



1 Cor. 14:34-40

God Has Commanded, But Will We Obey?

34 Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says.

35 And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church.

36 Or did the word of God come originally from you? Or was it you only that it reached?

37 If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord.

38 But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant.

39 Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues.

40 Let all things be done decently and in order.

One of the great problems of the church of our age, and indeed of any age, is the temptation to become a man pleaser. Like many pastors, I feel the temptation acutely to preach and teach and say that which I think will please men and women most. I have no great desire to offend people or make them angry. But the great problem is, that were I to make pleasing people the sole object of my ministry I would inevitably have to say a great many things that are not true to the word of God and its teachings. Where I to do that, I would be unfaithful to God and my calling, and I am mindful that I might be called by my Lord and savior at any moment to give an account of my ministry and how I handled that eternal word he has entrusted to his ministers.

I think Charles Haddon Spurgeon summed up the futility of trying to be a man pleaser best when he wrote the following:

“To please everybody is as impossible as to make ice and bake bread at the same moment in one oven. Give up the wretched attempt. Be a man, and be not a mere man-pleaser. How blessedly easy I feel in my work for God! But I owe that ease to the fact that I have no one to please but my Lord. When I preach, the last thing that ever occurs to me is to ask myself whether any of you will like it or not. It is no wish of mine to give offense; but it has never occurred to me to think whether you will be offended or not. I do not think you would respect me if I made my preaching an occasion for seeking to please you. If it pleases God it will please you, if you are right; and if you are wrong, and it does not please you, well, it never ought to please you.”

Certainly, as we have seen, at no point in this letter as he has confronting the problems in the Corinthian church could the charge of being a man pleaser be leveled against Paul. He has criticized their sectarianism, their worldliness, their failure to exercise church discipline, their scandalous behavior, their lack of *Agape love* for one another, and now for several chapters he has been correcting their abuses in worship. We need to realize that Paul has run the risk of offending huge swaths of the Corinthian church,

certainly every one who practiced tongue speaking in that communion would probably be feeling a certain sting at his instruction.

But he has been willing to do this, precisely because he knows that his responsibility was not to please the Corinthians, but to cause them to become pleasing to God.

So he has one more problem in their worship that he must deal with before he continue, one more ox to gore, and this deals with the women of the church. Now you will recall that he had already dealt with an unhealthy egalitarianism in the practice of the women of the Corinthian church, namely in their public unwillingness to wear the symbol of male headship in Greek society of the time, the Peplum or veil. Now it is not surprising that their egalitarianism extended more than just

But apparently the church was along them a role in the teaching and preaching in the ἐκκλησίαις - that is the public assemblies, the church services. So he immediately moves to address it.

Now before we talk about that, let me make one brief technical point; while the words of the bible are all the inspired word of God – they are literally *theopneustos* or god breathed – the versification of the bible is not. The present chapter divisions in our Bibles were invented in 1205 by Stephen Langton, then a professor in Paris and later the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Versification was done in the late 1500s by Robert Stephanus. Now most of these chapter and verse breaks are surprisingly good. Langton and Stephanus usually break chapters and verses at the natural point. But this is not always the case. For instance, almost every commentator in Protestant history has been agreed that the phrase at the end of verse 33: “*as in all the churches of the saints.*” Actually belongs with verse 34 and not the previous verse.

The importance of that is to emphasize that what Paul is saying is that their practice regarding women speaking needs to be in harmony with all the churches of Christ, that they are not some sort of independent and unconnected authority to themselves and this makes sense when we read verse 36 –

Did the word of God originate with you, are you the source of the gospel? Or are you the only people that the Gospel was preached to? The answer to both questions is obviously no. He is saying to them, stop acting like an authority unto yourselves! All the churches of Jesus Christ have to be conformed to the instructions of the word of God, no one has the right to make their own independent doctrinal decisions if those decisions contradict the word of God.

Therefore your women must stop the shameful, αἰσχρὸν that is literally disgraceful practice of teaching and preaching in the worship.

Now I must stress that while we may search for it, there is no ambiguity in this teaching. As if to nail this down he says it three different ways – they must be silent, they are not permitted to speak, and they must be submissive.

This is a teaching that Paul states again in 1 Tim. 2:12 ***And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.***

Now he does say that they are not to learn, or to grow in grace and the knowledge of the Lord, they are just not allowed to enter into the public disputations: if they want to learn, let them ask their husbands at home, which obviously implies the need of husbands to be able to teach them.

Now in conclusion, he makes the critical point that the standard for our practice is the word of God, that is why he says as the Law also says, he is making the point that this is the uniform teaching of the word of God in the OT as well. All the supposed revelations of prophets must be tested against this standard, and of course the Apostles themselves are inspired of God and giving new scripture.

If anyone therefore is a preacher or prophet of God's word in the churches his testimony must match up with that of the Apostles.

1 John 4:6 We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

Gal. 1:9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

If men in their ignorance are inclined to reject Paul's authority and assert their own as greater, what can one do, there is no persuading such a man. One thinks of the supposed prophets like Joe Smith, David Koresh and Jim Jones who eventually asserted their greater authority.

Finally, he sums up again setting the right order of importance:

DESIRE Prophecy

DON'T FORBID Tongues (for that could have been interpreted as his teaching)

But above all, remember that decency and order must prevail in your worship services.

1) Regarding the Teaching that Women may not preach or teach in Church: Obviously this has been controversial and certainly isn't man pleasing 101. There have been many attacks on Paul's authority here, attempts to spin what he is saying, particularly in the feminist movement:

"Perhaps it ought to be added in elucidation of the last point just made that the difference in conclusions between Paul and the feminist movement of today is rooted in a fundamental difference in their points of view relative to the constitution of the human race. To Paul, the human race is made up of families, and every several organism – the church included – is composed of families, united together by this or that bond. The relation of the sexes in the family follow it therefore into the church. To the feminist movement the human race is made up of individuals; a woman is just another individual by the side of the man, and it can see no reason for any differences in dealing with the two. And, indeed, if we can ignore the great fundamental natural difference of sex and destroy the great fundamental social unit of the family in the interest of individualism, there does not seem any reason why we should not wipe out the differences established by Paul between the sexes in the church – except, of course, the authority of Paul. It all, in the end, comes back to the authority of the apostles, as founders of the church. We may like what Paul says, or we may not like it. We may be willing to do what he commands, or we may not be willing to do it. But there is no room for doubt of what he says. And he certainly would say to us what he said to the Corinthians: "What? Was it from you that the word of God went forth? Or came it to you alone?" Is this Christianity ours – to do with as we like? Or is it God's religion, receiving its laws from him through the apostles?" - WARFIELD

2) Husbands must be able to teach. Women must NOT be forbidden to Learn. Titus 2.

3) Our worship services must be decent and in order.

Funny comment made by an earlier commentator when we see the potential problems caused by them, how thankful we should be that in these gifts have ceased and that in the Testaments of the Old and New Testaments we have all that we need.

Above all scripture must be the standard to which we all as Christians bow the knee.

2 Tim. 3:16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.