

1st Corinthians 14: Principles Governing the Operation of Spiritual Gifts in the Church (contd)

v20: Maturity in the exercise of spiritual gifts in the church gatherings

v20: *“Brethren, be not children in understanding...but in understanding be men”*; same analogy as ch13v11.

We are only to be as infants *“in malice”*, i.e. to be devoid of malice.

But as to gifts operating in the local church, Paul is instructing them to be mature in their understanding, recognising that tongues were soon to cease altogether.

All our participation publicly in the assembly must be marked by appropriate spiritual maturity.

v21-22: The purpose of these foundational gifts of tongues & prophesying

v21: Quotes from of Isaiah 28v11-12; God used *“other tongues”* previously to speak to *“this people”* (i.e. the nation of Israel), specifically the Assyrian invader; a warning of imminent judgment, which they did not hear.

v22: Similarly, the gift of tongues that operated in the early apostolic Church period (Acts 2/10/19) was a sign to that unbelieving nation of Israel, that a time of national judgment was imminent (AD70).

In contrast, God met the immediate urgent needs of believers in the early Church by prophetic ministry.

v23-25: Order relating to public oral contributions in church gatherings, and the testimony that is given

Paul is considering hypothetical gatherings of *“the whole church”*, not what actually pertained at Corinth.

v23: Paul envisages a disorderly gathering, with all speaking in tongues, possibly >1 at the same time, and likely no interpretation is being given; i.e. an unedifying scene of utter confusion, which cannot be of God.

v24-25: If prophetic ministry operates appropriately, observers of the gathering will know it is all of God, they are brought to conviction of their spiritual condition in the presence of God, and to appropriate awe, humility & contrition, *“and report that God is in you of a truth”*.

The Word of God has that discerning & convicting power (see Heb 4v12).

Those who minister the Word must do so with conviction, speaking *“as the oracles of God”* (1st Peter 4v11).

v26-40: Orderly exercise of spiritual gifts in the church gatherings

To maintain peace & dignified order in the assembly, Paul gives a 3-fold commandment to keeping silent in the gatherings.

1. v28: In relation to tongues, *“But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God”*, as speaking a tongue publicly with no interpretation will not profit any.

2. v30: In relation to prophecy, *“If [any thing] be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace”*, and allow another to follow with another fresh word of revelation from God.

3. v34: In relation to sisters in the local assembly, *“Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak”*.

v26: The need for these commandments to keeping silence in the church gatherings

This was what it really was like when the Corinthian believers came together; many different spiritual contributions, but not made in an orderly way, hence Paul’s plea is *“Let all things be done unto edifying”*.

v27-28: Practical guidelines, directives & prohibitions in relation to use of tongues

v27: Tongues were to be limited in number, used orderly **“by course”**, and interpreted.

v28: If **“no interpreter”**, then let the man with the gift of tongues **“keep silence in the church”**, and **“let him speak to himself, and to God”**. Any public contribution in the assembly must be for edification.

This again highlights the principle that possession of gift is of itself not a justification for using the gift.

v29-33: Practical guidelines, directives & prohibitions in relation to prophesying

v29: Prophetic ministry was also to be limited in number to **“two or three”**, in keeping with the capacity that God’s people have to receive & retain new revelations of divine truth.

Then **“let the other (allos) judge”**; the other prophets would have the ability to judge & discriminate a true prophet from a false prophet.

v30: Once a revelation was given, the prophet was to **“hold his peace”**, allowing another to give a fresh word of revelation from God, to give further help to His people. So there was to be no ‘one man’ ministry.

v31: The prophets were to speak under spiritual control and with a dignified orderliness, **“one by one”**.

All utterances were to be directed by the Spirit of God, **“that all may learn, and all may be comforted”**.

When spiritual gift operates in an orderly & scriptural way, God is able to minister to His people, and meet the needs of His gathered people.

v32: The prophets needed to be under complete self-control, and in full control of their gift.

v33: **“For God is not [the author] of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints”**; this is the basic guiding principle for the operation of spiritual gift in all local churches.

In view of the divine presence among us, our gatherings ought to be marked by appropriate order & peace; they must be places where the mind & character of God prevail, and our God is a God of order.

v34-35: The silence of the sisters in the church gatherings

v34: In the context, it is silence in contrast to public speaking & contributions in the gatherings.

Paul makes a brief reference to OT Scripture, i.e. **“as also saith the law”**, but does not elaborate more.

1st Tim 2v11-14 teaches the same truth, and references God’s creatorial order & the serpent’s deception.

v35: The sisters are to learn the truth of God; they do not remain silent in the gatherings because they are not knowledgeable of the Word of God; but because it is not their public place to speak, according to the way God orders His assembly, **“for it is a shame for women to speak in the church”**.

The world despises this teaching, but it is what the Word of God commands for this present Church age.

v36-40: The desired response of obedience to the apostolic teaching & divine commandment

v36: The Corinthians were seemingly puffed up and full of self-importance.

v37: The apostle’s teaching is not his alone; it **“is [the] Lord’s commandment (singular)”** (JND), see Rev 2v20.

v38: There are always going to be some **“ignorant”** believers who are just unteachable.

v39: The superiority of prophesying over tongues was for the edification of the church as a whole.

v40: **“Let all things be done decently and in order”**; where there is not order, there is not divine approval.