

Fulton County Gospel News

"The Churches of Christ Salute You"

Publication No. 211780

Second Class Postage Paid at Mammoth Spring, AR

Volume 21

Mammoth Spring, AR 72554

April 1987

No. 4

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE (9)

"WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?"

In this, the last of this series of articles, we want to discuss one of the most misunderstood terms used by man -- "Christian". The world uses the word to mean anyone who professes a belief in Christ. It is applied to Nazarenes, Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Catholics and others. It is even used of our nation as a "Christian nation." What we need to do is to go to the Bible to see how GOD uses this term. Remember, if we are to speak, we are to speak as God would have us speak (I Peter 4:11). We need to use Bible terms in Bible ways.

The term "Christian" literally means "belonging to Christ." It is used only three times in the Bible (Acts 11:26; 26:28; I Peter 4:16). Let us note how God uses the term:

- (1) Acts 11:26 -- By reading this verse carefully, we see that Barnabas and Saul were gathered with the church; that this group was called "the disciples"; and, that the disciples were called Christians. Thus, Christians are those in the church. How do you get into the church? Baptism (I Corinthians 12:13; Acts 2:38-47).
- (2) Acts 26:28 -- King Agrippa was almost persuaded to become a Christian. Obviously, a Christian was what Paul was, since Paul

was doing the persuading. Paul taught concerning the church (Ephesians 5:22ff) and about baptism (Galatians 3:27). Paul also was baptized to have his sins washed away (Acts 22:16). Thus, a Christian is one who has been taught correctly, is baptized into Christ, and follows God's commands.

- (3) I Peter 4:16 -- Christians are those to whom Peter is writing. Who are they? The saved - I Pet. 1:9; obedient - I Pet. 1:22; born again - I Pet. 2:2; died to sin - I Pet. 2:24; have Christ as Lord - I Pet. 3:15. How did they become these things? Baptism (I Pet. 3:21; John 3:5; Rom. 6:3, 4; cf. Rom. 6:17, 18; Acts 22:16; Gal. 3:27).

From God, we learn that the term "Christian" is applied only to those who have obeyed the commands of Christ (cf. John 14:15; 15:13). In order for a person to be a Christian, he must obey God in every respect concerning salvation. He must be baptized into Christ. He must be a member of the church of Christ. He must conform his life to the teachings of God (Romans 12:1, 2).

Please give prayerful consideration to the things said.

Charles Coats

* * * * *

"A ship in harbor is safe, but that is not what ships are built for."

John A. Shedd

"Unless there is within us that which is above us, we shall soon yield to that which is about us."

"Women Keep Silence In The Churches"

I Corinthians 14:34 - 35

By Larry D. Mathis

The King James Version reads, "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church."

Several questions immediately emerge from the text: (1) "Why did Paul command women to keep silent in the churches?" (2) "What does the word silence mean?" (3) "Why weren't they permitted to speak?" (4) "To what law does Paul refer?" (5) "Must a woman be taught everything from her husband at home?" (6) "Since Paul said, 'ask their husbands at home,' is she forbidden to ask questions outside the home?" (7) "Why was it a shame for women to speak in the church?"

Also, a number of good questions are often raised by honest and sincere people concerning this passage: (1) "Is it a shame for a woman, in a humble way, to ask a religious question in a Bible class?" (2) "Does this text mean that it is sinful for a woman to utter a sound while inside the church building?" (3) "Does this scripture forbid a Christian woman to teach women and children in our Bible school arrangements?" (4) "Is this the passage that proves that a female cannot be a preacher or evangelist today?" (5) "How could a single girl ask her husband, at home, the

continued on page 2

FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS

. . . is a monthly publication distributed free of charge to any who care to receive it. We will be happy to add any names to the regular mailing list. If you send in a name be SURE to include the Zip Code number. It must be with each address according to the Postal regulations. This paper is supported by unsolicited contributions for which we are grateful. If you care to know the financial status and expenses, that information will be furnished upon request. Mail all address corrections to:

FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS
P. O. Box 251

Mammoth Spring, AR 72554

EDITOR Charles Coats
Publication No. 211780

WOMEN KEEP SILENCE IN THE CHURCH

continued from page 1

answer to a religious question?" (6) "Is a Christian woman forbidden to ask a man, other than her own husband, the answer to a Bible question?" Our present study will be an attempt to answer such questions, and to give the correct explanation of the passage under review.

We must bear in mind that the passage under consideration occurs in a context dealing at great length with spiritual (miraculous or supernatural) gifts of the Holy Spirit. This long section begins at 12:1 and concludes with 14:40. In chapter 12 Paul discusses the "manifestation" of the gifts; in chapter 13 the "duration" of the gifts; and in chapter 14 the "REGULATION" of the gifts.

There were nine gifts (1 Corinthians 12:8-10). They are enumerated: (1) the word of wisdom; (2) the word of knowledge; (3) faith; (4) gifts of healing; (5) the working of miracles; (6) prophecy; (7) discerning of spirits; (8) divers kinds of tongues; and (9) the interpretation of tongues. Though these gifts were distributed by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:11), they were imparted through the "laying on of apostles' hands" (Acts 8:14-19; 2 Timothy 1:6). Miraculous gifts were greatly needed in the first century church in the absence of the written New Testament (Mark 16:17-20; Ephesians 4:11-16). Eventually, when the New Testament was completely revealed, these gifts, having served their purpose, "failed," "ceased," and "vanished away" (1 Corinthians 13:8).

First Corinthians 14:34-35 is found in a context depicting a church assembly that is impossible for our present day congregations! We have never witnessed such an assembly and never will either. Paul is discussing the exercise of supernatural powers (gifts) when the whole

church is come together (1 Corinthians 14:23,26). This letter was specifically written to "the church of God which is at Corinth" (1 Corinthians 1:2); a congregation that came "behind in no gift" (1 Corinthians 1:7). The apostle discusses matters peculiar to that church, and conditions existing at that time. We are more than 1900 years removed, and are studying what was written to them. To that congregation instructions were given touching how they should conduct themselves when the church was assembled and such powers were being manifested. Not only does he tell those who had spiritual gifts how to behave themselves, but he also gives instructions to all those who were present how to deport themselves while divine revelations were being received. **No such meetings are held anywhere today!**

In this chapter we have three classes of people commanded to keep silence in the church: i.e. tongue-speakers when there is no one to translate; the prophet who is speaking must be silent when another is receiving a revelation; and the women must be silent. Let us take a closer look at each one of these classes.

The individual who possessed the gift of speaking in a tongue (foreign language) was permitted to speak (address the assembly), IF an interpreter (translator) were present. Otherwise, "let him keep silence in the church" (1 Corinthians 14:27-28). Carefully observe that even a man in this context, was commanded to be silent! Without a translator, his message would not edify the church, and would only result in confusion.

Prophets were permitted to speak, but "in turn". The maximum number of speakers allowed in any one assembly was three. They were not allowed to speak or address the assembly at the same time. While one prophet spoke, the others could judge what he was saying (perhaps this is a reference to the other prophets who were present, or to those present who had the gift of discerning spirits). If a new or fresh revelation was given to a prophet that was "sitting by" the first speaker (prophet) must "hold his peace". That is, he must bring his message to a conclusion. He must be silent! The prophet had it within his own power to stop speaking! Though the prophets were under the influence and guidance of the Holy Spirit, they certainly were not rabid or uncontrollable. Paul, by inspiration said, "the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets" (1 Corinthians 14:32). And "God is not the author of confusion" (1 Corinthians 14:33).

Please note that there were two possible conditions then, in the first century church, under which men in the assem-

blies were to "keep silence." There was to be no speaking in tongues unless there was someone present to translate; and second if a man was speaking (teaching), and a revelation was given to another in the audience, then the speaker was to keep silence. The conditions here named, under which men were required to keep silence do not now exist in any congregation on earth, and to attempt to impose silence on men on the grounds named in these references is to grossly misapply the scriptures. If the conditions under which these men were commanded to keep silence in the church existed today, then the prohibition here laid down concerning women would be applicable.

Next Paul deals with "YOUR WOMEN" (1 Corinthians 14:34-35). He had been dealing with THEIR tongue-speakers, and THEIR prophets. "YOUR WOMEN!" May we ask, "Whose women?" Obviously, women at Corinth, not all women of all ages. Too, these women were married; and had husbands; their husbands were capable of answering their inquiries at home. The Corinthian women were not to disrupt the assembly with their questions while revelations were being received.

We are persuaded that "your women" is a reference to the wives of the prophets (14:29-33). The context seems to denote that some prophets' wives were interrupting them as they prophesied to the congregation. Such activity stopped the flow of God's revelation. These uninspired (MARRIED), women, (WIVES), were not allowed to interfere with or disturb the speakers with their questions but were to patiently wait until later, at home, to ask their husbands (the prophets) about the messages that were revealed in the assembly. Remember, they did not have copies of the New Testament as we do now. The apostle corrected their rudeness and commanded them to ask their questions at home rather than continue to disrupt the communication of God's spoken word.

The "silence" enjoined on the women of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, was absolute in nature. The word translated silence occurs also in 14:28. Any audible activity was prohibited. The women of chapter 14 were totally and completely silenced. It was shameful for a woman to speak in interrupting prophesying. They were to be under God's law of subjection from the beginning (Genesis 3:16). If they, "would learn anything" that is, anything further with regard to the revelation, the message, coming through the husband (prophet), they were not to interrupt the prophecy, but they were to wait and ask their husbands at home.

No such meetings are held any where

today. There are no prophets living in the church now; hence, no prophets' wives. To extend the application and to seek to govern the church by it today is to commit exactly the same fallacy as the so-called modern "tongue-speakers" who affect to see 1 Corinthians 14 as instructions governing the church today.

First Corinthians 14:34-35, is class legislation, designed for a specific situation (meetings in the early church where miraculous revelations were being received), and particular women (the wives of the prophets). If this is not the case please explain how the following women can learn anything "from their husbands at home." (1) Single girls. (2) Women whose husbands are not even Christians. (3) Women whose husbands are new converts (novices). (4) Widows. (5) Women who know more about God's word than their husbands. By the way, why would any Christian woman ask her husband anything at all about the Bible today (she has the same access to God's word that he has), unless he knew more about it than she did?

Any interpretation of this passage today that would forbid a woman in our assemblies to make an audible sound when men are present is patently false. How could she (1) sing praises unto God (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16); (2) confess Christ with the mouth (Romans 10:10); or (3) confess sin in her life asking for forgiveness (1 John 1:9; James 5:16)? Dear reader, do you think for a moment that it is shameful for women to sing in our assemblies?; to make the good confession before males?; to confess her sins that she might be restored? Surely not! Who could scripturally object next Sunday morning if a sister responded to the invitation taking twenty minutes to confess her wrongs?

Now to answer the questions that were earlier raised:

(1) "Why did Paul command women to keep silent?" Because they were interrupting the inspired speakers with their questions.

(2) "What does the word silence mean?" In 1 Corinthians 14 it means total and complete silence.

(3) "Why weren't they permitted to speak?" These wives were not allowed to rudely interrupt, interfere with, or disturb the speakers; such would stop the flow of revelation.

(4) "To what law does Paul refer?" Subjection (Genesis 3:16).

(5) "Must a woman be taught every

thing today from her husband at home?" No!

(6) "Since Paul said, 'ask their husbands at home' is the wife forbidden to talk or ask questions outside the home?" No! Paul also said in 11:34, "let him eat at home." Surely, we are not prohibited today from eating at any place except home.

(7) "Why was it a shame for women to speak in the church?" It interrupted the speakers. It interrupted teaching. It caused confusion.

(8) "Is it a shame for a woman, in a humble way, to ask a religious question in a Bible class?" No!

(9) "Does this text mean that it is sinful for a woman to utter a sound while inside the church building today?" No!

(10) "Does this scripture forbid a Christian woman to teach women and children in our Bible school arrangements today?" No!

(11) "Is this the passage that proves that a female cannot be a preacher or evangelist today?" It was not specifically written for that purpose. It proves that she is not to disrupt the assembly when men are present leading. Actually, 1 Timothy 2:11-12 is the passage that restricts or forbids women such activity today.

(12) "How could a single girl ask her husband, at home, the answer to a religious question?" She could not.

(13) "Is a Christian woman forbidden to ask a man, other than her own husband the answer to a Bible question?" No!

Paul, in 1 Corinthians 14, was dealing with a meeting wherein miraculous gifts were being exercised. He was discussing that type assembly. HE WAS NOT DISCUSSING OUR PRESENT DAY BIBLE SCHOOL ARRANGEMENTS. Christian women may properly teach in a Bible school arrangement today where such activity does not involve her in the exercise of dominion over the man. Women are restricted from that type of speaking (teaching or praying audibly) when the church is assembled for worship.

Let us be extremely careful lest we abuse and misapply 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 with wild interpretations. Brethren, there is absolutely no meeting in the world today like that talked about in 1 Corinthians 14:26-40! However, a number of sacred principles do apply for us today: (1) It is a matter of revelation that both males and females were members of the church in the first century. That being

the case we may scripturally worship together in the same assembly today. (2) Everything done in our assemblies should be done in order to edify those present. (3) God is not a God of confusion, but of peace. (4) Let all women be in subjection. (5) Let all things be done decently and in order!

P. O. Box 23067
New Orleans, LA 70183-0067

FORESIGHT

By Charles Coats

In a recent cartoon, Garfield (alias "Karate Cat") is about to demonstrate his prowess in karate. He breaks a table leg with his bare hand and brings the table down on top of him. In the closing scene, as he lies under the table, he makes this statement: "Karate Cat also demonstrates incredible lack of foresight."

How many times have we done something only to wish we could do it over again? This time, we tell ourselves, we will do it right. Too often, we do things without looking ahead to the outcome. "Karate Cat" demonstrates the predicament in which many have found themselves. All because they did not think ahead.

Using foresight, we can solve a lot of our problems before they ever happen, simply because we prevent them from ever occurring. Foresight can be defined by two statements -- "LOOK BEFORE YOU LEAP" and "THINK BEFORE YOU SAY."

I wonder if David would have sinned with Bathsheba had he considered the outcome (2 Samuel 11, 12)? Would Moses have lost his right to go into Canaan if he had only looked ahead (Numbers 20)? How about Peter? Would he have denied Christ (John 18) if he had considered the consequences of his sin, instead of thinking only of himself? I wonder how many sins could have been prevented if people had only looked ahead?

Likewise, we need to apply a little foresight in our lives? I wonder if we would speak evil of our fellow-Christian, if we would only consider the harm such statements do? I wonder if we would ridicule our spouses or children if we would stop to think of the lack of self-image this builds in them? It might take years, but, one day, we will reap the fruits sown by our tongues. I wonder if we would commit the sins we do or take the lackadaisical attitude towards our Christian living that we do, if we stopped to remember that

continued on page 4

FORESIGHT

continued from page 3

our PRESENT ACTIONS seal our FUTURE STATE (Romans 2:6)? I wonder if we would not treat everyone better if we only considered how our present actions affect our future standing?

Yes, foresight would solve a lot of problems. Solomon gathered wealth and fame, both fleeting and for the present. He finally realized the guideline for all words and deeds: "THIS IS THE END OF THE MATTER; ALL HATH BEEN HEARD: FEAR GOD, AND KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS; FOR THIS IS THE WHOLE DUTY OF MAN. FOR GOD WILL BRING EVERY WORK INTO JUDGMENT, WITH EVERY HIDDEN THING, WHETHER IT BE GOOD, OR WHETHER IT BE EVIL." (Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14).

Brethren, let us not be like "Karate Cat" and bring the "table down on us." Let us always consider the outcome of our statements and actions, BEFORE we say them or do them!

Editor's Note

Charles Coats

The March issue is the last issue I will edit. I will be moving to Dierks, Arkansas to work with the church in that city. I have enjoyed working with this paper over the past year and appreciate your response to the articles found therein. My prayer is that you will continue to read good Bible-based literature and grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).

* * * * *

"Never confuse the will of the majority with the will of God."

"Worse than a quitter is a man who is afraid to start."

"Most people want what they don't need and need what they don't want."

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2, 3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

Mail all address changes to:
CHURCH OF CHRIST
 P. O. BOX 251
 MAMMOTH SPRING, AR 72554