

Women Preachers?

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At first glance, without considering the context, 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 appears to say that women are to keep silent in church and that they are never permitted to speak.

1 Corinthians 14:33-35 – “For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints. Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.”

To understand these passages, one must read Paul’s discussion in chapter 11 as well. Also one must be familiar with Jewish history and early church history and the myriad of problems Paul was addressing in the Corinthian church. In the first few chapters of 1 Corinthians, he teaches to correct DIVISION and STRIFE in the Corinthian church. In the next few chapters he corrects FORNICATION and answers questions about MARRIAGE and DIVORCE. Then he discusses Christian LIBERTIES and DISPUTABLE MATTERS of the conscience. By the time one has read up to this point, it becomes apparent that the newborn believers in the heathen city of Corinth were struggling with the pressure of the heathen culture they lived in, and that they were abusing spiritual things out of their immaturity and lack of teaching. They had spiritual zeal and excitement, but little maturity and Bible balance. So the next chapters (12-14) deal with the Corinthians’ lack of tact and knowledge about the GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT. THIS IS THE CONTEXT IN WHICH 1 CORINTHIANS 14:34 IS DISCUSSED. At this time in history, when women and men came into a public assembly, the men sat on one side of the room and the women on the other... this was a CUSTOM of this era in time. Also as a CUSTOM the women wore veils or coverings over their heads as a symbol of submission and respect for their husbands. But nowhere in all these chapters (11-14), did Paul teach that ALL WOMEN were to submit to ALL MEN. The context is always that a woman should be submissive and respectful of her own husband. Immediately before Paul teaches verse 14:34, he first corrects the Corinthians in their disorderly use of the spiritual gifts (including the women). Too many people were giving messages in tongues while in the assembly and no one was interpreting those messages in tongues. Instead of one speaker at a time, many were trying to divide up in the sanctuary and have their own little meetings, completely ignoring a logical order for a worship service. There was confusion and mayhem as everyone was prophesying over everyone else, or giving a message in tongues, and interrupting the appointed speaker(s). AND IT WAS IN THIS CONTEXT, that Paul wrote: *1 Corinthians 14:33-35 – “For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints. Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.”*

Apparently many of the Christian Corinthian women were voicing themselves in a brash prideful manner and interrupting their husbands while their husbands were teaching in the assembly. Also the women were interrupting the other speakers by voicing questions without being recognized first by the speakers. They were shouting across the aisles and asking their husbands questions while the pastor was preaching. They were also going off in a corner and “DOING THEIR OWN THING” without considering the wishes of their husbands. Furthermore, they were teaching some things that their husbands did not approve of and that were scripturally unsound.

This tendency is further confirmed in 1 Timothy 2:7-15 KJV:

"Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity. I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and

doubting. In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. Let the woman (my note: not plural, but singular = wife) learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man (my note: not plural, but singular = husband), but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she (singular = wife) shall be saved in childbearing, if they (husband and wife) continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety."

Note that in the above verse, Paul instructs that a wife should not usurp her husband's authority and teach something that is scripturally unsound. Also note that Paul reveals that a natural weakness of the female gender is "deception." The book of Proverbs reveals that a natural weakness of the male gender is "seduction." So both genders have areas where they need to be on guard. By the way, the above verse doesn't teach that women cannot wear jewelry or makeup or nice clothing. It simply says that a Christian woman should dress modestly and not like the temple prostitutes of that day who wore long hair with all kinds of gold and pearls and braids in their hair to advertise their intentions. They also wore very costly and skimpy clothing that revealed much of their anatomy. Scholars have studied this verse in light of history and have concluded this very fact. So Paul is simply instructing women not to dress like a prostitute or seductive woman.

Now back to 1 Corinthians. Chapter 11 already has said that the women can and did pray in the church meetings. And Acts 2:16-21 has already said that women can prophesy (preach, teach and move in the gifts).

Acts 2:16-21 KJV - But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

We also know from the book of Acts that the husband-wife team of Priscilla and Aquilla co-pastored a church and that they also converted a leader named Apollos to Christ.

We also know from the Old Testament in the Book of Judges that Deborah was a noteworthy Leader, Judge, and Prophetess, and that God used her mightily!

We also know that Mary Magdalene was the first person to ever preach that Christ was risen!

The New Testament also specifically named Anna, who met Joseph and Mary at the dedication of Jesus, as being a "prophetess."

So Paul IS NOT SAYING in 1 Corinthians that women can't be leaders or that they can never speak in the church. How foolish! Definitely NOT! (If that were the case, all churches would have to close their doors as the men typically won't teach the childrens' classes. Ha! Gotcha!) In CONTEXT with the rest of this chapter, and in BALANCE with the rest of the Bible, it is clear that what Paul is teaching against is when women try to run roughshod over their husbands in spiritual things, get a "supersaint" mentality, and ignore their husbands' guidance and preferences, doing their own thing without coordination with spiritual authority in the church or in the home. Paul said it was shameful for the women to be speaking out and interrupting their husbands and the other speakers in a church service. Apparently some of the women had even developed a "JEZEBEL SPIRIT" and were trying to run the church, rebel against the leadership, and make their husbands look like spiritual whimps. THIS IS WHAT PAUL WAS TEACHING AGAINST. WE MUST GET "THE SPIRIT" OF HIS TEACHING, NOT "THE LETTER." It makes no sense that Paul would suddenly STOP AND INSERT AN UNRELATED SUBJECT in the middle of his paragraph about spiritual order and the proper use of the gifts of

the Spirit in a church service. WE MUST NOT TAKE THESE VERSES OUT OF CONTEXT WITH HISTORY, CULTURE, AND THE REST OF BIBLE REVELATION. Scripture must be kept in context! Scripture must interpret scripture. And scripture must balance scripture. Women are not supposed to undermine or interrupt leadership in the church or home... that is the bottom line! But women may pray, preach and teach in public just as freely as men may do so. To forbid women to preach and teach is bondage! It is legalistic, dogmatic, in error, and just plain heresy. It is wrong to place such heavy burdens and religious rules on people that stifle the Spirit and hinder the spread of the Gospel.

Have you noticed that most of the Christian circles that propagate this idea of women being too inferior to preach or teach are very legalistic fundamentalists and are also outsiders to operating in the gifts of the Spirit. They are the same groups of Christians that often say speaking in tongues is of the devil. They are the same groups of Christians that say miracles and tongues and supernatural gifts were only for the early church. They are the same ones who say supernatural healing passed away when the last apostle died. This is such a tragedy: The fundamentalists are right about so many things. Their theology is correct in so many areas. Their stand for traditional values is so noble. But it is just like the devil to mix a little untruth in with the truth to throw us off and to neutralize our effectiveness. Every Christian should be a "fundamentalist" in one sense of the word... they should believe the six fundamental or elementary doctrines of Christ as outlined in Hebrews 6:1-3. But most strict fundamentalists don't even believe in the laying of hands for healing, ordination and Holy Spirit baptism (even though this is the fourth fundamental doctrine of Christ). Most legalistic fundamentalists don't even know that there is an experience called the "baptism in the Holy Spirit" that is subsequent to their salvation experience (even though this part of the third "fundamental" doctrine of Christ). See my online book, "The Fundamental Doctrines of Christ" by surfing to www.devotional.net, then clicking on the "Dr Dan's Books" link near the top of the left menu, then scrolling down until you find this book title.

Dr. Paul Yonghi Cho, who pastors the largest church in the world in Seoul, Korea, whose membership numbers in the hundreds of thousands, says that the church in America has been very unwise in suppressing female Christians because of petty doctrines. He says that empowered women are one of the main reasons for the phenomenal growth of the church in foreign nations.

I don't know why certain men think they have to teach this erroneous doctrine of women being silent in the church. Maybe they are afraid the women will take over? Maybe they have had bad experiences with bossy women? Maybe they are chauvinists? Maybe they realize that some of the women pray more than many of the men and are actually more spiritual? Maybe they are trying to overcompensate for the Women's Lib movement? Maybe they fear a society that becomes predominantly led by women? Actually all these worries are moot points. One need not worry over such matters. Male leaders will always outnumber female leaders just because of cultural norms and the natural pecking order in societies. And no doubt there are indeed more male leaders named in the Bible than female leaders... that's obvious! But why persecute a woman just because God has touched and anointed her to lead, preach or teach? Do you really think God is going to punish her at the judgment seat of Christ because she led so many people to Christ, and helped other Christians to grow in their walk with the Lord? Come on, give me a break!

I just can't imagine God telling Beth Moore, or Katherine Kuhlman, or Aimee Semple McPherson, or Joyce Meyers, Kay Arthur, or Gloria Copeland, Maria Woodworth-Etter, or Elaine Hollmer, Marilyn Hickey, or Mother Theresa, or any other female leader to "GO TO HELL BECAUSE YOU WERE A WOMAN PREACHER! YOUR CALLING WAS A FALSE ONE! YOU INFERIOR WOMAN, YOU - YOU SHOULD HAVE SAT STILL IN YOUR PEW, LISTENED TO YOUR SHORT-SIGHTED TIN-HORN PREACHER AND LET THE WORLD ROT! BUT NOT YOU, YOU STUPID WOMAN, YOU HAD TO GO AND ACT LIKE MARK 16:15 THAT SAYS, "GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD AND PREACH THE GOSPEL" WAS INTENDED AS A COMMAND TO BOTH MEN AND WOMEN. DON'T YOU KNOW THAT THE GREAT COMMISSION WAS JUST FOR THE MEN; WOMEN ARE EXEMPT! I WOULD NEVER CALL A WOMAN TO OBEY ME IN SUCH A FASHION! DON'T YOU KNOW THAT I CREATED YOUR MOUTH

AND YOUR BRAIN TO BE INFERIOR TO MENS'. SO... FOR LEADING SO MANY TO CHRIST, I DO NOW HEREBY SENTENCE YOU TO HELL!"