceived, fell into transgression.” The Lord then pronounced a curse upon her. We find that curse in Gen. 3:16, where she is told two things: (1) her bringing forth children would be associated with pain, and (2) her subjection to her husband (an act of creation) would now take on the nature of a punishment (since both had become sinners). Her desire will be for (that is, to overtake) her husband – to become him, if you like – but he, now a sinner himself, will continue to rule over her, though not always anymore with her best interest at heart. Clearly, these are not good things.

Going back to 1 Tim. 2:15, “Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing” – which is to say that she (the woman, specifically) will still find fulfillment and joy in her role as a mother and wife – “if they (plural, now all Christian women) continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control.”

The idea seems to be simply this, that, while sin has brought a curse and misery on all mankind, if Christian men and women behave lovingly and responsibly in marriage, honouring one another and serving the Lord in doing so, they can still know great measures of joy and contentment in fulfilling their God-given roles.

When the Bible says, “He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favour from the Lord” (Prov. 18:22), it is restating what was said much earlier, that it is not good that man should be alone (Gen. 2:18). It does not mean that the blessing comes naturally, however, or that they will of necessity live happily ever after. No, this “favour from the Lord” is found in their committing to each other, in each seeking to please the other, despite the fact that now, in their depravity, they are inclined to seek their own ways in opposition to the other. Read Eph. 5:22-33, where marriage is ideally portrayed as a reflection of, and meant to mimic, the relationship of Christ and the Church.