

Understanding Church
Discovering the Power & Purpose of Church
Discovering the Supernatural Series – Part 5
1 Corinthians 14:26-40
November 19-20, 2022

Introduction

- **The Oddity of Paid Professional Christian View** – Christianity is designed primarily on the basis of normal people living out their faith in their day to day lives. Paid Professional Christianity is a necessary anomaly. Although it is necessary for a few roles, what we must not do is assume that the paid professionals will do all the ministry. There are not enough of them and it's not what God had in mind. Also we must not allow that to distort our views of the priesthood of all believers. The same Holy Spirit that dwells in a senior pastor dwells in a believer in the congregation. We cannot allow a 'haves vs have-nots' culture. Nor can we allow it to make us apathetic to allow the staff to do it all.
- **The Temptation to be Spectators & Consumers** – when the concept takes hold that the paid professional Christians are supposed to do the work of the ministry primarily, it allows the rest of us to become tempted to be spectators and consumers. We think, 'we are paying you to do this, so do it for us.' That's not how it works. That makes us consumers when the Body of Christ concept means that everyone is active, everyone matters, everyone is necessary and supposed to be engaged. Church is the people, not a spectator sport.
- **Church is the People (All)** – All believers are the Church and that means that Jesus wants All of His people to be involved. The Holy Spirit gifted all the people to do the work of the ministry. Everyone is critical to the victorious outcome. The empowered, fully engaged church is the type that the gates of hell will not prevail against. Are we seeing less victory because of a lack of involvement of the body, today?
- **The Parable of the Talents** = In Matthew 25 Jesus is recorded as telling a parable about a wealthy man who went on a journey and entrusted some of his money to his 3 servants who were supposed to invest it and make him more money by the time he gets back. He gave one 5, one 2 and one 1. The man with only one, buried it. The other two put their talents into play and earned more. The guy with one got in trouble. Here's my point today about this parable: the master/wealthy man left with instruction about expectation to use what he gave them. Jesus told the story as a command to discover and use the gifts the Holy Spirit has given us, for the benefit of the whole. It's not about whether we want to or not. It's about contribution to the whole.

Church is PARTICIPATION Not Mere OBSERVATION

- **Collective Involvement Can Lead to Chaos** – when you get people together all wanting to do something there's bound to be overlap and over-talk, and conflict. Since the point of the gifts in the Church isn't chaos, we have parameters and expectations so that there is order and all can use their gifts and all can be blessed. Paul was noticing that in Corinth people were talking over one another because of selfishness. His whole point in this passage about that was simply: wait your turn. If you have something from the Lord, do it in a way that is

orderly and blesses other people. It's not show off time. No one gets to be disruptive, because it's not about you.

- **Why Order is Important = Blessing to others** - We want everyone involved, engaged and using their gifts, but it has to be collectively beneficial. The goal is blessing the whole.
- **Order vs. Calm** – I do want to clarify one thing. The goal is order, but the goal is not calm. Just because some personalities get riled up doesn't mean it's from the devil. Just because something is odd and strange doesn't mean it's not orderly. Orderly doesn't mean passionless or subdued. It just means orderly. Different cultures can order in different ways. Some churches can herd cats in worship, others have to have everyone sit on their hand or they feel out of control. That's a church personality rather than a mandate from God.

Lesson

- **Grand Collective**
 - **Every Believer Has a Spiritual Contribution**
 - **1st Corinthians 14:26** – *“What then, brothers [and sisters]?”¹ When you come together [for church], each one [of you]² has [either] a hymn³, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up.”*
 - **Everyone has something** – And this is the point I was sharing in my introduction: Everyone has something to contribute. There is no unnecessary believer. Sure, there are seasons in life when we are able to contribute less (trauma, loss, pain, etc.) and seasons when we can contribute more (excitement, joy, freedom, etc.). But in general we all have something to contribute and it's on us to find out what it is and how to use it in our setting. We can minister in key areas even when we are hurting or struggling. We cannot wait to be perfectly balanced, aligned and joyful to serve and be a part of things. Sometimes it's in the serving that we find out healing and wholeness.
 - **Paul's Examples:** Paul lists out some example to make his point. He is not telling us how to run church or the ONLY ways to do church. He is simply giving examples. Notice that they fall into two general categories: 1.) something to say ABOUT the Lord, or 2.) something FROM the Lord. Ultimately we are seeking something from the Lord when we come to church. It's likely going to come THROUGH other people, but we are seeking something from God. How do we get God's stuff to God's people? That's what every congregant should be asking. And what's my part in it?
 - **The Point of Our Contribution: Building Each Other Up** – not platforming. Your gifts are to build the rest of us up. We could be so much more powerful as a church if we were all engaged and lifting one another up.

¹ “The combination of the formula “What then is the upshot of all this?” and the vocative “brothers [and sisters]”⁶ signals a shift in the argument, but in this case one that seems intended to tie together several loose ends.” NICNT, Gordon Fee

² “What is striking in this entire discussion is the absence of any mention of leadership or of anyone who would be responsible for seeing that these guidelines were generally adhered to. The community appears to be left to itself and the Holy Spirit.”

³ “For a discussion of the “hymn” see on v. 15; very likely this word stands for “prayer” as well, although the interpreted tongue could also fit that category.”

- **Orderly Grace**
 - **Prophecy and Tongues Need to be a Blessing**
 - **1st Corinthians 14:27-33a** – “If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three⁴, and each in turn⁵, and let someone interpret⁶.²⁸ But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God⁷.²⁹ Let two or three prophets speak⁸, and let the others weigh what is said⁹.³⁰ If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent.¹⁰³¹ For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged,³² and the spirits of

⁴ “First, “two—or at the most three—should speak.” One cannot be sure whether this means “at any one service” or “before there is an interpretation.” In favor of the former is the phrase “at the most,” plus the overall concern of the chapter that tongues not dominate the assembly; therefore in this guideline Paul is suggesting that such manifestations be limited in any given meeting. In favor of the latter is the similar recommendation for prophecies in vv. 29–31, which on the basis of vv. 24 and 31 is intended to limit the number of speakers in sequence, not the number of prophecies at any given service. On the whole, this is not easy to decide, but probably the word “at the most,” which is missing in the guidelines for prophecies, tips the balance in favor of the former.” NICNT

⁵ “Second, “and one at a time¹⁷.” Two observations are in order. (a) There seems to be no good reason for such a word unless it is intended to be corrective. Along with v. 23, the implication is that the Corinthians were doing otherwise. Not only did they have a singular passion for this gift, but apparently they had allowed it to dominate their gatherings in a way that reflected pagan ecstasy far more than the gospel of Christ.” NICNT

⁶ “Third, “and someone must interpret.” This simply repeats what has already been said in vv. 6 and 13, except that in those two passages it is assumed that the tongues-speaker will also receive the interpretation; whereas here and in 12:10 and 28–30 it is assumed that the interpretation will be given to someone else. What cannot be decided is whether “one” is to interpret after each utterance in tongues¹⁹ or whether both of the first guidelines are also intended to limit the number of expressions in tongues before there is an interpretation. Probably the latter, but there is no way to determine. This guideline receives further qualification in the next verse.” NICNT

⁷ “But as before, Paul does not forbid the gift itself. Repeating the ideas of vv. 2 and 4, he admonishes that the tongues-speaker “speak to himself and God.” Speaking “to himself” stands in contrast to “in the assembly” in v. 27, meaning that he or she should pray “to God” in this way in private.” NICNT

⁸ “He begins with the same ordering as in v. 27: “Two or three prophets should speak.” This does not mean that in any given gathering there must be a limit of two or three prophecies. Even though that is commonly suggested, it lies quite beyond Paul’s concern²⁴ and makes little sense at all of v. 24 (“when you come together and all prophesy”), nor of the concern in v. 31 that all have opportunity to participate. Rather, it means that there should be no more than three at a time before “the others weigh carefully what is said.” This latter item is the verb for “distinguishing between spirits” in 12:10 (q.v.).” NICNT

⁹ “As noted there, this is probably to be understood as a form of “testing the spirits,” but not so much in the sense of whether “the prophet” is speaking by a foreign spirit but whether the prophecy itself truly conforms to the Spirit of God, who is also indwelling the other believers. Other than in 12:3, no criterion is here given as to what goes into the “discerning” process,²⁷ although in Rom. 12:6 we are told that prophecies are to be “according to the analogy of faith,” which probably means “that which is compatible with their believing in Christ.” Nor is there any suggestion as to how it proceeds. At best one can argue that prophecies did not have independent authority in the church, but must always be the province of the corporate body, who in the Spirit were to determine the sense or perhaps viability of what had been said. Some have argued, on the basis of 12:28, that “prophets” refers to the special group of authoritative persons in the community who have been given this gift. “The others”³⁰ in this case means “the other prophets,” so that the whole text is intended to regulate the activities of the prophets, vis-à-vis regulating “prophecies” per se. But nearly everything else in the argument stands over against such a view. (a) The argument from v. 1 has been in the second plural, addressing the entire community. He urges all of them “eagerly [to] desire spiritual gifts, especially that you prophesy,” without a hint that this gift is limited to the “prophets.” (b) So with the rest of the argument; for example, in v. 12 he exhorts, “Since you are zealous for spiritual manifestations (referring to their collective enthusiasm for tongues), seek to excel in the building up of the church (meaning especially the gift of prophecy).” (c) The evidence in v. 24, even though hypothetical, is especially telling. As in v. 23, Paul implies a situation that could conceivably occur, namely that “all prophesy,” so that the unbeliever is convicted by all and judged by all. (d) So also in v. 31 he urges orderliness, “for you may all prophesy in turn so that all may learn and all be encouraged/exhorted.” It is gratuitous to suggest that the first “all” means “all the prophets” while the next two refer to the whole community. This does not mean, of course, that all will or do prophesy. It is simply to note that Paul’s concern here is not with a group of prophets, but with the functioning of prophecy in the assembly. The noun “prophets,” therefore, is to be understood as functional language, similar to the use of “interpreter” in v. 28, and means, as in v. 3, “the one who is prophesying.” Although he uses a noun in this case, which he does not do with “the one who speaks in a tongue,” the structure of the two sentences (vv. 27 and 29) calls for a similar understanding in both cases and does not imply that he is now speaking about a special group of persons.” NICNT

¹⁰ “The requirement seems to be aimed at those who might tend to dominate the meeting, although that is not certain.” NICNT

prophets are subject to prophets¹¹. ³³ For God is not a God of confusion but of peace.¹²”

- **Brief Tongues Recap –**
 - No interpreter = personal -
 - **Interpretation Benefit and Shift to Prophecy -**
- **Brief Prophecy Recap –** learning and encouragement.
 - **Prophecy is speaking for God.** It's getting a download from the Holy Spirit about what God thinks and wants to say. It's supernatural.
 - **Old Covenant Era Prophecy –** in the Old Testament there was no Bible. There was nothing to match up someone's words against to see if it was aligned with God's nature or not. So, when a prophet spoke it was a HUGE deal. They were the living Bible. What they said had to be followed strictly or there were consequences. But how would you know if they were a legit prophet or a liar? It was tough. So, that's why God put in strict laws about what happens if someone is a false prophet. They were to be stoned to death. There was no allowance for someone to take advantage of the situation and lead people astray. Deuteronomy 13:1-5 says that if what a prophet says comes true, you know he's legit. If not he should be killed. Unfortunately, some people have allowed that OT view to dictate their New Testament view of prophecy and don't think that prophecy is legit for today and they don't want to encourage it in their churches. But it's different now. **The arrival of Jesus and the Holy Spirit changed everything.**
 - **New Covenant Era Prophecy –** we all have the Holy Spirit speaking to us internally. Hebrews 8:10-11 tells us that God is revealing Himself in each of our hearts and that we are not just dependent on another person to reveal God to us. This is backed up by the Apostle John in 1st John 1:27. In the modern-era (post-Messiah's arrival) there is not just one prophet speaking. God reveals Himself in different ways to all believers. However, it's also important to note that we are broken vessels through which the message can get distorted, so we weigh and examine what is said before receiving it and acting on it.
 - **3 Main Purposes of Modern Prophecy:**
 1. **Revelation (Supernatural) –** The Holy Spirit is sharing more about what Christ revealed to us. It's like our own personal tutor to

¹¹ “This guideline clearly removes tongues from all forms of pagan ecstasy, as far as Paul's understanding is concerned. The admonition in v. 32 is probably intended as much for this gift as for prophecy. Whatever else, Christian inspiration, including both tongues and prophecy, is not “out of control.” The Spirit does not “possess” or “overpower” the speaker; he is subject to the prophet or tongues-speaker, in the sense that what the Spirit has to say will be said in an orderly and intelligible way. It is indeed the Spirit who speaks, but he speaks through the controlled instrumentality of the believer's own mind and tongue. In this regard it is no different from the inspired utterances of the OT prophets, which were spoken at the appropriate times and settings.” NICNT

¹² “This sentence, along with the final appeal in v. 40, seems to corroborate the suggestion made on v. 23 that the Corinthian assembly had become unruly in its expression of tongues. Now Paul is arguing that the basis of all these instructions is ultimately theological. It has to do with the character of God, probably vis-à-vis the deities of the cults, whose worship was characterized by frenzy and disorder. The theological point is crucial: the character of one's deity is reflected in the character of one's worship. The Corinthians must therefore cease worship that reflects the pagan deities more than the God whom they have come to know through the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. 12:2–3). God is neither characterized by disorder nor the cause of it in the assembly.” NICNT

understand how God's Word applies to us personally.¹³ Remember God's word is inerrant but not exhaustive (all that God wants to say).

- **How do you practically suppose this passage is going to happen?**
- Jn 16:12-15 - "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵ All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you."
- **Important Disclaimer – Personal prophecy today is not on the same level or the same authority as the Bible¹⁴.** The reason is that for the Bible God had to uniquely control the situation through His people so that they would write down EXACTLY what He wanted. Today, there's more grace for a flow of relationship and learning. In other words, there's more error.
 - **Don't let fear shut it down** – it's tempting, due to the reality of error to shut down prophecy and say it's not worth it. But Paul is very clear here and in 1st Thess 5:19-21, not to quench the Spirit and don't despise prophecies. Test everything, hold fast to what it is good. God gave it to us to use.¹⁵
 - **Be Cautious when Prophesying** – I'm always going to hold someone extra accountable when they prophecy or teach because they are speaking for God and that holds an authority and thereby can be dangerous. Be cautious. People aren't guinea pigs. The word of God is not to be taken lightly.
 - **The "God Told Me Trap"** – try not to say 'God told me', use the phrase, 'I feel like God may be saying...' It allows the hearer to process appropriately and not have to get over the obstacle that they are fighting with God.
- 2. **To Build up the Church¹⁶ (Practical)** – edify, exhort, console, comfort, encourage & strengthen. That means that the majority of what you are going to share is going to lift up the people you are prophesying over.
- 3. **Connection with God (Relational)** – This is a way that God not only speaks TO US, but THROUGH US and that allows us to experience His presence, thus building our relationship with Him.¹⁷

¹³ Jn 14:25-26; 15:26-27; 16:1-15

¹⁴ 2 timothee 3;16-17

¹⁵ Rom 12:4-6; Mt 25:14-30

¹⁶ 1 Cor 14:1-5; Acts 15:32; 1 Cor 14:26

¹⁷ God also speaks to His people through: 1.) Life situations; 2.) Impressions of heart and mind; 3.) dreams and visions; 4.) audibly (rare); 5.) Sudden Wisdom; 6.) through others around us; 7.) through angels.

- **Weighing the Revelation** – content and delivery. Either one being off makes it not land as well. Content analysis is about whether it resonates with Scripture AND whether it resonates with what the Holy Spirit is saying to you. We are looking initially for reasonableness as well as insight of the spirit. Likewise we examine the vessel it came through, did they say it as intended? What was the Spirit trying to say through them?
 - **It doesn't always land** – I want to be clear that just because someone thinks they have a word from the Lord, doesn't mean they have one. And just because you get one doesn't mean you need to share it. It could just be for you to know so you can pray for that person more directly. If someone prophesies over you, you aren't stuck. Your job is to take it consider it with the Lord. If it seems bogus, shake it off.
 - **Office of Prophet vs. Random Believers** – Just like all Christians can teach from the Word of God but there are some pastor (preacher/teachers) that hold the office, so too are there believers who prophesy randomly and those who hold an office of it. If prophesy is your gift, then it needs to be honed and trained and matured. It can be something that you use on a consistent basis. There is a higher level of accountability for someone who does it a lot.
- **When your turn is done: Keeping Silent in Church** = keep it as a prayer language between you and God. You may have a lot of stuff that you feel like God shared with you, but it's not just a one-person show here. Let the Holy Spirit use other people too.
 - **Domination Problems** – if someone else has something from the Holy Spirit, your turn may be over. It's not time to hold the floor just because you like the attention. There's a lot of reasons why I was the first kid to raise my hand in class with the right answer. Some of it was possibly pride that I knew it, but the way I thought about it, was that I thought the point was getting to the RIGHT answer instead of letting people LEARN. When I matured, I realized that there was more happening than simply getting something right. The same goes for here. God is doing all sorts of things and shutting other people out because you are certain you are right, isn't the whole point.
 - **Ecstatic vs. Orderly Ministry (not experiences)** – *when it comes to leading and sharing (corporate usage), the Holy Spirit moves in an orderly way* that allows for the individual to direct it (spirit of the prophets is subject to the prophets). *That doesn't mean that all person encounters or experiences are orderly or controllable.*
 - **God is not a God of confusion but of Peace** – This phrase is a another way to sift our thoughts. Is what we are hearing in our supernatural download confusion or words of truth and peace? If it's too confusing it's possible either that you are not mature enough to sift it, OR the enemy is jamming the lines and trying to mess with your head.
- **Women Gone Wild?**

- **The Orderliness of Relational Dynamics**
 - **1st Corinthians 14:33b-40** – “As in all the churches of the saints¹⁸, ³⁴ the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. ³⁵ If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church¹⁹.”
 - **Is it Paul: The Initial Problem with this Passage** – Linguistically in Greek it is a mess. All the manuscripts have it, although some have it later in the passage and some have it here. Not only is it not written like Paul, but it conflicts with what he JUST SAID in the same section about women prophesying with head coverings. Paul has extensively talked about HOW women should verbally share well, and now it looks like he’s saying they should be silent. That is contradictory (it also is said to be known to all the churches but it’s not. It’s also said that it’s in the OT, it’s not. It’s indicated that it’s theologically based, it’s not). Many scholars think this is an addition by a copyist that was moved into the main passage. It’s valuable regardless as an ancient commentary, demonstrating a problem, but needs to be considered carefully since it’s not likely Paul talking.
 - **What it CAN Mean** – it’s so problematic that we may need to just move on, but since it’s here let’s talk about what it can mean.
 - **Silence in context** – since we know that Paul already said that everyone comes with something to contribute and gave so much teaching on HOW women should share publicly we know that it doesn’t mean silent, so perhaps it can mean what it meant when tongues speakers and prophecy speakers are told to be silent. It means ORDERLY, in turn.
 - **In Submission** – in submission to the church? To their husbands? Again, it says, as the Law says, but nothing like this is said in the Law. The way that it’s written in Greek doesn’t allow any direct connection to the Old Testament. We would be guessing. But what it CAN MEAN is that anything that is out of order, or disruptive or rebellious needs to be contained and doesn’t bless anyone.
 - **Desire to Learn = Husbands?** – what if they are single? What if they are widows? What if their husband is a non-believer? All of those were realities in the Early Church. What if they were slaves and separated from their husbands outside of church? It’s presupposing too many things to be helpful. I suppose it CAN MEAN that if a woman wanted to argue some things in

¹⁸ “As will be noted in the next section, there is substantial evidence that vv. 34–35 are not authentic, and therefore that Paul could not have intended it to go with what he did not write. In any case, the very early textual evidence in the Western church indicates that this phrase was not considered to be part of vv. 34–35. (b) The two rhetorical questions in v. 36, both of which begin with “or,” make best sense when understood as referring directly to this statement. That is, “All the churches of the saints are intended to be orderly as we have just described, or did the word of God originate with you?” This seems to be the proper understanding of the rhetoric of v. 36, even if vv. 34–35 are authentic. (c) To take this phrase with v. 34 creates an even clumsier sentence: “As in all the churches of the saints women should remain silent in the churches.” That is a redundancy that is nearly intolerable—even the NIV tries to alleviate it with a different translation for the two clauses.” NICNT

¹⁹ See End Notes from NICNT Commentary – they are too lengthy to put here. The bottom line is that Gordon Fee does not believe these verses are from Paul but added in by a copyist/commentator and don’t align with Paul or the rest of the book (Paul just said that women are to prophesy and that all are to weigh things). IF they are from Paul, it MUST be that some form of disruption was occurring that needed to be shut down.

church that were dishonoring to her husband's headship in any way, that they need to sort that out away from church, at home, instead of venting it in service to the disruption of worship.

- **What is Shameful?** – as mentioned already, women were encouraged to speak by Paul. So, what's the shameful portion? It COULD MEAN that the behavior, attitudes or actions were shameful and were detracting from what they were trying to accomplish, and it was dishonoring to their husbands in some way. I don't know what this comment is trying to say. It contradicts what Paul teaches elsewhere.

- **Correcting Corinthians**

- **Paul Closes with Correction to the Corinthians**

- **1st Corinthians 14:36-38** – *“Or was it from you that the word of God came? Or are you the only ones it has reached?”^{20 37} If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord.^{21 38} If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized²².”*

- **Context** – context is everything here. Paul is directly challenging those who were challenging his authority as Apostle and pastor. They were saying that they were fine on their own, that they were his equal, that they knew better, and that their spirituality (primarily demonstrated in tongues) authorized them to do what they

²⁰ “These two questions are a direct confrontation with the Corinthians over their attitude toward Paul on some issue, in which he tries to give them perspective by reminding them of their own place in the history of “the word of God” (i.e., the gospel of Christ).⁸ “Did the message of Christ originate with you?” he asks with sarcasm. “Are you the fountainhead from which all Christian truth derives that you can act so in this matter?” “Are you the only ones to whom it has come,” he asks further, “so that you can carry on in your own individualistic way, as if there were no other believers in the world?” This is biting rhetoric, which flows directly from the (probably immediately) preceding clause, “as in all the churches of the saints.” Who do they think they are anyway? Is the implication; has God given them a special word that allows them both to reject Paul’s instructions, on the one hand, and be so out of touch with the other churches, on the other? But to what does this rhetoric refer? Probably not to vv. 34–35, which are unlikely to be authentic; in any case, one can make far better sense of the argument by seeing this as referring to the larger matter at hand, namely to their and his disagreements over the nature of being pneumatikos and the place of tongues in the assembly. Both questions begin with the conjunction “or,” implying that the first question flows directly from the immediately preceding sentence. This conjunction in fact goes very poorly with v. 35, but makes excellent sense following v. 33: “For God is not a God of disorder but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints; or did the word of God originate from you? Or are you the only people it reached?” They are dead wrong on this matter; this rhetoric, therefore, is not only an attempt to get them to see that they are out of step with the other churches, but also leads directly to the two conditional sentences that follow.”

²¹ “This is now the third instance in this letter where Paul attacks their own position head-on with the formula “If anyone thinks he is ...” (see on 3:18 and 8:2). Each occurs in one of the three major sections of the letter (chaps. 1–4; 8–10; 12–14); and the argument in each case indicates that by this formula Paul is zeroing in on the Corinthians’ perspective as to their own spirituality. They do indeed think of themselves as “the wise” (3:18 and as “having knowledge” (8:2), probably in both cases because they also think of themselves as being pneumatikoi (see on 2:15 and 3:1). In this case, however, it is probably not the Corinthians as a whole whom he is taking on, although they are certainly in view as well; more likely, as in 4:18 and 9:3, he is speaking directly to those who have been leading the church in its anti-Pauline sentiments. These people consider themselves to be “prophets” and “Spirit people.” These two words are probably to be understood as closely linked. In contrast to the functional use of “prophet” in the immediately preceding argument, the word “prophet” here reverts back to the usage in 12:28, where it refers to those who had a “ranked” position of ministry in the local assembly. Crucial here is the addition “or pneumatikos” (=“spiritual” or “a person of the Spirit”). As argued throughout the commentary, this is the central issue. There seems to be no other good reason for Paul to have spoken to them in this way if they did not consider themselves to be “spiritual,” the primary evidence of which was the gift of tongues. They were sure that they themselves were Spirit people; they were less sure of the apostle.” NICNT

²² “With the authority of the same Lord from whom he received the “command,” Paul pronounces sentence on those who do not recognize the Spirit in what he writes: “If anyone (i.e., the one who thinks he is a Spirit person) ignores this, he himself will be ignored.” Paul’s point is clear; the precise meaning of the repeated verb is slightly less so. He seems to be making a double play on words. The verb “to ignore” is here the antonym of “acknowledge” in v. 37. Thus, a spiritual person should “recognize” what Paul writes as “from the Lord”; if anyone “fails to acknowledge” it as such, that person will in turn not be “recognized/acknowledged.” Although it is possible that Paul meant the subject of this last clause to be himself or the church (= “not recognized to be a prophet or spiritual”), more likely “God” is intended. That is, failure to recognize the Spirit in Paul’s letter will lead to that person’s failure to be “recognized” by God (cf. 8:2–3). Hence it is a prophetic sentence of judgment on those who fail to heed this letter.” NICNT

wanted. Paul wasn't having it and challenged them in this closing argument about this subject.

- **Concluding Comments**
 - **Paul Wraps Up His Most Recent Argument**
 - **1st Corinthians 14:39-40** – *“So, my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues.”*⁴⁰ *But all things should be done decently and in order.”*
 - **Concluding Remarks**²³ – Paul brings it back to the main point he was trying to state: speaking in tongues is great and we should do it, but even more that we should want to prophesy. But when we do these things the WAY that we do it, matters. It can either keep it a blessing or turn it into a curse.

Conclusion

- **We need EVERYONE involved** – where are you serving? What are your gifts? Are you holding my miracle in your hands?

²³ “Paul’s long response to the Corinthians’ enthusiasm for tongues is now finished. The basic issue is over what it means to be pneumatikos (“spiritual”); and on this issue Paul and they are deeply divided. They think it has to do with speaking in tongues, the language(s) of the angels, the sure evidence that they are already living the pneumatic existence of the future. For this reason they have great zeal for this gift (cf. v. 12), including an insistence on its practice in the gathered assembly. Apparently in their letter they have not only defended this practice, but by the same criterion have called Paul into question for his lack of “spirituality.” Hence the undercurrent of apologetic for his own speaking in tongues in vv. 6, 15, and 18. Paul’s response to all this has been twofold. First, they are to broaden their perspective to recognize that being Spirit people by its very nature means a great variety of gifts and ministries in the church (chap. 12). Second, the whole point of the gathered people of God is edification, the true expression of love for the saints. Whatever they do in the assembly must be both intelligible and orderly so that the whole community may be edified; thus it must reflect the character of God, which is how it is (or is to be) in all the churches of the saints (v. 33).” NICNT

End Notes

NICNT Commentary thoughts on Women being silent in Church – 1 Cor 14:34-35

“Although these two verses are found in all known manuscripts, either here or at the end of the chapter, the two text-critical criteria of transcriptional and intrinsic probability combine to cast considerable doubt on their authenticity.

First, on the matter of transcriptional probability, Bengel’s first principle must rule: That form of the text is more likely the original which best explains the emergence of all the others. In this case there are three options: Either (1) Paul wrote these words at this place and they were deliberately transposed to a position after v. 40; or (2) the reverse of this, they were written originally after v. 40 and someone moved them forward to a position after v. 33; or (3) they were not part of the original text, but were a very early marginal gloss that was subsequently placed in the text at two different places. Of these options, the third is easily the one that best fits Bengel’s first principle. One can give good historical reasons both for the gloss itself and for its dual position in the text; but one is especially hard pressed to account for either options 1 or 2 had the other been original.

Although the majority of interpreters assume that option 1 is original, they generally do so without asking the historical question as to how then the Western text came into existence. The solution that is sometimes offered, that someone in the early second century “edited” the text in this fashion “to find a more appropriate location,”⁸ seems to be unhistorical—on two grounds: (a) displacements of this kind do not occur elsewhere in the NT; and (b) no adequate reason can be found for such a displacement were these words originally in the text after v. 33. It is simply a modern invention that someone in the early church would have been troubled by the placement of these words in the text, since all who comment on it find the arrangement very logical. It is therefore most highly improbable that with this text before him it would ever have occurred to a copyist to take such an unprecedented step as to rearrange Paul’s argument—especially so since in this case one can scarcely demonstrate that the “displacement” makes better sense!¹¹ The Western text may not be shunted aside. All the surviving evidence indicates that this was the only way 1 Corinthians appeared in the Latin church for at least three hundred years. Those who wish to maintain the authenticity of these verses must at least offer an adequate answer as to how this arrangement came into existence if Paul wrote them originally as our vv. 34–35.

Second, once one recognizes the improbability of authenticity on transcriptional grounds, then several questions of intrinsic probability are more easily answered: (1) One can make much better sense of the structure of Paul’s argument without these intruding sentences. As noted above,¹³ the balanced guidelines for tongues with interpretation and prophecy with discernment are fittingly brought to a conclusion on the twin notes of vv. 32–33, that the “spirits of prophets are subject to prophets” and that orderly worship fits the character of God, being what is found (or laid down) in “all the churches of the saints.” Then, in typical fashion, the mention of “all the churches” sends Paul off on an ad hominem argument against those in the community who in the name of being pneumatikos (“spiritual”) are leading this church in another direction. Thus, in light of the “other churches,” he asks rhetorically, “Or did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached?” This rhetorical aside (vv. 36–38), which at the same time is a direct confrontation between him and them over the crucial matters that divide them, is then followed (vv. 39–40) by a concluding wrap-up of the whole matter of chaps. 12–14. This reading of the text makes so much sense of all the data that even if one were to conclude that vv. 34–35 are authentic, they would appear to be best understood as something of an afterthought to the present argument.

Furthermore, very little in the two verses fits into the present argument, which to this point has only to do with manifestations of the Spirit in the community. Any mention of people as such (e.g., “the one speaking in tongues”) is quite subordinate to the larger concern of intelligibility and edification in the community through prophecy and related gifts, which by the same token disallows uninterpreted tongues. These verses, on the other hand, have to do with people only—women in this case, with no corresponding word to men as in 7:1–35 and 11:4–15. Moreover, there is not a single internal hint that they deal with gifts or manifestations of the Spirit in any way. The linguistic ties that do exist (“speaking, silence, submission”) are used in such completely different ways as to make them suspect in any case. For example, there is not a single absolute use of the verb “to speak” in its other 21 occurrences in this chapter, yet it is twice so used here; and the enjoined “silence” in vv. 28 and 30 is of an otherwise legitimate activity that in some circumstances is being curtailed, whereas here the injunction to silence is absolute. Thus, these two verses simply lack any genuine correspondence with either the overall argument of chaps. 12–14 or the immediate argument of vv. 26–40.

(2) Of even greater difficulty is the fact that these verses stand in obvious contradiction to 11:2–16, where it is assumed without reproof that women pray and prophesy in the assembly, not to mention that such is also assumed in the repeated “all” of vv. 23–24 and 31 and the “each one” of v. 26. This problem is so manifest that most interpretations that consider these words authentic¹⁶ engage much of their energy in “getting around” their plain meaning so as to allow the two passages to exist side by side in the same letter.

(3) Finally, as will be noted in the commentary on the individual verses that follow, some usages in these two verses seem quite foreign to Paul.

Taken together these data are more than sufficient reasons for considering these verses inauthentic. Nonetheless, since they are missing from no known manuscripts and are found in the majority of witnesses at this point, there have been several attempts to make sense of them in this context, none of which, however, is free of difficulties.

Historically the passage was taken as part of a long series of instructions on “order” in the churches. After some “rules” for tongues and prophecy, Paul laid down a further rule about women because they, too, were apparently out of order. The argument in 11:2–16 was usually dismissed as not really permitting women to prophesy, but as insisting on submission to their husbands by wearing the traditional head covering, or as referring to “private” meetings over against “official services” of the church. As already noted, the extreme difficulty of reconciling these two passages has led to other options, of which there are three major types.

(1) The most commonly held view is that which sees the problem as some form of disruptive speech. Support is found in v. 35, that if the women wish to learn anything, they should ask their own husbands at home. Various scenarios are proposed: that the setting was something like the Jewish synagogue, with women on one side and men on the other and the women shouting out disruptive questions about what was being said in a prophecy or tongue; or that they were asking questions of men other than their own husbands; or that they were simply “chattering” so loudly that it had a disruptive effect.

The biggest difficulty with this view is that it assumes a “church service” of a more “orderly” sort than the rest of this argument presupposes. If the basic problem is with their “all speaking in tongues” in some way, one may assume on the basis of 11:5 that this also

included the women; furthermore, in such disarray how can mere “chatter” have a disruptive effect? The suggestion that the early house churches assumed a synagogue pattern is pure speculation; it seems remote at best.

(2) Others consider the passage to be a prohibition of some form of inspired speech other than prophecy. This has taken one of two forms: (a) Some have suggested that the ban is on the “discerning” of prophecies mentioned in v. 29. It is assumed in this model that women did prophesy, but they are now being excluded from the weighing of prophecies because that could possibly put them in the “unbiblical” position of sitting in authority over their own husbands. This has against it (i) the extreme difficulty of being so far removed from v. 29 that one wonders how the Corinthians themselves could have so understood it; (ii) the fact that nothing in the passage itself even remotely hints of such a thing; and (iii) the form of v. 35, “if they wish to learn anything,” which implies not “judging” their husbands’ prophecies but failing to understand what is going on at all. Furthermore, despite arguments to the contrary, it is less than convincing that “discerning” the prophetic utterance of a husband is to sit in authority over him in a greater way than by a prophetic utterance. That seems to make the dependent, and therefore lesser, item (discerning prophecies) more significant than prophecy itself.

(b) Others have argued that the “speaking” here being banned is “tongues” itself, the implication being that it is the eschatological women who are primarily responsible for the disorder brought about by this gift in the church. In this view the verb “to speak” assumes its regular role in this chapter;²⁵ and “to be in submission” means, as in v. 32, that their “spirits” are to be kept in submission. This view has the attraction of trying to place the passage within the larger historical problem and to see the answer as within the context of the present argument. But it also seems to face insuperable difficulties: the verb “speak” is invariably accompanied by “tongues” in this argument when that is meant; the prohibition takes a more absolute form here than this view allows; v. 35 implies the asking of questions for the sake of learning, not the alleged thrusting on the congregation of their own revelations.

(3) Because of the very Jewish nature of this passage, others have argued that it does not represent Paul’s point of view at all, but rather is a quotation or restatement of the view of some Corinthians who were imposing it on the community. Usually this is associated with the “Cephas party” of 1:12. Vv. 36–38 are then viewed as Paul’s own response to this imposition of “the Law” on the church. This is attractive in that it removes the difficulties of the previous views, which must find ways to “get around” what is said if Paul is the author. On the other hand, it also has considerable difficulties: There is no hint in v. 34 that Paul has suddenly taken to quoting them; there is no precedent for such a long quotation that is also full of argumentation (two explanatory “for’s”); it presupposes the unlikely scenario that some in the church were forbidding women to speak—and especially that the quotation would come from the same Corinthian letter that is otherwise quite pro-women (see on 7:1–7; 11:2–16).

On the whole, therefore, the case against these verses is so strong, and finding a viable solution to their meaning so difficult, that it seems best to view them as an interpolation. If so, then one must assume that the words were first written as a gloss in the margin by someone who, probably in light of 1 Tim. 2:9–15, felt the need to qualify Paul’s instructions even further. Since the phenomenon of glosses making their way into the biblical text is so well documented elsewhere in the NT (e.g., John 5:3b–4; 1 John 5:7), there is no good historical reason to reject the possibility here. The fact that it occurs in all extant witnesses only means that the double interpolation had taken place before the time of our present textual tradition, and could easily have happened before the turn of the first century. In the commentary that follows, this is the assumed point of view; but other options are noted as well.

34 These two verses together have a singular concern, that women “remain silent” in the congregational meetings, which is further defined as “not being permitted to speak” (v. 34) because it is “shameful” for them to do so (v. 35). The structure of the argument bears this out. It begins with “a sentence of holy law,” the absolute nature of which is very difficult to get around. Two reasons are then given for such a proscription, which are intended to be two sides of the same reality. On the one hand, “it is not permitted for them to speak”; on the other hand, “let them be in submission.” To this final reason there is added the further justification, “even as the Law says.” This is followed by the allowance that they should learn at home by asking questions of their own husbands, for which the concluding reason is that “it is shameful for them to speak in the church.” Thus:

The rule	The women must be silent in the churches.	
The reasons:	For	1) It is not permitted them to speak; 2) But let them be in submission, even as the Law says.
The provision:	If they wish to learn, let them ask their own husbands at home.	
The reasons:	For	It is shameful for a woman to speak in the assembly.

Despite protests to the contrary, the “rule” itself is expressed absolutely. That is, it is given without any form of qualification. Given the unqualified nature of the further prohibition that “the women” are not permitted to speak, it is very difficult to interpret this as meaning anything else than all forms of speaking out in public. Someone apparently was concerned to note by way of a gloss that all the previous directions given by the apostle, including the inclusive “each one” of v. 26 and the “all” of v. 31, were not to be understood as including women.

The problems with seeing this as authentic are obvious. If Paul himself is responsible for such a “corrective,” it is surprising that he should add it here, yet allow them to pray and prophesy in 11:5 and 13. What is also surprising is the sudden shift from the problem of disorder in the congregation in Corinth to a rule that is to be understood as universal for all the churches. The problem is not so much with Paul’s setting forth such a rule as with his suddenly doing so here in the present argument. Some, who have also taken v. 33b as the beginning of this sentence, have argued that “in the churches” means “in all the congregational meetings of the Corinthian church.” But that will not work. Paul invariably says “in assembly” when that is what he means; both the plural and the definite article indicate that the author (whether Paul or an interpolator) intended this to be a rule for all Christian churches. We have already noted above that this rule of unqualified silence stands in a considerably different category from the two expressions of “silence” in vv. 28 and 30.

The first reason for the rule comes in the form of a prohibition: "They are not permitted to speak." What kind of speaking is intended depends on one's view, both of authorship and, if authentic, of its place in the present argument. The only internal suggestion is that of v. 35, that they should ask questions at home if they wish to learn. If authentic, this unqualified use of the verb seems to tell against the probability that only a single form of speech is being prohibited. Elsewhere Paul has said "speak in tongues" when that is in view, and when he means "discern" he says "discern," not "speak." Again, as with the opening "rule," the plain sense of the sentence is an absolute prohibition of all speaking in the assembly. This again makes sense as the glossator's concern, but very little as Paul's.

More difficult yet is the flip side of the reason, namely that they "must be in submission, as the Law says." Some have argued that "let them be in submission" refers to v. 32, that their "spirit of prophecy" is to be in submission. But that plays havoc with the grammar, which points to the women themselves as being in subjection, not to their having control over their own "prophetic spirit." What is not clear is whether the women are to be subject to their own husbands or to the church as a whole in its worship. More likely it is the latter.

Real problems for Pauline authorship lie with the phrase "even as the Law says." First, when Paul elsewhere appeals to "the Law," he always cites the text (e.g., 9:8; 14:21), usually to support a point he himself is making. Nowhere else does he appeal to the Law in this absolute way as binding on Christian behavior. More difficult yet is the fact that the Law does not say any such thing. Gen. 3:16 is often appealed to, but that text does not say what is here argued. If that were the case, then one must admit that Paul is appealing not to the written Torah itself but to an oral understanding of Torah such as is found in rabbinic Judaism.³⁴ A similar usage is reflected in Josephus, who says, "The woman, says the Law, is in all things inferior to the man. Let her accordingly be submissive." This usage suggests that the provenance of the glossator was Jewish Christianity. Under any view this is difficult to reconcile with Paul.³⁶

The author of this piece seems intent on keeping women from joining in the vocal worship of the churches. The rule he wishes to apply he sees as universal and supported by the Law. It is difficult to fit this into any kind of Pauline context.

35 But the author is not against women finding their "proper place," as he understands it, within the Christian community. The implication of this provision is twofold: First, the author assumes that the women would not understand what is being said in the community, probably with regard to the spiritual utterances being addressed in this chapter. Second, he wants them to learn, but they are to do so at home from their own husbands. It is certainly possible that for the glossator some form of asking questions was going on in the church that he wanted to stop. But that is not a necessary implication from what is said. It is also possible that this is simply a proviso: "If their wanting to learn is the reason for them to speak out, then...."

On the other hand, if Paul is the author, this seems yet to be the best of all the options, that some form of disruptive speaking out was going on, which then qualifies the apparent absolutes of v. 34. Nonetheless, as noted above, such a view is loaded with its own set of difficulties.

The final reason given for their being silent in the assembly is that speaking in church, apparently for the reasons given in v. 34, is "shameful," in the sense of being inconsistent with accepted standards of modesty. Again, as with the rule and prohibition in v. 34, the statement is unqualified: It is shameful for a woman to speak in church, not simply to speak in a certain way.

Thus, in keeping with the textual questions, the exegesis of the text itself leads to the conclusion that it is not authentic. If so, then it is certainly not binding for Christians. If not, the considerable doubts as to its authenticity ought to serve as a caution against using it as an eternal prohibition in a culture where such speaking by women in the assembly would not be a shameful thing. What seems hermeneutically questionable is the denial of all the surrounding matter as applicable to the church on prior hermeneutical grounds while selecting this single and probably inauthentic passage as a word for all time in all settings.²⁴

²⁴ Fee, G. D. (1987). [*The First Epistle to the Corinthians*](#) (pp. 699–708). Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.