

Parson to Person

1 Corinthians 14

(Order in the Local Assembly) – Part 5

~Repeated from last week~

“Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature. In the law it is written: ‘With men of other tongues and other lips I will speak to this people; and yet, for all that, they will not hear Me,’ says the Lord. Therefore, tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe. Therefore, if the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those who are uninformed or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind? But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all. And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you.

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. If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret. But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God. Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

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. 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. Or did the word of God come originally from you? Or was it you only that it reached? 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. But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant. Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order” (1 Corinthians 14:20–40 NKJV).

Glossolalia and Israel

Many Christians miss the fact that tongues are a sign of judgment against Israel: *“In the law it is written: ‘With men of other tongues and other lips I will speak to this people; and yet, for all that, they will not hear Me,’ says the Lord”* (vs. 21; see also Isaiah 28:11). This fact alone should indicate that tongues will continue until the climactic restoration of Israel (Genesis 17:7–8, Deuteronomy 28:1–14, Jeremiah 31:31–34, Hosea 3:4–5, Zechariah 2:10, Romans 11). Many cessationists will argue this point, but they are wrong.

There should be no question in the mind of the believer about the restoration of Israel—nor of the present blindness (judgment) they endure. Moreover, one should not question the fact that God has chosen Church Age Gentile believers to provoke Israel to jealousy (Romans 11:11). Therefore, even as our faith in the God of Israel is a mystery to the Jews, we note that *“tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers”* (vs. 22a).

Of particular interest to me is how many Dispensationalists miss the above. Covenantalists are understandably Cessationist (missing altogether the plan of God for Israel). However, Dispensationalists believe in the fundamental covenant God has with Israel and that the Church has not replaced her. Therefore, the Dispensational Cessationist is a mystery to me! Moreover, were the gifts of the Spirit

to have ceased after the canonization of the Scriptures, the death of the last Apostle, or the end of the first century (as some argue), there would of necessity be a dispensational change at that time. However, every good dispensationalist knows that the “Birthday of the Church” was the Day of Pentecost and the climax of the Church Age is the Rapture. Therefore, no dispensational change can be noted, and thus we should humbly accept continuationism—cautious, biblical continuationism.

Prophecy and Israel

Paul regulated speaking in tongues in the public assembly. He wrote, *“If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret. But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God”* (vss. 27–28). Moreover, he said, *“if the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those who are uninformed or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind?”* (vs. 23). However, he took a completely different approach to prophecy. He wrote, *“But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all. And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you”* (vss. 24–25). Therefore, prophecy should be emphasized.

Of interest is the fact that some dispensationalists avoid prophecy altogether—both the biblically identified eschatological (end time) and Israelological prophecy contained in the written word of God, and the Spirit-inspired word of edification, exhortation, and comfort as men and women are moved upon by the injunction and prodding of the Holy Spirit.

Order and Service in the Local Church

Of certainty there must be order in the local assembly. Therefore, whether tongues with interpretation or prophecy, all must be handled graciously, cautiously, orderly, and in others-centered love.

Paul wrote, *“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”* (vs. 26). *“Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints”* (vss. 29–30).

Comments on the “Women”

Paul wrote, *“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. 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”* (vss. 34–35). This comment was included with the order required in the local assembly. Paul addressed the submissive subordination order men are to recognize under God and the similar nature of submissive subordination of women under men in chapter 11. Here he adds a comment about behaviors in the local assembly.

Some will correctly argue that chapter 11 addressed the roles of men and women in general functionality and that the standard translates to corporate gatherings. Both are true. However, here the corporate gatherings are certainly in view.

In the local assembly, during corporate gatherings, women are to keep silent. However, we must ask, what does “*silent*” mean, and in what ways are women forbidden to “*speak*”?

As is the case with the prophets who were to prefer others if or when prophesying, or with those who may speak in a tongue without a present interpretation/interpreter, the women were to prefer the husbands and allow for their interaction while remaining “*silent.*” Moreover, the injunction “*ask their own husbands at home*” seems to put inquiry into the context. It could be that some of the women (wives) in the assembly were disorderly or interruptive and needed this reminder.

Biblical worldview stands against the worldliness of our American (and Western) cultural norms. Leadership in the Church is male. Paul contends for this standard!

This command “*let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord*” (vs. 37b) does not prevent women to pray or prophecy (see 1 Corinthians 11). It simply seeks to maintain this order in the general assembly.

Here at Candlelight we have allowed women to pray, share a testimony, etc., without violation of this standard as long as it is under the guidance of and submissiveness to male leadership. We do not allow women to “*prophecy*” in the general assembly. “*Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence*” (1 Timothy 2:11–12).

May the Lord speak to us through His word and call us all to orderly submission to His will and ways.

I love you all,
Pastor Paul