

# SILENCE IS ( G ) OLD( EN ) ?

## –MESSY ( BUT BEAUTIFUL ) CHRISTIANITY, WEEK 50–

*1 Corinthians 14:34-35 (NIV)*

### I. SILENCE IS NOT \_\_\_\_\_ ?

<sup>34</sup> Women should remain silent in the churches.

They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says.

<sup>35</sup> 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.

- **A few Greek manuscripts have verses 34-35 after verse 40:**

<sup>29</sup> Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. <sup>30</sup> And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. <sup>31</sup> For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. <sup>32</sup> The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. <sup>33</sup> For God is not a God of disorder but of peace—as in all the congregations of the Lord’s people.

[most manuscript have 34-35 here]

<sup>36</sup> Or did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached? <sup>37</sup> If anyone thinks they are a prophet or otherwise gifted by the Spirit, let them acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord’s command. <sup>38</sup> But if anyone ignores this, they will themselves be ignored.

<sup>39</sup> Therefore, my brothers and sisters, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. <sup>40</sup> But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.

[a few manuscripts have 34-35 here instead]

<sup>15:1</sup> Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel...

- **Reasons why 34-35 may be added by a scribe and not original to Paul**

- It is difficult to explain how these verses ended up in different places. A scribe would have moved them, but why? The easiest explanation may be that these verses were originally a comment written in the margin of a manuscript that later scribes inserted in two different places. This means they may not have been written by Paul at all.
- If the verses are removed, the passage reads more smoothly and wraps up the discussion of the Spirit and gifts without digressing to the very specific issue of women.
- The content of the verses seems to contradict what Paul himself has written about women praying and prophesying in 11:5, 13 and about how “all” can prophesy in 14:31.
- Paul appealing to “the law” as a guide to behavior without naming a specific passage seems very unlike Paul—this would be the only such instance.

- **Reasons why 34-35 may be original to Paul after all**

- No manuscript *lacks* these verses, *which is very significant*.
- Most manuscripts, including the oldest and the best ones, have these verses “in the normal place,” after verse 33.
- It is possible Paul himself wrote these verses in the margin of the letter, and a later scribe included them in different places.

### II. SILENCE IS \_\_\_\_\_ ?

<sup>34</sup> Women should remain silent in the churches.

They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says.

<sup>35</sup> 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.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

\_\_\_\_\_ Christian \_\_\_\_\_, with \_\_\_\_\_ toward \_\_\_\_\_.

...by interpreting difficult passages like this with \_\_\_\_\_.

...by recognizing the \_\_\_\_\_ Paul \_\_\_\_\_ on spiritual \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_.

...by always being careful to model \_\_\_\_\_ to the \_\_\_\_\_.

### **On the Difficulty with This Passage Even in Paul’s Own Writings**

“How can women like Euodia and Syntyche (Phil 4:2-3), Prisca (Rom 16:3; 1 Cor 16:19), Mary (Rom 16:6), Junia (Rom 16:7) and Tryphena and Tryphosa (Rom 16:12) function as co-workers in the churches if they cannot speak in those churches? How can Phoebe fulfill her role of deacon (Rom 16:1-2) if she cannot speak out in the assembly? How can a woman like Nympha, who is influential enough to host a house church (Col 4:15), have been required to remain silent in her own home (cf. also Prisca, the wife of Aquila, 16:19)?” (Bassler, “1 Corinthians,” in *The Women’s Bible Commentary*, 327-28).

### **On the Tension of the Ancient Church as Public and Private Space**

“Could she behave in church as she did in the privacy of the home, where she could exercise a certain amount of authority over other members of the household? Or alternatively, once home had become church, was she in effect in a new (Christian) family structure, with old structures of authority relativized? The tension would be twofold: for the married woman who was both prophet and wife, and yet had to function as prophet in a space which was both church and home” (Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, 669).

### **On the Tension with How Outsiders Might View the Church**

“I conclude that Paul’s instructions are conditioned by the social realities of his age and a desire to prevent a serious breach in decorum. The negative effect that wives publicly interrupting or contradicting their husbands might have on outsiders (let alone the bruise it would cause to sensitive male egos) could not be far from his mind. Paul may fear that the Christian community would be ‘mistaken for one of the orgiastic, secret, oriental cults that undermined public order and decency,’ in which women exercised more prominent roles” (Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 673).