

While there are few direct commands given in the New Testament we have one here in verse 34. Even here it is couched in terms that maintain the believers liberty to voluntarily do what our Lord desires, and avoid doing what would displease Him..

34 Let your women keep silence in the churches: It doesn't say "**make** your women keep silence." It says "**Let** your women..." The sisters are treated as mature enough and godly enough to handle this inspired admonition without assembly intervention. They are priests just as much as the brothers.

Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

They are free to pray, free to prophesy, but not in public, not in assembly. And when they pray or prophesy, the head is to be covered, ch 11:3-13. And when gathered together in an assembly meeting for prayer, worship or prophesying each sister is a full, if silent, participant and properly covers her head. On the other hand women are apparently at liberty to pray aloud and to prophesy aloud when gathered with women in private surroundings. Even there heads should be covered, if I read chapter 11 correctly. Chapter 11 gives the overall decorum for men and women praying and prophesying anywhere. Chapter 14 simply adds a limit upon sisters doing so audibly in public.

Was Paul a "male chauvinist"? Is God? Did Paul hate women? Does God? Paul clearly realizes that this was, and would continue to be, a controversial issue. While many questions arise over these directives that seem to focus on restraining women, open rebellion against the Lord's prerogative to set down order for the meetings of His assembly is strongly rebuked right here. While the immediate context is the silence of women in meeting these strong statements apply to all who dare to choose to ignore ANY of the directions given for order in the assembly. Verse 33 sums it up, "**For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.**" He is glorified by the spectacle of a group of widely diverse individuals from many backgrounds gathering together in a peaceful, orderly, quiet, respectful manner, in perfect liberty, without any visible leader presiding. Roberts Rules of Order is not needed here, just individual subjection to the Lord and submission to the Holy Spirit. WOW!!! What a miraculous thing when one thinks about it. But we are indeed to heed what He says here.

When we look into the background of the treatment of women one soon realizes that these passages establishing the befitting role of women amongst believers were drastically liberating compared with customary

social and religious practices up to then (and still rampant throughout much of the world). For instance, one commentator states,

"The Jews were very strenuous, and their laws were very strict. The Rabbins taught that a woman should know nothing but the use of the distaff; and they were specially prohibited from asking questions in the synagogue, or even from reading. The same rule is still observed by the Jews in the synagogues. Barnes.

Believers need to be wary of being caught up in the rebellious and ambitious spirit operating in the world today that seeks to overthrow God's prescribed roles for men and women, given here and elsewhere in scripture. Our object is not to see how much we can get by with. While some may be tempted to get just as close to the edge of the lines the Lord has drawn around us for our protection, blessing, and for His glory, we will be richly blessed if we wholeheartedly seek to walk in the center of the course He has set out for us.

What does Paul mean when he states women are "commanded to be under obedience"? Aren't we all are to be under obedience? This may be related to the symbolic head covering established in chapter 11. It speaks of headship and of upholding God's glory. As the last creature made by God, she is His masterpiece and the glory of man who is made in the image of God. However having been made from Adam's rib she was not directly created out of earth (dirt). Adam is directly responsible to his creator, having been directly created by God out of dirt. The woman God gave him for a suitable companion was made from his rib. This indicates, therefore, she is to be under the man's loving headship, leadership and care. Eve was responsible to Adam. (Of course she was also responsible to God who created them.) When she listened to the Serpent instead of her husband (her head and source of her very being) she led the couple into sin, disobeying the one and only commandment given them by their Creator. She not only led in initiating sin she usurped the place of headship Adam had been given by God.. It was Adam who first named the animals and later named his wife. Only one with superior authority has the right to name another creature, human or otherwise. Adam was given that authority and exercised it at first. But he relinquished it to Satan by heeding Eve when he accepted the forbidden fruit from her and ate it with her. At that point God Himself placed her in a position of deeper subjection to her husband than appears to have been her original created place.

So the sister in Christ is privileged to openly accept the protected position bestowed upon her by God, first by virtue of her creation out of man and then the discipline later meted out by God because of Eve's sin.

While this may not seem to be a privilege, it is. It is a continuing, living demonstration of the believers' recognition of Adam's original sin and the inherent sinfulness of the whole human race. It witnesses the redemptive work of Christ on the cross was indeed necessary to liberate both men and women from the shackles of an inborn sinful nature and its sinful works. And only the cross could accomplish that and the transformation of heart that would lead a man to uncover his head when praying or prophesying and woman to cover hers. Only that shed blood could enable a woman to voluntarily subject herself to a man in marriage. And she yields to men the more public place in assembly, in use of gift and in life as a whole. Only that shed blood could lead a man to win her heart's loving submission by loving her as himself (Ephesians 5) rather than using his superior physical strength to subdue her and force her subjection. Only that blood could move a man to faithfully take his God given responsibility humbly and respectfully, not lording over the flock of God, over his wife, or over the sisters in the assembly. Only that blood could restore the dignity and status of women that was long lost to the arrogance, lust and pride of man.

Paul enforces again the universal applicability of what is given us in his letter to the Corinthians. They were not unique. This is not the only place in the letter he asserts its applicability to all assemblies (then in existence, as well as to all to come, including us). They were not an isolated bunch of renegades needing to be reined in by special restrictions. The Lord uses their numerous problems and departures from His will as an opportunity to bless us with instruction for our personal lives, and assembly life, as well. We do well to read and heed.

This is also not the first time he reminds us that we didn't invent the assembly and set it up and establish its order. God did. The word of God didn't come out from us, it came in unto us through the Lord's apostles and prophets. If any considers himself to be a prophet, a source of the knowledge of God's mind, or thinks himself to be a spiritual man, he should recognize first that these words written in this epistle are God given and the inspired word of God.. The Corinthian's self exaltation and their seeking followers to lead, and picking leaders to follow, is exposed as missing the clear intent of God in forming them into one body.

The things he writes to them in this epistle are not less than the very commandments of the Lord, and are to be respected as such. How far we, with all of Christendom, have departed from this epistle. Later Paul writes to Timothy "all in Asia have forsaken me," that is, his ministry of the gospel of grace and of Christ and the assembly. May the Lord preserve all who seek to keep his word and to not deny His Name, Revelation 3:8. The epistle to the Corinthians is key to doing this.

Those who have willingly remained ignorant are to be left in their ignorance, but not allowed to destroy or corrupt that which God has created. Compromise for the sake of unity is not love.

So he sums up chapters 11-14 all in two sentences.

**Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid
not to speak with tongues.**

Let all things be done decently and in order.

By Ron Canner December 10, 2003.