

Comments on 1 Cor. 14: 34.

It is clear that woman is not permitted to speak in the church in a way that usurps authority over the man. She is to be in obedience and not disobedience. She is not to speak in an arrogant way that contends with or dictates to the man. Here she is required to be in absolute silence. She is not to lead the church by speaking publicly, for this would be taking the lead, or usurping authority over the man. That the public proclamation of the gospel is that which is prohibited is clear from verse 36 of chapter 14, which reads: "What? was it from you that the word of God went forth? or came it unto you alone?" No woman was ever commissioned to publicly proclaim the gospel, but women received the word from the ministry of men. The whole context shows that public speaking, and authoritative speaking, is the thing under consideration. If one were publicly addressing the whole church, and a revelation be made to another sitting by, the one speaking should cease his discourse. They received the truth at this time only through miraculous endowment. The New Testament was not written. Verse 28 is not applicable to the present day, as no one receives special revelations. A woman who is teaching a class of children is not teaching publicly, but privately. Women teach classes in the Tenth Street church of Christ, while I teach a class of men and women. The women teachers are not leading me or speaking to me. If every member of the body is serving God as he should be, there is no confusion. A public assembly may be divided into twelve units under twelve teachers, and thus every teacher engage in private teaching. When the twelve units are thrown into one under one teacher, then but one is to speak at a time, and a woman is forbidden to teach the whole church thus thrown together. As in those times most of the teaching was done by questions and answers, the public speaker would very likely be forced to contend with men, and, in fact, the whole church. Here woman must be obedience, "as also saith the law." As to such speaking, "silence" means silence. But to apply "silence" absolutely is to read into the scripture something that is not in it. If "silence" refers to more than public and authoritative speaking, then a woman would not be permitted to whisper.

to sing, or even to greet a brother in the church. Such a position is ridiculous, and hence is not true to the word of God.

Here is what some learned commentators say:

Macknight: "But it may be asked, Since women were not allowed to pray and prophesy in the church, for what purpose were the inspirations of the Spirit bestowed on them? They were bestowed for enabling them to instruct their own sex in private; especially those of the younger sort, and those who were newly converted. Perhaps, also, some of the married women, who were eminent for their gifts and knowledge, may, in private conversation, have assisted the novices even among the men; as we find Priscilla expounded the way of God to Apollos (Acts 18: 26), and as the daughters of Philip the evangelist may have done who are said (Acts 21: 9) to have prophesied. For *prophesying* does not necessarily imply the foretelling of future events by inspiration, but most commonly signifies the speaking by inspiration to the edification of others."

Poole Continuators: "This must be understood of speaking to the congregation, for the instructing them, or speaking in the congregation to the minister, or any of the people, for her own instruction. For the women might doubtless say 'Amen' to the public prayers, and also sing with the congregation to the honor and glory of God. But for her to speak in an ordinary course, prophesy to instruct people, or to call aloud the minister, or any member in the assembly of the church, to be satisfied in anything wherein she was in doubt, this she is forbidden."

Webster and Wilkinson: "The prohibition to women to speak in public is explicit, stringent, absolute, universal, and fortified by appeals to the law of revelation, and the law of nature. The apostle reiterates it in various forms, as if to prevent the possibility of being misunderstood."

Hammond: "As for your women, let them be so far from teaching that they do not so much as speak, by way of asking questions, in the church, but acquiesce in the judgments of their superiors, particularly their husbands, as the law of God commands."

Barnes: "*Let your women keep silence*, etc. This rule is positive, explicit, and universal. There is no ambiguity in the expressions; and there can be no difference of opinion, one would suppose, in regard to their meaning. The sense evidently is that in all those things which he specified, the women were to keep silence, they were to take no part. . . . It was contrary to all decency and propriety that they should appear in that manner in public. He here argues against the practice *on every ground*; forbids it altogether; and shows that in every consideration it was to be regarded as improper for them even so much as to ask a question in time of public service."

Thomas Scott: "To reconcile these verses with the scripture referred to [1 Cor. 11: 2-16], it seems most natural to suppose that some of the Corinthian women were used to speaking publicly, when not under any immediate or extraordinary impulse of the Holy Spirit; and perhaps they interrupted the other speakers, by inquiries and objections, according to the disputatious spirit which prevailed. The apostle therefore laid it down as a general rule (to which the foregoing case was the only exception), that women must not be allowed to speak in the public congregation, or to assume the office of teachers, or disputants: for this by no means consisted with that subjection to their husbands, which the law of God inculcated."

Pyle: "And let them be sure to be grave and silent in the church assemblies: for I cannot permit a woman to be a public preacher; that being the proper office of the superior sex, and for them to do it is to usurp upon the laws of the creation."

Beet: "33b, 34. These go together. For whereas verse 33b would add no force to the calm assertion of verse 33a, it introduces suitably, by making it valid for all churches everywhere, the strong and strongly confirmed injunction of verse 34. Similar references to other churches in 4: 17; 7: 17; 11: 16. *Of the saints*: reminds us that church members stand in a special relation to God. *In the churches*: general assemblies of men and women. Compare 'over the man,' in the similar prohibition of 1 Tim. 11: 12. Consequently, this verse is not inconsistent with 11: 5, where women are tacitly permitted to 'pray' and 'prophesy,' but limits these exercises to more private meetings consisting chiefly or wholly of women. Notice the coincidence of 11: 5. The women who are ready to speak in public would be also ready to lay aside their distinctive female head dress.

It is not permitted, etc.: 'supports the prohibition by an appeal to a general law of the church of Christ. *In subjection*: Eph. 5: 22. The contrast implies that to speak in church is to throw off their subordination to the other sex. *The law says*: probably Gen. 3: 16. Paul supports his prohibition to speak in church by enjoining general subordination; and supports this by appealing to God's words to the first pair. Compare carefully 1 Tim. 2: 11-14."

Meyer: "Even questions for their instruction should not be brought forward by the women in the assemblies—*en otoko* has the emphasis. *At home*, not in the assembly, they are to obtain for themselves by inquiry the desired instruction, and that from those to whom they, as women, are naturally referred, from their own husbands. Verse 36, etc., joins on to what is immediately before prescribed, not to the previous directions in general. (De Wette, Osiander, et al.) It is disgraceful for a woman to speak in public, unless, perhaps, you were the first or the only Christian, in which cases then, doubtless, your custom would show that disgracefulness to be a mistake, and would authorize as becoming the speaking of women by way of an example for other churches."



A Preacher Mayor.

Occasionally we find a preacher like Paul, who preaches the gospel and makes his living by tent-making. Preachers who realize that "woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel," are towers of strength for the truth. Sir James Duckworth, mayor of Rochdale, England, is, among other things, a local preacher of popular gifts. He is quoted as having said recently to a Methodist congregation, that, "with a church distinguished for sanctified common sense, money can be had for the asking." If there flows from a church no river of benevolence, there is no spring of godliness in that church. The illiberal, stingy church is walking in the way that leads to its own destruction. The best way for a church to quicken its own spiritual pulse is to help others. "In all things I gave you an example, that so laboring ye ought to help the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that he himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20: 35.) The work of Christians is not simply destruction, but is also one of construction. A godly life is more effectual than a carping one in leading men out of sin. It is not the purpose of this journal to waste its strength in contending with brethren over unrevealed methods of work. We have never argued with any man over the method of going or sending, provided that method did not contravene some law of God. Where God has revealed no method, we feel under obligation to use the most approved method. We desire to be systematic, sensible, and economical in doing the Lord's work. We do not intend to allow any man to be more progressive than we are in doing his work, but we do not propose to do our work in a human institution instead of in the blood-bought church of the Lord Jesus Christ. We shall do nothing that in any way reflects on the efficiency or the completeness of the church. A godly life is our dear Lord's best interpreter. The time is ripe for aggressive, constructive work. Action directed by the word of God is needed. The young must be taught the word of God. The gospel should be preached in the destitute fields of our own country and in foreign lands. Let us consistently and aggressively walk in the way that the Holy Spirit reveals, while we emphatically decline to attempt to impede the progress of the church of Christ by binding on it any method not required by the Holy Spirit, to the exclusion of other methods.



Sad will be the day for any man when he becomes absolutely contented with the life he is living, with the thoughts he is thinking and the deeds that he is doing—when there is not forever beating at the door of his soul some great desire to do something larger which he knows that he was meant and made to do because he is a child of God.—Selected.