

The Ignored Words of Our Apostle:

*“Let your women keep
silence ...”*

Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

“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? If any man thinketh 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 ... Let all things be done decently and in order” (I Corinthians 14:34-40).

“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. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in the faith and charity and holiness with sobriety” (I Timothy 2:12-15).

SHAME AND INTIMIDATION

The subject which we shall look at is one that has weighed upon the conscience of this author for many years. How easy it seems for us to brush these passages aside. And why do we seem to so consistently brush them aside? Could it be because we are so mindful of reputation and acceptance before the world? Could it be that we are ashamed and intimidated not to believe the *clear* teaching of Scripture? Would we not be much more comfortable following the culture of our own day? After all, with a century or more of modern, “open-minded progress” for the “liberation” of women, shall we dare to follow these outdated words of our apostle?

THE CLEAR WORDS OF SCRIPTURE

Paul makes it very clear,

“Let your women keep silence”

“It is not permitted unto them to speak”

“Let the woman learn in silence”

“I suffer not a woman to teach ... but to be in silence”

THE CORINTHIAN IGNORANCE

In the above passage written to the Corinthians, Paul states *“But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant ...”*

The root word for “ignorant” is “ignore.” The issue at Corinth was not that they were unaware of these clear truths. The issue is that they had chosen to *ignore* them! When individuals choose to ignore the clear teachings of Paul the Apostle they cannot be helped. They are to be left in ignorance – *“let him be ignorant.”*

THE ISSUE OF DECENCY AND ORDER

Paul goes on in that Corinthians passage to say, *“Let all things be done decently and in order.”* It is indecent for women to take on a verbal role in the Body of Christ. When they do so they are out of order.

THE I TIMOTHY PASSAGE

Paul takes us back to the garden to consider these issues. Adam listened to his wife instead of instructing her. There was indecency and disorder in the garden which resulted in the fall. In the I Timothy passage Paul reveals that the woman is:

- ◆ To learn in silence
- ◆ To be in all submission
- ◆ Not to teach
- ◆ Not to exercise authority over the man¹

1. This passage also has an interesting statement, *“Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue*

ATTEMPTS TO NEUTRALIZE THE INSTRUCTION

Some will attempt to argue that Paul's statements are somehow not valid – that they are not the instructions of God. A number of means are resorted to, in attempting to disregard these passages.

They have invented accusations against Paul, that he was a male chauvinist – that he had unresolved personal issues regarding women (arguments like this are attacks upon the very issue of inspiration!).

Others will protest that Paul was dealing with a rare and unusual problem at Corinth, or that he was only speaking of the customs of his own day. Nevertheless, it is time to put aside such foolish reasoning. We must reinstate the plain meaning of the words of these passages. Paul said in the very context of his teaching on this very subject, *“If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.”*

Therefore, regardless of what others may say – Paul's verbal prohibition upon women is not his own idea, but the *“commandments of the Lord!”* If anyone has a problem with these issues they will have to take them up with their Creator.

Paul did not make his pleas regarding the *silence* of women based upon personal or cultural issues. Neither did he make them based on some intellectual deficiency or worth in the woman. Rather, he made these divine declarations based upon the clear principles of Scripture:

1. Order of Creation (I Timothy 2:12-13) – Man was created first.
2. Source of Creation (I Corinthians 11:7-10) – Woman was made from the man.
3. Purpose of Creation (I Corinthians 11:9) – Woman was created for the man.

PROLIFERATION OF WOMEN TEACHERS

In our day we have a proliferation of women teachers, preachers, pastors, authors, etc. Has church history ever seen such a surge of vocal women? No, hardly!

This silence issue also, obviously, extends to the area of leadership. One will note that the passages regarding bishops, elders, and deacons will clearly reflect that they were designed to be male leadership, as it would be hard to have a muted leadership.

in the faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.” Regarding this passage, J.B. Hurley has written, “...Women in general will be saved or kept safe from wrongly seizing men's roles by embracing a woman's role. ... He [Paul] is speaking generally of a woman's role when he speaks of childbirth, using a typical part to represent the typical whole.” (J.B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective*, Zondervan, pp. 222-223)

“BISHOPS” (I TIMOTHY 3)

“... If **a man** desire the office of a bishop” (:1)

“A bishop must be ... **the husband** of one wife” (:2)

“A bishop must be ... apt **to teach**” (:2)

“One that ruleth well **his own house**” (:4)

“Having **his children** in subjection with all gravity” (:4)

“DEACONS” (I TIMOTHY 3)

“**Likewise** must the deacons be ...” (:8)

“Even so must **their wives** be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things” (:11)

“Let the deacons be **the husbands** of one wife” (:12)

Some will point to Israel’s history, in an attempt to find examples of godly women exercising leadership roles. They do so in an attempt to negate the teachings of our Apostle; but one must realize that these examples of female leadership are signs of God’s curse upon Israel, not His blessing.

“As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths” (Isaiah 3:12).

BEHAVE THYSELF

Paul concludes these truths written to Timothy with,

“These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and the ground of the truth” (:14-15).

Women attempting to function as “bishops” and “deacons” are MISBEHAVING in the house of God!

Aren’t we people of “the Book”? Or are we simply people who are controlled by our own imaginations, desires, and culture?

A SHOCKING CONCLUSION

Shall we be so bold as to suggest a shocking conclusion to these prohibitions?

The prohibition of women teaching even extends to a woman teaching other women the Scriptures themselves!

Now, the great passage that is often offered to support women teaching women is found in Titus 2:3-5:

“The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.”

Now it is clear that this passage says that the older women may teach the younger women. But what is the *subject matter* and the *method* of this teaching?

THE SUBJECT AREA

The subject matter of this teaching is clear. Here is what the older women were to teach the younger women:

- ◆ To be sober,
- ◆ To love their husbands,
- ◆ To love their children,
- ◆ To be discreet,
- ◆ [To be] Chaste,
- ◆ [To be] keepers at home,
- ◆ [To be] Good,
- ◆ [To be] obedient to their own husbands

Doesn't it seem odd that this passage would be used as support for women teaching other women Bible doctrines? Who has authorized the expansion of the subject area?

Women are forbidden *“to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.”* Some will suppose that because no men are present in a “woman’s Bible study group” that no one would be usurping authority over the man. Yet is this really true? Does a woman who attempts to teach another man’s wife or daughter not usurp his authority in their lives, whether or not he is present? Would this not be equally disorderly and indecent? Maybe even more so, since the wife or daughter’s authority is not present to judge the teaching? Paul said concerning wives, *“if they will **learn any thing**, let them **ask their husbands at home...**”*

THE TEACHING METHOD

The teaching method is also clear, “*that they be **in behaviour** as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine ...*” The older women’s method of teaching is clearly, by the context, their manner of life! They teach the younger women by *example!* Doesn’t it seem odd that this passage would be used as support for women teaching other women in:

- ◆ Classrooms
- ◆ Seminars
- ◆ Conferences
- ◆ Retreats, etc.?

Every *movement* that is pawned off as “godly” and “biblical” must have a proof text. The *women’s teaching movement* (of women teaching women Bible doctrine) is no different. They attempt to hang their hat on Titus 2:3-5; but is this the intent of the passage? Did the *women’s teaching movement* spring out of a genuine desire to fulfill this passage, or is it simply the closest support that could be rallied for their “godly” and “biblical” agenda?

God has already given women an ordained teacher. It is their fathers or husbands.

WHAT GOD GREATLY VALUES IN WOMEN

Peter, the apostle of the circumcision, spoke of the important role of the woman. He encouraged them to wear “*the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price*” (I Peter 3:4). This “meek and quiet spirit” is what God values in women. It is of tremendous value to Him. It is of “*great price.*” This is *the* divine viewpoint, which Satan always attempts to supplant.

WHAT LIES AT THE ROOT

What lies at the root of all of this is not the actual conduct of the dear women themselves; rather the ultimate failure lays squarely with us men. Husbands and fathers have abdicated our God-given role and responsibility. We have pulled away from our divine calling. We have left a very large gap which the women have attempted to fill (many with good and sincere intentions to honor and serve the Lord). There is a massive void resulting from our failure to lead and teach our wives (Ephesians 5:26) and children (Ephesians 6:4). By the shirking of our solemn responsibilities we have abandoned the women to attempt to meet their own spiritual needs by themselves, among themselves.

The rise in women teachers within the Body of Christ is truly an indictment against the men. It is a further mark of the great apostasy that has firmly entrenched our age. Remember that just as with Israel, female leadership – though it may be used of God – is a sign of rebellion, oppression, error, and destruction (c.f. Isaiah 3:12).

Brethren, God has called us to take leave of the pitiful condition in which we find ourselves.

Let us shake off the apathy that cripples us from being the real men that our wives and children desperately need. Let us work toward being freed from our emasculation. Then this in turn can provide our wives the freedom they desperately need to fulfill their feminine roles.

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