

Demystifying Gender Issues in 1 Timothy 2:9-15 with Fresh Assistance from Artemis

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Debate swirls around 1 Timothy 2:9-15. The conversations get heated fast because many scholars hold views that conflict with other biblical passages and, when applied, treat women in oppressive ways.¹ The dispute centers on the function and meaning of rare terms and themes. This socio-rhetorical research suggests that fresh evidence for demystifying gender issues comes from the last place we might expect to find it: Artemis. Below is the Greek text with translation.

⁹ Ὡσαύτως [καὶ] γυναῖκας ἐν καταστολῇ κοσμίῳ μετὰ αἰδοῦς καὶ σωφροσύνης κοσμεῖν ἑαυτάς, μὴ ἐν πλέγμασιν καὶ χρυσίῳ ἢ μαργαρίταις ἢ ἱματισμῷ πολυτελεῖ, ¹⁰ ἀλλ' ὃ πρέπει γυναιξὶν ἐπαγγελλομέναις θεοσέβειαν, δι' ἔργων αγαθῶν. ¹¹ Ὡς ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ μανθανέτω ἐν πασῇ ὑποταγῇ. ¹² διδάσκειν δὲ γυναικὶ οὐκ ἐπιτρέπω οὐδὲ αὐθεντεῖν ἄνδρός, ἀλλ' εἶναι ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ. ¹³ Ἀδὰμ γὰρ πρῶτος ἐπλάσθη, εἶτα Εὐα. ¹⁴ καὶ Ἀδὰμ οὐκ ἠπατήθη, ἡ δὲ γυνὴ ἐξαπατηθεῖσα ἐν παραβάσει γέγονεν. ¹⁵ σωθήσεται δὲ διὰ τῆς τεκνογονίας, εἰ μὲν πίστει καὶ ἀγιασμῷ μετὰ σωφροσύνης. (NA28)

⁹ Also that the women should dress themselves in moderate clothing with reverence and self-control, not with their hair braided, or with gold, pearls, or expensive clothes, ¹⁰ but with good works, as is proper for women who profess reverence for God. ¹¹ Let a woman learn in silence with full submission. ¹² I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent. ¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve, ¹⁴ and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. ¹⁵ Yet she will be saved through childbearing, provided they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control. (NRSVue)

This study finds help from a work by Xenophon of Ephesus called *Ephesiaca* by classical scholars and published later as *Anthia and Habrocomes* in the Loeb Classical Library. It has received little attention in New Testament scholarship because upon discovery in 1726 it was dated to the second or third century CE. Recently dated to the mid-first century CE, *Ephesiaca* provides clues that have been outside our view, brings to life what is known from ancient sources about the social setting and cultural rules in Ephesus, and adds missing key evidence to our knowledge.²

This paper presents findings in three parts.³ The first part maps seven unresolved interpretive issues linked to 1 Timothy 2:9-15. The second part presents what the testimony of Xenophon of Ephesus adds to our knowledge in those areas. The third section suggests possible conclusions.

¹ Explore the interpretive issues in these works and their bibliographies: Andreas J. Köstenberger et al., eds., *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9–15* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005); Sharon Hodgkin Gritz, *Paul, Women Teachers, and the Mother Goddess at Ephesus: A Study of 1 Timothy 2:9–15 in Light of the Religious and Cultural Milieu of the First Century* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1991); Richard Clark Kroeger and Catherine Clark Kroeger, *I Suffer Not a Woman: Rethinking 1 Timothy 2:11–15 in Light of Ancient Evidence* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1992); James R. Beck and Craig L. Blomberg, eds., *Two Views on Women in Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001).

² See: James N. O'Sullivan, *Xenophon of Ephesus: His Compositional Technique and the Birth of the Novel* (UaLG 44; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1995), 9; Bridget Gilfillan Upton, *Hearing Mark's Endings: Listening to Ancient Popular Texts through Speech Act Theory* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), xv; Jeffrey Henderson, *Daphnis and Chloe by Longus; Anthia and Habrocomes by Xenophon of Ephesus* (LCL 69; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 208–10.

³ For my exhaustive analysis see: Gary G. Hoag, *Wealth in Ancient Ephesus and the First Letter to Timothy: Fresh Insights from Ephesiaca by Xenophon of Ephesus* (BBRS 11; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015).

Part One: Overview of Unresolved Interpretive Issues in 1 Timothy 2:9-15

Disputes orbit around nearly every word or theme in this text. This section begins by sketching seven interpretive issues as a basis for exploring how *Ephesiaca* along with other ancient evidence might help us grasp how women in Ephesus may have understood these verses.

Scholars hold varied views on at least seven terms or themes in 1 Timothy 2:9-15: (1) having “hair braided, or with gold, pearls” in v. 9; (2) dressing in “expensive clothes” in v. 9; (3) learning “in silence with full submission” in v. 11; (4) the prohibition for women to teach in v. 12; (5) the meaning and function of ἀυθεντεῖν in v. 12; (6) the link between these instructions and the biblical account of creation and the fall in vv. 13–14, and (7) the promise of salvation through childbearing in v. 15. This section summarizes each of these seven interpretive issues.

1. “Hair braided, or with gold, pearls” in v. 9 (μὴ ἐν πλέγμασιν καὶ χρυσίῳ ἢ μαργαρίταις)

Some scholars have associated the term, πλέκω, translated as “braided” or “plaited” hair, with immodest or ostentatious women.⁴ Others read it through the lens of 1 Peter 3:3–4, though different words are used there, ἐμπλοκῆς τριχῶν, translated, “braided hair.” That passage aims at instructing women to cultivate inner beauty rather than prohibiting an external hairstyle and dress.⁵ To this point, researchers have lacked evidence to locate this prohibited decorum.

2. Dressing in “expensive clothes” in v. 9 (ἡ ἡματισμῷ πολυτελεῖ)

Widely speaking, scholars suggest that the second part of the prohibition in v. 9, ἡματισμῷ πολυτελεῖ, meaning “expensive apparel” or “costly clothing,” points to imprudent apparel associated with the prostitutes or promiscuous women.⁶ They lean on ancient descriptions of two contrasting categories of women — pleasure and virtue — in writings from the cultural landscape. In their thinking, the social trends leaned toward pleasure, and this prohibition regarding apparel called women to virtue instead, urging them to dress with self-control rather than sumptuousness. This view comes forth as only a broad theory without specific support.

⁴ Bruce W. Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows: The Appearance of New Women and the Pauline Communities* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 97–140; cf. Clifford Ando, *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty in the Roman Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 233. See Keil and Maresch on *lvE* 6.14, which honors the καταστολῆς καὶ σωφροσύνης, which in German is the “bescheidenheit und anstand,” or in English, the “modesty and decency,” of the wife of Diodorus, the gymnasiarch. Jürgen Roloff, *Der erste Brief an Timotheus* (EKKNT 16; Zurich: Benziger-Neukirchener Verlag, 1988); 127, reads 1 Tim 2:9–10 as a Christianization of prevailing cultural dress codes.

⁵ E. G. Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter* (London: Macmillan, 1946), 432–35; L. Goppelt, *A Commentary on 1 Peter* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 217–8; Hermann von Lips, “Die Haustafel als ‘Topos’ im Rahmen der urchristlichen Paränese: Beobachtungen anhand des 1 Petrusbriefes und des Titusbriefes,” *NTS* 40 (1994): 261–80; Jerome D. Quinn and William C. Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation with Notes and Commentary* (ECC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 196; Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation and Introduction* (AB35A; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 200; Paul R. Trebilco, *The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 406; S. M. Baugh, “A Foreign World: Ephesus in the First Century,” in Köstenberger et al, *Women in the Church*, 47–8.

⁶ I. Howard Marshall and Philip H. Towner, *The Pastoral Epistles* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1999), 450; Cf. Seneca, *On Benefits* 7.9; John W. Basore, ed. and trans., *Seneca: Moral Essays III* (LCL 310; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006); Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows*, 97–109; Joachim Jeremias, *Die Briefe an Timotheus und Titus* (TZNT 9; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), 21. Jeremias also reads this text as calling women to follow the Roman municipal modesty codes: “die Gemeindeordnung Schamhaftigkeit in der Kleidung der Frau.”

3. Learning in “silence with full submission” in v. 11 (ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ μαθησθήτω ἐν πασῇ ὑποταγῇ)

“The woman” is instructed to learn in silence. The shift from “women,” plural in v. 10, to “the woman,” singular in v. 11, seems to imply that this statement relates to every Ephesian woman. Such a shift directs our gaze from the context of the church to the function of women in a larger world that revolved around the goddess, Artemis.⁷ Many scholars harshly apply this imperative to all women using 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 for supplemental support, while others argue the inconsistency of this view in light of NT texts that treat women with equality to men.⁸ Separate from these positions, modern researchers have turned to religious and social realities associated with women that may lurk in the shadows of these texts – 1 Timothy 2:9-15 and 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 – as they seem to contain contextual instructions rather than universal commands.⁹

4. The prohibition for women to teach in v. 12 (διδάσκειν δὲ γυναῖκί οὐκ ἐπιτρέπω)

Some read this text as prohibiting women to teach Scripture in adult mixed-gender settings though the text does not say that. This interpretive tradition says that women cannot teach because it violates the creation order of vv. 13–14.¹⁰ Beyond the use of NT texts like 1 Corinthians 14:34–35, advocates of this view fail to reconcile this position with the portrayal of various NT women presented as teaching men or labeled as apostles who would be expected to teach.¹¹ A growing number of scholars discontent with the view that pigeonholes gifted female biblical teachers reports that clues may tie this injunction to a local heresy linked to Artemis / Isis.¹²

5. The meaning and function of αὐθεντεῖν in v. 12 (οὐδὲ αὐθεντεῖν ἀνδρός)

Since the translation of this text into English, αὐθεντεῖν has most commonly been rendered “exercise authority over” man. This rendering has licensed men to treat women as less than equal. Later researchers suggest “teaching and usurping authority,” “instigating violence,” or “author or originator” as additional plausible meanings of this rare term.¹³ When read in context, it occurs in contrast to the biblical account of creation as if the author of 1 Timothy seeks to set the record straight in a religious setting where prevailing beliefs were backwards.

6. The link between these instructions and the biblical account of creation and the fall in vv. 13–14 (Αἰδὰμ γὰρ πρῶτος ἐπλάσθη, εἶτα Εὕα. καὶ Αἰδὰμ οὐκ ἠπατήθη, ἡ δὲ γυνὴ ἐξαπατηθεῖσα ἐν παραβάσει γέγονεν·)

⁷ Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 213.

⁸ See Galatians 3:28 and 1 Corinthians 12:7 among many others, cf. Lucy Peppiatt, *Women and Worship in Corinth: Paul's Rhetorical Arguments in 1 Corinthians* (Eugene: Cascade, 2015), 108–11, 141–2.

⁹ For a good example of recent scholarship along these lines, see: Sandra Glahn, *Nobody's Mother: Artemis of the Ephesians in Antiquity and the New Testament* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2023).

¹⁰ Leland Wilshire, “The TLG Computer and Further Reference to ΑΥΘΕΝΤΕΩ in 1 Timothy 2.12,” *NTS* 34 (1988): 120–34. James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (CEP; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 208.

¹¹ See Luke 2:36; Acts 18:24–26, 21:9; Romans 16:7; et al.

¹² Elizabeth A. McCabe, *An Examination of the Isis Cult with Preliminary Exploration into New Testament Studies* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2008), 99–100. Cf. Kroegers, *I Suffer Not a Woman*, 117; Gritz, *Paul, Women Teachers, and the Mother Goddess at Ephesus*, 137.

¹³ Henry Scott Baldwin, “An Important Word: Αὐθεντέω in 1 Timothy 2,” in *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9–15* (ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger et al., 39–51; Linda L. Belleville, “Teaching and Usurping Authority,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality*, ed. Ronald W. Pierce and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis (Downers Grove: IVP, 2004), 220.

Many have read this text as universally prohibiting women to teach, see it as such because in their view it goes against the biblical order: Adam was created first and sin came into the world through woman. The context, however, may focus this statement as related not to the role of women in Christian ministry but to demythologizing the thinking impressed on the minds of Ephesian women. They must cease cultic activities and stop promoting the goddess and the content of her myth. As social and cultural evidence mounts, views remain mixed. Most read this as support for men dominating over women, and women having no voice to teach.

7. The promise of salvation through the act of childbearing in v. 15 (σωθήσεται δὲ διὰ τῆς τεκνογονίας).

The statement that “the woman [singular],” again seemingly implying all women in Ephesus, “will be saved through childbearing, provided they [plural] continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty” (v. 15) is yet another topic of debate. Scholars have offered a variety of suggestions for the meaning of this expression.¹⁴ Some think it limits the role of women to making babies. Since the woman is singular, others posit without evidence that it refers to Mary, though recent scholarship brings different girl (of sorts) into view, Artemis. Others suggest that “saved through childbearing” refers to choosing to go ahead with a pregnancy rather than having an abortion, which was a practice growing in popularity among “new” Roman woman.¹⁵ The diversity of views beckons us to see what fresh evidence might add to the conversation.

Part Two: Contribution of *Ephesiaca* by Xenophon of Ephesus

Here we consider the contribution of *Ephesiaca* by Xenophon of Ephesus to the interpretive discussions related to 1 Timothy 2:9–15. This section aims at presenting how fresh evidence may bring social and cultural realities into view to help reconcile these seven unresolved issues.

1. “Hair braided, or with gold, pearls” in v. 9 (μὴ ἐν πλέγμασιν καὶ χρυσίῳ ἢ μαργαρίταις)

Ephesiaca begins with the main characters, Anthia and Habrocomes, dressing to prepare for the parade to celebrate the birth of the goddess, Artemis. Xenophon of Ephesus portrays Anthia as looking like Artemis. Interestingly, the word used to describe Anthia’s hairstyle is the same rare root word that occurs in v. 9, πλέγμα.

Her hair was blonde, mostly loose, only little of it braided (πεπλεγμένη), and moving as the breezes took it. Her eyes were vivacious, bright like a beauty’s but forbidding like a chaste girl’s; her clothing was a belted purple tunic, knee-length and falling loose over the arms, and over it a fawnskin with a quiver attached... (*Ephesiaca* 1.2.6)

No other woman looks or acts more like the goddess than Anthia, and “often when seeing her at the shrine, the Ephesians worshiped her as Artemis” (*Ephesiaca* 1.2.7).¹⁶ The term, πλέκω, also

¹⁴ S. E. Porter, “What Does It Mean to Be ‘Saved by Childbirth’ (1 Timothy 2:15)?” *JSNT* 49 (1993): 87–102.

¹⁵ Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows*, 109–12.

¹⁶ G. Dalmeyda, *Xénophon d’Éphèse: Les Éphésiaques ou le roman d’Habrocomès et d’Anthia* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1926),

appears in the bridal chamber of Anthia and Habrocomes associated with the realm of the gods (*Ephesiaca* 1.8.2–3).¹⁷ Though scholars have linked this coiffure to immodest women, in the social setting of 1 Timothy 2:9–10 and *Ephesiaca*, Xenophon of Ephesus uses it to refer to the religious expectation that all young women wear the hairstyle to show their piety to Artemis.

2. Dressing in “expensive clothes” in v. 9 (ἡ ἱματισμῷ πολυτελεῖ)

The term πολυτέλεια, “expensive or costly,” occurs five times in *Ephesiaca*. In 1 Timothy 2:9–10, it refers to clothing. Xenophon of Ephesus uses it to describe costly woman’s clothes and appearance on four of those occasions. In the procession to the Artemisium to honor the goddess, Anthia turned heads toward the goddess with her promiscuous apparel. And she was not alone. “All the local girls had to march in procession, sumptuously adorned (κεκοσμημένας πολυτελεῶς)” (*Ephesiaca* 1.2.2). The social rules in this setting demanded that all the girls wear the hairstyle and costly clothing that matches the description of the prohibited decorum in vv. 9–10.¹⁸

3. Learning in “silence with full submission” in v. 11 (ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ μανθανέτω ἐν πασῇ ὑποταγῇ)

Learning started early in the Artemisium. Anthia was named a priestess from birth (*Ephesiaca* 3.11.4–12.1). Part of the daily routine for young Ephesian women included performing daily rituals to “serve the cult of the goddess” (*Ephesiaca* 1.5.1).¹⁹ They also said prayers aloud to the goddess in her temple courts (*Ephesiaca* 1.5.3–5). For Xenophon of Ephesus, the context for religious learning for Ephesian women was not characterized by silence or any measure of submission, but rather, repetition and incantation combined with rigorous competition aimed at dominating others seeking to attain religious roles associated with advancing the renown of the goddess.²⁰

4. The prohibition for women to teach in v. 12 (διδάσκειν δὲ γυναῖκὶ οὐκ ἐπιτρέπω)

Xenophon of Ephesus depicts Ephesus as a “sacred city” and claims that *Ephesiaca* was inscribed on the walls of the Artemisium, exalting the goddess as “savior” (*Ephesiaca* 5.15.2).²¹ Xenophon of Ephesus portrays women as imitating the goddess during the annual festival and promoting her myth throughout the year. Scholars suggest that based on the structure and composition of the story, it represents not a classical Greek novel, but rather a *hieros logos*, a sacred writing with a

5, states “Anthia représente, en effet, Artémis,” which in English is translated: “Anthia represents, in effect, Artemis!”

¹⁷ For more on this coiffure that links it to the realm of the gods, see: Athenaeus, *The Deipnosophists* 525E.

¹⁸ Sandra L. Glahn, “The First-Century Ephesian Artemis: Ramifications of Her Identity,” *BSac* 172 (2015): 455–59.

¹⁹ While Baugh, “A Foreign World,” 15–32, may be accurate in saying that women did not have a monopoly on priestly roles in Ephesus as compared with other ancient Mediterranean cities, what *Ephesiaca* adds to our knowledge is that all young Ephesian women participated in cultic activities that honored the goddess, while also competing for roles of prominence.

²⁰ For more on “silence and submission” in 1 Timothy 2:11, see: Thomas R. Schreiner, “An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9–15: A Dialogue with Scholarship,” in *Women in the Church: An Analysis and Application of 1 Timothy 2:9–15* (ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger et al, 1995), 97–99. Examination of the function of women associated with Aphrodite, the goddess of Corinth, may prove helpful, as the Corinthian text may likewise have a demythologizing function for Corinthian women who may have participated in cultic prostitution (as their behavior in marriage comes into view) and propagating myths (such as alleging that God’s Word originated with women; cf. 1 Corinthians 14:36).

²¹ For further reading on Artemis as “savior” see: Guy MacLean Rogers, in *The Mysteries of Artemis of Ephesus: Cult, Polis, and Change in the Graeco-Roman World. Synkrisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013); Sandra L. Glahn, “The Identity of Artemis in First Century Ephesus,” *BSac* 172 (2015): 330–33.

didactic aim.²² Readers see Ephesus as home to the Artemisium, the place visitors from across the ancient world came to learn about Artemis, who throughout *Ephesiaca* is mysteriously depicted synonymously in the oracles (*Ephesiaca* 1.6.2) and prayers (*Ephesiaca* 5.13.4) as one with Isis.

Women like Anthia aspired to cultic posts from which they benefited from promoting the Artemis myth. Those who could trace their Ionian roots to the origin of the city led the way in the annual procession on the Via Sacra.²³ As the social norms expected “all” Ephesian women to serve Artemis / Isis, the prohibition regarding teaching when read in context, seems to instruct women to stop teaching the myths associated with endless genealogies that conflicted with the biblical record (*Ephesiaca* 1.6.2; cf. *1 Timothy* 1:3-4).

5. The meaning and function of αὐθεντεῖν in v. 12 (οὐδὲ αὐθεντεῖν ἀνδρός)

In *Ephesiaca*, all aspects of life for Ephesian women had cultic and religious expectations linked to the goddess. Only when we consider the gravity of the social expectation for women to advance the renown of the goddess alongside the content of her myths does the interpretive picture come more clearly into view. Central to the Artemis / Isis myth we find a warped view of the creation of man and woman and the origin of sin when compared with the Genesis account.

So, whether αὐθεντεῖν is rendered “exercise authority over,” “usurping authority,” “instigating violence,” or “to be the originator of” man becomes a moot point as each expression can be explained considering this heresy. The Isis myth of the origin of man stated that Isis (the woman) had usurped authority from Ra (the man) in the *Legend of Ra and Isis* to become as powerful and prominent as Ra. She also instigated violence in the story by forming a serpent that would bite him, resulting in great pain. Additionally, the Artemis myth named her as the originator of or the author of all life. Alongside the myths and legends in *Ephesiaca*, the injunction from the author of *1 Timothy* to silence “the woman” (singular in v. 12) sends a message to Ephesian women like Anthia to abandon promoting the myths and cease retelling the legends learned from childhood.

6. The link between these instructions and the biblical account of creation and the fall in vv. 13–14 (Ἀδὰμ γὰρ πρῶτος ἐπλάσθη, εἶτα Εὕα. καὶ Ἀδὰμ οὐκ ἠπατήθη, ἡ δὲ γυνὴ ἐξαπατηθεῖσα ἐν παραβάσει γέγονεν·)

Regardless of our vague understanding of the mystical unity of the cultic identities of Artemis, Isis, and Diana, as the goddess was known in the Roman world, the prevailing cultic tradition in the mindset of Xenophon of Ephesus promoted the view that Ra in their creation account, was the one who was deceived. On the other hand, vv. 13–14 emphasize the creation of Adam (the man) first, then Eve (the woman), and identifies the teaching that Adam was not the one deceived but, rather, Eve. The construct of the statement in vv. 12–14 next to this foundational belief from the world of *Ephesiaca* demonstrates that the author of *1 Timothy* may be aiming at demythologizing life for Ephesian women, turning all they had previously learned right side up.

²² R. E. Witt, *Isis in the Ancient World* (Isis in the Graeco-Roman World; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 249–53; cf. Reinhold Merkelbach, *Roman und Mysterium in der Antike* (Berlin: Beck, 1962), 94. R.E. Oster, “Ephesus as a Religious Center Under the Principate,” in *ANRW* 18.3: 1677, describes it as “literary propaganda for the goddess Isis.”

²³ Guy M. Rogers, *The Sacred Identity of Ephesos: Foundation Myths of a Roman City* (London: Routledge, 1991) 80–126. Cf. *1vE* 27.

7. The promise of salvation through the act of childbearing in v. 15 (σωθήσεται δὲ διὰ τῆς τεκνογονίας).

Xenophon of Ephesus, like other ancient authors, stresses the centrality of honoring the goddess Artemis or else! Artemis was known widely as the “savior” or “deliverer,” the mother of all life, the goddess of childbearing, the goddess of vengeance who strikes down those who do not follow her purity laws, and the one in whom all women placed their trust.²⁴ With this reputation, the debated expression “saved through childbearing” takes on new meaning. It could point to a local expression linked to the way the goddess aided her supplicants in delivering babies.²⁵ It may also have alluded to the threat that likely gripped young women who came to faith in Jesus Christ and ceased service to Artemis. Those who failed to follow the purity laws of the goddess would meet an untimely demise.²⁶ We see this theme throughout *Ephesiaca*. Either way, Artemis comes into view. Pregnant Ephesian women would find themselves alone and at risk of the wrath of the goddess of childbearing at the time of delivery. In this light, v. 15 offers them hope and protection in place of fear and intimidation. Ephesian women could trust God to deliver them.

Part Three: Possible Conclusions from an Unlikely Source, Artemis.

After examining 1 Timothy 2:9-15 alongside *Ephesiaca*, a fresh reading has emerged that calls Ephesian women to shift their allegiance and service from Artemis to God. This study reconciles the seven interpretive issues related to women in three overarching ways.

Firstly, rather than adorn themselves with sumptuous apparel and a hairstyle to look like the goddess (issues 1 and 2), the author of 1 Timothy calls women to appear with modesty and to exhibit good deeds. The evidence disconnects the gender issue of female decorum from imitating Artemis to reflecting countercultural modesty and discretion that honors God.

Secondly, instead of engaging in daily rituals or the annual cultic festivities that advanced the goddess and her myth (issues 3-6), the author of 1 Timothy seems to exhort all women to stop participating in the activities and cease teaching and promoting her myth. The evidence shifts the gender issue of female deeds from exhibiting piety to Artemis to directing piety toward God.

Thirdly, despite the pattern of labeling a female a priestess to Artemis from birth and planting the fear of death during childbearing to all who failed to serve the goddess (issue 7), the author of 1 Timothy calls women to have babies without fear and to trust God for deliverance. The evidence shifts the gender issue of female doctrine from abandoning the myth and accepting biblical truth.

Scholars for centuries have used this text to create gender issues and hinder females from using their teaching gifts. This reading brings local issues into view and calls women to forsake the decorum, deeds, and doctrine of Artemis and, despite the threat of death during childbearing, embrace decorum, deeds, and doctrine that demonstrate their faith in God.

²⁴ Artemis gained the distinction as the goddess of childbearing for helping her mother, Leto, deliver her twin brother, Apollo. To find that all women put their trust in Artemis, see: Athenaeus, *The Deipnosophists* 15.694D.

²⁵ Sandra L. Glahn, “The First-Century Ephesian Artemis,” 468.

²⁶ For the implications tied to disobeying purity laws, see also: Achilles Tatius, *Leucippe and Clitophon* 8.6.11–14.