

Wednesday Evening Bible Study

March 30, 2021

Series - *The Life and Writings of the Apostle Paul*

The Corinthian Letters

The Long Letter (First Corinthians)

Chapter Fourteen – *Order in the Church*

Text – 1 Corinthians 14

Memory Verse – 1 Corinthians 14:40

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

Key verses from this chapter – v. 12; vs. 21 – 22; v. 33; v. 40

Introduction

Speaking in tongues had changed dramatically since its advent in Acts 2 (See Acts 2:1 – 18). At Pentecost Peter spoke and everybody understood him, and he understood himself. By the time we get to the letter to the Corinthians, it appears that all are speaking, and no one can understand anybody. Tongues had evolved from the communication of specific languages for the edification of the hearers to a communication “with the spirit”, which no one could understand. In this chapter Paul will correct the abuses that had been taking place regarding the speaking of tongues.

Problems with the modern day tongues movement:

1. 1 Corinthians 13:8 states that tongues would cease.
2. Women were not permitted to speak in the churches (v. 34)
3. At most, only three could be speaking in tongues, and an interpreter had to be present.
4. The emphasis in many Pentecostal churches is tongues, when Paul clearly taught that tongues were inferior to prophecy.

Even if speaking in tongues was still an available spiritual gift for today, the practice that is visible in most churches does not resemble at all the Bible pattern; but it does resemble the confusing abuses that were apparently taking place in Corinth.

I. The Principles - Preference of Prophecy over Tongues (vs. 1 – 26)

Notice in v. 1 that Paul will briefly emphasize the charity, which was the subject of chapter 13. Charity is more important than both tongues and prophecy.

A. The Practice of Tongues in Corinth Was Confusion.

1. Illustrations are given to demonstrate the uselessness of unclear sounds. (vs. 7 – 11)
2. Illumination must accompany the communication so that both the speaker and the hearer can benefit from it. (vs. 12 – 21)
3. Tongues were intended to be an indication that God was speaking, but it had begun to communicate just the opposite. It was “madness” (vs. 22 – 26)

B. The Prophecy of God’s Word Was Clear

Prophecy served to edify all who heard it, just as the preaching of the Word of God does today. Tongues were very confusing, and did not edify unless there was an interpreter present.

II. The Practicals - Orders to Help Keep Order

A. A Limited Number (v. 27)

B. No Lack of Interpreter (v. 28)

If there was no interpreter present the speaker was to keep silent in the church, and limit his communication to himself and God.

C. No Lawlessness in the Meeting (vs. 29 – 33)

There cannot be chaos. One person was to speak at a time so that all could benefit from what God had given him. Notice v. 32:

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

Notice that the spirit is not the Holy Spirit because it is not capitalized, and it is plural. The word “spirit” can refer to the human spirit concerning affection, desire, and emotion. What Paul is probably saying is that the prophets needed to keep their “spirits” (i.e. emotions, passions) under control.

*"He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls."
(Proverbs 25:28)*

D. No Ladies were to speak in tongues or to prophecy. (vs. 34 – 35)

E. Do Things Lawfully (vs. 36 – 40)

Paul did not put a stop to speaking in tongues, but he did put some restrictions on it. In v. 39, he re-emphasizes the preference of prophecy over tongues.