

Title: Three Rules for Worship pt.3

Text: 1 Corinthians 14.36-40

Theme: Order in God's Court

Series: 1 Corinthians #86

Read Text:

This message has 3 parts: 1) The big picture 2) The final admonition and 3) Concluding observations.

1 Corinthians 12-14 forms a unit in which Paul is seeking to set the church of Corinth straight on the issue of spiritual gifts. The problems they were experiencing with their use of spiritual gifts, was not because spiritual gifts themselves are a problem, but, their selfishness, arrogance, and disunity was being seen in the way they were abusing spiritual gifts. The abuse of the gifts resulted in some serious dysfunction in their worship services. So, these 3 chapters have addressed both issues; the attitude problems in the heart and the action problems in the church. A review of the **Big Picture** is in order.

1. The local church is a body of believers.
2. Each believer is a part of the body.
3. Each part is gifted by the Spirit in order to function harmoniously with the rest.
4. Each part needs the other parts.

We were born (re-born) to be interdependent upon each other. So, how are you acknowledging this need of others and leaning upon the gifts and strengths of others?

5. Each part affects the other parts.
6. Your part is to contribute to the health of the rest of the body.

Your part is not to put on a show in order to be admired and affirmed. Your part is to edify the others not be the exhibition. What are you doing to build up the other parts of the body?

7. The showy parts are not more important than the rest.

People who are gifted with speaking gifts (prophecy and tongues) are at great risk to abuse this gift by using it to show off. This is what contributes to a personality driven church instead of a Christ-centered church. People who are gifted with serving gifts are at great risk to trust their sacrificial serving. They must guard their hearts as well, but clearly, people with the showy gifts have the greater tendency to be full of themselves. (see #8) Do you equally value all parts of the body?

8. The Love of Christ must permeate and govern every word and every action, especially in the body of Christ, because if I don't love, I am wasting my life and discrediting the gospel I claim to believe.

Do I handle conflict in relationships driven by love? Do I love Christ enough to love and serve His church?

9. All aspects of the worship service in the church must be done in love for the purpose of edifying the church.

No one is permitted to use the excuse of getting carried away in the Spirit as a means to do their own thing. The Spirit never violates His own Word. Edifying others is more important than a spiritual experience. Tongues are limited in their capacity to edify others and must be limited in their exercise in the church. Revelatory gifts are limited in their capacity to edify others and must be limited.

10. Spiritual gifts are governed by guidelines.

They must be understood. They must be orderly. They must edify others (and not tear others down or reflect bad on others – wife/husband). They must function under the authority of the church leadership. Every part of the body (including the church leadership) is under the authority of the Word of God.

That is a summary 1 Cor. 12-14. I know, if I had just said that 6 months ago, we could be done with the book about now. But, we needed to wrestle with a couple of things. Let me wrap up the chapter by looking at the **Final Admonition**. Our focus is today is on verses 36-40. In the past couple of weeks we looked at Three Rules for Worship.

1. **Everything that takes place in the Worship Service needs to be for the edification of the body.** (26)
2. **Everything that takes place in the Worship Service needs to be done in an orderly manner.** (27-33a)
3. **Everyone is under authority.** (33b – 40)

Last Sunday, we only made it through the first part of this third rule for worship. Because the role of women is such a lightning rod issue today, I attempted to give a more detailed explanation of this last week, which in that sermon probably overshadowed the entire point that Paul is making. True, wives are under the authority of their husbands, but every person is under authority. In fact, the Spirit and the Son are both under authority. The immature, self-centered, myopic influence of our world culture gives this issue way to much tension. As followers of Christ, we really need to not get uptight when this topic is addressed in Scripture. Paul is not picking on wives. Everyone is under authority. The people who are speaking in tongues are under authority. The people who are prophesying are under authority. And the people who have the responsibility to evaluate the prophecies are themselves under authority. They are under the authority of the Word, and must evaluate any prophecy accordingly.

The process of evaluating prophecies is a governing function. God has entrusted the governing of the church to the elders, who are men, who are responsible to guard the integrity of the doctrine. This point is made very clear in 1 Timothy 3. Limiting the role of women in the public debate process involved in evaluating the legitimacy of a prophecy is not because women do not have spiritual insight. Many women have wonderful spiritual insight and that should not only be applauded, it should be cultivated. This limit is done in order to eliminate the risk of pitting a husband and wife against each other in the worship service, and creating an occasion where the unity of a marriage and the God-given order of the home is fractured and compromised. In the bi-unity marriage relationship, the tri-unity relationship of God is set on display. Marriage is a covenant with God that is designed to mirror God. The Son is under the authority of the Father. Everything he did in his life and ministry was under the direction of the Father. Wives are under the authority of their husbands. To put them into a public position where they could appear to be challenging that picture in marriage would not adorn the gospel because it is a bad reflection on the tri-unity relationship of God. The truth is, every person is under the authority of the Word of God. Notice the two questions. By asking these questions, Paul is clearly pointing out...

A. You are NOT the authority – God’s Word is. (36)

1) Did the word of God originate with you?

The Corinthian church was the recipient of the Word of God, not the originators of it. It was not up to them to pick and choose what they wanted to take and discard the rest.

2) Are you the only people it has reached?

This local body of believers has to understand that it is not an island. You are not the only church in existence. You do not set the standard. You are not the measure of a church, the Word is. That is so important to remember. Notice the two “if clauses”.

B. True Spirituality surrenders to God’s Word. (37-38)

1) If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord’s command.

This is an incredibly powerful statement and really helps expose whether or not a person is truly of the Spirit or not. This is a difficult part of the situation. When you put a restraint upon a person “doing their thing” in church, you are vulnerable to the accusation of – “Who do you think you are?! My experience and gift is just as valid as yours!” But any person who seeks to place himself or herself above the Word of God is standing on dangerous ground and should not be given any forum or audience in the church at all. No person, pastor, elder, teacher included can claim divine inspiration that is contrary to the Scriptures and be valid. Even Paul is careful to point out that what he is writing originated with the Lord. While this statement has the immediate context of tongues, prophecy and the limit of involvement of women in the public evaluation of the

prophecies in view, I believe that Paul has this entire letter in mind as well. A person who is truly spiritually gifted (not just gifted) will surrender himself to the authority of God's Word. It is also very clear that any revelation from a prophet was not at the same level of revelation that Paul was writing here in 1 Corinthians.

Look again at v.37. The words "spiritually gifted" are translated from the Greek word, *pneumatikos*. Pneuma is the word for Spirit. That is the exact same word that he uses at the beginning of chapter 12. Immediately in v.3 (chap. 12) he puts a definition of what it means to be spiritual. You cannot be led by the Spirit and curse Christ, nor deny the Lordship of Christ. At the end of this section, he summarizes all that he has just written and says that if you are truly of the Spirit, then you will acknowledge that what I have written is from the Lord and you will, in a very obvious way, by your submission to the text, show that you are under the authority of the Lordship of Christ, because what I am writing to you is the Lord's command. In this verse, *Lord* is in an emphatic position. To deny the authority of this text is to deny the Lord.

2) If he ignores this, he himself will be ignored.

Here is the incredible irony. We live in a day when the gift of tongues is being abused in the name of the Spirit. The claim is, we have the gift, we have the power, this is what it means to be spiritual, but in so many cases, the purpose and the Spirit-given limits on these are ignored. This disobedience to the Scriptures reveals that instead of being a place where the Spirit is active, these fellowships are in reality making themselves spiritually irrelevant. Notice the two commands: be eager to prophesy and do not forbid tongues.

C. The Abuse of a Gift does not necessitate the banning of the gift. (39)

Paul's concluding statement highlights the fact that just because certain gifts are abused does not mean that we should react against the abuse and ban the gift itself. But, it is clear again, that the Corinthian believers were told to be eager to prophesy, but that is not true about the gift of tongues. Tongues were not to be forbidden, ("do not forbid speaking in tongues") but they were not to be sought after either. But if the gift or any gift for that matter is used, it, along with everything else should be done in a fitting and orderly way.

Concluding Observations and Questions:

1) **Do we have to choose between a dead church and a chaotic church?**

Doing things decently and in order is not an excuse for micromanaging the Holy Spirit right out of our worship service. There is nothing wrong with having an order of service, and pre-planning a service and a sermon, as long as you do that on your knees with your heart depending on the Spirit of God to affect lives instead of depending on the performance of the parts of the service to move people. What is wrong, is when you attempt through your own skills (musically, technologically, artistically, verbally) to

manipulate people and move them emotionally, or impress them intellectually and allow that to be a substitute for actually meeting with God.

Here is the great fear. People in a sedate teaching church, fear the shallow, manipulated, and trite emotionalism that passes itself off for worship in what they see as a self-centered, feeling-driven faith that has no legs in the marathons of life. On the other hand, although some people in a more, let-r-rip style of worship crave in depth teaching and love to hear the Word, they fear the stale, complacent, academy-looking, Lysol-smelling, face-frowning atmosphere of a “teaching” church.

We should embrace preaching that has depth and content because faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. At the same time, we should embrace whole-hearted, passionate worship because we are to love the LORD our God not only with all of our minds but with all of our hearts and all of our souls as well. Passionate worship embarrasses a dull faith and Scriptural preaching ignites the true fires of worship. But, be careful. Live faith does not always mean loud, but neither does loud always mean real. Can we be Spirit-driven and orderly? Spirit-driven is orderly. The question is, can we clap orderly? Some of you need to get rhythm. Which brings up the issue of comfort.

2) Since we do not evaluate prophecies in our worship services, does this women remaining silent thing have any relevancy today?

This question involves two things: First of all, what place, if any should we give to prophetic utterances and the necessary evaluation process? An order of service, like ours, is often criticized because we do not provide an open forum for this sort of thing. Are we wrong? Do we need to change? Should we just let go and let the loudest voice win? Now, you are getting nervous, aren't you?

What Paul describes in 14.26, is not a complete detail of what is supposed to take place in a worship service. Some, after reading this verse have concluded that our format of having one person speak and everyone else listen is completely foreign to the NT, but that the NT church service was a dynamic, give and take, back and forth, more spontaneous atmosphere than allowed for and encouraged a much higher level of participation rather than the, “the Lord is in the Holy Temple” let every one else shut up and sit down deal. Yes, the Lord is in His Holy Temple, but the seraphim proclaimed day and night, “Holy, Holy, Holy is the LORD God, Almighty, the whole earth is full of his glory” and when they did that the temple shook and rumbled. Revelation speaks of thousands upon thousands and ten thousands times ten thousands gathering around the throne of God and the Lamb and in thunderous, whole-hearted worship, singing with all that is in them, in a loud voice, “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power for ever and ever!” (Rev. 5.11-13) In worship, there is a time for silence and a time for response and if we get anything straight it must be this. If you are noisy (in thought, or in word) when it is time to listen, you will not hear God, who speaks through His Word as it is preached, and prompts your heart by His Spirit, as you stop and listen. If you are silent and close your mouth and body to praise Him and distance yourself from worship, it is because you have closed your heart to the King.

Now, back to the question; this passage does not deal with all aspects of a worship service. The pastoral epistles give a more completed picture, with much emphasis given to the reading of the Word, and the preaching of the Word. We must also take into account the fact that we now have the completed, sufficient Word of God. The need of spontaneous prophecy is naturally going to diminish with the presence of completed prophecy. Nevertheless, is there a place in the church for a word of wisdom, knowledge, or prophecy in the sense that is not in any way adding to the Word, but perhaps giving some insight or consideration regarding a contemporary situation the church is facing? There could be. I do not want you in anyway to be a passive audience. You are to be an engaged church. I think that our small groups provide a great context for members to hear from each other, and then for a church of our size to be able to communicate necessary things to the leadership. So, I don't think that the revelatory aspect of prophecy functions now like it did then, simply because we have the completed Word, but, I think that leadership of the church needs to be and wants to be very attentive to what the Lord is doing in lives and sensitive to what we can learn from it.

What about the silence of women? First of all, this is not a rule prohibiting women from praying in public. But, praying in public is not to be an opportunity to be disrespectful. "Dear Lord, please convict my husband of his selfish heart for insisting on watching the ball game instead of helping me paint the closet." Paul's point in chapter 11 is that whenever you do something publicly, remember and reflect your place under the authority structure that God has for you. That is really the same thing here in chapter 14. The principle of relational unity and proper authority is foundational.

Let's say that tonight at 5pm I have an open mic Q/A session. Can a woman ask a question? Yes. If, however, by her asking the question, she would in any way reflect poorly upon her husband, then she should select another forum for that.

3) Is there a role for the gift of tongues in the church today?

I am not convinced from the text that the gift of tongues has to be gone from the life of the church. At the same time, neither am I convinced from the text that the gift of tongues is to occupy a prominent role in the life of the church or in the life of a believer. Its public expression in worship seems to be more confusing than it is edifying. In private, that may be a different matter. What I am most concerned about, is this unbiblical notion that being baptized by the Spirit is a second experience for a believer subsequent to salvation and the proof of that is speaking in tongues. This, I strongly denounce and reject. The "us vs. them" and resulting bondage for those who do not measure up is very harmful to the unity of the body. It is also very harmful to genuine spiritual growth since it places enormous emphasis on an experience while dismissing the place and the power of the Scriptures. I have some more thoughts on this that I will open the Q/A time tonight with.

This text is not ultimately given so that we can win arguments at work. It is so that the fame of Christ is set on display by the unity of his church.