

Properly And Orderly

1 Corinthians, Vol. 30

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1 Corinthians 14:26-40

As Paul wraps up that task in the case of tongues, his reasoning leads him to address five matters.

I. **Regulating Tongues** (26-28)

1 Corinthians 14:26: *What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.*

This verse is a snapshot of the situation Paul was responding to in the church at Corinth. On any given occasion some of them apparently arrived for worship with a predetermined plan to have a speaking part in the service.

Let all things be done for edification is the command. Everything done in the service should be designed to build up everyone present. Many in our generation take this verse out of its context and use it as it is actually a command to have as many people as want to, speak in the every service.

1 Corinthians 14:27-28: *If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and one must interpret; but if there is no interpreter, he must keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God.*

Here are **3 regulations** for the gift of tongues.

Number. Not more than 2, and on a rare occasion, possibly 3.

Order. At no time were two or more persons to speak simultaneously.

Mode. Speaking in tongues, *if it ever occurred in church*, was always to be followed by interpretation.

II. **Regulating Prophecy** (29-33a)

Don't forget that the context unequivocally states the superiority of prophecy (proclamation) over tongues as what should be most prominent whenever the church is gathered together for worship.

1 Corinthians 14:29: *Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment.*

The **first** regulation is about the **number** of prophets. It was limited to 2 or 3. Paul accepted three prophets proclaiming God's word, but the limit was three.

The **second** regulation is that prophecies were subject to **review and discernment** by other preachers present. Just as interpretation was necessary for tongues, discernment was necessary for preaching. **The others** are the **other prophets** who might be present.

1 Corinthians 14:30: *But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, the first one must keep silent.*

Here, the length of the message is regulated. A prophet was to defer to any new revelation through another prophet, in this small window of history during which the New Testament was being unveiled. Naturally, the two were never to speak simultaneously, or one to shout down the other.

1 Corinthians 14:31: *For you can **all** prophesy one by one, so that **all** may learn and **all** may be exhorted;*

This kind of respect and alertness was to be practiced by the preachers, to allow all the of them to speak in the ongoing life of the church. The goal was always maximum edification to the body of Christ.

All . . . All . . . All . . . The first **all** is limited by the context to the prophets (maximum of 3 in any service), and the last two **alls** refer to the entire congregation.

1 Corinthians 14:32: *and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets;*

This explains why the command in verse 30 is appropriate. A true spiritual gift never causes a person to lose control of the mouth or the mind.

1 Corinthians 14:33a: . . . *for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, . . .*¹

Because of the nature of God, Paul wrote about the spirits of the prophets being under their control. God is not a God of commotion or confusion, but a God of peace. The gifts given by God, therefore, are capable of being controlled by people who are under the control of His Spirit who gives the gifts. See 1 Corinthians 13:5.

III. **Regulating Women** (33b-36)

1 Corinthians 14:33b: *As in all the churches of the saints, . . .*

You can compare this with 11:16. There is to be consistent understanding and application of the word of God.

1 Corinthians 14:34-35: *The women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says. If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church.*

Charles Swindoll commented on these verses over 40 years ago:

“These are fightin' words today! Without stirring up needless dust let me just ask you to hear what God is saying here. I take the words to mean that the woman is not to have an authoritative voice in the Christian assembly. The woman is to be an example of quiet submission, contrary to popular opinion. This has reference to the church.”

As you surely know, there is tremendous debate over how to apply this passage. Let's consider the ways it is applied in modern situations, and see what fits the context.

Possibility #1: It is not meant to cover all occasions, but only situations where there abuse occurred as in Corinth. The problem with this idea is that Paul specifically says *as in ALL the churches*.

Possibility #2: It refers only to women speaking with tongues or prophesying, according to the context of chapter 14. This one also crashes on takeoff because the next sentence deals with questioning her husband at home, which would hardly be a substitute for a woman using the gift of tongues or prophecy in the church.

¹The last part of verse 33 doesn't fit well at all with the previous context, but it fits perfectly with what follows. If you have the NASB you'll see a marginal note about the preferred punctuation.

Possibility #3: It refers only to a woman assuming or usurping an authoritative role in a local church, not to her actually speaking in public in the service. This has the same problem as #2, in addition to the fact that the only two options are **to keep silent** and **to speak**.

Possibility #4: It means just what it says, and it is a general rule for all churches. Paul does not deny women the use of speaking gifts, but he says that they should use them in circumstances other than the public worship services of the church.

Just as the Law also says: This refers most directly to:

Genesis 3:16: *To the woman He said, "I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth, In pain you will bring forth children; Yet your desire will be for your husband, And he will rule over you."* See also 1 Timothy 2:11-14.

It's not popular to hold to what the Scriptures say about this, but nonetheless, submission and equality coexist without any contradiction.

1 Corinthians 14:36: *Was it from you that the word of God first went forth? Or has it come to you only?*

This is meant to be sarcastic and biting.

IV. **Recognizing Authority** (37-38)

1 Corinthians 14:37-38: *If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment. But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.*

Anyone who contradicts the word of God is not a spokesman of God.

V. **Regulating Worship** (39-40)

1 Corinthians 14:39-40: *Therefore, my brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak in tongues. But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner.*

Properly is a word that implies beauty. It is literally *well formed*. It describes what produces a pleasing impression.

Orderly manner comes from a military word. It has to do with performing the proper task at the proper time in the proper way, wearing the proper uniform and passing inspection.

Tongues: A Personal Opinion

Pastor Charles Swindoll

“I should be up front with you at the outset. I do not believe that the modern-day tongues movement belongs in the church today. It does not square with Scripture, nor does it unify the body. Therefore I do not see it as a work of God that exalts and honors His Son.

“... I have never had anything near the 'tongues experience' either privately not publicly nor do I intend to seek it. Frankly, I have all the enthusiasm and zeal I can handle!

“... As I study God's word and seek to know His mind and desire with regard to the modern-day tongues experience, I find no justification for either encouraging it or allowing it to occur. I have pastor-friends who did, and today they are sorry they sat back and watched it divide and conquer the flock. I do believe it was a vital part of God's plan for the declaration of His truth in the first century... but what is happening today is a far cry from what happened back then.”