

1 CORINTHIANS (PART 26) ▪ CHAPTER 14:34-40
HUSBANDS, WIVES & THE CHURCH
KENTON SPRATT
HOLY TRINITY CHURCH, COLVILLE
A.D. FEBRUARY 5, 2012



[As in all the churches of the saints,] Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but *they are* to be submissive, as the law also says.³⁵ And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church.³⁶ Or did the word of God come *originally* from you? Or *was it* you only that it reached?³⁷ If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord.³⁸ But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant.³⁹ Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues.⁴⁰ Let all things be done decently and in order. (1 Cor. 14:34-40)

INTRODUCTION

The church has completely dropped the ball when it comes to standing against the prevailing cultural winds. In fact, it could be argued that we set the play in motion and continue to help move the ball for the other team. The other team, it's important to understand, is not women (or men). The other team consists of those men and women who reject God's word. But if the Scriptures are God's word then feminism and Christianity are fundamentally at odds with one another. The apostle Paul gets all the blame for this, but the godly will acknowledge that the things which Paul writes "are the commandments of the Lord" (v. 37). To be embarrassed about what Paul writes is to be embarrassed of your Lord (Mk. 8:38). But not to be embarrassed of what's written here does not mean not being embarrassed of all the things said and done in the name of the Lord. There is a way of reading certain statements in the Bible out of the context of the story that Muslim men would find emboldening and that Christian men ought to disown entirely. This is one of those statements that ought not to be misread.

FOUNDATIONS

To read Paul rightly, we must understand that what Paul says is not an innovation of his. Not only does Paul say that the things he is saying are the commandments of the Lord, he also says that they are also in keeping with the law. The word "submissive," for example, ought not to have feminist or Muslim content poured into it. Paul does not specify exactly where in the law he is referring to, but the husband and wife relationship is laid out from the creation onward (Gn. 2:18). And it is upon these foundations in the law that we build our understanding. What Paul is saying here is not an innovation, but something required for all the churches of the saints. It's in keeping with what God has said in the past. And let it also be said that for 1900 years this was also unquestioned in the church. A feminist (male or female) is someone whose Christian culture made it possible to make a leap off of a cliff, but the results have not been uniformly pretty. In the long term the Biblical foundations cannot be messed with – they are the way that God created the world. Arguing with this is like arguing with gravity – you always lose. First, God made us male and female (Gn. 1:27). Second, the female was made "a helper comparable to him" (Gn. 2:18). Third, together in marriage they are "one flesh" (Gn. 2:24), and made in the image of God to

be fruitful and subdue the earth having been given dominion over it (Gn. 2:27, 28). The submission required of a wife to a husband is that same submission that was given of Jesus to his father: earthly and heavenly (Lk. 2:51; 1 Cor. 15:27-28). The fact that women are not to be confused with men does not mean women are less the image of God, or in any way to be dominated or demeaned. Submission to husbands is not demeaning anymore than submission in any of our other relationships where we are required to submit is demeaning. Jesus was not demeaned when He submitted to the Father; rather this was the means of his exaltation (Phil. 2:8-9).

MEN MUST LEAD THEIR WIVES AND THE CHURCH

There is a connection made throughout Scriptures between the order of the church and the order of the home. One of the primary qualifications of the elder and deacon is that he rule his own family well (1 Tim. 3:4-5, 12). There is no way to have a healthy church or family without this order being in place. There is a close connection between our messed up churches and our messed up families. But it will do us no good at all to emphasize the proper role of the wife and neglect the husband's role. For better or worse men always lead family and therefore culture (Eph. 5:23). Rightly understood – and in our cultural context we must emphasize this – if it's shameful for a woman to authoritatively teach the men in the church (and it is), it would be a double shame if their husbands couldn't answer their questions at home (v. 35). Men are given the responsibility by God to lead. And this is not arbitrary, but something the world was wired with. For better or worse, men will naturally lead. But it won't be a beautiful thing apart from the gospel permeating our lives (Gn. 3:16). A culture without husbands providing godly leadership is not a culture without male headship. It's a culture with poor male headship. It's a culture which flounders and is messed up in profound ways. Men lead cultures as certainly as women have babies. And all the feminist hand-wringing in the world cannot change it. Certain men and women have a problem with this, because they have a problem with their creator. Why, they ask, have you made me like this? But to attack this order is to attack the image of God.

APPLICATION

The order of the home and the order of the church are related. Elder's qualifications come from how men manage their households. There is more to being a leader in your home than bringing home the bacon. You are called to be a spiritual leader in the home and community. Husbands must be prepared to lead their wives and families. This means hard work and preparation. Above all this means taking responsibility. And one of your responsibilities is to know the gospel well enough to lead your family and to answer their questions. And your answers need to come from more than your lips.

Wives must be submissive to their husbands. And this submission at home is to be reflected in the order of the church. Submission rendered willingly is both glorious and powerful (1 Pet. 3:1-2).

There is something powerfully attractive and beautiful about men and women fulfilling their God given roles with cheerful zeal, grace, and humility. This is at the heart of the mission of the church. Because the husband and wife relationship is a three dimensional proclamation of the gospel, if we're not proclaiming the gospel here we have nothing to offer the world. If it isn't beautiful, it isn't the gospel. And for people to exhibit this beauty, they must first know the beauty of God's grace and forgiveness.