

1 Corinthians Chapter 14 Continued

1 Corinthians 14:20 "Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men."

We are God's children, so we should always be humble before God as His dear children. We should be forgiving as children forgive, as well. Children can fight one minute, and in the next five minutes be playing again. They are quick to forgive and forget. In that, we should be just like them. We should not be children in the decisions we make however. We should be mature Christians in understanding. We should grow in the Lord each day, so that we will be wise in the decisions that we make. Our understanding of the things of God must be influenced by the teaching of the Holy Spirit of God.

Most of the Corinthian believers were the opposite of what Paul here admonished. They were extremely experienced in evil, but greatly lacking in wisdom. Yet mature understanding was especially essential for proper comprehension and use of the gift of tongues, because the conspicuous and fascinating nature of the gift made it so attractive to the flesh. He was asking his readers to put aside emotion and experience, along with the desires of the flesh and pride, to think carefully about the purpose of tongues.

1 Corinthians 14:21 "In the law it is written, With [men of] other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord."

The "law" is not speaking of the Mosaic law, but is speaking of the Old Testament. We can find a reference to this in the book of Isaiah 28:11 "For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people." We, also, know that Joel spoke of this, and the Scripture in the book of Acts the second chapter is speaking of this as well. In all of these miraculous utterings, they still did not hear. They had ears to hear, but they did not hear.

In a freely rendered quotation from Isaiah, Paul explains that centuries earlier the Lord had predicted that one day He would use men of other tongues, that is, foreigners speaking unknown languages, as a sign to unbelieving Israel, who "will not hear Me." These "other tongues" are what they knew as the gift of languages, given solely as a sign to unbelieving Israel. That sign was three fold: cursing, blessing and authority. To emphasize the cursing, Paul quoted Isaiah's words of warning to Judah of the judgment from Assyria.

The leaders thought his words were too simple and rejected him. The time would come, the prophet said, when they would hear Assyrian, a language they could not understand, indicating judgment. Jeremiah spoke similarly of the Babylonians who were also to come and destroy Judah.

When the apostles spoke at Pentecost in all those foreign languages, the Jews should have known the judgment prophesied and historically fulfilled first by the Assyrians and then by the

Babylonian captivity was about to fall on them again for their rejection of Christ. Including the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., as it had happened in 586 B.C. under Babylonian power.

1 Corinthians 14:22 "Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying [serveth] not for them that believe not, but for them which believe."

Those who do not believe are looking for signs and wonders. Those who believe are basing what they believe on the Word of God. Peter, John, and the other apostles did not have to hear someone speak in other tongues to cause them to believe. The Holy Spirit given to them on the day of Pentecost was not given to them as a sign that God was real. The tongues were to show them that they had been empowered by the Holy Ghost to minister. They believed, because of the Word of God, and not because of the sign.

Explaining further, he says explicitly that all tongues are for the sake of unbelievers. In other words, that gift has no purpose in the church when everyone present is a believer.

In the completely opposite way, the gift of prophesying benefits only believers, who are able, by their new natures and the indwelling Holy Spirit, to understand spiritual truth.

1 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?"

To someone who did not know the Scriptures, it would seem strange. Some who were there at Pentecost thought that the disciples were drunk. Peter straightened them out when he said it was but the third hour of the day.

Acts 2:15 "For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is [but] the third hour of the day." It would be a confusing thing to come into the church as a newcomer and everyone in the place was speaking in another language other than your native language. How would this type service bring people to the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ?

As Paul explains in more detail later, even for unbelievers, even when the gift of tongues was exercised in its proper time in history. When it was dominant and uncontrolled in the church, bedlam ensued and the gospel was disgraced and discredited. In Corinth, there was charismatic chaos.

1 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 for a truth."

It was not the speaking in tongues that brought the thousands to the Lord, but the preaching of Paul. We see in the verses above, that all are bringing this one that believed not the gospel

message. It seems they were all trying to tell Him of the Lord. Their testimonies convinced him. All of them had a part in winning him to the Lord. It was by the Word of God that he was saved.

In this last section on the topic of tongues, the stress is on how they were to be systematically limited for use in the church in an orderly way. For the sake of hypothetical discussion, it is noteworthy that even if one granted that the gift was still in use today, the modern movement would be totally discredited as illegitimate by its failure to follow the clear, controlling commands in these verses.

1 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."

It seems in this, that all are trying to minister at once. There was total disarray. They all have heard from God in one way or the other and they all want to share what they know.

A Psalm: "the reading or singing of an Old Testament psalm. A doctrine or teaching: probably refers to a doctrine or subject of special interest; A tongue: In the singular, this refers to the counterfeit; A revelation: Some supposed word from God, whether spurious or genuine; An interpretation: This refers to that of a tongue's message; For edification: This was Paul's way of calling a halt to the chaos. Edification is the goal and the Corinthian chaos could not realize it.

It seemed there was no order in the service here. If what they are doing is building up the service, fine. If it is not, it is not the time to share it.

1 Corinthians 14:27 "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."

This is said just to keep order in the church. Very little could be done with everyone trying to speak at once. Notice how important it was, and is, to have an interpreter. It does no good for the church to have someone speak in tongues, unless you know what the message is. This should be limited, even at that, because the message through preaching is what generally saves people. Through the foolishness of preaching, men are saved.

Verses 27 and 28 provide regulations for the exercise of the gift:

- (1) Only two or three persons in a service;
- (2) Only speaking in turn, one at a time;
- (3) Only with an interpreter.

Without those conditions, one was to meditate and pray silently.

1 Corinthians 14:28 "But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God."

Speaking in tongues really builds up the one who is speaking in the tongue. That can be done even better in private, than in public. Speaking in tongues can build the whole church up, if there is someone who can interpret. If there is no interpreter present, then the message is exclusively for the one speaking in tongues.

Verses 29-31: Since Paul's pastoral (1 and 2 Tim. and Titus), do not mention prophets, it seems evident that this unique office had ceased to function in the church even before the end of the apostolic age. When Paul wrote the Corinthians, however, prophets were still central to the work of the church. Here he gave 4 regulations for their preaching:

- (1) Only two or three were to speak;
- (2) The other prophets were to judge what was said;
- (3) If while one was speaking, God gave a revelation, the speaker was to defer to the one hearing from God; and
- (4) Each prophet was to speak in turn.

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

Even the preaching should not be done by everyone there, but by one or two at each meeting. The people would tire and probably go home, if too many tried to bring a message at one meeting.

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

We can see from this, that there had been total confusion in their services. That is really the job of the pastor to see that order is maintained in the services. Whoever had the message that was the most urgent should be the one that was heard.

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

At this time, many of them were at the same level of understanding and God was revealing things to each of them. It was good for each of them, on occasion, to share the things that God had revealed to them. That way, they could all share in the knowledge each of them had. The comfort spoken of here, is in being able to share what God had revealed to them.

1 Corinthians 14:32 "And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets."

All of the prophets could determine among themselves, who should be heard at a given time.

Not only were the prophets to judge others with discernment, but they were also to have control over themselves. God does not desire out of spirit or out of mind experiences. Those who

received and proclaimed the truth were to have clear minds. There was nothing bizarre, ecstatic, trance like, or wild about receiving and preaching God's Word, as with demonic experiences.

1 Corinthians 14:33 "For God is not [the author] of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints."

The confusion, spoken of here, would come from some who would push their way into the position to speak, even when the prophets had decided they were not to speak. There has to be a leader in the church which keeps all of this from happening. The pastor of the church should be the final word on who speaks, and who does not. They are responsible to God for the message that is preached in the church they are in charge of. Everything should be done decently and in order.

Here is the key to the whole chapter. The church at worship before God should reflect His character and nature because He is a God of peace and harmony, order and clarity, not strife and confusion.

1 Corinthians 14:34 "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."

This has been debated back and forth ever since the day it was written. In all of these lessons, we have seen Paul trying to bring a system of order to all churches that he had begun within the context of their customs. We must first look at this in the context of what we have been reading.

There seemed to be great confusion going on in this church at Corinth; everyone was trying to speak at once. There was probably so much noise that it would have been difficult to hear. Notice who the women were. Paul says, your women (the women of Corinth). Next let us look at (also saith the law). Whose law is this speaking of? There was no such law included in the Levitical law. This was not part of the 10 commandments, nor was it part of the over 600 regulations in Exodus and Leviticus.

It was not the law of the Christian, because we have just studied that the only law for the new Christians was that they not eat anything strangled, they not eat anything offered to idols, they are not to drink blood, and that they cannot commit fornication. Then whose law is this? It is a direct quote from the Talmud. The Talmud was not the Bible, but a commentary. In this area, women were thought of as subordinate to the men.

The Talmud was a commentative and interpretative writing involving Jewish traditions. The Talmud, to them, was like many think of the commentaries of our day. This is opinion, and not law. The Babylonians and the Palestinians came up with these teachings of customs.

We know that this was never intended by Paul to become doctrine for the Christians. He had fought hard for the Christians not to be strapped down with customs. There are so many things that tell us that this was tradition of this area, and was not to be taken as law for the Christians. First of all, you must have two witnesses to establish a thing. You only have the writings of Paul.

It does not mean that what Paul said was untrue. It just means that this was tradition, and not law or doctrine of the Christians. There are several different times that Jesus mentions establishing with two witnesses, but I will give two here in His own words.

Matthew 18:16 "But if he will not hear [thee, then] take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established."

John 8:17 "It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true."

This is the very reason that there were two witnesses at the temple when Jesus was dedicated to God.

Paul did not have any problem with women ministering. We see in the following Scripture, that Paul ministered with women as his assistants.

Philippians 4:3 And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow laborers, whose names are in the book of life."

There are many of you that will say that is not what this means, so let us look at Joel and see.

Joel 2:28 "And it shall come to pass afterward, [that] I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions;"

The root word that "prophesy" was translated from means to preach, speak by inspiration, or to make self a prophet. The second witness to this (is in the book of Acts chapter 2). We also know that Phillip's daughters preached or prophesied. The word is interchangeable. Even in the Old Testament, there were women who were anointed of God to serve in this capacity. Debra judged in the land, and judged the men as well as the women. She led the battle with her general (or else the people would not have gone to war).

Huldah was a prophetess in the land (2 Kings 22:14; 2 Chronicles 34:22). There are many more examples, such as Lydia and Dorcas, but I believe we have said enough to settle this.

Paul said this then, to fulfill the traditions of the area here in Corinth, and never intended this to close off women from the ministry whom God has called. I do not mean to infer by this that women are not subject to their husband in the family. Flesh and spirit are two totally different realms. With God, there is no male or female.

Galatians 3:28. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

1 Corinthians 14:35 "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."

This again, was the tradition of the Corinthians. At the time that Paul wrote this, women were not very well educated. The temple school in Jerusalem had just taught young men, and women were not thought to be interested in this type thing. We need to look at when this changed. We gave the Scripture in Joel just a few verses back about God's Spirit being poured out on all flesh, and the women as well as men prophesy. In Joel, it speaks of this as being later.

Acts 2:16-18 "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;" "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:" "And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:"

We see from this that it was perfectly alright for the women to prophesy (preach). One meaning of the word is speak from inspiration. What the Scripture is probably trying to convey, was here at Corinth, there was so much confusion with everyone speaking at once, that Paul is trying to stop some of the confusion.

Verses 36 and 37: Paul knew that the Corinthians would react to all these form regulations that would end the free for all in their services. The prophets, tongues speakers, and women may all have been resistant to words, so he anticipated that resistance by sarcastically challenging those who put themselves above his word. And thus, above Scripture by either ignoring it or interpreting it to fit their predisposed ideas.

If anyone was a genuine prophet or had the true spiritual gift of tongues, he or she would submit to the principles God had revealed through the apostle.

1 Corinthians 14:36 "What? came the word of God out from you? Or came it unto you only?"

Paul has quickly jumped to another subject. He is saying, did you start this work, or did I? Paul is explaining to them why he has the authority to establish this work with his direction, and not theirs. He in finality is saying, I brought the Word of God to you.

1 Corinthians 14:37 "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."

Paul is saying, that all he has tried to do is set the church services up the way God would have wanted them set up. Paul is, also, saying that God should have revealed to them that he was telling the truth, if they really were a prophet, or spiritual.

1 Corinthians 14:38 "But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant."

That is, anyone who does not recognize the authority of Paul's teaching should himself not be recognized as a legitimate servant gifted by God.

Some people do not want to know the truth. They are unteachable. That is what Paul is dealing with here.

1 Corinthians 14:39 "Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues."

Legitimate languages were limited in purpose and in duration, but as long as it was still active in the early church, it was not to be hindered. But prophecy was the most desirable gift to be exercised because of its ability to edify, exhort and comfort with the truth.

1 Corinthians 14:40 "Let all things be done decently and in order."

In this, Paul is trying to sum up what he has said. The best thing for them to do is to pray that God will give them the gift of preaching. Tongues are great, if used correctly, but can cause confusion, if improperly used. Do all decently and in order as we talked about in verse 33: "The church at worship before God should reflect His character and nature because He is a God of peace and harmony, order and clarity, not strife and confusion."

1 Corinthians Chapter 14 Continued Questions

1. Paul said, be not _____ in understanding.
2. Be children in _____.
3. What trait do children have, that would be good for adults to have?
4. What should our understanding of the Scriptures be influenced by?
5. What was written in the Old Testament that is mentioned in verse 21?
6. What other books of the Bible speak of this same thing?
7. Tongues are for a _____.
8. Prophesying serveth for whom?
9. Those who do not believe are looking for _____ and _____.
10. Who were some of the prophets who did not have to have to hear someone speak in tongues to believe?
11. The tongues had been to show them that they had been _____ by the Holy Ghost to minister.

12. If everyone speaks with tongues in a church service and someone unlearned comes in, what will they say?
13. Verse 24 is speaking of what, when it says prophesy?
14. What brought the thousands to the Lord just after Pentecost?
15. Verse 26 says that every one of them hath a _____, hath a _____, hath a _____, hath a _____, hath an _____.
16. How many, at the most, should speak in tongues at a meeting?
17. If they speak in tongues, there must be an _____.
18. What generally saves people?
19. If there is no interpreter, what should the one desiring to speak in tongues do?
20. What is meant by verse 30?
21. Ye may all prophesy, one by one, that all may _____.
22. What was the comfort, in verse 31, speaking of?
23. The spirits are subject to whom?
24. God is not the author of confusion, but of _____.
25. Whose women were to keep silence in the churches?
26. What law is this speaking of?
27. What were the only laws of doctrine for the Christians?
28. What is the Talmud?
29. How many witnesses do you have to have to establish something?
30. Where do we find a specific Scripture that tells us Paul ministered with women?
31. Who are some of the women God ordained to work for Him?
32. Where can we find the Scripture that is the second witness to this?
33. Why did Paul make this statement in Corinthians, then?
34. Are women subject to their husbands in any way? Explain
35. What does the word prophesy mean?

36. Covet to _____.

37. Let all things be done _____ and in _____.