

## IS A WOMAN WITHOUT A VOICE JUSTIFIED

by Carol Schmidt

“Doing theology” involves observing the effects of theological assumptions and doctrines on the lives of people and asking many questions. Today I wonder what justification means for a person whose voice is not allowed to be heard in the church and I wonder if the church that silences people believes in the gracious God revealed to us in Jesus Christ or if it remains under Law.

In Genesis 3, grace remained in the Garden even as Adam and Eve attempted to hide in fear from God. God was still with and calling them. When questioned by God, when each was asked to give an account for what he and she had done, the humans set in place the hierarchical chain of blame. The man blamed the woman and the woman blamed the creature. In the failure of each to take his or her own responsibility before God, the rule of man over woman began and the woman’s voice was silenced.

In the temptation of Jesus as recorded in Matthew 4, I see a reversal of the chain of blame. Jesus refused to exploit nature, to throw himself down, or to elevate himself above others, acknowledging that God is God and people are not. God alone is to be worshiped and served (vs. 10). The faith of Jesus caused him to remain on level ground with other people. He refused helpless resignation and the power to rule over other people, thereby reversing the sin of Adam. The faith of Jesus is then displayed in his ministry.

“After they had gone away, a demoniac who was mute was brought to him. And when the demon had been cast out, the one who had been mute spoke; and the crowds were amazed and said, ‘Never has anything like this been seen in Israel.’ But the Pharisees said, ‘By the ruler of the demons he casts out the demons.’” Matt. 9:32-34

The healing of Jesus Christ involves not only eyes to see and ears to hear what God is doing in the world, but also voice to proclaim salvation that is presently effective. The Pharisees, remaining in the sin of Adam, attributed this healing act of Jesus to “the ruler of the demons.” They failed to recognize that God’s power is not to be used to silence other people and rule over them, but to free voices to speak and participate fully in this new life initiated by Jesus Christ.

Faith in Jesus Christ involves the healing of the whole person. Therefore, does a church that silences the voices of women attempt to delay the justification of women until a final day of judgment after life on earth has ended? Do they think that women are saved in the end by their obedient silence to men while men are presently saved in their rule over others? Where is the faith of the church that allows men to stand above the cross and to nail any woman who dares question their authority to a cross? Where is the faith of women who speak only to affirm that they should be silent in accordance with the rule of men? In whom do we place our trust?

Until women refuse to throw themselves down in silence and men refuse power to rule over women, we continue to test God and refuse to worship and serve the Lord, Jesus Christ. We, as a church, reject the good news that there is one Lord and no others when we refuse to stand on

level ground at the foot of the cross, where no voice is silenced. We remain under Law and reject the Grace of God freely given to us in Jesus Christ.

(Written for *The Daystar Journal*, September 2006)