

# GOSPEL HIGHWAY

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## 5. ORDER IN PUBLIC WORSHIP (1 Corinthians 14:26-40)

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We are coming to the end of our study on 1 Corinthians 12-14, which is on the spiritual gifts. The Corinthian Christians were facing some problems with regard to the use of the revelatory gifts, and especially with the gift of tongues. Paul's approach in dealing with the problems has been patiently to lay the foundational principles before proceeding to deal with the practical issues. The following foundational principles have been carefully laid - in chapter 12, "The church is one body"; in chapter 13, "Love is indispensable"; in chapter 14:1-25, "Prophecy is greater than tongues". In this last portion, which is 1 Corinthians 14:26-40, he is ready to deal with the immediate problems. He gives the Corinthian Christians practical instructions on how the revelatory gifts of prophecy and tongues are to be used in public worship.

One key word for the Christian life is "edification". Christians should not be petty, inward-looking and selfish. They should always be thinking of how to build up the faith of others. The apostle Paul is always striking this note. In 1 Corinthians 6:12, he says, "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." In 1 Corinthians 10:23, he says, "All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify." The same note is struck in his letter to the Ephesians. In writing about the gifts of Christ to the church, he says, "And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ... according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love" (Ephesians 4:11, 12, 16).

With regard to spiritual gifts, edification means remembering these four things: first, no schism should be caused to the church by anything sinful or selfist. second, love should be shown more and more; third, there should be intelligibility in whatever is uttered in the church; and fourth, there should be decency and order. The first three points arise from the studies we have done so far on 1 Corinthians 12 to 14. The last point arises from 1 Corinthians 14:26-40, which we are studying now.

### **Decency And Order (14:26-35)**

#### ***Every gift is for edification***

Paul develops this last point, namely that there should be decency and order in the church, by reminding his readers of the key word, "edification". He says, in verse 26, "How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification." The question at the beginning of this verse is meant to connect what has been said earlier with what is going to be said later. By asking, "How is it then, brethren?", Paul is asking the Corinthian Christians, "What is the conclusion?" The answer is obvious, "Let all things be done for edification!" The question also carries an inquiry, "What is the condition with you?" That is why Paul mentions the list of things which they have been contributing at their meetings - a psalm, a teaching, a tongue, a revelation, an interpretation. The irony of the situation becomes obvious. Paul is saying to them, "All of you have something to contribute, but it is not for edification!"

If you were present when the letter was read out, would you not feel the sting in Paul's words? Or would you be so "thick-skinned" and obtuse as not to get what he is saying? Words are meant to

be understood. We should not miss the point made here. Note, by the way, that the gift of tongues is included in the list in this verse, showing that it is meant also for the edification of the church. The charismatics are wrong in claiming that the gift of tongues is meant for personal edification!

### ***Tongue-speaking must be orderly***

Every gift is meant for the edification of the church. Paul moves on to apply this truth to the gift of tongues. It says in verses 27-28, "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." Three conditions are laid down for tongues. The first condition is that only a maximum of three persons may speak at any one meeting. In fact, it is preferable to have only two persons speaking but, **at the most**, there could be three. The second condition is that each of these two or three persons should speak in turn, and not together at the same time. The third condition is that there should be an interpreter present, to interpret the unknown language into the language known by everyone.

What if there is no interpreter present? Paul's answer is that the person who intends to speak in a tongue should keep silent. Paul adds the remark that he is to speak to himself and to God! Note very carefully that Paul does not say the individual is to practise his tongue-speaking at home. That is not the plain meaning of the sentence. The person is still in the church. He has been told to keep silent. He is not even to mutter quietly in the tongue. The phrase "to speak to himself and to God" means, therefore, to engage in thinking of the things he had wished to say aloud.

But why should he be directing the thoughts to himself and to God? If he had wished to **pray** in a tongue, as is referred to in 1 Corinthians 14:14-15, he should be directing the prayer to God, and not to himself. If he had wished to **speak** in a tongue, he should be directing the revelation he has received from God to other people, and not to himself or to God. What Paul says, however, is that he should speak "to himself and to God". Clearly, Paul does not intend his readers to take these words literally. He is employing what we have called "holy sarcasm". Not all sarcasm is sinful, just as not all anger is sinful. The Lord was angry at sin and hypocrisy. He was also, sarcastic without being spiteful. He said to Nicodemus, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?" (John 3:10). In reference to the hypocrites who blew their trumpets about their charitable deeds, the Lord said, "Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward" (Matthew 6:2). Elijah mocked at the prophets of Baal and said, "Cry aloud, for he *is* a god; either he is meditating, or he is busy, or he is on a journey, *or* perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened" (1 Kings 18:27). Here, Paul is employing "holy sarcasm" to bring home a point. He says, "...let him speak to himself and to God".

Charismatics today do not seem to feel embarrassed by this passage. They practise tongue-speaking without realizing that their "tongues" are not the tongues spoken of in the Bible. We have noted repeatedly that the tongues of the Bible were human languages, and not the senseless jabber of the charismatics. Furthermore, they engage in their so-called tongue-speaking without regard to the conditions laid down in this passage. Often, more than three persons would "speak in tongues". When they engage in corporate prayer, the whole church would "speak in tongues" at the same time. The conditions laid down in this passage for speaking in tongues are clear. Only two, or at most three, may speak. It is to be done one at a time. An interpreter has to be present, without which no one should speak.

### ***Prophecy must be orderly***

The conditions laid down for prophecy are similar to those for tongues. Paul says in verses 29-31, "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." You would notice that two of the conditions are exactly the same as those for tongues. Firstly, only a maximum of three persons may speak. Secondly, they are to do so one by one. The third condition is different from that for tongues. It is required that other people in the church should judge what has been uttered.

Just as with the words "spirit" and "mysteries" in 1 Corinthians 14:2, there is a tendency in many people to form too quick an opinion on what it means "to judge". Our charismatic friends

would like us to understand it as “sifting out the true from the false”. That is because they have already made up their mind that the gift of prophecy continues to today, and the “prophecy” they utter may consist of truths that are mixed with errors. They claim that such “prophesying” does not contradict the authority of Scripture, and their “prophecy” is of the secondary, or “non-canonical”, type which does not compete with the truths of the Bible. With such assumptions already in their mind, they form the conclusion that “to judge” is to pick out things that are true while rejecting those that are not.

We cannot accept such an understanding of the word. The word “diakrino” is made up of the preposition “dia” (meaning “through”) and the verb “krinein” (meaning “to judge”). It has many shades of meaning - including to separate throughout, discriminate, discern, decide, judge, contend, hesitate, and doubt (Vine). The word is used in a number of other places. In 1 Corinthians 11:31 it is used in reference to self-examination, and in 1 Corinthians 6:5 it is used in reference to arbitration. In Acts 15:9, 1 Corinthians 4:7 and James 2:4 it is used in reference to discrimination. The basic *meaning* of the word is to exercise the critical (thinking, reasoning) faculty. What is its *usage* in this instance? Is it to sift out truth from error, as the charismatics are claiming? Or is it to exercise the critical faculty in some other ways?

To arrive at the correct answer, we must first note that prophecy in the Bible is a reference to the intelligible communication of truths from God to man. It says in verse 30, “But if *anything is revealed* to another who sits by, let the first keep silent”. (Emphasis added.) Clearly, the utterances of the prophets are the *revelation* of God. As such, it can never be mixed with error.

Two common arguments have been raised against this time-honoured understanding of prophecy. First, there are those who would claim that prophecy may consist of ecstatic utterances, as in the case of Saul in 1 Samuel 19:24. It says in 1 Samuel 19:24, “And he also stripped off his clothes and prophesied before Samuel in like manner, and lay down naked all that day and all that night. Therefore they say, ‘Is Saul also among the prophets?’” Saul’s exceptional case, however, can never be used to determine the meaning of prophecy. For one thing, we are not told that he uttered unintelligible words. He in fact prophesied “in like manner”, that is as the prophets there did. For another, he was under God’s judgement for attempting to kill David. He was therefore rendered helpless and made a fool of himself in public. A case of God’s judgement cannot be used to determine the normal meaning of the word “prophecy” nor of the act of prophesying.

The second argument raised against the biblical understanding of prophecy is that while God’s revelation is itself inerrant and infallible (that is contains no error and is not capable of proving false), it may become mixed with the errors of the persons who are prophesying. Put in another way, God’s pure words may become mixed with human errors in the process of transmission! This is an attempt to “strain out a gnat and swallow a camel” (Matthew 23:24). It fails to take into consideration God’s sovereignty in ensuring that His revelation will be given correctly. It distorts the biblical concept of the inspiration of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:21). It is an attempt to dilute the biblical meaning of prophecy. It is a dangerous opinion that will ultimately undermine trust in the reliability and authority of the Bible.

No, true prophecy cannot possibly be mixed with error! That being so, the hearers in Paul’s time would not be sifting out truth from error. They were, in any case, not in a position to do so. The Bible was not yet completely written. Only the Old Testament, and possibly the Gospels, were in circulation at that time. The people would not be able to assess what was prophesied in the light of the *complete* revelation of God. True, we are told in Acts 17:11 that the Bereans searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether the things they heard from Paul were true. They searched only the Old Testament. But what exactly did they search for? They searched for confirmation of what Paul was claiming about the person and work Christ. We are told, in Acts 17:2-3, “Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and *saying*, ‘This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ.’” The Bereans were non-Christians who heard the gospel and searched the Old Testament to see if what they were hearing were indeed true. As a result, many of them believed. In 1 Corinthians 14:29, we have people who were *already believers*, and they were hearing *new revelation*

from God. The two situations are different.

Prophecy was basically the *forthtelling* of the will of God. It could include the *foretelling* of future events. If the events did not occur as foretold, the person who prophesied would be treated as a false prophet. This is the teaching of Deuteronomy 18:20-22. The Lord Himself warned of those who would come to Him on the last day claiming to have prophesied and cast out demons in His name, but He is going to disown them (Matthew 7:21-23). The apostle Paul often warned the churches of false teachers from outside the church as well as from within, who would attempt to draw away the disciples (Acts 20:29-31).

The churches in the New Testament time, however, had accredited prophets in their midst (Ephesians 4:11; Acts 11:28; 13:1; 21:10). The word “prophet” is used in reference to one who occupies the office. We do not believe that these recognized prophets were listened to with distrust. It would have been strenuous upon the worshippers in church to have to constantly weigh up the utterances of these prophets. No! The official prophets, like Agabus, were trusted individuals who uttered inspired words from God. Only strangers and the common people were subjected to such tests because of claiming the gift of prophecy. The official prophets are referred to in 1 Corinthians 14:29. They are the ones who would normally prophesy in the church. The believers would be listening with the intention of obeying what God is saying through them. “To judge” would include this element of listening with the intention of obeying.

Paul, however, has been discussing the gift of prophecy, which may be possessed by those who are not official prophets. This is clear from 1 Corinthians 11:4-5, the passage about “head coverings”, which says, “Every man praying or prophesying, having *his* head covered, dishonours his head. But every woman who prays or prophesies with *her* head uncovered dishonours her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved.” This is also clear from 1 Corinthians 14:1 where Paul had said, “Pursue love, and desire spiritual *gifts*, but especially that you may prophesy.” Paul is not forbidding the people exercising the gift, just as he does not forbid them speaking in tongues (1 Corinthians 14:5). He says, therefore, in verse 31, “For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged.”

What are the people in church to do when someone in their midst desires to prophesy? Remember that often there were strangers in the midst of the Corinthian church - “the uninformed and the unbelievers” mentioned in verses 23 and 24 of the same chapter. This certainly adds to the difficulty of the situation. What if one of these men claims to be a prophet and wishes to prophesy? The Corinthian Christians are to weigh carefully the prophecy with the view of obeying the will of God that is being revealed, or to reject the person as a false prophet if his prophecy turns out to be untrue. “To judge” would, therefore, include this element of testing the prophecy of the person to determine whether or not he is a true prophet. This, then, is what it means “to judge” - it is to listen carefully with the view of obeying the will of God, and to reject the false prophet if his prophecy turns out to be untrue.

These two purposes of “judging” are taught in the Bible, but not that of sifting out truth from error. In 1 Thessalonians 5:20-21, for example, we have these words, “Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good.” The prophecies are “tested” with the intention of obeying what is said. In 1 John 4:1, we have, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” Here, the prophecies are “tested” with the view of rejecting the false prophets. We conclude from these arguments that “to judge” in 1 Corinthians 14:29 carries the same meaning as “to test” in these other passages. It means to weigh carefully with the intention of obeying what is heard, or to reject the person as a false prophet if his prophecy turns out to be untrue.

What about those who say, “How can I keep silent? I have a revelation from God which must be spoken out!” Verse 32 gives the answer to such people, “And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.” Put another way, Paul is saying, “You may be under divine influence, but it does not destroy self-control.” That person has to keep silent if the three conditions for prophesying cannot be fulfilled.<sup>1</sup>

***Women must behave orderly***

Paul goes on to say, in verse 33, “For God is not *the author* of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.” Tongue-speaking, prophecy, or anything else that disturbs peace, and creates confusion, cannot be of God. Everything must be done in an orderly way. This is a rule that applies to all the churches. No special pleading is allowed.

This rule applies also to the role of women in the church. It says, in verse 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.” The feminist movement of the world has infected the churches, and there is such a strong cry today for “the equality of the sexes” to be seen. To avoid being unpopular, many preachers try to explain away the passage by claiming that the teaching is “culturally conditioned” - that it applies only to the culture of Paul’s time. Culture, however, is not even alluded to in the passage. We may not simply explain away teachings which we do not like. Instead, two reasons are given by the apostle for this teaching.

The first reason has been given already in verse 33 - God is not the author of confusion but of peace. God requires men and women to play different roles in the churches. There is no implication of inferiority or superiority. We are all sinners in God’s sight. We are all saved by God’s grace through faith in Jesus Christ. There is no more Jew or Greek, slave or free, and male or female, for we are all one in Christ. The same apostle teaches this in Galatians 3:28. The oneness, however, has to do with our standing before God, and our salvation. It does not wipe out the difference between the sexes, just as it does not wipe away ethnicity and status in society. It is only when men and women willingly take up their God-given roles in the churches that there will be peace and harmony.

This is not to say that women have no place in gospel work. The Bible shows that women were actively involved in direct gospel work (e.g. Romans 16:1-3, 6; 1 Corinthians 9:5; etc.). Today, women may be involved in teaching children and other women. In some missions situation, they may be involved in teaching a mixed group of people. What needs to be kept in mind is the necessity of male leadership under normal circumstances. It is God’s will that the man should be the head of the home (Ephesians 5:22ff.). It is God’s will that only men are to be leaders of the churches (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6). It is God’s will that women are to keep silent in the churches. Difficult people will want to twist this teaching and say that women are not permitted to utter a single word under all circumstances. However, that is not what the passage says. What it teaches is that they are not to be seen in a position of authority - such as prophesying or speaking in tongues. That is what it means by “they are to be submissive”. Confirmation of this may be found in 1 Timothy 2:11-12, where the same apostle equates teaching with authority, “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.”

The second reason why women are to keep silent is that the law of God requires it. We know that this is the ***second*** reason because the word “also” indicates so - “as the law also says” (verse 34). Paul does not say which law in particular, but it is clear that the law of God as contained in the Old Testament is meant. Male leadership was such a well-known truth that Paul found no necessity to quote any proof-text. Moreover, he had handled the matter in another context before, in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16. This reason alone ought to end all controversy. If it is taught in God’s law, we must not argue about it. It is our duty to accept it willingly and obey. That is not the case with fallen people, however. Knowing the truth is one thing, submitting to it is another. Oh, stubborn people that we are!

Paul found it necessary to add, in verse 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.” Earlier, in verse 31, Paul had said, “For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged.” This applies to women as well. They may learn, and be encouraged. However, it is out of place for women to be obtrusive - that is to be pushy, to be too loud, to want to be heard. If there is anything that they cannot understand, or if there are queries in their mind, they are to ask their husbands at home. The word “shameful” is a strong one. It carries the idea of being immodest or impure. Paul is saying that it is disgusting for women to speak in church. Such strong language makes sense only when we understand that he is not referring to mere talking to one another in church, but rather to the sort of

assertiveness that is so unbecoming of the fairer sex.

The peculiar power and usefulness of women depends on their femininity. Not all women are the same. Some are louder in speech than others. Some are more cheerful and out-going than others. Such differences do not make any of them less feminine. It is only when their attitude and behaviour are such as to blur the distinction between the sexes that problems arise. The moment they begin to assert themselves like men, they cease to become objects of admiration and affection. There their power and usefulness ceases! There they go against God's will!

What about unmarried women, and widows, who have no husbands to ask? Again, we must be careful not to display a difficult spirit. The word of God is plain here. Women, whether married or unmarried ones, must maintain their femininity and stop being obtrusive. They can be useful - very useful! - in God's work without being assertive. Women are as necessary to the life of the churches as the men. How many pastors will be able to testify to that! The saying is true - Behind every successful man is a woman! So also, behind every blessed church are the sisters who serve the Lord well. We must thank God for godly women in the churches!

We must come back to the main thrust of Paul's words. He is still discussing the spiritual gifts. The principle taught here is that women must not assert themselves by speaking in a public meeting. It follows that they are not to engage in prophesying or tongue-speaking in the church. The Corinthian church appears to be facing this difficulty. The women are clamouring to exercise their gifts. (The feminist movement is not a modern phenomenon!) Paul is saying to them that it ought not to be the case.

We see the same problem in today's churches. Wherever the charismatic movement has gained a foothold, there the women feature prominently in the meetings.

### **Closing Admonition (14:36-40)**

#### ***Listen to God's word***

The apostle Paul has finished dealing with the practical aspects of the gifts. He now closes with admonition. He asks, in verse 36, "Or did the word of God come *originally* from you? Or *was it* you only that it reached?" Put another way, Paul is saying, "You are not the oldest (or mother-) church, neither are you the only church." Humility is needed to consider how others have understood the word of God. The Corinthian Christians had behaved as though God was speaking to them alone. There was no necessity for them to compare their teaching with the other churches. Theirs was the most vibrant church, the most blessed, in which God was present in the most apparent way. So they thought of themselves! They could act contrary to the teaching and practice of other churches. That was when they began to go astray! Individuals who are too proud and self-centred tend to go astray very quickly. So also with churches that are too proud and independent!

We know that truth is not measured by numerical strength. The false religions in the world have more members than many faithful churches. It may be that a faithful church will find itself contending alone for the truth, while other churches have succumbed to errors of various kinds. In such a situation, the truth lies with the one church and not with the many apostate churches. Certainly, Paul is not saying here that the other churches are right simply because they are more in number whereas the Corinthian church is alone in its practice of prophesying and tongue-speaking. No, Paul is pointing out rather the importance of referring to the word of God for all their practices. He is asking the Corinthian church not to do things contrary to the word of God. The word of God is known to other churches besides the Corinthian one. The problem with the Corinthian church is that the word of God is being set aside while practices not sanctioned by God are being carried out.

Today, charismatic churches have grown in number, and many people are being attracted to them. As noted already, numbers alone are no measure of truth. The truth has to be determined from the Bible. We would ask the charismatic churches the same questions that Paul asked the Corinthian churches - "Did the word of God come originally from you? Or was it you only that it reached?" Generations of Bible-believing Christians have studied the word of God and come to the conclusion that the revelatory and sign gifts have been withdrawn. The various confessions of faith that issued

forth from the Reformation affirm that Scripture alone is to be the sole authority in all matters of faith and practice. Of course, there have been isolated groups of people who claimed to have the gifts of tongues and prophecy after the time of the apostles. Paul's questions could be directed at such groups, just as they may be directed at the charismatics today. The charismatic churches are not at liberty to introduce their own teachings and practices!

Paul goes on to say, in verses 37 and 38, "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." Here is Paul's "holy sarcasm" again! Pride, and arrogance, have marked the Corinthian Christians. There have been those who claimed themselves to be prophets. There have been those who claimed themselves to be spiritual. These people would likely be resistant to Paul's teaching. Paul is reminding the Corinthian Christians that he writes as an apostle of Jesus Christ. His words are the commandments of the Lord. His words should not be questioned, but heeded. If there are those who remain adamant in refusing to heed Paul's teaching, let them continue in their ignorance!

I wonder what effect this last point has on you. We ought to realize that it is a terrible thing to be ignored by God. When God ignores a person, it means that that person is being left to wallow in his sins. It means that God's displeasure rests on him, and there is the certainty of judgement upon him. That is what it amounts to when Paul says, "But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant." It reminds us of similar passages in the Bible. It says in Ezekiel 3:27, "But when I speak with you, I will open your mouth, and you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God.' He who hears, let him hear; and he who refuses, let him refuse; for they *are* a rebellious house." It is as the Lord said of the hypocrites, in Matthew 6:2, "Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward". Paul says, in Romans 1:24, "Therefore God also gave them up..." I shudder while writing this!

### ***Decently and in order***

Paul has come to the end of his discussion on the spiritual gifts. He says in verse 39, "Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues." This is a repetition of his earlier statements. In chapter 12, verse 31, he had said, "But earnestly desire the best gifts..." In chapter 14, verse 1, he had said, "Pursue love, and desire spiritual *gifts*, but especially that you may prophesy." In verse 5 of the same chapter, he said, "I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied;..." At the time of writing, the gifts of prophecy and tongues were still available. Paul found it necessary to remind his readers that he was not trying to stifle their gifts. That was for the simple reason that, throughout, he had not been too enthusiastic about their abuse of the gifts. They had been elevating the gifts above the graces of faith, hope and love. They had been proud of their abilities. There was such chaos in the church as they exercised those gifts. Paul had been "putting on the brakes" instead of "stepping on the accelerator". He wanted them to be more sober and mature in their understanding and use of the gifts. They could prophesy and speak with tongues if the conditions spelled out earlier were fulfilled.

A closing point is now given, in verse 40, "Let all things be done decently and in order." The word "decently" means appropriately, in a manner that is pleasing to all who are of right mind. To do things "in order" means to do them in the proper place, at the proper time, in the proper way. This is a general principle that is applicable to all Christians, and in all situations in the church. It is mentioned as a last point to finish this section on the use of the gifts. It is the last knot that clinches the point that ***there should be order in public worship.***

### **Conclusion**

The gifts of prophecy and tongues have ceased, but the principles underlying their practice remain. The truth we should grasp from this study is that there can be no edification unless there is orderliness. All church meetings must therefore be planned carefully in advance, and all the items should be thought through before being presented. We are not advocating a rigid inflexibility under all circumstances. We are not denying that God can prompt a person to say things quite unplanned for. All that we are pointing out is the need to do everything in a decent and orderly way.

This rule of "decency and orderliness" is always broken by the charismatics in their meetings.

In the first place, they have been wrong in their understanding of what constitute tongues and prophecy. Their “tongues” are not human languages, and their “prophecies” are made up of truths mixed with errors. When practising their “tongue-speaking” and “prophesying”, the conditions laid down in Scripture are never followed. More than three people speak, often at one and the same time. Women occupy a prominent place in their meetings.

God’s word is clear. It is sufficient for all our needs. It shows up very clearly the errors of the charismatic movement. We should learn to trust the word of God more and more. If we love the Lord, we would love His word. We should exert effort to study His word, and prayerfully seek to understand it correctly. We must also preach the word of God, and never be diverted by charismania!

**Footnote:**

1. Some cessationists make short work of the passage by claiming that the “others” of verse 29 is a reference to the other prophets, and the “judging” is a reference to determining who is to speak, and in what order. This is possible but not probable because it would necessitate: (i) the assumption that there were many official prophets in the church; and (ii) the unenviable task of making such “judgment” in the midst of a meeting.

To arrive at the correct understanding of 1 Corinthians 14:29-32, it would be necessary to take into consideration the following facts: (i) the “prophets” are a reference to those who occupy the office of a prophet (1 Corinthians 12:29; Ephesians 4:11), whose “prophecy” consists of infallible revelation from God (1 Corinthians 13:2); and (ii) the problem being dealt with throughout is the abuse of the gift of prophecy by ordinary members of the church, and not by the leaders of the church, which the prophets are (Acts 13:1).

The passage shows that, ordinarily, the prophets are the ones who prophesied. The ordinary members who occasionally prophesy (cf. 14:5) have to adhere to the same rules spelled out by Paul here.

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