

1 CORINTHIANS 14: 34-35

In the previous section we analyzed a passage of Scripture [1 Corinthians 11: 3-16] that was deemed to be one of the most difficult in the entire Bible. The passage was difficult, no doubt, because it was nonsensical and contradictory in nature. However, when we learned that several verses were a quote of a faction of men who wrote Paul, cohesion and understanding were brought to the passage as a whole and thus complete harmony to God's Word. There is no doubt then that 1 Corinthians 14: 34-35 is also quoted. Indeed, verses 34-35 are **NOT** Paul's words but rather the words of another faction of men from Corinth who wrote him. (See 1 Corinthians 11: 17-19.) For it is clear that the words in these verses are opposed to everything Paul is saying in this passage. Let us take a look. Verses 34-35^{NASB} read as:

34 "The women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says. 35 If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church."

Now let us take a look at the rest of 1 Corinthians 14^{NASB}. The following are key verses that Paul states to **ALL** believers in chapter fourteen.

1 "Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual *gifts*, but especially that you may prophesy."

3 "But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation."

4 "One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church."

5 "Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but *even* more that you would prophesy..."

12 "So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual *gifts*, seek to abound for the edification of the church."

22 "So then tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophecy *is for a sign*, not to unbelievers but to those who believe."

26 “What is *the outcome* then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.”

29 “Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment.”

31 “For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted.”

39 “Therefore, my brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak in tongues.”

So, we can clearly see that the above are the words of Paul, both the main points (vss. 1-31) and the summation (vs. 39). Therefore, verses 34-35 cannot be the words of Paul. For Paul's words and verses 34-35 are at the opposite ends of the spectrum. They are in complete opposition to one other. They are wholly and diametrically opposed. Therefore, there is no way for one to be true and also the other. For wouldn't it be an impossible feat for women to **speak** to both men and women for their edification and exhortation and consolation (vs. 3) if they were not permitted to **speak** (vs. 34)? And Paul would not tell women to desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that they may prophesy (vs. 1), if they were to keep silent in the churches (vs. 34). Paul would not tell women to seek to abound for the edification of the church (vs. 12) if they were not permitted to speak (vs. 34). Paul would not tell women that when they assembled with other believers they could give a psalm, a teaching, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation (vs. 26) if it was improper for them to speak in church (vs. 35). Paul would not tell women to **learn** from others who were prophesying (vs. 31) if they were supposed to ask their own husbands at home if they desired to **learn** anything (vs. 35). Indeed, the possibility of both the above being Paul's words and verses 34-35 being Paul's words are nil, zip, zilch. For Paul's words are reflective of God's Word and verses 34-35 are in fierce opposition. As a result, verses 34-35 absolutely, positively, cannot be the words of Paul. Indeed, verses 34-35 are the words of a faction of men who wrote him. And if I surmise correctly, it is this faction of men who were causing the disorderly conduct that Paul speaks of in verse thirty-three. (Note: The word that is translated as “confusion” in verse thirty-three is “akatastasia” in the Greek and means “disorder, rebellion, riot, revolution”.^[1]) Now I believe this to be the case because I do not believe that it is by mere coincidence that Paul's quote comes immediately after verse thirty-three. For I believe that these men had a major problem with the fact that women were equal heirs in the body of Christ and had full rights as daughters of God. They disliked the fact that women could read and quote Scripture, teach them, prophesy for their edification, exhortation and consolation, speak in tongues and interpret tongues because they were used of their Oral Law which stated that it was a shame for a woman's voice to be heard among men.^[2] So, because they disliked this new way of things,

they were causing “akatastasia” (vs. 33). They were rebelling and rioting and trying to overthrow what was taking place. They were interrupting the women who were prophesying so that they could not speak (vss. 30-31).

It is also important to note that after Paul quotes these men, he then immediately rebukes their attitude toward women by asking them two rhetorical questions. He first asks them, ³⁶“Was it from you that the word of God *first* went forth?” (Note: The word that is translated as “word” in verse thirty-six is “logos” in the Greek and means spoken or written word or message.^[3]) Now Paul asks them this question because he knows the answer is a resounding “NO”! Indeed, Paul knows that no portion of Scripture originated through these men who were trying to silence women by their own traditions and rabbinical laws. At the same time, Paul knows that God’s Holy Word did originate through women who prophesied. In fact, many people today do not understand this point that Paul is trying to make to these men. He is trying to get them to understand that God’s Holy Word, the very Scripture that they will read and teach from on the Sabbath, and the very Scripture that they forbid women to read and teach from, did not originate through them, but through many holy men AND WOMEN whom God had chosen.

Therefore, let us now look at Scripture that has come forth to us through women. Turn to Luke 1: 46-55^{NASB}. It reads, ⁴⁶“And Mary said: ‘My soul exalts the Lord, ⁴⁷and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. ⁴⁸For He has had regard for the humble state of His bond slave. For behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed. ⁴⁹For the Mighty One has done great things for me; and holy is His name. ⁵⁰AND HIS MERCY IS UPON GENERATION AFTER GENERATION TOWARD THOSE WHO FEAR HIM. ⁵¹He has done mighty deeds with His arm. He has scattered *those who were* proud in the thoughts of their heart. ⁵²He has brought down rulers from *their* thrones, and has exalted those who were humble. ⁵³HE HAS FILLED THE HUNGRY WITH GOOD THINGS; and sent away the rich empty-handed. ⁵⁴He has given help to Israel His servant, in remembrance of His mercy, ⁵⁵as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his descendants forever.’” So here, the Word of God has come forth to us through Mary. Now please do not make the mistake of thinking it is Luke. Luke is writing down Mary’s words, but they did not originate, or FIRST go forth, through him. They originated to us through Mary by God; for it was Mary who was inspired by God to speak these words. Now Luke was inspired by God to write an account of things (Luke 1: 1-4); nevertheless, much of what he has written down has not originated through him but from other men and women. Therefore, it is perplexing why we give more credit to the one who takes dictation than the one who gives the dissertation. Furthermore, it was Mary who learned of Christ’s birth through the angel Gabriel. (Luke 1: 26-38) No men were present at the time. No men were eye witnesses. No men heard

the voice of the angel. She was the only human to ever see or to hear the angel. We would not know about this part of Scripture if it were not for Mary.

Likewise, what about the resurrection of Christ? The women were the only ones to hear the angel's voices at the tomb. (Matthew 28: 5-7, Mark 16: 5-7, Luke 24: 4-7, John 20: 12-13) For none of the male disciples were present. Therefore, we have this testimony of the angels in God's Word because of the women. And Mary Magdalene was the very first one to see our risen Lord and to hear His voice. (John 20: 14-18) This testimony too we have first from a woman.

Also, do we not have the divinely inspired utterances of the prophetess Deborah? Did she not say to Barak, 6...“Behold, the LORD, the God of Israel, has commanded, ‘Go and march to Mount Tabor, and take with you ten thousand men from the sons of Naphtali and from the sons of Zebulun. 7I will draw out to you Sisera, the commander of Jabin’s army, with his chariots and his many *troops* to the river Kishon, and I will give him into your hand?’” (Judges 4: 6-7^{NASB}) And did not Deborah also say to Barak, after he showed himself to be weak in faith by not believing that God would speak through a woman (vs. 8), 9...“I will surely go with you; nevertheless, the honor shall not be yours on the journey that you are about to take, for the LORD will sell Sisera into the hands of a woman?” (Judges 4: 9^{NASB})

Also, what about Huldah? Did not King Josiah send Hilkiah the high priest, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, Achbor the son of Micaiah, Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah the king’s servant to inquire of the LORD concerning the words of the book of the Law which had been found? (2 Kings 22: 12-13) And did not this high priest and the other men go to Huldah the prophetess? (2 Kings 22: 14) Did she not hear directly from God and speak to these men in 2 Kings 22: 15-20^{NASB} saying, 15...“Thus says the LORD God of Israel...?” Are her words not recorded for us in both 2 Kings 22: 15-20 and 2 Chronicles 34: 23-28? From whom did these portions of Scripture originate? Did they originate from the unknown author of 2 Kings? Or did they originate from the possible author, Ezra, in 2 Chronicles? Did they originate through two different authors? Or did they originate to us through Huldah? Yes, this Word from God first came forth to us through the spoken words of Huldah. It was Huldah who heard God’s voice. The very words of this woman not only taught the high priest, scribe, and other men in that day but her very words still teach us today. Men are taught by her words; men teach by her words; yet men themselves, who have never heard God’s voice as this woman had, still insist that a woman cannot teach.

Furthermore, what about Hannah’s words? Are they not written down for us in 1 Samuel 2: 1-10? From whom did they originate? Did they originate through Hannah or through the author

of 1 Samuel? The author of 1 Samuel is unknown; however, they still originated through Hannah. It was she who first spoke these words; for it was Hannah who was inspired by God to speak these words.

In the Bible do we not also have the words of wisdom of Abigail? (1 Samuel 25: 24-31)

Do we not have the very words of the Queen of Sheba? (1 Kings 10: 6-9; 2 Chronicles 9: 5-8)

What about the portion of Scripture recorded in Proverbs 31? In Proverbs 31: 1^{NASB} it says, 1“‘The words of King Lemuel, the oracle which his mother taught him.” Now the word that is translated as “oracle” is “massa” in the Hebrew and also means a “prophetic utterance” or “prophecy”.^[4] So, who spoke by prophetic utterance, the king or his mother? Did King Lemuel say by God’s Spirit, 2“‘What, O my son? And what, O son of my womb...?” (Proverbs 31: 2^{NASB}) Did King Lemuel even have a womb? Or was it his mother who was inspired by God to speak these words? And did she not teach the king through her prophetic words? How many times have I heard men on Sunday morning, teach a sermon to God’s people from the very words and wisdom of this woman, yet they themselves teach that a woman cannot teach. The ignorance of such men amazes me. They just don’t get this simple rebuke of Paul’s. They do not understand that it was through this woman that God’s Word first came forth unto us. They act as if the words of women were not valid and did not count as Scripture until they were written down by men. But shall we apply this same reasoning to the words of Jesus? Shall we say that Jesus’ words were not valid and did not count as Scripture until they were written down by men? Of course not! But men continually take for themselves the credit that is due women for the words they have spoken. Not only did the men in Paul’s day not get it, but men today do not get it. Because of their own hardheartedness towards women and lack of understanding of Scripture they continually tell women that they cannot teach, yet they themselves will teach from the very words of women in Scripture.

I would also like to say that it is ridiculous for one to say that prophesying is not teaching. For how could Paul say that all may *learn* by those who prophesy (vs. 31), if prophesying is not teaching? For how can one *learn* if one is not taught? Furthermore, Paul spells out very clearly that prophesying is for the edification and exhortation and consolation of all believers (vs. 3). And to “edify” is to instruct in such a way as to improve, enlighten, or uplift morally, spiritually, or intellectually; to “exhort” is to urge earnestly, by advice or warning, to do what is proper; and to “console” is to comfort those in distress.^[5] Moreover, Paul’s very own words, in verse nineteen, show us that prophesying is indeed teaching. For in verse nineteen Paul states, when speaking of prophesying, that he desires to speak five words with his mind so that he can “instruct” others in the church. In addition, Paul makes clear, in verse six, that revelation is prophecy and that knowledge is teaching. This means that something that is not previously

known, revealed or realized is prophecy, and something that is known, or is of knowledge, is teaching. As a result, prophecy must come first. (See 1 Corinthians 12: 28) For one cannot teach by way of knowledge if they do not have first the prophecy revealed to them. Indeed, the one who prophesies teaches God's Word for the first time, either by hearing directly from God or by God speaking to their spirit, and the one who teaches, teaches from information given by the one who prophesied. Therefore, it is absurd to say that women can prophesy, but not teach. Else, a woman could make known to others what was not previously known, but then could not teach others what she had previously made known to them. (This is why prophecy was a greater gift than teaching – 1 Corinthians 12: 28 & 31, 14: 1.) And many men feel assured in their pride that no woman has actually written any portion of Scripture. However, there are many books of the Bible where the author is unknown and many scholars think that Priscilla is the author of Hebrews. Certainly a woman could have written God's Word since women were allowed to speak God's Word.

So, there is no denying the fact that God's Word first went forth through these very women and other women as well, women such as Sarah, Ruth, Naomi, Rahab, Esther, Miriam, King Solomon's lover, Elizabeth, Martha, and the woman at the well. It is also clear from Paul's question that no portion of Scripture first went forth through the self righteous men whom he rebukes. So again, Paul knows the answer to his first question is a resounding "NO"! It was not from these men that the Word of God first went forth. Thus, Paul asks them a second question. For Paul knows that the answer to it is also a resounding "NO"! He then asks them, ³⁶... "Or has it come to you only?" For Paul wants to know if these men somehow thought that they were SO special, that God gave His Word only to them and that the rest of us, and even Paul himself, did not know about it. But Paul indeed knows that these men were not the only ones to whom God gave His Word. Indeed, God gave His Word to ALL of us. As a result, we are ALL aware of its contents and cannot be deceived.

Now, in verses 37-38 we should also note that Paul continues his rebuke and says, ³⁷"If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment. ³⁸But if anyone does not recognize *this*, he is not recognized." Therefore, Paul is making known to the men, and to all, that if they think themselves to be a prophet or a spiritual person, then they are to fully know that the things which he has written, in verses 1-33, are the Lord's commandment. But if they choose not to recognize this, then they themselves are not to be recognized. In other words, Paul is saying that believers are not to give credence to anyone who teaches that women cannot teach. Those men are to teach in an empty church.

And finally we should note that Paul, in verses 39-40, sums up the things which he has just written and says, ³⁹“Therefore, my brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak in tongues. ⁴⁰But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner.” Now, I would like to take a moment here to say that Paul’s summation is extremely significant. For when one sums up their words, they are giving, in brief form, a condensed statement of their main points that they previously had stated. And notice that a woman being silent is not part of it. For Paul sums up that BOTH men and women should desire earnestly to prophesy and that no one should be forbidden to speak in tongues, but that all of these things should be done properly and in an orderly manner.

So, the following shows the different parts of 1 Corinthians 14:

Verses 1-33 – Paul’s own view and the Lord’s commandment.

Verses 34-35 -- Paul quotes the faction of men from Corinth who wrote him.

Verses 36-38 -- Paul gives a rebuke to the faction of men who wrote him.

Verses 39-40 – Paul sums up the things which he has written in verses 1-33.

In ending this section I would like to say that it is shown in the Bible that the disciples sometimes could not grasp simple teachings of Jesus and of Scripture because of their hardheartedness. (Mark 6: 52, 8: 14-21, 16: 11, Luke 24: 25-26, John 13: 12-17) So it is the same here. For indeed, the reason that most men cannot grasp the concept that verses 34-35 are quoted is because of their hardheartedness, plain and simple. They do not believe because they refuse to believe. But the fact remains that the fourteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians is unambiguous. It is straightforward, completely clear in its message, and can only be misunderstood by the one who wants his own agenda instead of God’s. For there is no escaping the fact that women, according to Joel (Joel 2: 28-29), according to Peter (Acts 2: 16-18), according to Paul (1 Corinthians 14: 1), according to GOD, may prophesy. It is also clear from God’s Word that women may instruct, they may teach, they may give advice, they may warn, and they may comfort all members in the body of Christ, both men and women, for the building up of the body (1 Corinthians 14: 3, 26). Furthermore, there is no getting around the fact that prophesying is teaching. Any man who tries to make the claim that prophesying is not teaching is himself teaching a different doctrine than what the Word of God teaches. And any man who teaches that a woman may not teach God’s Word among God’s people defames the Word of God. So to any man today who is ignorant of God’s Word, and believes that women should be silent and do not have the God given right to teach His Word, I will ask you, “Was it from you that the Word of God first went forth? Or has it come to you only?”

1 CORINTHIANS 14

PAUL'S VIEW AND THE LORD'S COMMANDMENT:

¹"Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual *gifts*, but especially that you may prophesy."

³"But one who prophesies speaks to people for edification and exhortation and consolation."

⁴"One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church."

⁵"Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but *even* more that you would prophesy..."

¹²"So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual *gifts*, seek to abound for the edification of the church."

²²"So then tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophecy *is for a sign*, not to unbelievers but to those who believe."

²⁶"What is *the outcome* then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification."

²⁹"Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment."

³¹"For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted."

PAUL QUOTES THE FACTION OF MEN FROM CORINTH WHO WROTE HIM:

³⁴"*The women are to keep silent among the people; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to be set as also the Law says.* ³⁵*If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for a woman to speak among the people.*"

PAUL REBUKES THE MEN FROM CORINTH:

³⁶"Was it from you that the Word of God *first* went forth? Or has it come to you only? ³⁷ If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him fully know that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment. ³⁸ But if anyone does not recognize *this*, he is not recognized."

PAUL SUMS UP HIS PREVIOUSLY STATED VIEWS WHICH ARE ALSO THE LORD'S COMMANDMENT:

³⁹"Therefore, my brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak in tongues. ⁴⁰ But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner."

²⁸"*It will come about after this that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; and your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old will dream dreams, your young will see visions. ²⁹ Even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.*" (Joel 2: 28-29)

References

¹Goodrick, E. W., & Kohlenberger III, J. R. (1990). *Strongest NIV exhaustive concordance*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

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