



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

1 Corinthians 14:26-40

“Final Instructions about Tongues and Women”

TRANSCRIPT

Well, it's time for us to begin. Let's open our class with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, again, we turn to Thee in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We express to Thee our thanksgiving for the blessings that are ours. By virtue of the ministry of our great Messiah, the Son of God, Lord of our lives, Lord of the universe, King of kings and Lord of lords as scripture says, we thank Thee for the concern of so great a person for us, his servants, his friends, his followers who would be his disciples and who would, Lord, ask that Thou wouldst increase our love for him, our devotion to him, and our faithful service to him.

We thank Thee for each one present here. We pray for them. We pray for their families, for their concerns. We especially remember those who've requested the members of Believers Chapel to pray for them. We remember them, and ask Thy blessings upon them and pray that Thou will give encouragement and help, healing, a solution to the trials of life in accordance with Thy will.

We thank Thee for the confidence we have. We pray that, through the word of God, thou wilt increase it, enlarge our faith and make us, Lord, more useful servants, we pray. We ask that Thou wilt bless our time of study together this evening.

In Jesus's name. Amen.

[Message] Well, the subject this evening is the last in our series of studies on 1 Corinthians chapter 14, “Final Instructions About Tongues and Women.” Further remarks about two very sensitive issues conclude the chapter, tongues and women. They are, indeed, very prickly subjects. In fact, the last 25 years has increased the prickliness of the study of women in the light of scripture and tongues as well.

Twenty-five years ago or so at the -- well, it's about 23 years ago almost at the Democratic National Convention of 1972 when McGovern was nominated. Reeder Kramer, writing about that time, says, “In bellbottoms, miniskirts, blue jeans and hot pants, women seemed to be all over the convention floor. At one point when McGovern was introduced to a group of women delegates with the phrase, ‘We are all here because of him.’ And he responded jokingly, ‘The credit should go to Adam,’ he was hissed and booed. ‘Can I recover by saying Adam and Eve,’ he asked contritely? A woman delegate shouted out, ‘Make it Eve and Adam!’

“At another point during the abortion debate, Gloria Steinem had to be led from the floor in tears, and New York Congressman Bella Abzug stormed out after a quarrel with Shirley MacLaine who commented, ‘She's getting to be more theatrical than I am. I guess I'm getting into her profession, so she's getting into mine.’

“Around that time, one of the Boston militants, Roxanne Dunbar, said, ‘Ultimately we want to destroy the three pillars of class and caste society: the family, private property, and the State, in order to do away with the evils of sexism.’”

What is very interesting about this in the light of what Paul and others say with reference to the sexes is that what we have in our society, which is being attacked so, has been that which has existed and has been associated with the societies that have been controlled by males down through the centuries. It is not something new. It is something that has been the history of the human race. But we are living in very, very interesting days in which the foundations of Western civilization, and not only Western civilization

but Eastern as well, are being challenged, attacked, at times. So we have to respond if we believe the scriptures. We want to respond as the scriptures respond to that question.

I read a couple of years ago, Michael Levin’s book *Feminism and Freedom*. And in the course of the book, he set out four tenets that he felt the feminists at that time were seeking to attack. They’re very interesting. “Anatomical differences apart, men and women are the same. Infant boys and girls are born with virtually the same capacities to acquire skills and motives, and if raised identically would develop identically.” That’s an interesting claim.

In fact, in today’s paper, was it, or yesterday’s, some men were actually suggesting that perhaps in the light of our increased scientific knowledge in our day that we not only will have men who are fathers as they ought to be, but even possibly have men who will become, well, father of children, mothers, in effect. That’s astonishing that someone would even think about something like that. But anyway, anatomical differences apart, men and women are the same.

Second, “men unfairly occupy positions of dominance because the myth that men are more aggressive than women has been perpetuated by the practice of raising boys to be oriented toward mastery and girls to be oriented toward people.” He said some other things about that, but that’s not in our -- not needed that we say more about it than that.

Thirdly, “true human individuality and fulfillment will come about only when people view themselves as human repositories of talents and traits and deny that sex has any significant effect on one’s individual nature.”

And, fourth, “these desirable changes will require the complete transformation of society.”

These are very interesting goals and a believing man, as he looks at the scriptures and looks at the history of the world as forecast in scripture in the light of the promises and tenets of the word of God, can only say it cannot be. It simply cannot be because God has made it very plain that certain specific truths that are taught in the word of God

will find their culmination in the kingdom of God upon the earth ruled by the man Christ Jesus.

In the church, much of the same thing is happening. We have, for example, in the Anglican Church today women who are being ordained as priests in the Church of England. That may seem to be no great thing with our society. Our society has been so into this over the past 25 or 35 years that it’s not surprising. We’ve gone. We’ve inched on and inched on. So what’s so strange about that? Well, nothing is so strange about it except, if we look over human history, human Christian history or biblical history, it is a tremendous transformation.

A few years ago Sheffield’s Anglican’s bishop, David Lunz, said -- this is just after they had debated the ordination of women in the Church of England just a few years he said these words: “It’s bizarre that a doctrine and practice unknown in the church for 2,000 years, unsupported by Scripture or tradition, and still overwhelmingly unacceptable to the majority of Christians should become mandatory in the Church of England after debate of only a few years.”

He said he would resign if the church ordains women. Well, they’re ordaining women now. This was two or three years ago that Bishop Lunz had said this, and I don’t know whether he has resigned or not. I haven’t followed it. So we are seeing and we have experienced, many of us, some very, very interesting things.

Well, in the 14th chapter of Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, the first of them, there are important insights here concerning the church’s corporate worship. He does touch the women’s issue or women’s issue here in verse in 34 and 35, but he has some other things to say, and we want to look at all of them in the time that we have. I think one of the things that stands out immediately for somebody who attends a church like Believers Chapel in which there is freedom for the ministry of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the meeting of the church, there should be some gratification in reading Scripture because it seems evident that many of the things that were part of the local churches of the Apostle

Paul's day and were being practiced -- practiced are the things that the Chapel has historically attempted to practice.

It would be, of course, wonderful if we had a TV program of the church at Corinth meeting so we could observe it and see where we've fallen sort of the apostolic standard and where we may have gone beyond them, but nevertheless what we see in 1 Corinthians 14 is surely suggestive of the fact that the early church had a meeting in which there was great freedom.

Eduard Schweizer, who was Professor of New Testament at the University of Zurich for a number of years, says in one of his books, “It's completely foreign to the New Testament to split the Christian community into one speaker and a silent body of listeners.” I think that's interesting, too. In other words the idea that the church service is to gather around a pulpit with one man standing in the pulpit and everybody else listening is something that is not found in the New Testament. Isn't that striking? It's not found in the New Testament. Nowhere in the New Testament is any one man called the pastor of any church. And yet that's characteristic, not only of the 20th century, but a number of centuries of Christian history. It's very evident that we have not -- I'm speaking the church as a whole of which I'm a part, too -- we have not given ourselves to following the ecclesiology that the New Testament sets forth for us. In fact, it's very troubling in one respect. It's almost as if we want to go back to the children of Israel in certain ways in which the high priest was the preeminent person who on the significant festival days carried out the most significant part of the ministry.

John Calvin had some interesting statements to say about this but one thing particularly I liked. He said this: "To return to the ceremonies which are abolished is to repair the veil of the temple which Jesus Christ rent on his death. A multitude of ceremonies in the Mass is a form of Judaism quite contrary to Christianity. But some of the things in Protestantism are similar to the things in Judaism.

Oscar Cullmann -- these men have no particular axe to grind, so far as I can tell, they wouldn't have been members of Believers Chapel. And Believers Chapel is not the final standard anyway, we need to remember that. Because we have so many faults that we really shouldn't be talking about faults, except Scriptures talks about things to which we all have to pay attention. But Oscar Cullmann, who was professor of New Testament at the University of Basel, a man under whom I sat off and on when I was living in Basel, points out about the meetings of the early church that the church usually gathered in one place. Well, of course, we know that. They met on the first day of every week in distinction from the Judaism, and they celebrated the resurrection then.

And in connection with this, another New Testament professor, Charles Mole of Church of England in his worship in the New Testament pointed out that members, according to 1 Corinthians 14, “found various items to contribute.” It's worthwhile to notice how far removed this sort of gathering was from most modern types of worship with a single leader and the rest comparatively passive. Comparatively, well, yes we sing a hymn. We sing two hymns in Believers Chapel, but passive.

Isn't it interesting, too, that we hear of no officials in the New Testament. We hear of no officials appointed to conduct the services of the church. Have you ever noticed that? Has that ever occurred to you as you read through the New Testament? Who conducted the services in Corinth? Who conducted the services in the churches of Galatia and so on? It's not found in the New Testament. There is nothing that suggests that. So how is it that this -- it's a theological revolution, mind you. How has this happened in the Christian church?

Well, John Bennett said how this theological revolution has been accomplished: without people in the pew coming to see what is being done with their church. He asks that question, and then he writes in a book -- rather in a church issue called *Wind and Chaff* published by the National Student Christian Federation, he said this to seek to explain how these things happen. You know where the fault lies? The fault lies with you

and me. Listen to what he says. “Churches often change convictions without formally renouncing their views to which they were previously committed. And their theologians usually find ways of preserving continuity with the past through reinterpretation.”

Why don't we notice that? Why, we don't notice that because we're not really reading the Scriptures, and we don't know when reinterpretation is taking place. The greatest fault of all of us is that we sit in a congregation. We're part of congregations. You've been a part probably of more than one. I've been a part of a number. We sit in the congregation. We do not read the word of God. We do not, in Christian earnestness, check what is transpiring with the things that we read about in God's holy word.

I like what G. H. Lang once said. When Christ's Davids of today have boldly put off this Saul's -- this Saul's armor -- and have returned to the unarmed simplicity of apostolic slings and stones, they've seen again and again that Jehovah of hosts is with his people to give victory. I do believe that. When the church -- when the local church -- when the local church gives up trying to be like others and tries to be what the New Testament says the church ought to be in simplicity and in spiritual courage, then significant things happen in the local church.

Well, you might think that Paul here in 1 Corinthians 14 is arguing for anarchy in the church. No, he's not talking about anarchy when he says that it is open for all who have spiritual gifts to participate in the meetings of the church. It's not anarchy that he wants to see in the local church. It's obvious that consideration for others is part of what he's talking about.

Now, that's a lengthy introduction, but we want to now turn to 1 Corinthians 14, verse 26 through verse 40. That's our passage tonight, and I want to read these verses.

The apostle says, verse 26 now,

"How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done

for edification. If anyone speaks in a tongue, *let there be* two or at the most three, *each* in turn, and let one interpret. (That's interesting in itself; only three may speak in tongues in a meeting, and there must be interpretation.) But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in the church, and let him speak to himself and to God. Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge.”

In other words, the prophet is to make his prophecy. The others are to discern. We'll talk about that later on if we have time. But they are to discern. They are to judge. They are to weigh the prophecies in the light of the word of God. Notice it says two or three prophets. It doesn't say at the most three. He seems to have a little more concern for those who speak in tongues to be sure there are not more than three. He just says, with reference to the prophets, let two or three speak and others judge.

“But if *anything* is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. (Now, that's an interesting verse. I hope I have time to say about that.) For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged.”

Well, that's what the prophets were supposed to do, wasn't it, back in chapter 14 in verse 2 speaking about the prophets? He says, “For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands *him*; however, in the Spirit he speaks mysteries. But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men.” So then it's not surprising we read in verse 31, “For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged.” So a prophecy is not necessarily the prediction that the Cowboys will beat the Saints on Monday night, Monday Night Football, or that they will win a Super Bowl. It's not that. It's the kind of prophetic ministry that is instruction and comfort, for example. Verse 32,

“And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not *the author* of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.”

In other words, there is not anarchy in the church meetings. We tend to think that perhaps they go to church meetings because there was so much participation, it would be anarchy. No. The apostle is speaking with reference to Corinth. Perhaps they were having trouble, but the apostle speaks to and tells them not to do what they can do, but he says, “For God is not *the author* of confusion but of peace, 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. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home;”

(Inaudible) What a joke. Why, the women know more about Scripture than the men do today. Now, I'm not talking about nonevangelical churches. I'm talking about evangelical churches. The men come, sit in the audience, and reflect upon the fact that as the days and weeks and months go by they give money to the church, and that's their duty. The wives study the word more than they do, much more. And so if they -- these wives go home and ask their husbands, that might be good. Might be good for them to do that, except they'd probably think it's not -- it's worthless. He doesn't understand much at all except that he's a Christian. That's all. The women...

-- “if they want to learn something,” Paul says, “let them ask their own husbands at home; it is shameful for women to speak in church.

Or did the word of God come *originally* from you? Or *was it* you only that it reached?

Evidently conditions in Corinth were different, and so Paul says, to bring them up short, did you originate the Scriptures? Does that permit you to violate the practices of the early church, the church as he would have known it? And was it only you that the word of God reached so you authoritative in what you are doing? No. They would have responded to that in an entirely different way.

“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. But if anyone is ignorant, let him be [unrecognized] (that is, by the church. Or perhaps ignorant. There’s a textual problem here that would justify both of those translations, but probably the rendering, ‘But if anyone is ignorant, let him be unrecognized by the others’ is correct.) Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order.”

Let's go back and talk first about instructions for the exercise of the gifts. Paul speaks first about the regulation of tongues. The limitations, in verse 26, verse 27, verse 28 are there should be an interpreter present. If anyone speaks in a tongue, *let there be* two or at the most three, *each* in turn, and let one interpret. Interpretation is necessary. And notice, too, that edification is the aim because this has been the aim all along in the meeting of the church. Edification. Paul has stressed that from the beginning of this chapter. I think it's interesting that he says each of you has a psalm. What does that mean? an Old Testament psalm? Probably not. Each of you has an psalm probably is not, He likes Psalm 68. He likes Psalm 2, or whatever it may be. Probably it's something that he himself wants to give to the congregation.

Now, that may not be acceptable to the covenanters because the covenanters in Scotland believed very strongly, and still do, in singing the Psalms. Their hymn book is really the Psalms of the Old Testament. There are certainly some great psalms and

certainly worthy of singing, but it’s more likely that this is a reference to one’s own individual response by a song that he himself would like to sing.

Now, we’ve had that in Believers Chapel. Howard Pryor has enough gray hair to remember this, but the rest of you probably won’t. But when we first started and we were in the schoolhouse, we had a young man who started attending the Chapel -- I may have mentioned this once before, but some of you weren’t there -- and he stood up in the meeting and said that he had a psalm, a song, he would like to sing. And he said the Lord had given it to him. And so we didn’t know what to do, I guess, because we let him sing. Well, as a matter of fact, it was scriptural to let him sing. But we did, like we were supposed to do with reference to prophecies, we waited and judged it. And we judged it unanimously that the Lord had not given it to him. [Laughter] It didn’t have any tune at all, and it really didn’t say anything much, but we listened. Perhaps if we had more people who did that, we might have had some very unusual and very fruitful and edifying contributions. But when I read this, I think of that incident. Each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation -- evidently prophetic revelation -- has an interpretation that all things be done for edification.

And the regulation of prophecy, particularly, is interesting because Paul turns in another passage of his writings to discuss the matter to. We’ll turn to it. It’s in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 in verse 20 and verse 21 which will indicate that this was generally practiced among the Pauline churches. In verse 20 and verse 21 of 1 Thessalonians 5 the apostle says, "Do not despise prophecies." "Do not despise prophecies."

Now, in Believers Chapel, we very rarely have things that we would call prophecy, except in our meetings individuals do arise among the men and do give us instruction, and we could call that prophecy because in verse 3, remember, of chapter 14 it says he speaks in a -- rather verse -- yeah, verse 3, "He who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men." That would be prophecy, too.

But here we read, “Do not despise prophecies.” Then verse 21, “Test all things; hold fast that which is good.” So if an individual should get up and exhort the brethren in a way that one could show was unscriptural or contrary to the Pauline revelation as they knew it, that would be a way in which they could test it, and then they could say, what you had said, brother, is out of harmony of what the apostles teach and have taught us. And so a friendly positive rebuke would be given. But they were not to despise prophesying.

What would despising prophesying be? Well, he says it in the verse before, quenching the Spirit. That's the meaning of the saying, “quench the Spirit.” There is a lot of talk here and there in spiritual life, Do not quench the spirit, or something that refers to something we may distinguish from grieving the Spirit. Grieving the Spirit is saying something that is unhappy as far as the Spirit is concerned. The spirit is contrary to him [the Holy Spirit] and to the word in such a way that he actually is grieving over it. Quenching the Spirit is not doing things perhaps that we ought to do, but actually in context it refers to the prophecies. Do not quench the Spirit. That is, don't tell people they cannot prophesy.

If someone has prophesied something that might be regarded as ridiculous, that does not mean you should stop the freedom to prophesy, so Paul, it seems to me, makes plain.

Peace and discipline are to be the atmosphere, but freedom is also to exist. Now, there was that text that I thought was rather interesting that comes up here in a moment. He says, “If there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God. Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. But if *anything* is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent.”

Now, that's interesting. Commentators have a good time talking about this because they ask the question: What does this mean? Here is an individual to whom something is revealed, and he's in the congregation. How does this work? Does he stand

up and say, Sit down brother, something has been revealed to me and I want the floor? Is this the way you go about that? Actually, Paul doesn't tell us. He says simply, “Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. But if *anything* is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent.”

Now, how that worked out, I'm not sure. In our congregation, every now and then, we've had people say -- this happens very rarely, but it has happened -- in which an individual said something and finally one of the elders stood up and ask that a change take place in the conduct of the meetings. Maybe it was something like that. I don't know.

But now come instructions concerning women in verse 34 and verse 35. The apostle says, "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.”

Now, we know from Paul's teaching that this issue concerning the women has come up more than once. We have it in 1 Timothy chapter 2. We have it in 1 Corinthians chapter 11. And here we have it again in 1 Corinthians chapter 14. And I think anybody who reads these two verses, particularly, “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. 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,” are not easy to interpret. I presume that they would be easy if they were the only things that Paul said about the women, but, unfortunately, he says some other things. And if you read the other things, well, some have suggested that the apostle was inconsistent with himself. We don't like to think that is so because we regard the scriptures as the word of God. We regard them as being the inerrant word of God, and therefore the idea of contradiction is something contrary to the statements of the beliefs of evangelicals concerning scripture. But some texts are very difficult to harmonize. That does not mean they cannot be harmonized because you and I are not perfect interpreters of the word of God. I'm sure we all would

acknowledge that in this room. We are not perfect interpreters of the word of God and, furthermore, we don't understand everything that happened in the 1st century. So there may be things of which we are not cognizant, we may learn about or we may never learn about that give us difficulty.

But in verse 5 of chapter 11 the apostle says, "But every woman who prays or prophesies with *her* head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved." And I have to say it's the general interpretation -- not necessarily the correct interpretation but the general interpretation -- that 1 Corinthians chapter 11 has to do with the meetings of the church. So how can the apostle say every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, and then say in the same epistle, Let your women keep silent in the churches for they are not permitted to speak?

So it's not surprising then that some of our finest interpreters of the New Testament have said this is not easy. Donald Carson, a man that I highly regard and I've mentioned his name once or twice previously, says this is by no means easy to interpret. I think he also uses the expression in another place, extremely difficult. I agree.

1 Corinthians 11 seems to permit utterance. 1 Corinthians 14 says he suffers not the women to speak. Let your women keep silent in the churches. You know what I want to say at this point? Paul, where are you? Deliver us from our problem. Well, there are various ways in which you might be delivered from it. We're just not absolutely certain about them. It's possible that in 1 Corinthians chapter 11 the apostle is not talking about the meeting of the church, but formal meetings and informal meetings in the home, because the church met largely in homes at one point in its history, that the women, if they were covered, could pray and prophesy or did pray and prophesy.

And there is some reason to think that that may be so because in verse 17 of 1 Corinthians 11, after having spoken about the women here, he says in verse 17 of 1 Corinthians 11, "Now in giving these instructions I do not praise *you*, since you come

together not for the better but for the worse. For first of all, when you come together as a church,” Now, that might suggest that the earlier part of the chapter does not have to do with coming together as an assembly, but in verse 18, from that time on, he does talk about coming together as a church. And as you know as we go on through the remainder of this chapter, he talks about the Lord's Supper which was observed in the meetings of the church. And so it's possible that these meetings, these verses in the earlier part of the chapter have to do with formal meetings that would harmonize our passage, but there is not the kind of certainty that you would like to see for that interpretation.

Others have taken other viewpoints with regard to it. Some have taken the viewpoint that these verses, actually verse 34 and verse 35, are non-Pauline interpolations. Now, the word “interpolations” comes from the Latin word *inter* and *polire* which means “to polish,” actually. And so an interpolation is to insert something for purposes of easing or making better sense out of the passage. And so this is supposed to be an interpolation, not really coming from Paul but something that someone wrote in the side of some manuscript which later came to be in the text as the text was copied and so on.

But unfortunately every manuscript of the Greek New Testament that we know has these verses. It is true that they are found at one point in one part of chapter 14 and then in most of the manuscripts where we have them here in verse 34 and verse 35, but there doesn't seem to be any real good evidence that would demand the exclusion of these verses. They should be included and probably right where they are, Let your women keep silent in the churches for they are not permitted to speak.

Now, Paul goes on to say some other things in connection. We know in 1 Timothy he says he suffers not the women to teach or use their authority over the man, but here, Let the women keep silent in your churches for they are not permitted to speak. They are to also -- they are to be submissive as the law also says.

Submission and the avoidance of shame are the reasons why the women, Paul says, should keep silent in the church meetings. In other words, in the church meeting a more official meeting, the place of the women is the place of submission to her head, the husband; and, therefore, in harmony with that, they should keep silent in the churches. They are not permitted to speak. They are to be submissive as the law also says. Now, it is very interesting that he says as the law also says because, again, what law is he talking about? Well, generally interpreters refer to Genesis chapter 3 in verse 16. In Genesis chapter 3 in verse 16 says this, "To the woman He said (after man's fall): I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire *shall be* for your husband, and he shall rule over you." We don't have time to talk about the way that text should be translated and some of the problems with it. I did give a series in which we went over these texts in more detail, and you may look them up.

Personally, I don't think that that's what Paul means when he says that they are to be submissive as the law says. I think that really what he's talking about is the original creation in which man and then woman was created. And in the fact of creation itself from, as Paul explains in 1 Corinthians chapter 11, there is implicit the submission of the woman to the man. Listen to what Paul says back in 1 Corinthians Chapter 11 with regard to it. Verse 4 he says, "Every man praying or prophesying, having *his* head covered, dishonors his head. [But] every woman who prays or prophesies with *her* head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved. For if a woman is not covered, let her also be shorn. But if it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered. For a man indeed ought not to cover *his* head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. For man is not from woman, but woman from man." The creation. The creation itself gives us an indication of the relationship of the sexes. "Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man. For this reason the woman ought to have *a symbol of* authority on *her* head, because of the angels."

Now, the symbol of authority may be her hair, or it may be the covering, probably that. Because of the angels. What a strange thing, because of the angels. Well, the angels, we know, were part of the meetings of the church. You think about that on Sunday evening in Believers Chapel, the angels are watching? That’s what the New Testament says, the angels are watching. They’re actually in full knowledge of things that happen in our observances.

In fact, in Ephesians chapter 3 the apostle says that the angels not only observe but they learn things from us. In Ephesians chapter 3 of that most important chapter, the apostle writes these words. And I think they bear on our point, and I would like to mention them. He’s talking about the mystery, and then he says, “To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly *places*.” What are the principalities and powers in heavenly places? They’re the angelic beings.

So by means of the things that are happening to the Christian church, they learn truths about the mystery of which Paul is talking. Here the mystery that’s been hidden from ages past and is now revealed, the relationship of Jew and Gentile in the one body of Jesus Christ, the church, so that we are the means for the instruction of the angelic world. What have they learned from us? Maybe what not to do rather than what to do.

Listen to what he says in 1 Corinthians chapter 4 in verse 9, "For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last, as men condemned to death; for we have been made a spectacle (That’s the word from which we get theater, *theatron*, a theater) to the world, both to angels and to men."

Ah, my Christian friend, the things that transpire in our life, they are open books in the angelic world, in heaven. That’s a very challenging thing, isn’t it, to realize that we

can get off by ourselves but we cannot actually ever get to the place where the angelic world is not able to observe us and see how we are making it in this present life of which we are a part.

So when the apostle writes then in chapter 14, the women keep silent in the churches. They're not permitted to speak. They're to be submissive. That's precisely what Genesis says in the creation ordinances. As the law says, if they want to learn something, let them ask -- let them ask their own husbands at home, for it's shameful for women to speak in the church on account of the angels because the angels, the apostles seem to say, would be offended by the disobedience of the saints, offended when we disobey, offended when they disobey in speaking in the church.

Now, that says some things that our society doesn't like to really think about too much today because we have been troubled so much in recent years with the struggles between men and women, largely brought on outside the church but affecting now the church itself. We must be careful that we do not make it hard for the women who are part of our church life, who frequently contribute more than we men do in the service of the Lord. We know that, all of us, even in the world itself.

I was reading a little book that I bought [when we] went down to a place south of here, Salado. And it's a little book about men written by women. Listen to some of these things”

“You can talk to a man about any subject. He won't understand, but you can talk to him.” (That's pretty good, isn't it? I hate to read these for Martha because she doesn't know exactly what these are, but now she'll know.)

“Whatever women do they must do twice as well as men to be thought half as good. Luckily this is not difficult.” (I like that one, too.) [Laughter]

“Not all women are fools; some are single.” [Laughter]

QUESTION: “Why is it good there are female astronauts? ANSWER: Because when the crew gets lost in space, at least a woman will ask for directions.”

QUESTION: “How do men define a 50-50 relationship? (I like this one.)

ANSWER: You cook, they eat; you clean, they dirty; you iron, they wrinkle.”

“When he said we were trying to make a fool of him, I could only murmur that the Creator had beat us to it.”

“The fundamental reason that women do not achieve so greatly as men do is that women have no wives.” (I like that one, too.)

When we talk about these things that are in the word of God, we need to talk about them and remember that men and women fail equally. And the things that the Lord says about the women are very important, in my opinion. The things that they say about the men are very important. But we need to remember that this is not a struggle with the women for the men or with the men for the women. This is something in God's word. This is the inspired word of God. And we are seeking to please him, really.

Listen to what H.A. Ironside says about this. I think this is a marvelous two paragraphs. He says,

“Women have a wide sphere for service and testimony outside of the worship meeting of the assembly. The home is preeminently women's sphere. (I know that's now not looked at as something that people like to hear today in our society where both men and women are working, but nevertheless it's true.) In social gatherings, too, she has an

abundant opportunity to witness for Christ. No one is more peculiarly adapted to work among children and to help her own sex than a godly, well-instructed woman, in visitation work in the sick room and elsewhere her services are invaluable. If God has restricted her so that it is not for her to usurp the place of pastor or preacher in public assembly, it's not to slight her gifts nor to ignore the value of her services elsewhere. The true test of love for Christ is obedience to his words. He knows best what each one of us should do in order to glorify him. Our happiness should consist in acting in accordance with his revealed word. This honors God and glorifies the head of the church, our blessed Lord. (Now, listen to this) A Priscilla may teach an Apollos. A Mary Magdalene may be the risen Lord's messenger to his faint-hearted disciples. A regenerated woman of Samaria may evangelize the men of her city. But Dorcas may serve by ministering to the comfort of the poor. A Phoebe may be a deaconess of the assembly, but a woman, no matter how gifted and godly, is not to take the place of the man in the assembly of God, but to set an example of lowly subjection to the reveal will of God, assured that he values devoted obedience above any possible form of activity however much it may be approved by those who have never learned to let God's word be the supreme authority.”

That's what I would like to have learned. I have not yet, to let God's word be the supreme authority in my life. That's really what this issue is all about.

Well, I think I feel like C.K. Barrett when he discusses this. And he admits it's a difficult passage. He finally quotes a French sentence which means, “if someone gives a better interpretation, I will put myself in support of it.” I feel the same way.

Now, the conclusion of the matter, in verses 36 through 40, are very simple. The apostle now challenges in very blunt words the Corinthians, because evidently they have not been following the word of God, the word of the apostles as Paul thinks they should. So he bluntly asks them, “Did the word of God come *originally* from you?” Are you the source of the word of God and, thus, do you have authority in the practice of it, to carry it

out as you think you ought to, or is that something that is God's prerogative, or was it you only that it reached? In other words, are you the source of the word of God for the rest of us people on the earth?

Well, you know, of course, that the Corinthians would have replied something like this. “No, Paul. No. We admit that the word of God has come to us through you. You first preached it to us. We did not preach it to you.”

Well, Paul is just reminding them of that. This is really a question of obedience to the word of God, even when we may not fully understand it. Or even if we fully understand it, we may not be altogether happy about it. We are responsible to obey the holy scriptures. That's fundamental.

So now, in these three verses, 36 through 38, he talks about the authority of the apostle. Verse 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.” A true prophet. The man who is truly in the will of God will acknowledge, Paul says, that my words are authoritative, more authoritative than the prophets that you may have been listening to. And so he speaks as an apostle with this sense of dominical authority, one of the apostles of our Lord, and the man of the Spirit, the prophet, will show his true spiritual caliber by recognizing Paul's office as Jesus Christ's earthly mouthpiece.

How do we do that? We acknowledge the word of God as the mouthpiece of the apostles to us. And so we seek, by God's wonderful grace, to be obedient. He says if anyone is ignorant, let him be -- let him go unrecognized. There's a little textual problem. I'm taking one of those readings and translating it that way. If anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant, my text has. I think it means if anyone is ignorant, let him go unrecognized by the assembly. “Therefore, brethren,” now exhortation and counsel closes this chapter with an affectionate summary. What does he say? “Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues.” That's an expression that often means, stop forbidding to speak with tongues, but it's obvious that the apostle is dealing

with people who haven't forbidden the speaking of tongues at all. So this particular construction in this type of context means, Don't develop the custom of speaking or forbidding the speaking of tongues.

“Let all things be done decently and in order.” Decently, possibly referring to the Lord's Supper and to the conduct of the men and women in the assembly, “Let all things be done decently” and then in order, perhaps a reference to the gifts and the exercise of them of which he's been speaking previously, gifts of prophecy and tongues and so on.

Well, that's nice to have gone through 1 Corinthians 14. I'm sorry I've left you with some questions in your mind. I have a few in mine, too. The first time that I ever taught 1 Corinthians was 1947. I had already been instructed by my professor Everett Harrison in the Greek text of 1 Corinthians 14. And then for many years, every year I went through 1 Corinthians in the Greek text. You would think that after doing all of that so many years you would know everything in 1 Corinthians. The Bible is the kind of book that that's impossible. It is the inspired word of God. Therefore, let us remember that our one responsibility, fundamental responsibility, is to be submissive to it. Let's bow in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for Thy word. We thank Thee for the gift of us. It surely is a great gift of grace to us who are sinners. Give us, Lord, the mind to be submissive to the truth and also, Lord, enable us to serve Thee effectively.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.