

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MAY 21ST - 22ND, 2022 // BOOK OF 1 CORINTHIANS

## MATURITY IN THE GIFTS (1 CORINTHIANS 14:20-25)

Paul is in the midst of a section in his letter to Corinth on the **importance of orderly worship**.

- He's addressed the topic of **spiritual gifts** (1 Cor. 12), emphasized the **importance of love** (1 Cor. 13), and instructed on the use of the **gift of tongues** (1 Cor. 14:1-19).
- His desire for this church is for them to be, "**mature in their thinking**" when it comes to their use of the spiritual gifts (vs. 20).

There's a difference between being "**childlike**" and "**childish**."

- We're to be "**childlike**" in our faith-- expectant and **trusting in God the Father** (Matthew 18:3)-- and **ignorant to that which is impure and unholy**.
- But we're never called to be "**childish**"-- where we act **selfish and immature**, promoting and drawing attention to ourselves at the **expense of others**.

Now Paul quotes from Isaiah 28:11-12 as he returns to the topic of speaking in tongues (vs. 21-22) and calls tongues a "sign for unbelievers."

- Isaiah 28 is a pronouncement of judgment against Samaria, **the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel**.
- The false prophets of Israel ridiculed Isaiah's words of judgment, mocking him by saying his words were like nonsensical "**baby talk**" (Isaiah 28:9-10).

Isaiah responded by saying: "When judgment comes upon you, it will be **exactly** like baby-talk, because it will come from those with **foreign lips and strange tongues**" (Isaiah 28:11).

- Those with "**strange tongues**" would be the Assyrians, who **raided Samaria in 722 B.C.** and sent Israel into exile.
- So, **what in the world** is Paul talking about?? Why **does he use this OT reference??**

The **context of the passage** is Paul is telling this church to make sure that the gift of tongues **doesn't take front and center**.

- One of the reasons for this is because of "outsiders and unbelievers"-- if they come into their gatherings and hear everyone speaking in tongues, they'll think Christians are **out of their minds!** (vs. 23).
- It will most likely **harden their heart and lead them away from Christ** and the gospel.

In that case, "**tongues**" would function as a sign for those unbelievers-- but a sign of God's **judgment** because it would **expose their alienation from God**, harden their hearts, and **drive them away** (vs. 22a).

- On the other hand, prophecy reveals God's **gracious forgiveness** and restoration in an intelligible manner so an unbeliever can hear, understand, and **turn to God** (vs. 24-25).

Paul's admonition to us is to **grow up a bit** and see the bigger picture-- for us to think about the outsiders, the unbelievers, & **the seekers**.

- What things that you think are "**normal**" in church may actually be quite strange and may **create obstacles** for someone to hear the gospel?
- When it comes to church-- are we thinking like selfish "children" who simply **want our own way** instead of considering what's best for everyone?

## NOT A GOD OF CONFUSION (1 CORINTHIANS 14:26-33A)

The **general principle** Paul gives to guide gatherings of the church is, "let all things be done for building up" (vs. 26).

- The reason we gather is not so that we can be entertained, catered to, or even so that we can show off-- it's for **the spiritual building up** we need in order to live lives that glorify Jesus **outside the walls of the church!**
- So **what does that mean** practically?

It means that **everything that happens in a worship service**-- whether it's singing, teaching, prophecy, or even a word of tongues and its interpretation-- should be done in order to encourage others and build up our faith.

- Most scholars agree that Paul's suggested "**liturgy**" isn't a comprehensive mandate of what has to happen at a worship service, but he is saying our "**liturgy**" must have a **spiritual purpose**.

Then Paul gives practical instruction on how the gift of tongues is to operate within a worship service:

1. There must be an **interpretation** (vs. 27).
2. It must be done **one at a time** (vs. 27).
3. Only **2 or 3 messages** in tongues (vs. 27).
4. If no one present in the **worship gathering has the gift of interpretation of tongues**, that person is to remain silent (vs. 28).
5. That person with the gift of tongues can speak to themselves and God in their tongue, but **their practice of this gift must be silent** and not distracting to others (vs. 28).

- Some churches justify the practice of all speaking in tongues at the same time by making a false distinction between "**giving a message in tongues**" and using a "**prayer language**."

For Paul, "**speaking in tongues**" is the same thing as using a "**prayer language**" (14:2,14)-- saying that they're two separate things is a false distinction.

- Using the gift of tongues **against the scriptural guidelines is wrong** and goes against the plain teaching of the Bible.
- We must be willing to **reexamine our traditions** if they go against the teaching of Scripture.
- Just as the gift of tongues must be practiced in an orderly fashion, so too must **the gift of prophecy** (vs. 29-32).
- The whole service shouldn't be given over to prophecy -- only **two or three words should be given** (vs. 29a).
- When a word of prophecy is shared, others in the congregation and **church leadership** are to "**judge**" and evaluate that word.

No "**word of the Lord**" for the church should be received without careful consideration from its pastor and elders (1 John 4:1).

- "Do not **despise prophecy**--test all things, hold fast to that which is good" (1 Thess. 5:20-21).
- If someone with the gift of prophecy **received a revelation while another was speaking**, then the first speaker was to stop and let someone else share what God placed on their heart (vs. 30-31).

Words of prophecy happen "**one by one**," not all at the same time, so that the church **can learn and be encouraged** (vs. 31).

- No one that ignores these guidelines can say that they were simply "overwhelmed" or "overtaken" by prophecy like they were demonically possessed-- "**the spirits of prophets are subject...**" (vs. 32).
- The Holy Spirit still allows someone to **have control over their body and mind**, even as His gifts are moving upon them.

## GOD IS NOT A GOD OF CONFUSION, BUT OF PEACE (VS. 33).

The right practice of the gifts brings **peace and builds the church up** in love for the Lord and each other.

- The wrong practices of the gifts brings **confusion and chaotic weirdness** -- as we wonder if what we're seeing is fake, the work of the enemy, or just the **wrong practice** of real spiritual things.
- If it **breeds confusion**, something is wrong.

## DECENTLY AND IN ORDER (1 CORINTHIANS 14:33B-40)

Paul says that the women should, "**keep silent**" in the churches and are, "not permitted to speak" (vs. 34).

- But rather, they should be in submission to the Law and ask their husbands if they have a desire to learn, because **it's shameful for a woman to speak in church** (vs. 35).
- But wait-- Paul assumed the right for women to **pray and prophesy** under proper authority in 11:1-16, so something **more** is happening with this text.

The instruction to "**weigh what is said**" or "**judge**" words of prophecy (vs. 29) would've raised up an issue for the women in the church.

- To evaluate a word of prophecy spoken by a woman's husband **could lead her to publicly dishonoring her husband**.
- Also, evaluating or judging prophecy seems to be **the job of the elders**, pastors, and overseers-- something restricted to male leadership.

Another thought is that **men and women in the early church would often sit apart** (much like in a **Jewish synagogue**).

- Among the Christians in Corinth, there might have been the problem of **women talking or disrupting the meetings** with questions.
- Paul is saying, "Don't disrupt the worship service. Ask your questions at home."
- Remember **the big idea of this section** -- Paul is calling for **order within the worship gathering!**

So for anyone who would **reject Paul's authority** by claiming that God was leading them differently, Paul asks, "was it from you that the word of God came?" (vs. 36a).

- No, **God's Word came to them from Paul the Apostle**.
- "Are you the only ones it's reached?" God doesn't give people "words" or direction that contradicts what He's spoken through **Scripture**.

If anyone considers themselves to be spiritual, they must **acknowledge Paul's words as commands of the Lord** (vs. 37).

- Some folks in hyper-charismatic circles consider themselves to be **the most spiritual Christians there are**, but if they're not following God's Word on these matters, they're not spiritual at all.
- If they don't recognize God's Word in these things, **we're not to recognize them** or give them spiritual authority in our lives (vs. 38).

It's easy to see **the abuses of the gifts of prophecy and tongues** and just want to throw the baby out with the bathwater-- that's the "safe" approach.

- Scripture tells us to, "**earnestly desire**" to prophesy and not forbid the gift of tongues (vs. 39).
- But at the same time, we're told that these gifts **must be practiced decently** and in order (vs. 40).

## DECENTLY AND IN ORDER.

- Pursuing **freedom for the sake of freedom** produces chaos (**anarchy**).
- Our **freedom in Christ and in the Holy Spirit** doesn't extend beyond the **boundaries of God's written Word**.
- Once we go **past God's boundaries**, our "**freedom**" can hurt others, confuse others, and bring dishonor to God's name.
- Pursuing **order for the sake of order** produces lifelessness (**tyranny**).
- Some of us want our Christian lives to be **safe, predictable, and restricted**, simply because we're afraid of not being in control.
- Anything that we can't **control, understand, or easily explain** we presume must be bad or unbiblical-- but that's not the case (Acts 2:12).
- Pursuing **order for the sake of freedom** is liberating (**liberty**).
- God's design for all creation is for it to **be ordered and organized**, and yet He allows creation the freedom to exercise our choices in a meaningful way-- **we get to cultivate and create and produce life!**
- "Where **the Spirit of the Lord** is there is liberty" (2 Cor. 3:17).

## LIBERTY.

- We've been liberated from...
- The **law of sin and death** (Gal. 4:3-7)
- Our **bondage to sin** (Romans 6:14)
- The slavery of our own **self-governance** (2 Pet. 2:19)
- We've been liberated to...
- Trusting, **loving obedience** to God's Word (John 10:11)
- Trusting, **loving childlike faith** in our Father and His goodness (Matthew 18:3)