

Exegetical Notes – 1 Corinthians 14:26-40

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Introduction: In this Chapter, Paul concludes his discussion of spiritual gifts. The point of the passage is found in verse 40, “Everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.” Christian worship should not be disorganized nor hodge-podge. It should be orderly and planned so as to build up the congregation, see verse 27.

1 Corinthians 14:26-40

Verses 26-28

What then shall we say, brothers and sisters? When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Everything must be done so that the church may be built up. ²⁷ If anyone speaks in a tongue, two—or at the most three—should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret. ²⁸ If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and to God.

- It appears that when the Corinthian Christians gathered for worship, the parts of the service of worship were assembled from those in worship. One person would suggest a hymn to be sung, another would speak in tongues. Someone else would interpret the tongue.
- But everything must be done in an orderly way.
- Speakers in tongues were given specific boundaries. Only two or three persons should be allowed to speak in a tongue and if there was not one there to interpret what was being said, the person exercising the gift of tongues was to be silent. Those speaking in tongues were to take turns, speaking one at a time. It was not to be an event in which everyone present spoke at the same time.

Verses 29-33

²⁹ Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. ³⁰ And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. ³¹ For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone

may be instructed and encouraged. ³² ***The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets.*** ³³ ***For God is not a God of disorder but of peace—as in all the congregations of the Lord’s people.***

- Two or three preachers were to speak at each service and the others present were to listen to them carefully.
- If a special revelation was given to a prophet who was present but not preaching that morning, the one preaching needed to agree to yield to his fellow prophet so that the teachers were not speaking over each other.
- Prophets were to be cooperative with each other, not competitive. The “SPIRIT” of a prophet was, first of all, under his control. He could choose to speak or to be quiet. The “SPIRIT” of a prophet was also subject to the other prophets present. Prophets should listen to other prophets to protect the word of the Lord and the congregation from error.
- This is because God imposes order and destroys chaos. God’s word does not disagree with itself. The order imposed on the prophetic community protects the word from error.
- The last phrase of verse 33 is somewhat problematic. Is it the concluding thought concerning prophets or is it the opening thought of the next thought about women? Linguistically it could be either. Certainly, God is not a god of disorder in any congregation of faithful people.

Verses 34-35

³⁴ ***(As is all the congregations of the Lord’s people) Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says.*** ³⁵ ***If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.***

- Remember that Paul is discussing the order of worship and the use of spiritual gifts in worship in this passage. Nothing should disrupt the orderly progression of worship. In the verses preceding these he has been discussing the way prophets were to cooperate with each other and be subject to each other.
- Remember that Paul does not preclude women participating verbally in worship (see 1 Corinthians 11:5). However, in 1 Timothy 2:11-12 Paul says clearly, “I do not permit a woman to have authority over a man.” The issue here is divine order. That order must be preserved in order to avoid confusion. Women are not to assume leadership in Christian worship.

Verses 36-38

³⁶ Or did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached? ³⁷ If anyone thinks they are a prophet or otherwise gifted by the Spirit, let them acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command. ³⁸ But if anyone ignores this, they will themselves be ignored.

- Remember the rule, "The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets," (verse 32). Paul is speaking as a prophet. Other prophets will recognize that he, too, is a prophet. They will see the sense in what he says and agree with him. The Holy Spirit, acting through the gifting of prophets, will see to this. The other prophets will agree with him.
- Those who ignore these rules laid down on worship, expose themselves. They are not acting under the gifting of the Holy Spirit. They do not divide the word of the Lord correctly and so should be ignored.

Verses 39-40

³⁹ Therefore, my brothers and sisters, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. ⁴⁰ But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.

- While the gifts of the Holy Spirit should be used in Christian worship, all things must be done in an orderly and fitting way so as to honor God.

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