

Why did Paul tell women to keep silence in the church?

Thank you for asking your question at www.gospellessons.info: "Why did Paul, in 1 Cor 14, say that women are to keep silence in the church?" In 1 Cor 14:33-35, Paul is certain about what he is teaching, using absolute language:

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.

The teaching was universally taught in all the congregations. Women were to remain silent and not allowed to speak. To do otherwise was disgraceful. The teaching is so certainly express one has to reject it in order to say it does not mean what it says. Many modern groups do just that. They say it is all right to have women teach over men or even be a preacher. To adopt this modern teaching is to reject the clear meaning of the New Testament. If one can change this meaning, one can change any other teaching, rendering the law of Christ null and void.

This teaching is repeated in 1 Tim 2:11-3:1: "A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. 12 I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent." To change this teaching to accommodate the modern trends is to pervert the teaching of Christ.

A woman can teach in many ways and at many times. In Acts 18:26, we find that Priscilla taught with her husband; not in the church, but in the home: "When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately." Older women are to teach younger women: "Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. 4 Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, 5 to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God. Titus 2:3-5. Moreover, women can teach their children. A woman can teach family and friends, but this must be done outside the assembly where she would "teach or to have authority over a man." With her own husband she must be very careful. Peter instructed women with unbelieving husbands in 1 Peter 3:1-2: "Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, 2 when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.

Although there are many ways a woman can teach, she cannot teach in the assembly and have dominion over a man. She is to be silent.

There are consequences for altering the gospel of Christ in these and other matters:

6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— 7 which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! 9 As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned! Gal 1:6-9.

In the matter of women speaking in the church and all other matters, we are to speak what God has spoken—nothing more and nothing less. Peter wrote in 1 Peter 4:11, "If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God."

Thank you so much for your question.

May I also invite you to visit the Orangeburg Church of Christ web site at www.orangeburgchurchofchrist.info.