



CHARIS-MATTERS

STUDIES IN FIRST CORINTHIANS

Text

First Corinthians 14:26-40

Topic

We see that there are principles for maintaining order while exercising the gifts of the Spirit during the public services of the church

Title

"I'm About to Get Control and I Think I Like It!"

Introduction

- If you feel prompted to speak in tongues in a meeting of the church, should you do so?
- If you feel prompted to prophesy in a meeting of the church, should you do so?

We're at the point in our study of the exercise of these extraordinary speaking gifts that we can give an answer.

We can definitively, unequivocally, with all authority, say... *"Maybe!"* Maybe you should speak in tongues or prophesy; maybe you shouldn't.

It's not double talk. It depends upon the meeting and your understanding of certain principles for the order of service that are clearly outlined in the remainder of First Corinthians fourteen.

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"I'm About to Get Control and I Think I Like It!"

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 If You Really Want To See Others Built-up You Will Keep Gifted Speaking Under Control, and #2 If You Really Want To See Others Built-up You Will Keep General Speaking Under Control.

#1 If You Really Want To See Others Built-up
You Will Keep Gifted Speaking Under Control

(v26-33)

We're going to see that there should always be order within the public services of the church. You can't have order unless you first understand and agree that Christians can keep their speaking, including tongues and prophecy, under control.

The word "control" almost sounds unspiritual. I mean, if the Holy Spirit wants to speak through you, is it really biblical to keep such gifted speaking under control? Won't you quench the Holy Spirit if you keep silent?

Drop down to verse thirty-two.

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

Let's read the NIV's translation of verse thirty-two.

1 Corinthians 14:32 The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets.

Occasionally you'll hear someone reference the Amplified Bible. It's a translation that uses explanatory alternate readings and amplifications to assist us in understanding what Scripture really says. Multiple English word equivalents to each key Hebrew and Greek word clarify and amplify meanings that may otherwise have been concealed by a traditional translation method.

Here is First Corinthians 14:32 in the AV.

1 Corinthians 14:32 For the spirits of the prophets (the speakers in tongues) are under the speaker's control [and subject to being silenced as may be necessary],

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The same Holy Spirit who prompts you to speak in tongues or prophesy inspired the apostle Paul to write these words telling you that you must always keep His supernatural promptings to speak under control. **Period!**

Knowing we can control our speaking we can embrace the principles for order within the public services of the church.

1 Corinthians 14:26 How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.

Different types of meetings of the church are described in the Book of Acts. There were prayer meetings, there was a teaching that last all night, there were leadership meetings, and there was a church council. The different meetings had different emphases. Different things happened at them.

In the meetings we're talking about everyone has an opportunity to participate. In singing, in teaching, in speaking in tongues, in interpreting tongues, in prophecy.

Paul added a quick reminder that "all things be done for edification" - with the goal of building-up others.

There are principles of order regarding how you are to conduct yourself at such a meeting. Paul starts with speaking in tongues in verses twenty-seven and twenty-eight.

1 Corinthians 14:27 If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret.

1 Corinthians 14:28 But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God.

The gift of tongues is controllable. Here are the basic principles governing the public exercise of the gift of tongues:

1. "Let there be two or at the most three" - Speaking in tongues should not dominate a meeting. Two or three people might be allowed to speak in tongues to the whole group, and that's all.

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2. "Each in turn" - There is to be no multiple speaking or singing in tongues; only one person at a time should be exercising the gift of tongues.
3. "...let one interpret. If there is no interpreter...keep silent" - You must be concerned with there being an interpretation of the utterance in tongues since uninterpreted tongues cannot edify others. If, for example, there is an utterance in tongues that goes uninterpreted, that's a pretty good indication that there should be no further exercise of the gift in that meeting.
4. Look back at verse two of chapter fourteen:
1 Corinthians 14:2 For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.
The interpretation of a tongue must always be prayer and praise from men to God. It will never be a message from God to men.

How is this practiced? You are in a meeting of believers. The leader of the meeting indicates to you whether or not it would be appropriate to have a time of prayer and praise during which the gift of tongues and the interpretation of tongues could be exercised. As the group prays and praises, *you are prompted to speak in tongues!* You might already know someone there who has the gift of interpretation. If so, you can be somewhat comfortable in speaking or singing in tongues.

What if you're not sure if someone there has the gift of interpretation? You might simply share with the leader of the group that you feel God prompting you to speak in tongues. Perhaps he knows if someone is there who can interpret. Or he might feel that God wants to give someone the gift of interpretation as they hear your tongues being spoken. He will instruct you what to do.

By the way: An interpretation is *not* a word-for-word translation. You don't recognize words and phrases, like you would a known language. You are given the interpretation - you are given words that describe the sense of what was spoken to God.

That brings up an interesting point that is rarely considered. God may genuinely prompt you to speak or sing in tongues. You obey God, following

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the kind of procedures I've just outlined. *But there is no interpretation!*
What happened?

It's possible God wasn't really prompting you at all. *But it is just as possible that there was someone there with the interpretation, but that they lacked the faith to share it!*

Here is something else to consider. The interpretation need not come immediately on the heels of the utterance in tongues. It can come later in the meeting. In other words, you don't have to just stop everything and wait for the interpretation. Trust God to give it to someone as you continue to pray and praise.

These principles of control allow interpreted tongues to be a gift that edifies others.

Paul next turns your attention to the gift of prophecy. How is this practiced? You are in a small group meeting of believers. The leader of the meeting indicates to you whether or not it would be appropriate to have a time of prayer and praise during which the gift of prophecy could be exercised. As the group prays and praises, you receive a word of prophecy!

There are principles for the exercise of the gift of prophecy.

1 Corinthians 14:29 Let two or three prophets speak...

“Two or three” simply means prophecy should not be allowed to dominate the meeting. All of the gifts are for edification and there should be no over-emphasis of any one gift.

1 Corinthians 14:29 ...and let the others judge.

When someone speaks what they believe to be a word of prophecy the believers in the group must judge its accuracy according to God's already revealed Word. The leader of the group has a very real responsibility to judge the accuracy of the prophecy. He should look at it from at least these two viewpoints: content and character. Does its content agree with the

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revealed content of Scripture? Does its character agree with the revealed character of God?

I recommend you stop and discuss the prophecy right then and there. Write it down while it is fresh. Take it seriously from the beginning, and don't take it to heart until you have examined it thoroughly.

1 Corinthians 14:30 But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent.

At first this statement seems like a contradiction. It seems to be saying that you can interrupt someone if you suddenly receive a prophecy.

Here is what I think it means: Paul just told you "let two or three prophets speak." He is putting a reasonable time limit on each prophecy. Some people have a tendency to ramble on. They prophesy (or even pray) too long - dominating a meeting.

That agrees with what he says next:

1 Corinthians 14:31 For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged.

When Paul says "you can all prophesy," is he saying everyone can and should have this gift? No. In chapter twelve you learned that not everyone has the gift of prophecy. In addition, he just limited the exercise of the gift of prophecy to several instances per meeting. He is simply saying that "all" who do have the gift of prophecy at the meeting should exercise it in an orderly way, one after another, allowing time for each to exercise their gifts.

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

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

When the Holy Spirit is truly the source of your gifts there will be "peace" not confusion. Peace is achieved by controlling your gifts according to the principles set forth and especially to the overall principle that your gifts should be only always be exercised in ways that edify others.

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“As in all the churches.” In our day this means Pentecostal churches as well as conservative churches. **No one is exempt or has any other leading of the Holy Spirit.** These are His principles governing His gifts.

#2 If You Really Want To See Others Built-up
You Will Bring General Speaking Under Control
(v34-40)

There was another problem in the meetings at Corinth. It involved the out-of-control behavior of certain women:

1 Corinthians 14:34 Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says.

1 Corinthians 14:35 And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church.

These are tough verses. One of my favorite Bible commentators, Gordon Fee, goes so far as to suggest they were added to the text years after Paul wrote this letter and thus don't belong in the Word of God.

Women were allowed to speak in the meetings. In chapter eleven verse five Paul already referred to women praying and prophesying in meetings.

So what was Paul talking about? If you think about the words you conclude that certain married women were interrupting the public services by speaking out-of-turn. Apparently it involved asking questions, and since Paul related it to being “submissive,” I take it to mean they were questioning authority. They were thus exhibiting a “shameful” lack of proper submission to God and to their husbands.

I want to expand this and say that all of us, women and men, should bring our general speaking under control. In another place Paul urged Christians to “know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15).

Public conduct is deteriorating. Years ago, if a person cussed, they didn't do so around women and kids. *Now women and kids cuss!*

Gone to a movie lately? People are rude, interruptive, and belligerent.

Even though we are very casual in our services, we ought to “know how [we] ought to conduct [ourselves]” in the public meetings of the church. We are here to build-up others and should speak to them in ways that are appropriate for doing so.

Paul next summarized his thoughts on controlling yourself in public for the sake of others being built-up.

1 Corinthians 14:36 Or did the word of God come originally from you? Or was it you only that it reached?

1 Corinthians 14:37 If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord.

1 Corinthians 14:38 But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant.

We are not at liberty to develop our own principles regarding the exercise of the gifts as if “the Word of God [came] originally from [us].” Regardless your background and experiences with the exercise of spiritual gifts, control **must** be acknowledged and followed. If you have seen or even personally experienced something different, then you must bring your tradition into alignment with the teaching here in chapters twelve, thirteen, and fourteen.

Read the Gospels and watch Jesus as He exercises the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Read the Book of Acts and see the gifts in operation. There are none of the weird, out-of-control excesses you see in churches today. The one church that was acting out-of-control, Corinth, was asked to come under control.

1 Corinthians 14:39 Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues.

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

At the same time I would add that the gifts - **all of them** - were in operation. They ought still to be in operation. We must make allowance for their exercise.

Control does not equal quenching. **You do not quench the Holy Spirit by remaining under control.**

On the contrary, you set Him free to minister.