

The Silencing of the Lambs

By Michael Clark

If you look at the body of Christ today to see how it is really constructed, you would have to conclude that it has one mouth for every 1,000 ears whose only job is to listen. The lambs have been silenced by the example of their teachers and this is the message: "Be silent in Church and let the professionals do the talking. You are nothing but a support system to keep their mouths working."

There was a movie by a similar title that was about a mass murderer. I choose such a gruesome title because I feel that over the years the viability of the individual members of the body of Christ has been murdered en masse. The members no longer function as living members of Christ's body with Him giving direction as the Head. The body for the most part has become a quadriplegic and Christianity has become a spectator sport.

Have you ever thought that the Church is training Christians to be silent? I remember when I was a teen. My dad was a heavy smoker and eventually died from it. He would take a hit off a cigarette and as he exhaled the smoke would say, "Son, I don't want you to smoke!" As many of us have figured out from raising our own children, the example speaks louder than words. I was smoking and on my way to a full blown habit before I graduated from high school. I thank God I was able to quit with the help of my loving wife before I got out of the Navy four years later.

My father also forced us to go to Catholic mass. I had to not only remain silent, but wasn't even permitted to move in my seat. If I even dared to shift my weight, Dad's big hand would come down on my knee, pinch the nerve running alongside, and send an electric shock through my body. I learned not to be animated in church. The holy thing to do was to sit there like a cigar store Indian and not make a ripple.

So what is my point? My experience in Protestant circles has not been much different. A man is born again, usually in his late teens or early twenties, and what happens? He is placed in a Sunday school class where he passively **listens** to the teacher for an hour each week. He then goes into the "sanctuary" where he sits

there in silence for another hour or two **listening** to the real professional Christian deliver an oration. If he wants to really become spiritual and get on the fast track, during the week he **listens** to Christian radio and watches Christian TV, or goes to a Church conference and **listens** to the professionals speak some more. By the time this man turns seventy, he has listened to anywhere from five to ten thousand sermons and teachings and still is as interactive with his Christianity as someone sitting there watching the evening news in his favorite recliner. So the scripture is fulfilled, ". . .ever learning, but never able to come to the *knowledge* of the truth (Greek--*epigonosko*--participation with the truth)." (2 Timothy 3:7).



If you look at the body of Christ today to see how it is *really* constructed, you would have to conclude that it has one mouth for every 1,000 ears whose only job is to **listen**. The lambs have been silenced by the example of their teachers and this is the message: "Be silent in Church and let the professionals do the talking. You are nothing but a support system to keep their mouths working."

Now contrast this with the typical gathering in the early church. They had fellowship. They were family and not a family where the children were to be seen and not heard, either. Consider what Paul taught them regarding their coming together as the body of Christ.

Now there are **diversities of gifts**, but the same Spirit. And there are **differences of ministries**, but the same Lord. And there are **diversities of workings**, but it is the same God who works all **in all**. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to **every man** for profit. For to one is given by the Spirit the **word of wisdom**; to another the **word of knowledge** by the same Spirit; To another **faith** by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of **miracles**; to another prophecy; to another **discerning** of spirits; to another various kinds of **tongues**; to another the **interpretation of tongues**: But in all these works that one and same Spirit, **dividing to every man individually** as he will. For as **the body is one, and has many members**, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: **so also is Christ**. For by one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have

been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. (1 Corinthians 12:4-14 KJ2000)

Even so you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that you may excel to the edifying of the church. (1 Corinthians 14:12 KJ2000)

How is it then, brethren? when you come together, **every one** of you has a psalm, has a doctrine, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying. (1 Corinthians 14:26 KJ2000)

For as we have many members in one body, and *all members* have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and **every one** members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teaches, on teaching; Or he that exhorts, on exhortation: he that gives, let him do it in simplicity; he that rules, with diligence; he that shows mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be tender loving one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another; Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; (Romans 12:4-11 KJ2000)

Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the others judge. If anything be revealed to another that sits by, let the first hold his peace. For **you may all prophesy** one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. (1 Corinthians 14:29-31 KJ2000)

Did you notice how many times *all* and every appears in these passages about body gatherings? This trained passivity that rules the Church in most of today's religious gatherings where ministry is done by the **few**, was not the order of the day when it all began. Look at the effect of the Spirit upon the assembly when He was allowed to move in the Church's earliest gatherings:

And **when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.** (Acts 4:31, NKJV)

They were *all* filled with the Spirit and each one had a viable part in spreading the gospel. This is how "having Church" was done in the first century.

It was not until about the sixth century that professional oratory by a paid professional became the rule for Christian gatherings. By then the Catholic Church was well on its controlling way, replacing that beautiful expression of the living organism that was once called the ecclesia of God. The bodily expression of Christ on earth that was once well on its way to "turning the world upside down" now sat there in dumb silence. Professional clergy had taken over.

Maybe part of the problem is in the way the words *preach, preached, and preaching* were used while translating the New Testament into English. If you do a word study on the Greek words these three English words were translated from, you come up with a whole spectrum of communication. The most common Greek word translated "*preach (-ed, -ing)*" is *euaggelizo*. It simply means to *proclaim the good news*. But it is interesting that once the lost were converted and became saints, they were no longer *euaggelizo*'ed. Jesus had already been proclaimed among them and once they were converted they were treated like family and included in their discussions about the kingdom.

Consider this passage as an example of what I mean.

And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul **preached** unto them, ready to depart on the next day; and continued his speech until midnight. And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together. And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long **preaching**, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead. (Acts 20:7-9 KJ2000)

This word should not have been translated preached or preaching.

1256 διαλέγομαι dialegomai {dee-al-eg'-om-ahee}
middle voice from 1223 and 3004; TDNT - 2:93,155; v

1. to think different things with one's self, **mingle thought with thought**
 - a. to ponder, revolve in mind
2. to **converse, discourse with one, argue, discuss**

This is the Greek word we get the English word dialog from. When he was with the saints of God, Paul mingled thought with thought, conversed with, held a discourse with and discussed the kingdom of God with them. **The spirit filled saints were not preached at! The sinners were.**

Do Not Forsake the Assembling?

In the book of Hebrews we find a verse that is often quoted by those who rule from behind a pulpit. It reads:

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as you see the day approaching.
(Hebrews 10:25 KJ2000)

This is used by clergy to demand that people attend church on Sunday, though it does not say that. What does it mean to be "assembled together"? Let us look at it in context. The previous two verses read:

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:
(Hebrews 10:23-24 KJ2000)

We are to come together with the saints and profess our faith and provoke one another unto love and good works. It does not say that we are to go to a church building once a week and let one man do all the professing, provoking and good works. And where do we get the grace to do the workings of the body as individual members? By holding fast to its *Head*, not to the teachings of a professional clergyman. Again the context reads:

Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having a high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. (Hebrews 10:19-22 KJ2000)

I hold that the "assembling together" we see in today's churches is what forsakes the assembling of the living members of Christ's body as functioning Spirit filled

viable components of His precious body. When one man controls all and demands to be the center of all that happens, it is not a manifestation of a properly assembled body to its Head, Jesus. We no longer properly discern the body of Christ in this setting and as a result many of the members of the body are sickly and weak. Yes, let us draw near into Jesus our High Priest over the household of God in a new and living way, not the same old synagogue system of Judaism, but as the family of God in which every member is equally important (See [1 Corinthians 12:13-27](#)). The veil of the temple has been torn from top to bottom giving us all equal access to our Father. What shall we say to Him if we neglect so great a salvation?

There is much talk today about not forsaking our "assembling together." What I have seen so far reminds me of a lawnmower that has been taken apart and then for the sake of *assembling together*, all the pieces were thrown together in a big box. Yes, it is assembled together, but God can't use it to mow the lawn and it just adds to the clutter that fills His garage. Until we yield our lives over to Him, obeying the Spirit of Christ within and He does the *assembling* of His body in love the status quo will remain the same.

In Conclusion

So where do we go from here? We, like so many others, no longer support what we consider this *silencing of the lambs* known as "going to Church" in today's culture. We seek to encourage the citizens of God's kingdom to speak out as they come together and to listen to the Holy Spirit and cultivate a familiarity with HIS voice. When they do this, He will give them, like He did with the early Church, the words to speak either in the assembly of believers or in the public forum.

With the advent of the Internet, web sites, and talk lists, and the resurgence of interest in free flowing home gatherings, many of us have *finally found our voice* as well. No longer does that pastoral death grip on the all holy pulpit and microphone stop us from sharing what God has placed on our hearts. We have chosen to speak the words we hear our Father speaking and not be silenced any longer.

May you all find that same freedom that once made the ecclesia of Christ bloom and grow as it edified itself in His love. May you all find your voice once again. Remember Paul's admonition to the Church in Galatia,

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. (Galatians 5:1, NIV)

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