

1 Corinthians 14:26-40

We left off last week with Paul instructing the Corinthian church on the exercise of the gift of tongues and prophecy in public worship. We came away with the large over-arching thought that tongues are uniquely, a personal 1 on 1 conversation, between the worshiper and God and should be interpreted if they are exercised in a public setting for the benefit of the Body so that the church can be edified, built up and glorify God with the worshiper who is praying in tongues.

Furthermore, Paul exhorted the church to desire to prophesy - to speak forth God's word - in words easy to understand. He illustrates this with his profound statement in verse 19, "yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue." And we all say - Amen to that.

Paul also desired that when unbelievers visited our gatherings that they would be able to "report that God is truly among you," by observing our worship.

You may recall that in chapter 11 Paul rebukes this church, saying, "you come together not for the better but for the worse."

The pattern continues here in chapter 14 verse 26 when Paul asks rhetorically,

[1Co 14:26 NKJV] 26 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.

Paul is challenging the Corinthians on the confusion that reigned in their church. This confusion was born out of each person's desire to show off! This is what self-promotion looks like - each person coming to church for the thinly veiled purpose of demonstrating their own prowess, command of Bible knowledge, their superior gifting by the Spirit, and drawing away people after themselves instead of worshiping God! Remember, division was the norm at Corinth.

Since chaos is the prevailing tone of the Corinthian church, Paul sets in order for them how they ought to behave when they gather together. We will see that his instruction is to bring order to the commotion and more rightly display the nature and character of Christ - one that is peaceful, ordered, and intentional. All traits that we would say Christ exhibits in His person.

V.27 - IF anyone speaks in a tongue - it is not a given, it is an IF.

Let there be two or at the most 3 - this is very straightforward, the exercise of tongues is restricted to 2 or at the most 3 people. We might be tempted to say, Paul didn't really mean 2 or 3, he was just using those numbers figuratively to indicate that tongues shouldn't take up the entire service. I would push back on that and say, let the Bible speak for itself. This is not legalism, it is obedience. When our thoughts and practices are challenged

by scripture it is most often because we are in rebellion against God's word - not because God's word is wrong. Let Him be true and every man a liar.

Additionally, there shouldn't be any talking over one another - this is true for tongues during any other part of the worship service. This is simply being considerate to others. We would say it is rude to talk over somebody or to interrupt someone while they are speaking.

Often when we interrupt others it is because we don't value what they have to say, we believe our words have more merit so instead of listening we decide to bully the conversation into something we can dominate. This is not Christ's nature.

v.27-28 ...and let one interpret, but if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God - this is so crucial.

The requirement for an interpreter for those who desire to speak in tongues is a biblical imperative. This, again, is very straightforward.

We must remember that interpreting the spoken tongue is also a gift by the Holy Spirit. It is specially gifted to somebody to declare in plain language what has been spoken to the Body that we all might be edified by that word.

If there is nobody who has received that gift of interpretation then we would ask that person exercise self-control and to pray to him/herself and to God. And this is where the idea comes into play that this is something one can

do in their personal prayer and devotional time - just the worshiper and God. The audience for tongues after all is God, not men. We can all say amen if there is an interpreter but the gift of tongues is to God.

v. 29 - Paul similarly limits the number of people prophesying since their particular problem was that everybody wanted to talk, and show off, and parade themselves, and talk over one another.

let the others judge - there is an element of discernment here when we move into the gifts of the Spirit.

On one hand we want to be open to the Spirit moving and not hinder or quench the Spirit. On the other we know that the Holy Spirit will NEVER EVER contradict God's word - neither will He add to or take away from God's word, the Bible. The word, the Spirit and the Father are unified.

So in regards to judging the prophecies that are spoken forth at these meetings we use God's word as our measuring rod.

Is what we are proclaiming supported by God's word as we speak forth edification, exhortation and comfort to the Body? If not, we shouldn't speak those things.

We are instructed by John to test the Spirits:

[1Jo 4:1 NKJV] 1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

[Jhn 8:43-44 NKJV] 43 "Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. 44 "You are of [your] father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own [resources], for he is a liar and the father of it.

Why do we judge? Because prophesying falsely is easy and can do tremendous damage. If one speaks forth of their own resources or their own contentious spirit they are prophesying falsely and when that happens it is up to the hearer to discern that and to call it for what it is. How do we know - be a student of the Word.

This reminds us that we who are desiring to prophesy (as Paul instructs) should recognize the gravity of serving as God's mouthpiece. It's a big deal and not to be taken lightly or recklessly. Be led by the Spirit and be obedient to the Spirit.

v.30 - deferring to others - don't dominate the discussion. This is a hard lesson for some to learn. Some people we have to pull them into interacting - same goes for exercising gifts of the Spirit. Some people need to be encouraged into participation because they have a little scar tissue from past experience or they are a little skeptical.

Other people we have to temper, exhort to self-control, encourage to let others have a say.

Remember deferring to others is in Christ's nature, so it should be part of our nature - since we have His Spirit.

[Phl 2:3 NLT] 3 Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. [Phl 2:4 NLT] 4 Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.

Allow others to experience the glory of serving God and serving the Body through the exercise of their gift.

v.31 - those who prophesy shouldn't be speaking over one another - just like tongues, let each one speak in turn, one by one - in this way the Body is taught and encouraged. (not bummed out, or weirded out).

v.32 - the spirit of the prophets are subject to the prophets - this doesn't mean the Holy Spirit is subject to the prophet - we can't control God, nobody can! But what we can control is ourselves and as Paul instructs the Galatian church that is one of the fruits of the Spirit, the evidence of the Spirit in the life of the believer, is self control. (Gal 5:23)

v.33 - the whole point - we can't blame our confusion, chaos, or weirdness on God. He is the author of peace.

Speaking over one another, inciting disorder and confusion, unabashed self-promotion and performance worship are not from God. God is the author of peace and where God is, there His peace will be.

v.34-35 - let your women keep silent in the churches - keep this in context. People have taken this verse wildly out of context and used it as a standalone verse to justify the subjugation of women in ministry. That's not the chaos. Remember Paul is addressing order and peace within the conduct of church meetings.

He already addressed the role of women praying and prophesying in the church in chapter 11 - where the implication is made that women praying and prophesying in the church is an acceptable practice. Furthermore there are other examples of women prophesying within the church and ministering in the church that our time is not sufficient to cover this morning.

Paul's point here is to maintain order within the church service - no chattering. Culturally women and men would sit apart from one another during worship meetings for Jewish gatherings, a tradition that may have carried over into the first century Christian church. In this context women who called out to their husbands or who chatted it up with one another were adding to the chaos.

This of course is equally applicable to men - though it appears by Paul's instruction that the Corinthian women had a particularly difficult time behaving during their meetings.

I am happy to report that we don't have that problem here...yet.

But it is certainly distracting when anybody carries on sidebar conversations during the middle of a worship service. So Paul instructs them, if there are questions about the material or what is going on then let that be a conversation for later. This doesn't mean that the husband is the filter for wives - I'm not baby birding my wife's Bible teaching. She and I are equal at the foot of the cross where there is neither male nor female - we are both wretched sinners. She is God's child before she is my bride, and I am God's child before I am her husband. I would add that any value either of us have in our marital roles is derived from our relationship with Christ and any hope we have to fulfill our marital roles is inextricably tied to our relationship with Jesus Christ.

v.36-37 - who do you think you are!? - Paul's words cut deep, but they are holy and inspired by the Spirit.

God's word didn't come from the Corinthian church, they were recipients of God's word unto salvation. Paul's encouragement to them is that they should remember that. There is a lesson in humility here.

Furthermore, they were not the only church on the planet! They were part of the larger, universal church, that is glorious and hopefully tempered their own lofty opinions of themselves. Again, a lesson in humility. Which isn't a bad thing - Christ was humble, we should be humble and not be too self-important.

Paul, on the other hand, had a special office appointed to him by the Lord.

[Eph 4:11-12 NKJV] 11 And He Himself gave some [to be] apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,

God puts people into ministry and equips them for the work. Paul had a special place that we are still reaping the fruit of. We benefit so much from his faithfulness, candor, and Spirit inspired instruction.

v.38 - this is harder to do! Sometimes we want to shake people...but that's frowned upon and the Bible tells us to let them be, rather than spinning our wheels trying to get them to "get it."

v.39 - the long and short of it - desire earnestly...don't forbid... - it's not our role, nor do we have the spiritual authority to prohibit tongues.

v.40 - at the end of it all this is what church looks like, this is what exercising the gifts of the Spirit look like and we are going to do it today!