

Introduction

1 Corinthians 14:34-36

“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. What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only?”

1 Timothy 2:11,12

“Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.”

These words from the epistles of Paul have been a source of perplexity to lovers of the Word of God — in particular, to that great and growing company of women who feel a fire burning in their souls which they cannot smother, and who know the hand of God has been laid upon them for service.

In whole Christian denominations, women have been forbidden to teach, preach, or even to testify or offer audible prayer in church, based on these Scriptures. Many conservative denominations allow the women to take only a small role.

Some people would simply brush aside these words from the epistles of Paul by saying that Paul was merely expressing his own fallible opinion. But I believe, because Paul states when he expresses his own opinion, that Paul is writing here under inspiration of the Spirit of God. In fact, he went on to say in **First Corinthians 14:37-38**, ***“If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant.”***

The passage commanding women to keep silence in the churches is in **chapter 14 of First Corinthians** — the great Pentecostal chapter. And who ever saw a Pentecostal church where the women kept silence and were not permitted to speak? We haven't.

In no other churches that we know of are women more free to speak, teach, preach, pray, shout, and hold responsible positions than in Pentecostal or Full Gospel assemblies. Yet no louder claim is made to follow the Word of God wholly and solely than the claim of Full Gospel and Pentecostal churches. In fact, that's what is meant by Full Gospel — following the full truth. And in Full Gospel and Pentecostal Bible schools and seminaries, women and girls are found studying the Word of God in preparation for distinctively Christian service as missionaries, evangelists, and preachers.

However, when you just skim over the surface of these Scriptures without going into detail to study them, it would seem that our custom in “Full Gospeldom” is at variance with the teachings of Paul. Therefore, it is incumbered upon us either to admit we ignore and violate the Word of God in this particular instance, or we must interpret it in harmony with the practices we permit in our midst.

Was Paul a Woman-Hater?

We have heard some preachers and others in the church world advance the theory that Paul didn't like women, that he never married, and was in fact a woman-hater. They propose this as the reason he put restrictions on women. Well, Paul was not a woman-hater.

Nor does he advise celibacy as some think he does. He did advise it under the circumstances which existed in that day. Reading **First Corinthians 7:25-40** you will find Paul advised celibacy because of what he calls the **“present distress”** (v. 26); i.e., the persecutions and afflictions to which Christians in his time were exposed, and also for the sake of one's being free to devote himself wholeheartedly to the service of the Lord.

Paul was not against matrimony. You know that from the passage you just read. In **Hebrews 13:4** he says, **“Marriage is honourable in all...”**

When he gave the qualifications for a bishop, or pastor (**First Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-10**), he said he should be the husband of one wife, and rule in his household well, having his children well disciplined. If Paul had hated women, or had felt all ministers should be celibates, he would have advised Timothy and Titus to find unmarried men for this most responsible position. But he didn't.

Paul spoke in terms which showed his high regard for womanhood and for the work of women.

ROMANS 16:1,2

"1 I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea:

2 That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also."

The Greek word diakonos, translated here as **"servant,"** is translated elsewhere in the King James Version of the New Testament as "deacon." Some of the newer translations of **verse 1** read, ***"I commend unto you Phebe . . . a deaconess ..."***

And notice that Paul said to the Church at Rome, and he wrote to the men as well as the women, ***"...assist her..."*** Assist this woman, in other words. Don't just push her aside and take over but assist her in whatever business she has need of you.

In his warm greetings, Paul does not forget the women of Rome.

ROMANS 16:3,4

"3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus:

4 Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles."

Contrary to the usual custom among us today, even in this modern age, Paul mentions the wife, Priscilla, before the husband, Aquila.

"Greet Mary," he wrote, ***"who bestowed much labour on us"*** (v. 6).

ROMANS 16:12

"12 Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord."

From the Greek we know these three individuals were women. And since Paul said of Tryphena and Tryphosa, ***"who labour in the Lord,"*** and of Persis, ***"which laboured much in the Lord,"*** these women had some kind of ministry.

And in **verse 13** he said, ***"Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine."*** In an extensive passage (**Ephesians 5:21-33**) showing how the husband-wife relationship

illustrates the relationship of Christ to His Church, Paul takes the occasion to exhort the husbands to love their wives:

EPHESIANS 5:25,33

***“25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it ...
33 Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself”***

In **Colossians 3:19** he wrote, ***“Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.”***

Are these the words of a woman-hater? Certainly not! On the contrary, they show that this great apostle — though denied the sweet refining and inspiring influence, comradeship, and companionship of a godly wife — highly esteemed good women, as well as good men. And if his counsels were only heeded by men, most of the sorrows and woes of good wives would disappear.

The attitude of Jesus toward women is an example to all men. None could ever treat women with greater consideration than did the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Is the man the head of the woman?

This appears on the surface to be the plain statement of the following Scripture:

1 CORINTHIANS 11:3

“3 But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.”

However, looking at that Scripture in some translations other than the King James will help you see how it is actually in agreement with **Ephesians 5:23** which says,

1 CORINTHIANS 11:3 (WEYMOUTH)

“3 I would have you know, however, that of every man Christ is the head, that the head of a woman is her husband, and that the head of Christ is God.”

“But I wish you to know that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the wife is the husband, and the head of Christ is God.”

Now, is every man the head of every woman? Assuredly not! A man may be the head of one woman — his wife. But he is not the head of every woman.

A pastor recalled some of the things a fellow preached during a revival meeting in the last church he pastored. He wasn't very studious, or he'd have known better. He just skimmed over the top of the Scriptures, like you would pan for gold.

(Back during the Gold Rush, you could go into a stream of water and pan out a little gold dust. But if you really wanted to make a strike and get down where the real gold was, you had to dig for it. In the same way you can skim along on the top of Scriptures — but if you really want to find out what the Bible says, you'll have to dig down into the Word of God.)

The pastor didn't correct this fellow as he preached some of these things from the pulpit. The pastor knew the people would know not to accept it anyway. But even after they got back to the parsonage, the man wouldn't let go of the subject.

Finally, the pastor said to him, "Brother, that isn't what that Scripture is saying."

"Oh yes," he said, "it says right here that the man is the head of the woman. Men are the head of women in everything."

"No, no," the pastor said, "Men are not above women in the Lord. If that were the case, women could never be saved unless their husbands told them they could."

He was the type of fellow who was very hard on the women. He always preached about the women. In fact, he was a hard individual. His wife was not a partner; she was a doormat. He walked on her. Most of the time, figuratively speaking, he had his foot on her neck and the necks of their children as well.

"In the first place," the pastor said to him, "you are not the head of my wife. I am."

He had been trying to tell the women, including the pastor's wife, how to dress, etc.

So, the pastor said, "While we're on the subject, I want to tell you something else. It is none of your business whatsoever how my wife is dressed. That's my business."

And how my wife wears her hair is none of your business, nor is it the business of any other man in the church, nor any other preacher anywhere. It is my business. She wears her hair to suit me, not you. She dresses to suit me, not you. If your wife wants to put up with all your idiosyncrasies, that's her problem. But don't go pushing that off on me or my wife."

The pastor continued, "And since you brought up the subject, just lay off of it and don't say anything more about it in this church. As pastor I'm the head of this church locally. Jesus is the head of the Church universally, but I'm the shepherd of this local church and have authority here." (Governments is in the office of pastor.) So don't say another word about the woman business while you're here."

The Greek word used for "man" and for "husband" in the New Testament is the same word, **aner**. The Greek of the New Testament had no separate word for "husband." Likewise, it had no word for "wife." Therefore, the Greek word for "woman," **gyne**, has been translated both as "woman" and as "wife."

Hence, it must be determined by the setting which of these significations should be given to the words in the English passage. For instance, you must tell from the context whether it's talking about women in general, or strictly about wives. Sometimes Paul is talking about women in general — but at other times he's strictly talking about wives. And such passages should be interpreted as relating to the role of a wife.

Our text (**First Corinthians 11:3**) cannot mean that every man stands in the same relationship to every woman as Christ does to every man. That could not be true.

Christ is the head of the woman just as much as He is the head of the man. If He isn't, then the woman is not in the Church, for Christ is the head of the Church.

It is possible to make the Bible say anything you want to believe. No matter what you want to believe, you can find Scriptures, misinterpret them, take them out of their settings, and make them say whatever you want them to say.

A fellow came up to a preacher after he had made the statement that the man is not the spiritual head of the woman.

"Oh, yes he is," he said. "The Bible says so. It says that as Christ is the head of the Church, so is the man the head of the woman." Then he asked the preacher, "Is Christ the spiritual head of the Church?"

"Yes," the preacher replied.

"Then the man is the spiritual head of the wife."

"And Christ is not her spiritual head?" the preacher asked.

"No, He isn't."

The preacher continued, "If Christ is not her spiritual head, then she's not in the Church, is she?"

"Oh, yes, yes," he said, "she's in the Church."

"Well," the preacher said, "if she is in the Church, and a member of the Body of Christ, then Christ is her head — and not the man."

Paul was simply illustrating that from the family standpoint — ***the domestic standpoint*** — the man is the head of the wife, just as from the spiritual standpoint Christ is the head of the Church. He is not saying the husband is the wife's head spiritually. If that were true, the born-again wife of an unsaved man would have no spiritual head. Can you see that? But, praise God, she does have a spiritual head — the Lord Jesus Christ!

This same fellow went on to tell the preacher that since the man is the head of the woman, the wife should obey and submit to her husband in everything. He said, "Even if a husband tells his wife to sleep with another man, she should do it."

That is stupidity. The husband is not the lord of his wife's conscience — her spirit. Jesus is her Lord spiritually, just as much as He is the Lord of the man spiritually.

The Bible says, ***"But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit"*** (1 Cor. 6:17). And in the same chapter it says, ***". . . he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh"*** (v. 16). The Scriptures use this same terminology, ***"and they two shall be one flesh,"*** regarding the husband and wife (Eph. 5:31).

Can you see how it is only in the husband-and-wife relationship — in the domestic situation — that the husband is the head of the wife? From the spiritual standpoint, he or she who is joined unto the Lord is one spirit, with Jesus as the spiritual head. The woman is a member of the Body of Christ just as much as the man is. And Christ is the spiritual head of the woman, just as much as He is the spiritual head of the man.

Every woman can come to Christ directly, without the mediation or consent of any man. I've heard some who say their wives are not even to pray without their consent. That's foolish. Any woman can come to God without the mediation or consent of her husband or any other man. She can come into the same close personal fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ that any man can. In fact, many women are walking in closer fellowship with Christ than a lot of men.

But as a wife, in the natural human relationship, she has a subordinate place in the family. (She does not have a subordinate place in the Body of Christ. And this does not mean that husband and wife are not equal before God.) For the sake of good order in the family, the husband should be the head of the house. No intelligent woman should think of marrying a man who in her estimation is not worthy to take that place, and especially if that man is not a Christian.

Great calamities might have been averted if God's order in family government had been accepted and followed. The husband is not to be contrary and lord it over his wife. Rather both are to be helpers together in all which concerns their temporal and eternal welfare.

The husband must carry the greater responsibility; therefore, he should have the higher authority. If both husband and wife are what they should be, the husband will take his place naturally as the head of the family, and it will be a joy to his wife to see him there. No real woman wants a mere echo or a puppet for a husband. It should be the wife's delight to submit her will to her husband's when necessary, rather than make him the laughingstock of his neighbors. There is no escape from the plain teaching of the Word of God on this point.

EPHESIANS 5:21-25

***“21 Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.
22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.
23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.
24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.
25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it...”***

Paul is talking to the whole Church when he says, ***“Submitting yourselves one to another...”*** (v. 21). Does he mean we're to lord it over one another in the Church? No! It means we're to give in, be agreeable, and get along with one another.

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Then in the next verse where it says, ***"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord,"*** does it mean the husband is to lord it over his wife; that she is never to have any say-so? No! It means they are to be agreeable and endeavor to get along with each other.

The same verse (**First Corinthians 11:3**) which says that the head of the woman is the man also says, "The head of Christ is God." This does not mean Christ is essentially and eternally inferior to God the Father. His eternal equality with the Father is declared in the following passage; note **verse 6**.

PHILIPPIANS 2:5-9

***"5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:
6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:
7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:
8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.
9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:"***

But as our Savior, as our Sacrifice, and as our very own Brother, He took a subordinate position and was in all things obedient to the Father and submissive to the Father's will.

The Scriptures beautifully teach that when Christ humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, God highly exalted Him and placed Him at His own right hand. There, Christ ever lives and makes intercession for us.

Likewise, when a man (or woman) submits to the cross and receives Christ as Savior, he is also raised and sits in the heavenlies with Christ.

EPHESIANS 2:4-6

***"4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,
5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)
6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus..."***

Christ is not under God — He was under Him when he came in the flesh — but is raised up and seated beside Him at His right hand. Man — though under — when he was saved and came to the cross and confessed Jesus as Lord, was raised with Christ, and made to sit with Him. It is not a vertical matter, but a horizontal one. The Word of God says that we are heirs, sons of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. Joint means equal. And the women are joint-heirs as well as the men.

Jesus prayed in **John 17:21**, *"That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us..."* That includes wives who are believers as well as husbands who are believers.

Much of what is heard on this subject of submission cannot be substantiated by Scripture — but takes verses out of their settings and makes them say something they don't say. It makes a woman feel inferior to the man. It makes her feel she should take the place of a slave or servant. It binds instead of loosens. And the Word of God clearly states in **John 8:32**, *"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."* It will never bind!