

I Corinthians Lesson # 31
Order in the Christian Worship Service
Pentwater Bible Church
Daniel E. Woodhead
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I Corinthians 14: 23 If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?

In short the way the Corinthians were speaking in tongues in the Church was of no benefit to anyone. Spiritual gifts are supposed to benefit the entire body of Christ not some individuals alone. Without interpretation, those who came into the assembly from outside would think they were crazy. This will edify nobody, scare off unbelievers or new people in the faith and hurt the witness of the Church.

How will unbelievers entering the congregation of tongue speakers view them? They will think they are crazy.

I Corinthians 14: 24-25 But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.

In contrast to the overly showy speaking in tongues without a translator when one prophesies all are learning God's Will. They know that only the Supreme God of all creation can truly know what is in their hearts and will bring those things out in confession and worship of our Lord.

I Corinthians 14: 26 How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.

Paul is addressing the Christian community in Corinth as brothers. This is a general term including both sexes (e.g., 1:10; cf. 1 Peter 5:9). When the church met, anyone was free to participate (both men and women) by contributing a hymn, or a word of instruction (cf. 1 Cor. 14:6; probably a lesson based on the OT), a revelation from one gifted in prophecy (cf. vv. 6, 29-32), or a word from one gifted in a tongue followed by an interpretation of what was said. The controlling principle in this free participation was the rule of love. All that was said and done was to have as its goal the need of strengthening the body of believers. Everything should edify, everything done should build up the body not tear it down.

I Corinthians 14: 27-28 If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. But if

there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God.

Tongues could be used in the early Church but with specific rules of order and appropriate restraint. If they were used there must be an interpreter or the speaker should confine his/her gift to God and not the congregation. This way the blessing would be for them only and not provide a hindrance to the general congregation.

What should be done if there is no interpreter in the congregation? Limit the gift to God and not to the congregation.

I Corinthians 14: 29 Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.

Now comes the regulation on those with the gift of prophecy. This gift like all the others had to be regulated by love, order and edification. Only two or three at the most could speak in the assembly. Finally the others in the congregation would judge the merit of the speaker's message.

I Corinthians 14: 30 If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace.

A prophet might have received a revelation sometime prior to the meeting of the church at which he subsequently related it. However, a prophet might also experience a new revelation during the Church service. If that happened, the prophet in the course of speaking should conclude his message and let the other prophetically gifted member speak. This is another phase of order in those services.

I Corinthians 14: 31 For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted.

This is again the principle of order in process. Prophecy one by one, not all talking at the same time. This as with all gifts should be done in an ordered, controlled and appropriate manner.

I Corinthians 14: 32-33 And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

The prophets were instructed similarly to the tongues-speakers (v. 28). The spirits referred to a prophet's spiritual gift, which did not control the gifted member, but he controlled it (cf. v. 30). This means we have self-control to regulate our behavior in the Church service. If two or three prophets spoke in a particular service, others gifted and with something to say could do so on another occasion. The church was not a forum for personal pontification or self-glorification; it was a place where people were to be built up and God was to be honored (cf. 10:31-33). The service and those who took part in it

should reflect the character of God. He is a God of peace, not disorder, and His Spirit worked to produce the same fruit (Galatians 5:22) in believers' lives. Conversely if there is confusion and disorder we know that this comes from Satan. It is a sure sign that something is amiss.

Who is not the author of confusion? God. Therefore by deduction who is? Satan

I Corinthians 14: 34-36 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. What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only?

The central context of this section of Scripture has been *order in the worship service*. When Paul came to this issue he did not mean that in all circumstances women were forbidden from speaking in a worship service. In chapter eleven we saw that women were encouraged to exercise their spiritual gifts. So it can't mean not to speak at all. In their services the young women both married and unmarried were separated from the males and sat at the rear of the meeting room with men in front. This was probably done so they could care for the infants and very young children, which might cause the young married women to leave the service. Some young unmarried women were chattering amongst themselves, which caused a disturbance. Others who were married were asking their husbands questions in an elevated voice across the room. Both outbursts were disrupting the order and decorum of the service.

Verse 34 refers to married women. I Tim2: 11-15 refers to the same. Why would Paul command married women to be silent in Church? Because they were chattering and speaking across the room to their husbands, which was disruptive to the service.

I Corinthians 14: 37-40 If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant. Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order.

Here is Paul's conclusion not only to the immediately preceding instructions (vv. 33b-36) but also to all his discussion about Corinthian inappropriateness in worship and the needed corrections (11:2-14:36). He expected some opposition (cf. 11:16; 14:36), but warned that those who opposed him did so at their own peril (cf. 4:18-21). Anyone who ignores the Lord's commands would find himself ignored by Him at the last day (cf. 3:17; Gen. 9:6; Matt. 10:32-33), because his actions would show that he never knew the Lord (cf. 1 Cor. 8:3; Matt. 7:22-23; 1 John 4:6).

The conclusion was that the Corinthians should give special attention to the gifts, which were most beneficial to the church as a whole (12:31; 14:1) without denigrating the other gifts. They should see that their services were conducted in a proper (cf. 11:2-16; 14:34-36) and orderly (cf. 11:17-34; 14:26-33) way.

Questions? Contact Daniel Woodhead at: 616-928-0974 or e-mail at:
Pentwaterbiblechurch@scofieldinstitute.org