

Commentary - Authority to Teach

Thursday, January 8, 2026
10:07 AM

Paul to the Corinthians

1 Corinthians 14:26-40 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. (27) If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret. (28) **But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God.** (29) Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. (30) But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. (31) For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged. (32) And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. (33) **For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.** (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.** (35) 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.** (36) **Or did the word of God come originally from you? Or was it you only that it reached?** (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.** (38) **But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant.** (39) Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues. (40) **Let all things be done decently and in order.**

Believer's Bible Commentary

1 Corinthians 14:26-40 Regarding Men and Women

14:33 For God is not the author of confusion but of peace. In other words, if a meeting is the scene of pandemonium and disorder, then you can be sure that the Spirit of God is not in control!

14:34 As is well-known, the verse divisions and even the punctuation of the NT were added centuries after the original manuscripts were written. The last clause of verse 33 makes much greater sense modifying the church practice in verse 34 than a universal truth about the omnipresent God (some Greek Testaments and English translations use this punctuation). For instance, the ASV reads: “As in all the churches of the saints, let the women keep silent in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but let them be in subjection, as also saith the law.” The instructions which Paul is giving to the Corinthian saints do not apply to them alone. These are the same instructions that have been addressed to all the churches of the saints. The uniform testimony of the NT is that while women have many valuable ministries, it is not given to them to have a public ministry to the whole church. They are entrusted with the unspeakably important work of the home and of raising children. But they are not allowed to speak publicly in the assembly. Theirs is to be a place of submission to the man.

We believe that the expression as the law also says has reference to the woman's being submissive to the man. This is clearly taught in the law, which here probably means the Pentateuch primarily. Gen_3:16, for instance, says “your desire shall be for your husband. And he shall rule over you.”

It is often contended that what Paul is forbidding in this verse is for the women to chatter or gossip while the service is going on. However, such an interpretation is untenable. The word here translated speak (laleo) did not mean to chatter in Koine Greek. The same word is used of God in verse 21 of this chapter, and in Heb_1:1. It means to speak authoritatively.

14:35 Indeed, women are not permitted to ask questions publicly in the church. If they want to learn something, they should ask their own husbands at home. Some women might try to evade the previous prohibition against speaking by asking questions. It is possible to teach by the simple act of questioning others. So this verse closes any such loophole or objection. If it is asked how this applies to an unmarried woman or a widow, the answer is that the Scriptures do not try to take up each individual case, but merely set forth general principles. If a woman does not have a husband, she could ask her father, her brother, or one of the elders of the church. Actually, this may be translated, “Let them ask their men-folks at home.” The basic rule to be remembered is that it is shameful for women to speak in church.

14:36 Apparently the Apostle Paul realized that his teaching here would cause considerable contention. How right he was! To meet any arguments, he uses irony in verse 36 by asking: Or did the word of God come originally from you? Or was it you only that it reached? In other words, if the Corinthians professed to know more about these matters than the apostle, he would ask them if they, as a church, produced the word of God, or if they were the only ones who had received it. By their attitude they seemed to set themselves up as an official authority on these matters. But the facts are that no church originated the word of God, and no church has exclusive rights to it.

14:37 In connection with all the foregoing instructions, the apostle here emphasizes that they are not his own ideas or interpretations, but that they are the commandments of the Lord, and any man who is a prophet of the Lord or who is truly spiritual will acknowledge that that is the case. This verse is a sufficient answer to those who insist that some of Paul's teachings, especially those concerning women, reflected his own prejudices. These matters are not Paul's private view; they are the commandments of the Lord.

14:38 Of course, some would not be willing to accept them as such, and so the apostle adds that if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant. If a person refuses to acknowledge the inspiration of these writings and to bow to them obediently, then there is no alternative but for him to continue in his ignorance.

14:39 To sum up the preceding instructions on the exercise of gifts, Paul now tells the brethren to desire earnestly to prophesy, but not to forbid men to speak with tongues. This verse shows the relative importance of these two gifts—one they were to desire earnestly, while the other they were not to ban. Prophecy was more valuable than tongues because sinners were convicted through it and saints edified. Tongues without interpretation served no other purpose than to speak to God and to one's self, and to display one's own proficiency with a foreign language, a proficiency that had been given to them by God.

14:40 Paul's final word of admonition is that all things must be done decently and in order. It is significant that this control should be placed in this chapter. Down through the years, those who have professed to have the ability to speak in tongues have not been noted for the orderliness of their meetings. Rather, many

of their meetings have been scenes of uncontrolled emotion and general confusion.

To summarize, then, the Apostle Paul sets forth the following controls for the use of tongues in the local church:

1. We must not forbid the use of tongues (v. 39).
2. If a man speaks in a tongue, there must be an interpreter (vv. 27c, 28).
3. Not more than three may speak in tongues in any one meeting (v. 27a).
4. They must speak one at a time (v. 27b).
5. What they say must be edifying (v. 26b).
6. The women must be silent (v. 34).
7. Everything must be done decently and in order (v. 40).

These are the abiding controls which apply to the church in our day.

Paul to Timothy

1 Timothy 2:1-15 Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, (2) for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. (3) For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, (4) who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (5) For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, (6) who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time, (7) for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle—I am speaking the truth in Christ and not lying—a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. (8) **I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting;** (9) **in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing,** (10) **but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works.** (11) **Let a woman learn in silence with all submission.** (12) **And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.** (13) **For Adam was formed first, then Eve.** (14) **And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.** (15) **Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control.**

Believer's Bible Commentary

1 Timothy 2:8-15 Regarding Men and Women

2:8 The subject of public prayer is now resumed, and this time our attention is directed to those who should lead the people of God in prayer. The introductory words I desire express Paul's active and inspired desire in this matter.

In the original language of the NT, there are two words which may be translated men. One word means mankind in general, whereas the other means men in contrast to women. It is the second word that is used here. **The apostle's**

instruction is that public prayer should be led by the men rather than by the women. And it means all the men, not just the elders.

The expression everywhere may be taken to mean that any individual Christian may pray at any time, no matter where he may be. But since the subject here seems to be public prayer, it would be better to understand this verse as saying that wherever a mixed group of Christians is gathered together for prayer, it is the men and not the women who should lead in this exercise.

Three qualifications are added, applying to those who are to pray publicly. First of all, they should lift up holy hands. The emphasis here is not so much on the physical posture of the one praying as on his inward life. His hands should be holy hands. The hands here are figurative of the man's entire manner of life. Secondly, he should be without wrath. This points out the inconsistency of one who is given to displays of temper, rising in the local church to speak to God in behalf of those assembled. Finally, he should be without doubting. This may mean that he has faith in the ability and willingness of God to hear and answer prayer. We can summarize these qualifications by saying that a man should exhibit holiness and purity selfward, love and peace manward, and unquestioning faith Godward.

2:9 Having discussed the personal requisites of the men who lead in public prayer, the apostle now turns to the things which should characterize the women who are in the congregation at such a time. First of all, he states that they should adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation. John Chrysostom gives a definition of modest apparel which can scarcely be improved upon:

And what then is modest apparel? Such as covers them completely and decently, and not with superfluous ornaments; for the one is decent and the other is not. What? Do you approach God to pray with braided hair and ornaments of gold? Are you come to a ball? a marriage-feast? a carnival? There such costly things might have been seasonable: here not one of them is wanted. You have come to pray, to ask pardon for your sins, to plead for your offences, beseeching the Lord. ... Away with such hypocrisy!

Propriety means avoiding anything that would cause shame. It carries the thought of being modest and discreet. Moderation means that a woman will be moderate

in her dress. On the one hand, she will not seek to attract attention to herself by expensive, conspicuous fashions. These might tend to provoke admiration or even jealousy from those who should be worshiping God. **On the other hand, she should avoid attracting attention to herself** by wearing clothes that are drab or old-fashioned. The Scriptures seem to teach a moderate, middle-of-the-road policy in regard to clothing.

Some of the excesses to be avoided are braided hair, gold, pearls, or costly clothing. Braided hair would not necessarily exclude simple braids, which might be very modest, but rather an elaborate adorning of the head with showy hairdos. The use of jewelry or expensive clothing as a means of self exhibition is decidedly inappropriate at the time of prayer.

2:10 The positive side of women's adorning is brought before us in this verse. The adorning which is fitting for women professing godliness is found in the performance of good works. Such "clothing" does not distract others from communion with God, but rather provokes such fellowship. Neither does it cause envy or jealousy in a wrong sense, but only encourages others to follow the example. Good works are a prominent theme in the Pastoral Epistles, forming a very necessary balance to sound doctrine.

2:11 As far as her part in public meetings of the church, a woman is to learn in silence with all submission. This is consistent with the rest of Scripture on this subject (1Co_11:3-15; 1Co_14:34-35).

2:12 When Paul says: I do not permit a woman to teach, he is speaking as inspired of God. This does not represent Paul's own personal prejudice, as some say. It is God who decrees that women should not have a public teaching ministry in the church. The only exceptions to this are that they are permitted to teach children (2Ti_3:15) and young women (Tit_2:4). Neither is a woman to have authority over a man. That means that she must not have dominion over a man, but is to be in silence or quietness. Perhaps we should add that the latter part of this verse is by no means limited to the local assembly. It is a fundamental principle in God's dealings with mankind that man has been given the headship and that woman is in the place of subjection. This does not mean that she is inferior; that is certainly not true. But it does mean that it is contrary to God's will that the woman should have authority or dominion over the man.

2:13 To prove his point, Paul first of all goes to the creation of Adam and Eve. Adam was formed first, then Eve. The very order of the creation was significant. By creating man first, God intended him to be the head, the one who would exercise direction, the one who would have authority. The fact that woman was created second means that she should be in submission to her husband. By basing his argument on the order of creation, Paul rules out any thought that this is a matter of local culture.

2:14 The second proof refers to the entrance of sin into the human race. Instead of approaching Adam directly, the serpent went to Eve with his temptations and lies. According to God's intention, Eve should not have acted independently. She should have gone to Adam and put the matter before him. Instead of that, she allowed herself to be deceived by Satan and fell into transgression.

In this connection, it is noteworthy that false teachers today usually visit homes when the wife is most apt to be there alone, that is, when the husband will most probably be away at work.

Adam was not deceived. It appears that he sinned with his eyes open. There are those who suggest that when he saw that his wife had already fallen into sin, he wanted to maintain his unity with her, and so he himself plunged into sin. But the Scriptures do not state this. They merely state that the woman was deceived, but that Adam was not.

2:15 This is one of the most difficult verses in the Pastoral Epistles, and many explanations have been offered. Some think that it is a simple promise from God that a Christian mother will be saved from death in the physical act of childbearing. However, this is not always true, because some godly, devoted Christians have died in the act of bringing life into the world. Others think that childbearing (literally, "the childbearing") refers to the birth of the Messiah, and that women are saved through the One who was born of a woman. However, this scarcely seems to satisfy the sense of the passage, since men are saved in the same way. No one could reasonably suggest that the verse means that a woman receives eternal salvation by virtue of becoming a mother of children; this would be salvation by works, and works of a most unusual nature!

We would suggest the following as the most reasonable interpretation of the passage. First of all, salvation in this context does not refer to the salvation of her soul, but rather to the salvation of her position in the church. From what Paul has just said in this chapter, the impression might arise in the minds of some that the woman has no place in God's purposes and counsels; she is reduced to a nonentity. But Paul would dispute this claim. Although it is true that no public ministry in the church is assigned to her, she does have an important ministry. God has decreed that woman's place is in the home, and more specifically in the ministry of raising children for the honor and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Think of the mothers of the leaders in the Christian church today! These women never mounted a public platform to preach the gospel, but in raising their children for God, they have been truly saved as far as position and fruitfulness for God are concerned.

Lilley writes:

She shall be saved from the results of sin and be enabled to maintain a position of influence in the Church by accepting her natural destination as a wife and mother, provided this surrender is further ratified by bringing forth the fruit of sanctified Christian character.

It may be asked at this point: "What about those women who never marry?" The answer is that in this passage God is dealing with women in general. The majority of Christian women do marry and bear children. As far as the exceptions are concerned, there are many other useful ministries committed to them and yet which do not involve public teaching or having authority over men.

Note the qualifying clause at the end of verse 15: She will be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control. It is not exactly an unconditional promise. The thought is that if the husband and wife maintain a consistent Christian testimony, honor Christ in the home, and raise their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord, then the woman's position will be saved. But if the parents live careless, worldly lives, and neglect the training of their children, then these children may be lost to Christ and the church. In such a case, the woman does not achieve the true dignity which God has ordained for her.

Let no one think that because woman's ministry is private and in the home that it is any less important than that which is more public. It has been truly said: "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world." In a coming day, at the Judgment Seat of Christ, it is faithfulness that will count, and this is something which can be exhibited in the home as well as in the pulpit.

Further Analysis

The main restrictive texts

1 Timothy 2:11–12 (NET)

"A woman must learn quietly with all submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man. She must remain quiet."

This is the clearest restriction text.

A few key observations:

- The issue is **teaching with authority**, not speech in general
- The context is **order in the gathered church** (1 Tim 3 follows with elders)
- Paul grounds this in **creation order**, not local culture (vv. 13–14)

This text limits authoritative doctrinal instruction over men in the church.

1 Corinthians 14:34–35 (NET)

"The women should be silent in the churches... if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home."

Important clarification:

- This cannot mean absolute silence
- Earlier Paul assumes women **pray and prophesy in church** (1 Cor 11:5)
- The silence here likely refers to **weighing prophecies or disruptive questioning**

*So again, the concern is **authority and order**, not visibility or gifting.*

Texts that show women speaking publicly

women prayed and prophesied

1 Corinthians 11:5 (NET)

“Any woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered disgraces her head...”

Prophecy is **public speech** given by God for the church (1 Cor 14:3).

That means women spoke God’s word in mixed gatherings.

women taught alongside men (non-authoritatively)

Priscilla (with Aquila)

Acts 18:26 (NET)

“They took him aside and explained the way of God to him more accurately.”

- Priscilla helps instruct Apollos, a learned man
- not in a formal church gathering
- not as a ruling authority

women recognized as ministry partners

Romans 16:

- **Phoebe** – a *diakonos* (servant/deacon)
- **Priscilla** – Paul’s coworker
- **Junia** – “outstanding among the apostles” (v. 7)

None of these are rebuked or minimized.

What “teaching with authority” means in the New Testament

The key text again is:

1 Timothy 2:12 (NET)

“*But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man.*”

Two verbs matter here.

- **to teach** (*didaskein*)
- **to exercise authority** (*authentein*)

Paul does not forbid *all* teaching.

He forbids a **specific kind of teaching** tied to **authority**.

These two ideas belong together.

Authority in the New Testament is not volume or visibility

Authority is not:

- speaking loudly
- holding a microphone
- being intelligent
- explaining Scripture
- sharing insight
- prophesying

Authority **is tied to office and responsibility**.

Where teaching authority lives

Elders are the authoritative teachers

1 Timothy 3:2 (NET)

“The overseer must be ... able to teach.”

Titus 1:9 (NET)

“He must hold firmly to the faithful message... so that he will be able to give exhortation in such healthy teaching and correct those who speak against it.”

This kind of teaching:

- defines doctrine
- guards boundaries

- corrects error
- binds the conscience of the church

That is **elder-level authority**.

Teaching vs governing

In the early church:

- Teaching + ruling go together
- Doctrine shapes the life of the community

That's why Paul links teaching to authority, not gifting.

James 3:1 (NET)

"Not many of you should become teachers... because you know that we will be judged more strictly."

This is **covenant responsibility**, not platform access.

Why Paul restricts this role

Paul roots his argument in **creation**, not competence.

1 Timothy 2:13 (NET)

"For Adam was formed first, then Eve."

This is not about intelligence or worth.

It is about **order and representation**.

Elders represent:

- Christ's headship
- Doctrinal stewardship
- Spiritual accountability

This is why the restriction is narrow but firm.

What this restriction does *not* mean

It does **not** mean:

- women cannot explain Scripture
- women cannot teach children or other women
- women cannot speak truth publicly
- women cannot prophesy to men
- women are less spiritually capable

The New Testament clearly contradicts those ideas.

Prophecy shows the difference clearly

Prophecy:

- is spontaneous
- must be weighed
- does not define doctrine
- is submitted to the body

Teaching with authority:

- is stable
- sets boundaries
- corrects error
- carries responsibility

That distinction matters.

1 Corinthians 14:29 (NET)

“Two or three prophets should speak and the others should evaluate what is said.”

Prophets speak.

Elders evaluate.

That is authority.

Why this often gets confused today?

Modern church culture often:

- Collapses authority into stage time
- Treats teaching as content delivery
- Ignores covenant responsibility

So any public speaking feels like authority.

But biblically, **authority flows from responsibility**, not airtime.

A clean definition

Teaching with authority is:

- Doctrinal instruction that binds the church.
- Exercised from recognized spiritual office.
- Accountable for guarding truth and correcting error.
- Representative of Christ's headship to the body.

That is what Paul restricts.

Nothing more.

Nothing less.

The danger on both sides

One error:

- Silencing women beyond Scripture
- Creating fear-based control

The other error:

- Dissolving authority altogether
- Turning teaching into mere gifting

The New Testament rejects both.

The early-church expectation

Acts 2:17–18 (Joel fulfilled)

“Your sons and your daughters will prophesy...”

The Spirit produces **speaking**, not silence.

Pulling it together

The Bible does **not** say:

- Women may never speak in public
- Women may never teach anything
- Women must be invisible in mixed gatherings

The Bible **does** say:

- Authoritative doctrinal teaching that governs the church is entrusted to qualified men (elders)
- Women freely prayed, prophesied, instructed, and labored in ministry
- Order matters, but **control is not the goal**

What the early church did *not* teach

Before 200 AD, the church did **not** teach:

- That women must be silent in all gatherings
- That women cannot speak God’s word to men
- That women are spiritually inferior
- That gifting equals authority

Before 200 AD, the church held this pattern:

- **Authority belongs to recognized office (elders)**
- **That office was male**

- Women freely exercised speaking gifts
- Prophecy was honored but submitted
- Order mattered more than control

A simple summary

- Teaching as authority over the church → restricted
- Speaking, praying, prophesying, instructing → affirmed
- Crowds of men and women → not forbidden by itself
- Fear-based silence → not biblical

The New Testament protects **order without erasing gifting**.