



---

Conducted by  
Frank Worgan

---

***“Acts 1:14. Does this verse authorise the audible praying of women in worship services?”***

I have been given to understand that this is a question which is currently being debated in some quarters and, I have to say, it relates to a practice which is foreign to Churches of Christ in the British Isles. I, certainly, have never known it to occur in the sixty-two years during which I have been a member of the Church.

As to the passage referred to, the first thought that occurs to me is that no-one who reads the scriptures carefully, can reasonably use Acts 1:14 to authorise, or justify women praying audibly during meetings of the Church which are held for worship. The grammatical construction of the sentence alone clearly shows that those who were praying, on this occasion, in the upper room, were the apostles of Christ.

May I, yet again, point out the importance of considering the verse in question in its context?

**Concerning whom is Luke writing?**

1. Acts chapter 1, verses 1 to 14, reveals the Lord dealing with His remaining eleven apostles, Judas Iscariot having already died. Notice how Luke's inspired record reads, and pay particular attention to his many references to the apostles.

v.2 The Lord *'gave commandment'* to the *APOSTLES* whom He had chosen,

v.3 To the *APOSTLES* He *'showed Himself alive.'*

v.4 He stayed with the *APOSTLES*.

v.5 He instructed the *APOSTLES* not to leave Jerusalem

v.5 The *APOSTLES* were told to wait for *"the promise of the Father,"* (that is, the baptism of the Holy Spirit).

v.6 This promise was given to the *APOSTLES* (*YOU shall be baptised . . .*)

v.8 The *APOSTLES* were to *receive power* and thus become His witnesses.

v.9 The *APOSTLES* witnessed His ascension to heaven.

v.11 The *APOSTLES* were addressed by the angels. (*"Ye MEN of GALILEE"*)

v.12 *"They'* (the *APOSTLES*) then returned to *JERUSALEM* from the Mount of Olives," from where He ascended.

(NOTE! *This account of the Ascension is endorsed by what Luke also records in his Gospel; chap. 24:48-52, which clearly shows the Lord was dealing only with His APOSTLES*).

v.13 The *APOSTLES* then *"went up to the upper room where 'they' - the APOSTLES - were staying."*

The names of the *APOSTLES* are then listed - all eleven.

v.14 *"ALL THESE" - the APOSTLES - "devoted themselves to prayer."*

There can be no doubt, therefore, that this is an account of a private, personal

meeting of the Lord with His apostles.

2. Notice, also, as I have already indicated, that the **grammatical construction** of verses 13 and 14 shows, without question, that the ones who '*devoted themselves to prayer*' were the *apostles of Christ*, whilst the *women* were merely *present*.

**Who were these women?**

This is not difficult to determine, because Luke, in **Luke 23:49** and **55**, identifies them for us as '*the women who followed . . . from Galilee.*' They are also mentioned in **Luke 8:3** and **Matt. 27:55**, as women who '*provided for them out of their means.* In other words, who provided financial support for the Lord and His apostles, so that their material needs were met.

Both of these passages tell us that there were '*many*' such women, and it is apparent that they continued to render the same invaluable service to the apostles after the Lord's crucifixion. This is why they were present in the upper room on this occasion. They were not present as members of the Lord's chosen apostolic group, but as believing women who fulfilled a needful ministry.

It is my personal view that, since at least some of the apostles were certainly married, among the women present there were, very probably, family members of the apostles. In **1st Cor. 9:4**, Paul writes: "*Do we not have the right to be accompanied by a wife, as the other apostles and brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?*"

And I expect that most of us have read, in **Mark 1:30**, the account of the illness and cure of Peter's *mother-in-law*.

Be this as it may, consider, as I have already indicated, that if we are meant to understand that these women were among those who '*devoted themselves to prayer*' - (and the question assumes that *audible* prayer is meant, although we have no way of knowing what form the prayer took) - the statement found in **Acts 1:13-14** would have read differently.

It would have stated:

*"They went to the upper room where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew . . . and Judas the son of James, together with the women, ALL these continued in prayer."*

But that is *not* what the passage says. The precise statement is: "*All these - (i.e. the apostles whose names have just been listed) - with one accord devoted themselves to prayer, together with the women.*"

The women were present, but the ones praying were the apostles. Indeed, I cannot understand why anyone should find this difficult to understand, because this is precisely what occurs in our congregations today, during a worship service in which there is a period of prayer. Sisters are *present*, but it is the brothers who engage in audible prayer.

3. This practice is followed in obedience to the command in **1 Tim. 2:8**. "*I desire (Greek: 'I will') then, that in every place the MEN should pray . . .*"

Timothy is being given apostolic instruction as to what he is to teach the churches, as he fulfils his ministry. In **1 Tim. 6:2-3** we read: "*Teach and urge these duties. If any one teaches otherwise and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ . . .*"

(I suggest you read the passage yourself, through to the end of verse 5, for Paul is quite severe on anyone who is unwilling to hold to what the Lord has revealed through His inspired apostles.)

4. We should notice, also, that the word '*andras*', used in ch. 2:8 and rendered 'men', *means* 'men'. Contrary to what has occasionally been claimed, the word does *not* mean 'men and/or women'! This instruction on prayer is given only to the men of the congregation.

That this is the divinely appointed arrangement becomes evident from the following verses in **1 Tim 2**. Commencing with v.9, we read instructions, which are given

specifically to the 'women' - the '*gunaikas*'. They are instructions, which stand in stark contrast with what has just been written concerning the men. The command which is especially relevant to this discussion states that the woman is to learn "*in silence*", and is not permitted "*to teach or to have authority over men.*"

And please note that this word for 'women' is the same as in **Acts 1:14**, - the verse used in our question.

Putting this as plainly as I am able; the words for 'women' and 'men' are the words for '*female*' and '*male*', so there is no room for misunderstanding or argument. Women, in the assembly, are not to teach or to have authority over the men.

If a woman were to pray in a meeting where men are present, she would be violating this instruction. She would be taking the lead. This is because, when a brother leads in prayer during a service of communal worship, he is not praying for himself alone, but for the assembled company. His prayer should be sufficiently audible, and of such character, as to enable the congregation to 'say the "Amen,"' as Paul puts it when he writes to the Corinthians. (1st Cor. 12:16).

I cannot resist pointing out that it is evident:

a) that the early Christians joined together in saying 'Amen' at the close of a public prayer, and;

b) that the prayer was not muttered or mumbled inaudibly but presented clearly enough for the rest of the congregation to hear and approve. Congregations and brothers, please note!

5. No one should be influenced or misled by the quite illogical assertion that '*this interpretation prevents women from praying.*' Remember that the instruction relates to conduct in the assembly; in other words in meetings consisting of males and females. It does not regulate the prayer of women in meetings arranged for, and attended only by women, or when a woman is alone.

Nor does it prevent women from praying silently in a service.

There are many *men* who never pray audibly when the Church meets for worship. But he would be a very presumptuous person indeed, who dared to assert that these men *never* pray at such times.

This teaching is not popular in some quarters and will be dismissed as contrary to the mood and thinking of the times. There are some that are more concerned about 20th century innovations than about 1st century commands!

Like it or not, it is what the Scriptures clearly teach and therefore cannot be lightly cast aside by believers - men or women - who have regard for the authority of the Word of God.

Finally: It has often been stated that the Scriptures teach by:

1. Express command.
2. Apostolic (or New Testament) Example.
3. Necessary Inference.

Concerning our current topic;

There is no express *Command* to authorise sisters praying aloud when the Church is at worship.

There is no New Testament *Example* of women praying at such times.

And there is certainly no *Necessary Inference* to be extracted from Acts 1:14.

Since, therefore, the Scriptures are silent on the subject, we should keep silent.

(Questions to Frank Worgan, 5 Gryfebank Way,  
Houston, Renfrewshire, PA6 7NZ, Scotland.)