

# SHOULD WOMEN REMAIN "SILENT" OR BE ALLOWED TO SPEAK OR TEACH IN THE CONGREGATION (CHURCH)

BY: PRESIDENT & INTERNATIONAL BISHOP E. S. HENRY Dip. Theo. MIET.

Dated 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2011

My conversion to the Lord Christ Jesus our Saviour and Lord was at the age of 15 years. I was baptised in His name at the age of 16 years. From those years until now, I have encountered disappointments and failures. I have made mistakes, and have been disillusioned, and been misled, but I have also had many blessings.

Within church settings, the most controversial issue, which has caused me great pain and anguish, is the role of women in the church. It is a known fact that women are not permitted to speak, teach or to minister in some of the 7<sup>th</sup> Day Churches of God and other churches worldwide.

I have been in this Christian faith for the past 45 years and started out as a lay preacher. I am now a Leader for Conferences and Church Missions in the United Kingdom with six other countries abroad. I have always believed deep inside my spirit, that women should be allowed to preach, teach and lead the churches of God as and when it becomes necessary to do so.

My reason for not speaking out before now was due to me being fearful that I would lose my ministerial colleagues friendship in the Ministry of Christ Jesus. It was a fear of being the odd one out by not supporting the silence of women in the churches. God has now, through his Holy Spirit, given me the courage and empowered me to speak out.

To set the records straight my intention in drafting this document it is not to bring hurt or disrespect to any church leaders. I am writing from my own perspective and conviction in accordance with proper exegesis/interpretation of biblical texts. I hope my fellow church leaders share my honesty, boldness and conviction.

A high percentage of churches practice the 'NO POLICY' to women's involvement in ministering/teaching during worship services. The two primary Scriptures that are used are 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians Chapter 14: verses 34-39 and 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy Chapter 2: 11-12.

Let us deal in the first instance with 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians Chapter 14 verses 34-39 which states (NKJ) <sup>34</sup>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. <sup>35</sup>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. <sup>36</sup>Or did the word of God come originally from you? Or was it you only that it reached? <sup>37</sup>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 <sup>38</sup>But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant. <sup>39</sup>Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues.

Turning to 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy Chapter 2 verses 11-12 (NKJV) which states <sup>11</sup>Let women learn in silent with all submission. <sup>12</sup>And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be silence.

The Apostle Paul's line of argument was base on "spiritual gifts" and conduct. The Greek word "Charisma" is closely akin to the word "Charis" which means in the English language "Grace or Favour" and it denotes "that which is graciously given".

The Apostle Paul again in this instance when he used the words "let a woman learn in silence" was ignoring the popular myths (at the time when the text was written) about women being incapable of learning and urged Timothy to provide opportunities for women to be educated in silence . He was also referring to the women's attitude or manner while learning. Paul was not saying that a woman could not speak or teach in the local assembly (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11: 2-16. He was simply cautioning women to learn with an attitude of submission and not in a manner that is unruly.

In using, the reference "to teach" the Apostle Paul used a Greek word that indicated the type of teaching, found in the Jewish communities and synagogues from which he had come. Such teaching was more than giving information to students; those who exercised this responsibility in the early church had the spiritual gift of teaching (see Romans 12: 3-8; 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:27 -28).

It was viewed in 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 2: 11 -12 that Paul was using his apostolic authority to curb the spread of false teaching in Ephesus (see 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 1: 3-7). This teaching was apparently becoming popular among some women who had not been properly instructed or trained (see 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 2: 11).

For one to follow the exegesis and interpretation of a written text of any author of the different books of the Bible, they will have to follow the five "W's" which is the elementary theological rule of the process of the interpretation of the Bible:-

- **Who** was the author of the text or scripture?
- **What** does the text mean to us today (i.e. language and culture)?
- **When** was the writer speaking and to whom was he speaking (i.e. audience: Jews, gentiles etc)?

- **Where** was the author (i.e. location, country; region - Jerusalem)?
- **Why** did the author speak the way he did - what was happening).

If we just extract a verse or a few verses from the chapter/chapters, we could find ourselves in serious trouble. This type of practice is called 'pigeon hole' or 'cherry picking' interpretation of scriptures. When interpreting biblical texts the good practice to follow is to start with a few chapters or verses before and after the story line of the particular text, which we are exegesis/interpreting. This is exactly how one should look at the Apostle Paul's writings of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13<sup>th</sup> Chapter to the 15<sup>th</sup> Chapter.

Let us now start a fair and reasonable discussion by allowing myself and all who would read this document with the guidance of the Holy Spirit to use the five "W's" to exegesis/interpreting the given text of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 14: 34-39. We will concentrate on verses 34-35, and 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy Chapter 2: 11-12 (NKJV).

- **Who** was the author of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 14: 34-39 and 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 2: 11-12-? the Apostle Paul
- **What** does the text mean to us today? - Women should not be silent, but be allowed to speak and teach in the churches.
- **When** was the writer speaking and to whom was he speaking? It was during the Christian apostolic church and he was speaking to an audience of Jews and Gentiles.
- **Where** was the author? The author was in Corinth and Ephesus. He was speaking to the Corinthians and Ephesus churches.

- **Why** did the author speak the way he did? There were a group of women being uncontrollable and disruptive and they continued to behave disorderly and usurping authority and continually speaking in tongues.

Let us look at the word "silent". In general, we all know and speak the English language. My interpretation of the word "silent" means that words should not be spoken and that your mouth should be closed. I would refer my readers of this document to consult the Webster Dictionary, also other dictionaries and the internet for clarity. If it is true that silent means no words should be uttered or spoken, then when women attend church worship services, they should not sing or pray openly, read the scriptures or testify. They should just sit like dummies.

The text also said that if any of these women want to know anything let them ask their own husbands at home. This is fair and reasonable for those women who have lawful husbands at home. However, let me pose a question to all readers of this document - What about all the young/old women in our churches worldwide who do not have a husband of their own? - To whom are they going to ask their relevant questions to when they go home?

When I consider the whole argument on the subject of women not being allowed to speak, teach or minister in God's churches I find it more than disconcerting. This is total male chauvinism; it shows disrespect to our good living sisters in the Lord.

I will now draw your attention to some great, holy, good living women of God in times past who are as follows:

- The women who were having prayer meeting worship service to release Peter from prison - Acts 12: 5-6.

- The women Paul himself recommended and worked with in the Gospel of Christ - Romans 16: 1-3, Acts 18: 26.
- Deborah - Judges Chapters 4 & 5.
- Huldah - 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 34: 22-33 & 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 22: 14-20.
- The Mary's and other women which are found in Matthew 28: 1 - 10, Mark 16: 1-8, Luke 24: 1-12, & John 20: 1-10.

We note that because of the Jewish culture, women were not recognised, or valued to any high degree. They were very low esteem, yet God chose these women above priests, kings and prophets - ie Jeremiah, Josiah, and Hilkiah to carry out His ministerial and other duties.

Some leaders today still carry the same popular myth as it was in the church at Ephesus that women are incapable of learning the same type of ministerial duties as a man.

I do share the view that women who do not have a godly behaviour in their homes and at the place of worship (church) etc, those who usurp authority and do not comply with Titus 2, Eph 5: 22, 32 & 33 should be silent and not be permitted to speak or teach in and out of the churches.

I strongly disagree and object to any good behaving, obedient, respectful holy women of God, who have the qualities identified in the Scriptures quoted above, who live in compliance to the same are asked to keep silent and/or not be allowed to minister or teach in the churches.

My conclusions to the whole matter are as follows:-

- Many church leaders have come up with their own defective and traditional beliefs which is very much outdated for the church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century;

- Many church leaders are not educated in church visions and missions etc;
- Many church leaders are very arrogant, selfish, irrational, and do not know how to be humble and to love females;
- Many church leaders think that they are superior and that God has given them a separate calling to Christ Jesus Ministry (Gospel);
- Many church leaders fail to understand that a church/assembly without women being able to function is unfair and unjust.

Finally, I find that the subject that women should be silent and are not permitted to speak or teach in the churches, to be very confusing and it shows a lack of knowledge.

*Mount Zion 7<sup>th</sup> Day Church of God (UK International Conference)*

*333a Sydenham Road, Croydon, Surrey, CR0 2EL, United Kingdom*

*Tel/Fax: (+ 44) 20 8684 7052*

*E-Mail address: [mountzion@btopenworld.com](mailto:mountzion@btopenworld.com)*

*Website address: [www.mountzion7day.co.uk](http://www.mountzion7day.co.uk)*

President & International Bishop E S Henry Dip. Theo. MIET.