

**“Revelatory Gifts and Gender Distinctions in Worship” – Session # 14 on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Commandment; Presented on November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2013, in the Adult Sunday School.**

The Bible, the Word of God, has been designed by our great God to have two things which should enable us to be in love with it, and in love with God, all of our lives. Those two things are great simplicity and great depth of wisdom. We should be very thankful for these things; that the Bible is not a technical manual like you receive when you buy a piece of equipment. It is a living word directed at your heart. It is not as though the Bible does not require careful study; you can study the Bible all of your life and yet not exhaust its riches. But God has designed the Bible to speak to us, very simply and straightforwardly, as a living word concerning His will and His ways. The Bible is a treasure-house of His wise perception of how we should think, and how we should live, and how we should corporately worship Him. God expects that we will hold fast to this written word, and that we will strive to live out the truth of the Bible in our personal life, our family life, and also in our corporate worship together. This morning I would like to begin a study on the revelatory gifts and gender distinctions in relation to the corporate worship of the church. What are the joyful roles and responsibilities of men and women in relation to the corporate worship of the church? This relates to our study of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> commandments; “You shall have no other gods before me”, and “You shall not make a graven image”, to worship God by. In other words, these two commandments are telling us that we should not superimpose our own ideas of what worship should be like, upon God’s conception of what worship should be like. We should only worship the God of the Bible, and we should worship Him according to the truth of the Bible. God’s conception of worship is clearly and simply found in the Bible. We will therefore be finding great simplicity and great depth in our study of this subject, as in all the other portions of the Scripture. The real question for every Christian and every Church is – Are you willing to receive it?

**1<sup>st</sup> - The Simplicity and depth of the Commands of Scripture in relation to teaching and prayer.**

We are living in a day when every aspect of Biblical corporate worship is being challenged, and in many churches it is being set aside. There are many churches where a woman has been raised up to be the pastor of the church, and where a woman’s preaching in the worship of the church is fully approved of. But we can say with a clear conscience, that as we receive the word of God the Bible to be the truth, that the Lord does not approve of this, because the Apostle Paul specifically wrote that it should not be allowed. Turn with me over to 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians Chapter 14, verse 34. “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.” “Or did the word of God come originally from you?” “Or was it you only that it reached?” “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 ignorant.”

The simplicity of the word of God is found in its direct commandments, given by our Lord to His Apostles, to write them down and thus give them to the whole church in all generations. The command here is that women should not speak in the gathered designated worship of the church. The word “speak” here in the original Greek is (*λαλεω*, laleo), and means to speak authoritatively. We shall see in our further study that no woman has been given that kind of authority by God, over men, but rather she is to be submissive (in subjection) to her husband, and also to be submissive to Christ Himself as the word of God is being preached or taught by the male pastor-teachers of the church; to be submissive to them in that holy way of obedience to the word of God. The word, “submissive” is (*υποτασσο*, hupotasso) in the original Greek. From

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12: 1 on through 1 Corinthians 14: 40, the Apostle Paul has been giving instructions related to the use of the revelatory gifts, for the time period that they would be in use; that is, in the time period before they ceased, when the Apostles passed off the scene, and the Scriptures would be canonized. The proof that the revelatory gifts would eventually cease after the Apostles died, is found in the middle of this whole section, in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13, where Paul is speaking of the “better way” of advancing the truth, which is by the exercise of the grace of Christian love. Hold your place here in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 14 and turn back a page and look at verse 8 of Chapter 13. “Love never fails.” “But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.” “For we know in part and we prophesy in part.” “But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.” “When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.” “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face.” “Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.” “And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.” The exercise of Christian love is here directly addressed to the use of gifts in the local church; whether we are considering the use of them in the early church, or now. The exercise of Christian love is quite necessary and critical to their appropriate use. And Christian love, this text says, comes to be the better way of promoting the truth of the Bible; an even better way of conveying the truth than the use of the revelatory gifts which were only to be given for a time.

The word “perfect” has often been debated, here, because it is so critical to the understanding of what we should do in worship; whether the charismatic gifts, of speaking in tongues and prophecy, should be allowed in the church of our day. I believe that the word, “perfect”, as it is being used here by the Apostle Paul, has a dual meaning. There is no need to argue about this. The Scriptures in reference to prophecy often have a primary reference and a secondary reference, or even has more than one fulfillment in major time periods of history, both Old Testament and New. Therefore, this same principle may be used in rightly interpreting the Scriptures here: “When that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.” This word has reference to two time periods; that of the time after the Scriptures were canonized, and secondly, after Christ returns at the end of the age. The primary sense for our consideration this morning in relation to the revelatory gifts and when they would cease. The revelatory gifts of tongues and prophecy would cease, and cease to be needed, when the “perfect” would come, and the perfect would come when the Apostles of that day, in the early Church, died and passed off the scene. This cessation formally began for the Church of Jesus Christ, when the Apostle John finished writing the book of Revelation at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century. When he completed this book, then the Scriptures, the whole Bible which we now have, were completed, and certified to be so, by Apostolic authority. The apostle Jude says in his little epistle – Verse 3 – “I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.”

And the Apostle John writing at the end of the book of Revelation, knowing that this book that he was writing would be the last book of the Scriptures, says in Revelation 22, verse 18 – “For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, and from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.” The book of the Revelation is the final prophecy given to the church; nothing more was needed than had already been given by the New Testament Apostles and prophets. Of course, all the books of the Bible were eventually formally recognized by the Church itself in later centuries. Various godly men in councils confirmed that this was the last book of the Bible, but all of the books of the Scriptures had already been given to the Church of their day, by the Apostles themselves, or someone they

had personally recognized, such as Mark or Luke, or Jude or James. So with the completion of the whole group of the New Testament books came this completed canon of Scripture. When that took place, then that which was in part, each New Testament prophet's prophesying, in this extraordinary and infallible way, prophets judging prophets in the assemblies of the churches, (1 Corinthians 14: 29) would be done away with. For – Verse 11 of Chapter 13 – When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.” The 12 Apostles when they wrote the Scriptures were writing infallibly as they were guided by the Holy Spirit. Their written works which make up our present day New Testament, are “the more sure word of prophecy” which Peter speaks of in 2 Peter Chapter 1, verses 16-21. The 12 Apostles, and the other apostles and prophets of the early church, speaking their prophecies in the context of a local church gathered were speaking by the Spirit of God infallibly also, but this infallibility in their publicly speaking in this context of a local assembly, needed to be confirmed by the other prophets in the gathered assembly. If you will remember there was a time that the Apostle Peter was reproved by the Apostle Paul “in the presence of them all”, in the presence of all those in spiritual authority over the church at Antioch. This shows that even the 12 Apostles were not infallible in their personal judgments of every spiritual matter. But in their writings, in the Scriptures, they were.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> – Applications pertaining to men and women in public worship:**

1. In conclusion, let us understand that the revelatory gifts of tongues and prophecy have ceased since the days of the Apostles, but there still are speaking and teaching gifts which are given to both men and women. Let both men and women use these gifts according to the commandment of the Lord. Only men ought to be raised up to be pastors and publicly preach the gospel in the church. Women may have speaking gifts, but let them be used in subjection to their own husbands, and in subjection to the pastoral authority in the local church that they are members of. Men are to publicly pray, lifting up holy hands to God. Women are to remain silent in regard to their publicly praying, but they are to participate with all of their heart, by listening to those praying and lifting up their spirit to God. By their thoughts of agreement conceived in perfect silence before men, but knowing and believing that they are heard by the God who sees in secret, God will be well-pleased. Let us understand that the commandment of the Lord given to us through the Apostle Paul is still very much in effect, that women are not to use whatever speaking gift that they might have, in the public worship service of the church. They are not to publicly interrupt to make comments or to ask questions, but to ask their husband at home. Her being commanded to be silent in the church does not mean that she must be completely silent in other meetings such as a Sunday School class, when the Pastor asks for verbal participation by all present. He is the one teaching and in authority, and he may ask questions and seek answers from everyone there, women included, as he knows that the women there are submissive to their husbands and to him as the pastor of the church. But in that setting where permission is given by the pastor to speak, every woman present should show by the way that she asks questions or gives an answer, that she is in entire submission to her husband and to the authority of the pastor of the church. She should be clearly conveying to everyone there that she is under their authority. She should receive the word with all quietness and meekness, as we shall further see in our next study, that of 1 Timothy 2: 8-15.

2. A brief exhortation to the men, which I found in Matthew Henry's commentary on 1 Corinthians 14: 34 (actually written by a Mr. Simon Browne). “As it is the woman's duty to learn in subjection, it is the man's duty to keep up his superiority (his delegated responsibility to lead and teach his wife), by being able to instruct her; if it be her duty to ask her husband at home, it is his concern and duty to endeavor at least to be able to answer her enquiries; if it be a shame for her to speak in the church, where she should be silent, it is a shame for him to be silent when he should speak, and not be able to give an answer, when she asks him at home.”