

1CO 14:33-40 "For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. As in all the congregations of the saints, 34 women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. 35 If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church. 36 Did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached? 37 If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command. 38 If he ignores this, he himself will be ignored. 39 Therefore, my brothers, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. 40 But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way."

Well now, here's an interesting passage. If you're a woman here this morning Paul has a word for you as he does for all women in the church everywhere. But, before you're tempted to start a protest in the aisles, let me just say that what Paul is addressing is not some way to stifle women in their worship of God, but rather to continue his theme of doing all things in an orderly, peaceful and biblical fashion.

I know there are groups within Christendom which will address a passage like this and instead of taking it in its context they take it literalistically. The difference is that to take it in its context is to take the plain meaning of the passage as well as within the larger context of the entire word of God, as we compare Scripture with Scripture.

To take it literalistically is to lift the passage out of its context and create a meaning which was not intended by the writer or the Holy Spirit. This type of irresponsible exposition creates all sorts of weird doctrines and ends up dividing the church instead of building it up and encouraging the body, which includes both men and women, boys and girls.

I'll give you another quick example of how when we take something literalistically instead of what the plain teaching is we can go so far down the path of absurdity that it makes one wonder how anyone could adopt such a view in light of the rest of the word of God.

MAT 26:26 "While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."

The church in Rome has held to a view which states that during the Mass the elements of bread and wine literally become the body and blood of Jesus Christ while retaining the outward appearance of bread and wine. This is known as transubstantiation.

They would take a passage like the one we find in the gospel of John and conclude that unless we believe that these elements literally become the body and blood of Christ, and consume them by faith, we do not really have salvation which is sustained through this means.

JOH 6:53-56 "Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. 54 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. 55 For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. 56 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him."

By the way, this whole passage in John chapter six comes on the heels of the crowds following Jesus only because He fed them with literal bread.

But this does beg the question, did Jesus really mean that the bread and wine becomes his body and blood in a most literal way? The answer is no. Why? Because Jesus makes it quite clear that we are saved by grace through faith in Him alone; not through some ceremony whereby we ingest bread and wine which is supposed to be literal blood and flesh.

This would relegate our salvation experience to a works oriented approach. So, why does Jesus use such language in JOH 6:53, where he clearly says, "that unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you"?

Well for the same reason he says in JOH 10:9 "I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture."

Do those who subscribe to taking the bread and wine proposition in a literalistically way also subscribe to putting a gate in their churches and demanding that it is literally Jesus and only as you pass through that gate can you be saved?

No, they would say Jesus was speaking figuratively about being a gate. Well, you can't have it both ways. If you're going to take the gate figuratively, then you need to take the bread and wine figuratively because they both speak of the same thing in the same passage of the gospel of John; Jesus Christ coming down from heaven as the bread of life through whom all who pass by faith may have life.

JOH 6:47 "I tell you the truth, *he who believes has everlasting life*. 48 I am the bread of life."

In the same way, to take our present passage out of context is to miss the point Paul is trying to make and that is that God is not a God of disorder and so neither should His people be a people of disorder which leads to division.

1CO 14:33-34 "... As in all the congregations of the saints, 34 women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says."

Here's the question. If Paul says that women are to be silent in the church, which some suggest means that they cannot open their mouths in any way shape or form, then how do we explain what Paul said earlier in this same letter?

1CO 11:5 "And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head - it is just as though her head were shaved."

And are we to suggest that women are not included in the statement Paul makes in chapter 14?

1CO 14:26 "What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church."

Can women not pray out loud or sing out loud, as long as it's done for the edification of the church? How can a woman prophesy unless she does it out loud, for all to hear? And before someone says, women are not to prophesy, what do we do with Philip's four daughters who all had the gift of prophecy, according to Act 21:9?

Well, then if women are allowed to open their mouths out loud to sing, to pray, and to prophesy, what is Paul talking about when he says, they are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says?

Keep in mind that he is dealing with being orderly and not causing chaos in the church. And notice how Paul adds, they must be in submission as the Law says. Here is the key to what he's addressing.

He's already addressed a passage from the Law earlier as it relates to speaking in tongues. Here in our text he doesn't name a particular O.T. passage but clearly has the law, addressing women being in submission, in mind. This certainly would have included Genesis.

In fact, he's already done this in this very letter when addressing sexual immorality in chapter 6 when he quotes from Gen.2:24, "The two shall become one flesh." And then in 1Co 11:8-9 Paul is addressing the roles of men and women when he alludes to Gen. 2:18-23.

And now, he's back to addressing the law in Genesis which deals with the reason for God's design where women are to be silent in the churches. If this is not referring to praying, singing, or prophesying, then it must refer to some aspect of women being in submission to men, specifically their husbands.

What were these women in Corinth doing which would have violated God's role of women being in submission to their husbands? According to Dr. Kistemaker, these women were being disorderly in that they were trying to discuss, in a public setting of worship, the very prophecies which were being delivered to the church....."

In other words, they were being out of order by speaking out loud in their quest to learn all of the nuances of what these prophecies from God may have meant. There would be time for that, but not during the service where the simple prophecy was simply to be delivered as God gave it.

We're told that one person with another prophecy was allowed to motion the one standing to sit down so they could give their prophecy. But that is different from someone in the congregation trying to discuss what was pronounced while the prophecy was being delivered.

Evidently, there were women who were being disruptive during this time. Paul simply reminds them of God's order of creation where women are to be in submission to their husbands, and by extension, being submissive in matters where God is speaking to

His church through prophetic utterances or where others are speaking to God in tongues.

That's why Paul says what he does in the next verse.

1CO 14:35 "If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church."

These particular women were asking questions in church which could have waited until they got home where they could have asked their husbands. By interrupting the worship time these women were bringing disgrace, not only upon themselves, but also upon their husbands, who now appear to have a wife out of control as they are not considering the needs of others who are trying to worship the Lord.

Remember, ultimately, the time of worship is about the Lord. He is worthy to receive honor and glory and adoration. And when others decide to upstage, if you will, what God deserves in the way of worship, which by the way would include men not just women, they are actually bringing attention to themselves and away from God.

And of course, in the process it also disturbs others who are trying to bring their worship to the Lord when there's a lot of talking going on which has nothing to do with worship, only seeking answers to questions about the worship time.

This last Pastor's conference in Merritt Island there was a man in the back of the church who was interpreting the teaching time into another language as he spoke into a tape machine.

Now, those who were in his immediate area may have known what was going on, but for the rest of us it just sounded like someone was carrying on a separate conversation with someone while Pastor Chuck and the others were teaching.

My immediate reaction was that this guy was being inconsiderate and rude to those in the church who were trying to concentrate on the word of God being taught. And you know what? it was rude. He could just have easily have gone to a different section of the church where no one was around and he could have translated there.

It was annoying, it was interruptive and it took me out of the spirit of worship and receiving from the Lord to where I was now more

concerned with this noise that was filtering through the church, which I could neither understand or wanted to hear at that time, since it interrupted the speakers.

In a similar way these women in Corinth were evidently annoying people with their extra chatter which had nothing to do with promoting corporate worship. Add to that that the church was already in disarray as different groups were being cliquish and divisive and selfish. This sort of thing only adds to the confusion and divisiveness.

And evidently, these people in the church at Corinth were permitting this to go on as they had decided that anything goes. And so, in essence they were making up their own rules as to how to worship God instead of letting the word of God be their guide in such matters. And Paul addresses this attitude in the next couple of verses.

1CO 14:36-37 "Did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached? 37 If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command."

Paul asks two questions to which he expects an answer. Did the word of God originate with you? What kind of a question is this? Well, it's a question which is to put them in their place. The obvious answer is, no it didn't originate with us. Well, then, are you the only people it has reached? Again, the implied answer is, no we are not the only people the word of God has reached.

The reason he poses these two questions is because these Christians in Corinth were acting as though they were not accountable to anyone but themselves as they made up their own rules, as they violated the plain teaching of the word of God.

These two questions are in the context of what Paul stated earlier in verse 33 where he said, "As in all the congregations of the saints..."

He is suggesting in the most forceful way that everyone else in all the rest of the churches seem to understand that they are accountable to God and His word. But you Corinthians are all on a different page and it's not God's page.

As one commentator put it, "[Paul] said in effect, if you didn't write Scripture, then obey it. If you are not the sole receivers of God's word, then subject yourselves to it as faithful children of

God, as Christians everywhere else are obliged to do. No believer has a right to overrule, ignore, alter, or disobey the Word of God. To do so is to put himself above God's word." (John MacArthur)

And by the way, this applies to all churches at all times in history. For a church today to ignore the plain instruction of God's word on any particular teaching is to place that church above the word of God on that matter.

And so, to ignore chapter 14 of 1 Corinthians, for example, which gives clear teaching on how the gift of tongues or prophecy is to be used, is to ignore God. To say, we still will allow everyone to speak in tongues at the same time, and if we get an interpretation or not we'll still permit it, is to tell God that His word doesn't matter.

And the danger is that if you can do this in seemingly small matters, it's only a matter of time where you begin to pick and choose what you'll obey in larger matters. This is the reason the cults flourish. Many of the cults were birthed from people who claimed to be Christians, but decided they knew better when it came to adhering to the written word of God.

You see, if the written word of God doesn't fit your particular bent, then you start writing your own authoritative word. You claim that you're getting revelations from God and that you're the prophet everyone needs to listen to. And so, the Mormon church comes up with its own writings which they believe are authoritative, as do the Jehovah's Witnesses, along with other groups.

1CO 14:37 "If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command."

Paul says to these people in Corinth that if you are truly spiritual then you will recognize that I have been sent by the Spirit of God to minister to you with God's word. And so, essentially what Paul is saying is that his word to them, as the Spirit inspires him, are the very words of God which are meant to be obeyed; not changed, not altered and not ignored.

Some people have wondered if Paul really knew he was writing Scripture when he wrote these particular letters to the churches. The answer is, yes, he most certainly understood how God was using him in this role. And, in fact, the other apostles understood

how God was using Paul. I mentioned a couple of weeks ago how Peter knew this.

2PE 3:16 "He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction."

You see, this is why Paul exhorts these believers that they must acknowledge that what he is writing to them is the Lord's command.

It's not Paul's command, though he's being used in the process in bringing this word to them. This command from God, which is another way of saying, this word which you have received from me, is none other than God's very word to you.

And so, Paul is verifying to these people that his ministry is validated by God Himself and so when he speaks for God, he is meant to be listened to as God's spokesperson, and the words he delivers are meant to be taken as God's very words.

Now, you would think that if an apostle told you that God is speaking to you and here are his words, that you would be prone to listen and be humbled in the process as you submit to God and His word, but this doesn't appear to be the case in Corinth. And Paul gives another warning from God Himself if this persists.

1CO 14:38 "If he ignores this, he himself will be ignored."

And of course the implication is that "if he ignores this [command from God], he himself will be ignored [by God]."

The idea here is that if you're going to disregard the word of God, then you must be disregarded as being truly spiritual, because the truly spiritual person will walk after the Spirit, according to the word of God, not after the flesh and their own desires.

And so, what Paul has done here is to not only warn those who are walking after the flesh, but he's also giving comfort to those in Corinth who want to obey the Lord, but may feel intimidated by these self-proclaimed spiritual people. Paul is saying to them, don't fear these people, God does not recognize them as His leaders.

And it's true for us today. There are a myriad of false teachers in the church, be they teachers on T.V., or radio, or tape, or in a particular congregation. If they will not submit to the word of God,

and if they claim to have an authority which supersedes the written word, they are not to be feared, and they are not to be followed.

Paul is not pulling any punches here. And what actually appears to be happening here in Corinth is that there may have been some leaders who were actually presuming to speak for God. In the process they may have actually been stifling other believers from using their gifts of prophecy and tongues.

Notice the segue Paul makes in the next verse.

1CO 14:39 "Therefore, my brothers, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues."

The word "therefore" connects what previously came before with what Paul is about to say. And so, in essence Paul is saying that not following God's authoritative word, which I have delivered to you, which includes the proper use of tongues and prophecy, has evidently lead to some not promoting the gift of prophecy and tongues.

Therefore, what I tell you now is to be eager to prophesy and do not forbid speaking in tongues. Now, all of this is in the context of using these gifts properly, but they should be sought and used according to God's word, is what Paul is saying.

And by the way, what was true for the church in Corinth in the mid-first century is meant for our day as well, as God gifts His people with the gifts of prophecy and tongues.

But Paul concludes this section by reminding them that they must be imitators of Christ who is the God of order and peace.

1CO 14:40 "But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way."

He is saying that they, and all Christians, must be promoting the peace and unity of the body of Christ. That's the way he started this letter.

1CO 1:3 "Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

And he wants this grace and peace to permeate the body of Christ to the glory of God. He doesn't want the Corinthians or any church today to be in a state of strife. That doesn't bring glory to the Lord, it only shows the world that our God doesn't seem to be enough for us to live in peace with each other.

It is important how the world views the body of Christ, because when they look to the body they ought to see the head, who is seen as the One who loves supremely and has died for us so that we might have life and a peace with the Father through the reconciliation of the shed blood of Christ.

It is the name of our God that we either bring glory to or dishonor. And it is His name that He desires to be lifted on high among His people.

**Exodus 9:16** <sup>16</sup> "But, indeed, for this reason I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you My power and in order *to proclaim My name through all the earth.*

The world ought to see an agape love among God's people which is not just making noise despite it being busy with the apparent use of the gifts of the Spirit, or busy doing a lot of good things, but doing them for all the wrong reasons.

They ought to see a church which supremely loves Christ then loves each other, and then a church which loves the world with the truth of the gospel of Christ. The Corinthians had a problem with this, but it was a problem which was not beyond repair, and this is what should give every believer hope.

Yes, we're human and we do fail each other, but we're human beings who are now new creatures in Christ with a new nature and the Spirit of God who indwells us. We have everything we need, from gifts to the power to fully and faithfully represent our Lord and Savior.

Peace and unity starts with knowing the One who is peace and has set us free. But it's also an appreciation of that peace with the Father which allows us to promote peace and unity among God's people in the love of Christ to the glory of God.

EPH 3:16-21 "I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, <sup>17</sup> so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, <sup>18</sup> may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, <sup>19</sup> and to know this love that surpasses knowledge - that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. <sup>20</sup> Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, <sup>21</sup> to him be glory in the church

and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever!  
Amen."