

Chapter Fourteen Notes

Verses one to nineteen

- Furthermore to show that Paul was not depreciating the gift of tongues, he referred to his own case. He spoke in tongues more than any of the Corinthians. Yet, he understood that the gift could be abused; hence, he refrained from exercising the gift in the event that the congregation would not be edified by it.
- Because the church must understand what is said in order to be edified and because edification is one of the primary purposes of the public assembly, Paul said that he would refrain from using his gift in the church. Instead, he would prefer to speak but a few clearly understood words that he would edify the church rather than myriads of words in a foreign language that no one understood. Because instruction in the word of God is the means whereby one gets faith (Romans 10:17) and is edified (Acts 20:32), Paul realized that what was spoken in the public assembly must be easily and clearly understood.

Verses twenty to twenty-five

- Paul uses the term "brethren" to tone down an otherwise harsh statement. The Corinthians, like children who were enamored by things that more them more than by things that were useful to them, had become enamored by the gift of tongues. Although the way in which they were using the gift of tongues made them virtually useless, they, nevertheless, preferred it above prophecy. The Corinthians must grow up in their thinking. They must learn to appreciate the gifts that help them rather than amuse them. Today a man can draw a large crowd if he can strum a guitar and sing beautifully. The man who teaches Christians how to live cannot. Some characteristics of children are to be emulated and some are to be avoided. We must avoid their immaturity, ignorance, instability, and frivolity; we must imitate their humility, teachableness, purity, willingness to forgive, thirst for knowledge, persistence, and lack of anxiety.
- The usage of Isaiah 28:11 is a very interesting one. Isaiah had prophesied the word of God to a nation of Israelites who refused to listen to Him. The priest and the prophet were drunkards who reeled with strong drink; hence, they totally dismissed Isaiah's words with a drunken mock. Because the Jews refused to listen to God's revelation through Isaiah, God promised to speak to them through a people with stammering lips, namely, the Assyrians.

Hence, when Assyria smote the Israelites, the passage was fulfilled. At that time, the Israelites knew that what Isaiah had said was the word of the Lord instead of what their drunken priests and prophets had said.

- Paul used this passage saying that tongues were a sign. The usage of tongues in the New Testament confirms that the message was from God.
- Speaking in tongues was given as a miracle to establish faith in unbelievers. That was how it was used on Pentecost when it confirmed to unbelievers that the speakers of that day were divinely inspired; it also convinced the unbelieving Jews at Cornelius' house that what Peter was doing was divinely approved. Prophecy was more properly designed for believers. Tongues was a sign to make the unbeliever a believer, willing to accept what was spoken by the prophet. Tongues only endorsed the message spoken as a divine message. Prophecy, on the other hand, is the divine message needed by believers and unbelievers alike.
- If the unbeliever or ungifted person were to see a service where people were speaking in tongues and the tongues were uninterpreted, he would become convinced that the members were out of their minds or insane.
- Vs. 24 contrasts prophecy and tongue-speaking from the point of view that one was in an easily understood language while one was in a foreign language that the unbeliever or ungifted person could not understand. The work of conviction is accomplished through the proclamation of the word of God. In this manner, the sinner is convicted of his sins and resolves to repent of them.
- The inner thoughts and impulses of his heart, known to no one other than himself, are brought to light, inasmuch as the prophets depict the hidden thoughts and strivings of the human spirit with such divinely given insight that the listener sees the secrets of his own heart laid bare before all who are present (Hebrews 4:12-13). Having been convicted of his sins and shown the way to salvation, the unbeliever or unlearned is moved to offer true worship to Almighty God. No one will be moved to worship God who is not first convinced that he is in a lost condition and condemned before the Lord. The visitor who hears the prophets draws a different conclusion than the one who heard the tongue-speaker did. One becomes convinced the congregation is full of insane people while the other becomes convinced that God is in their midst.

Verses twenty-six to forty

- Having proven that understanding is necessary for edification to

occur and therefore, that tongues must be translated in order for the congregation to be profited by that supernatural gift, Paul now lays down specific instructions pertaining to the exercise of the various gifts in the public assembly.

- Since Paul had said that the abusive use of the gift of tongues could lead unbelievers to conclude that Christians were insane (vs. 23), some would undoubtedly conclude that the gift of tongues should not be used at all in the public assembly. Therefore, Paul needed to be sure that what he said was not misunderstood. This passage lays down the rules for worship in the congregational assembly.
- In the congregations, there were distributed to different members psalms, teaching, revelations, tongues, interpretations, etc. All these things are not to be practiced in order to display one's own abilities for self-glorification. These gifts were to be exercised for the edification of the church. No doubt some among the Corinthians abused their gifts because they like the attention that came to them when they were exercising their gifts; they like to speak to the entire congregation. The Corinthians should have been eager to use their gifts for the benefit of the whole congregation rather than for their own self-exaltation.
- Paul limits the number who would be allowed to speak in tongues at any given assembly. There could be no more than three tongue-speakers in any given assembly of the saints. The phrase forbids more than one person speaking in tongues at a time. Instead of allowing the assembly to degenerate into mass confusion, Paul allowed only one person to speak at a time. Paul also allowed only one person to interpret at a time. One man would interpret for all of the tongue-speakers in any given assembly.
- If no one was present to interpret, the tongue-speaker was not allowed to exercise his gift. Tongue speaking was not ecstatic utterances. In this context, the verse "keep silence" does not forbid the tongue-speaker from saying anything at all in the assembly; rather, it forbids him to exercise his gift. The man still had the gift, though, but just could not exercise it in the assembly. When this was the case, the person was to speak to himself and God.
- The same limitation in number is imposed on the prophets as was imposed on the tongue-speakers. No more than three of either prophets or tongue-speakers can speak in any given service. The rest of the congregation was obligated to listen carefully to what the prophet was saying to see if it was the true revelation of God (1 John 4:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:20-21; Acts 17:11). The church was obligated, not to accept blindly anything any prophet taught, but to

test to see if it harmonized with the rest of God's word.

- In order to avoid confusion when one person is receiving a revelation from God while another is speaking, Paul instructed the prophet who was speaking to stop his discourse in order to allow the other prophet an opportunity to speak. The word "keep silent" is the same word used in vs. 28. This instruction does not prohibit the prophet from saying anything in the assembly; rather, it forbids him to continue his prophecy.
- Paul further gives instruction to control the assemblies. By giving place to each other, all of the prophets would be benefited. The man who speaks also needs to hear gospel preaching. If a prophet did nothing but speak, his own spiritual needs may not be fulfilled. Also, one prophet might be able to meet the spiritual needs of one man better than another was able to meet them. Therefore, by giving place to one another, everyone's spiritual needs were able to be met. Prophecy is to occur in order that the church might learn and be comforted. The prophet reveals the will of the Lord, and the congregation diligently tries to learn it. Hence, the impartation of knowledge is one of the works of the prophet. The prophet's message is designed to exhort Christians to walk in the right way as well as to comfort them in hours of trouble.
- The coming of the Holy Spirit upon the prophet did not cause the prophet to go into an uncontrolled frenzy. The manner in which the prophet of God was able to control his divine impulse was one of the things that distinguished him from the heathen. The reason Paul mentioned this was to refute the excuse that the prophet just could not keep himself from speaking. Any person who was unable to control his spirit was not under the influence of the Holy Spirit.
- Paul then commands the women to keep silence. The word is the same as in vss. 28 and 30. The women were the wives of the inspired prophets and tongue-speakers. These wives of the inspired men were not to interrupt the assembly to ask their husbands but were to ask them at home if they wanted to know the teaching. This passage does not have application because not all women have husbands; some who have husbands cannot ask their husbands because their husbands do not know the will of God; and they do not have to ask anyone for we have the completed will of God and all may read, study, and find out God's will. Then God's will was in the man; now it is in the book. This passage does not have specific application now just as 1 Corinthians 11:1-16 does not have specific application now.
- The word used in 1 Corinthians 14:28, 30, and 34 is "sigao" means to "hold one's peace or be silent." The word used in 1 Timothy

2:11-12 and 2 Thessalonians 3:12 is "hesuchia" which means "descriptive of the life of one who stays at home doing his own work, and does not officiously meddle with the affairs of others."

- The point of vs. 36 is that their practice is different from that of all of the churches. If the gospel originated with them, the other churches were wrong for changing it; on the other hand, if the gospel came to them from some other place and their practice was different from that of other churches, then they were guilty of wrong doing for changing that practice. The implication of this verse is that Christians today should study the work, worship, and beliefs of the early churches in order to imitate them. The early church was a blueprint or model which should serve as a pattern for building subsequent congregations. The practice of the prophet's wives speaking in the worship assembly at Corinth was at variance with the universal practice of the Lord's churches. Therefore, the Corinthians were obligated to conform to the rest of the churches.
- Paul said that whether or not a man is a prophet or a spiritual man depends upon his acknowledgement that what Paul writes is the commandment of God.
- If an individual does not recognize the authority of Christ as involved in the commandments concerning order in the assembly, he is not to be recognized as from God. This verse implies that the congregation should not fellowship any person who refuses to submit to one of the Lord's commandments. Fellowship cannot be extended to the person who refuses to acknowledge the authority of God's word on any subject.
- Paul did not seek to prevent the use of spiritual gifts, he merely wanted them to be exercised in an orderly manner. Paul ends the discussion by stating that the congregational assembly should be conducted in such a manner that confusion and disorder are absent.