*A commentary on 1 Corinthians 14:34-35*

written by Kevin Abdullah Karim

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[In the Bible we read that it is shamefull for a woman to speak in the church:](http://legionofmarytidewater.com/blog/?p=123)

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 any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church. [ 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 ]

*Commentary by St. John Chrysostom*

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[St. John Chrysostom](http://legionofmarytidewater.com/blog/?p=123) writes in his classic commentary:

Having abated the disturbance both from the tongues and from the prophesyings; and having made a law to prevent confusion, that they who speak with tongues should do this in turn, and that they who prophesy should be silent when another begins; he next in course proceeds to the disorder which arose from the women, cutting off their unseasonable boldness of speech: and that very opportunely. For if to them that have the gifts it is not permitted to speak inconsiderately, nor when they will, and this, though they be moved by the Spirit; much less to those women who prate idly and to no purpose. Therefore he represses their babbling with much authority, and taking the law along with him, thus he sews up their mouths; not simply exhorting here or giving counsel, but even laying his commands on them vehemently, by the recitation of an ancient law on that subject. For having said, "Let your women keep silence in the churches;" and "it is not permitted unto them to speak, but let them be in subjection;" he added, *"as also saith the law."* And where doth the law say this ? "Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." [ Genesis chapter 3, verse 16 ] Seest thou the wisdom of Paul, what kind of testimony he adduced, one that not only enjoins on them silence, but silence too with fear; and with as great fear as that wherewith a maid servant ought to keep herself quiet. Wherefore also having himself said, "it is not permitted unto them to speak," he added not, "but to be silent," but instead of "to be silent," he set down what is more, to wit, "the being in subjection." And if this be so in respect of husbands, much more in respect of teachers, and fathers, and the general assembly of the Church. "*But if they are not even to speak*," saith one, *"nor ask a question, to what end are they to be present ?"* That they may hear what they ought; but the points which are questioned let them learn at home from their husbands. Wherefore also he added, Ver. 35. "And if they would learn any thing, let them ask their own husbands at home."Thus, "not only, as it seems, are they not allowed to speak," saith he, "at random, but not even to ask any question in the church." Now if they ought not to ask questions, much more is their speaking at pleasure contrary to law. And what may be the cause of his setting them under so great subjection ? Because the woman is in some sort a weaker being and easily carried away and light minded. Here you see why he set over them their husbands as teachers, for the benefit of both. For so he both rendered the women orderly, and the husbands he made anxious, as having to deliver to their wives very exactly what they heard. Further, because they supposed this to be an ornament to them, I mean their speaking in public; again he brings round the discourse to the opposite point, saying, *"For it is shameful for a woman to speak in the church."* That is, first he made this out from the law of God, then from common reason and our received custom; even when he was discoursing with the women about long hair, he said, "Doth not even nature herself teach you?" [ c. xi. 14. ] And everywhere thou mayest find this to be his manner, not only from the divine Scriptures, but also from the common custom, to put them to shame. 1

*Commentary by Cornelius a Lapide*

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Cornelius a Lapide writes [in his classic commentary](http://legionofmarytidewater.com/blog/?p=123):

Women should keep silent in church - even prophetesses, because it is against nature and the law that women should speak in the presence of men to whom they are subject [ Gen 3,16 ]. Thus says Ambrose and, following him, Anselm. Secondly, because speaking is against their modesty and humility. Thus says Anselm. Thirdly, because men have a better judgment, better intellect, better power of speech and discretion than women have. Fourthly, "rightly women are ordered to keep silent", says Anselm, "since, when they speak, they persuade their husbands to sin [ Gen 3 ]." 2

Women are clearly inferior to men in the Bible.   
  
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**References and Notes:**[1]  
  
Saint Chrysostom's Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians: *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, *Part 12,* [ Kessinger Publishing 2004 ], p. 222  
  
[2]  
  
Cornelius A Lapide: "*Commentaria in Scripturam Sacram"* [ Paris, 1891] , vol. 18, p. 396