

Text: 1 Cor 14.6-19

Summarizing 1 Cor 12-14 so far

1 Corinthians 12: Emphasis on unity of spirit and clarity of understanding**1 Corinthians 13: Partial digression**

- **Spiritual Fruit: superior to Spiritual Gifts** (12.31b-13.13)
 - **A pause for definitions**

1 Corinthians 14: Priority of intelligibility in the church

- Contrasting prophecy and tongues (14.1-5)
- Illustrations for clarity (14.6-12)
- Difficulties for tongues in church services (14.13-19)

Here we emphasized that in the church service, the goal was edification of the attendants. The Corinthian practice of tongues distracted when no one could interpret, so is not preferred.

Up to this point, Paul is *reasoning* with them about the inferiority of tongues among the many other spiritual gifts. Now he turns to regulation.

Today: Instruction for the Church (14.20-40)**I. The significance of tongues and prophecy to unbelievers (20-25)**

Paul admonishes the Corinthians to “grow up” in their thinking. (20) What does this suggest about their essential attitude with respect to tongues?

Self-indulgence, acting like children

The quotation from Isa 28.11f. refers to God’s judgement against Judah by ceasing to speak through prophets, instead speaking to them by foreigners in a foreign language (the Assyrians). Though God “spoke” to them in tongues, what was the result? **unbelief**

Considering this, what kind of sign are tongues in the church service to unbelievers? Will they listen to God because of the tongues? (22a, 23)

They signify madness, they make no sense, they keep men in unbelief

Prophecy is also a sign, what does it signify? (22b, 24-25)

The message of God, bringing conviction and conversion

So, when Paul says prophecy is a sign to those who believe in v. 22, what is he especially pointing to?

Unbelievers who become converts

II. Order in the church (26-38)

A. In the church service (26-32)

What does v. 26 suggest about the current state of affairs in the Corinthian church?

Everyone had a "gift" and wanted to "get in on the act"

What is the general rule given in v. 26?

Everything for edification

How does Paul limit tongues in v. 27?

Limits number (no more than three), speak in order, always interpret

What if there is no interpreter present? (28)

Tongues speaker to keep silence

Likewise Paul limits prophets. What are the rules for prophets? (29-31)

No more than three, prophesy one by one, not speaking over each other

What does "let others pass judgement" suggest? (29)

Consider carefully, compare to Scripture

What does the phrase "spirits of prophets are subject to the prophets" suggest? (32)

Not in a frenzy, under control

What is the concluding principle in these instructions? (33)

God is orderly, not confused, or inspiring confusion

B. For women (33-35)

Compare 1 Cor 11.4-5. How does this seem to conflict with vv. 34-35?

They seem to participate in prophecy (ch. 11) but here are not permitted to speak

Note: I preached a message on this passage in our Ask the Pastor series, see "Shall Women Speak?" on Sept 18, 2022. (You can filter the Audio Sermons by date and find it.)

Since women are permitted to prophesy in some contexts, they were not forbidden to utter their prophecy. Compare 1 Tim 2.12

1 Tim 2.12 But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.

In 1 Cor 14, with apparently public evaluation of prophecies a part of the process (29), would women be putting themselves in authority by questioning a male prophet? **yes, in my opinion**

Consequently, this is an additional regulation on the gift of prophecy operating at that time.

C. Authority (36-38)

In these verses, Paul exercises his authority by virtue of the gift of apostleship (the number one gift).

What is the challenge of v. 36?

Are you the source of divine revelation?

What must every prophet or spiritual person recognize about Paul's writings? (37)

That Paul writes inspired revelation

What should the Corinthians think of any prophet or "spiritual person" if they rejected Paul's authority? (38)

Those people are not recognized by God

III. Concluding thoughts (39-40)

Did Paul allow the Corinthians to exercise any spiritual gifts God might give? (39) **yes**

What was the overriding principle that must be exercised in church services, regardless of the gifts used? **orderliness**

Conclusion:

These are the main points about spiritual gifts:

1. The gifts come from God according to his will, not human desires.
2. The Lord doesn't give everyone in the church the same gifts.
3. The principal issue is the interworking of the whole body, not one part of the body looking down on another part.
4. Individual believers should put a priority on the best gifts.
5. Even more important, each believer should put a higher priority on the fruit of the Spirit (love).
6. In exercising the gifts in church, those gifts that edify the church are more valuable.
7. In the church services, decency and order are priorities, exercising gifts are secondary and regulated.
8. As to the "at-will" miracle gifts, we have shown that these gifts were temporary and ended as the church grew.