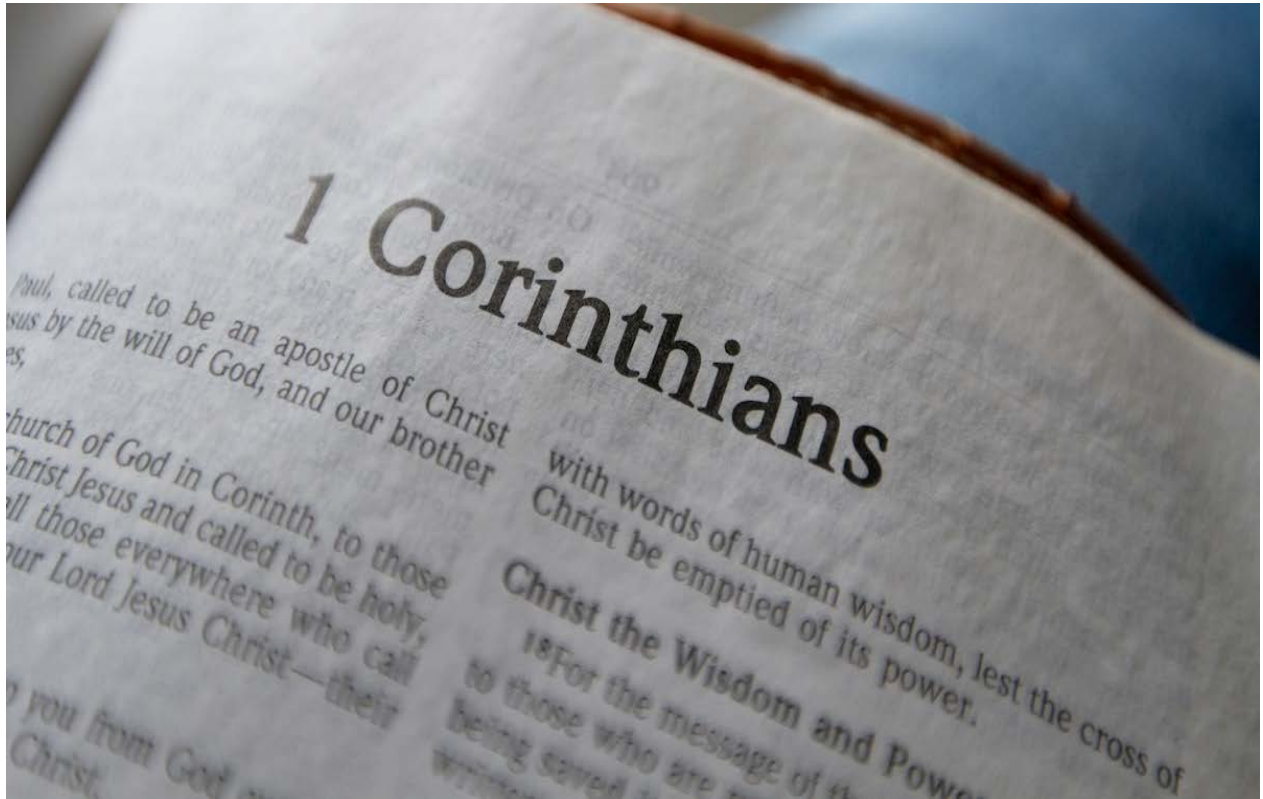


Decently and in Order

1 Corinthians 14

1 and 2 Corinthians Part 15



T. M. AND SUSIE MOORE

A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

Decently and in Order: 1 Corinthians 14
1 and 2 Corinthians Part 15
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Introduction to *1 Corinthians 14*

Paul puts an exclamation point on his discussion of spiritual gifts, the more excellent way, and how God's people should comport themselves in worship: He insisted that his teaching is the very Word of God.

The Corinthians had a choice: Hear Paul and change their ways to reflect his teaching. Stop insisting they know better than the Lord how to live their Christian lives and build His Church. Stop making their faith a means of puffing themselves up at others' expense. Start living as Paul has been teaching, with the mind of Christ and for the glory of God in all things.

Or choose to be ignorant and remain ignorant.

That same choice comes to us each day.

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We hope you find this study instructive and helpful to equip you for your walk with and work for the Lord. Thank you for joining us.

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1 The Native Tongue of the Faithful

Pray Psalm 125.1, 2.

Those who trust in the LORD
Are like Mount Zion,
Which cannot be moved, *but* abides forever.
As the mountains surround Jerusalem,
So the LORD surrounds His people
From this time forth and forever.

Sing Psalm 125.1, 2.

(St. Gertrude: *Onward, Christian Soldiers*)
All who trust in Jesus, strong as Zion stand!
Naught shall ever move them from their promised land!
Like the hills surrounding safe Jerusalem,
Christ surrounds His Church and holds her in His mighty Hand!

Refrain, v. 1

All who trust in Jesus, strong as Zion stand!
Naught shall ever move them from their promised land!

Read and meditate on 1 Corinthians 14.1-5.

Preparation

1. How should we use the gift of prophesy?
2. What was Paul's desire concerning this gift?

Meditation

Paul says that of all the spiritual gifts, we should seek to prophesy (v. 1). This word is addressed to all the believers in Corinth, and not just to the shepherds of the church. All believers should seek to prophesy. Indeed, prophecy is the true native tongue of the faithful.

In verse 3, Paul tells us why. They prophesy who speak edification, exhortation, and comfort to others by giving praise and thanks to God (1 Chron. 25.3). We are called to build up our brethren and bring encouragement and comfort to them with our words. This is the true spirit of prophecy, and it's not difficult to see why every believer must seek this gift.

If all our conversations and all uses of our tongues were robed in the garments of prophecy, how different would be our lives together in the church and in the world. We would always strive to build others up, encourage them in the Lord and His work, remind them of God's salvation, enlarge on that salvation, and urge them on to know more of it; and we would affirm, strengthen, and embolden others with our words, opening through praise and thanksgiving new insights to God and His Word.

Prophesy is a spiritual gift, a work of God's Spirit in those who possess it; nevertheless, we must all work to develop and use this gift appropriately, making sure that our own spirits—mind, heart, and conscience—are bent to the service of edification, and not merely of boasting. The focus of all such speech will be Jesus Christ and His many excellencies, for “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Rev. 19.10; cf. also Acts 13.15ff).

Let all our words be of this nature as we grow in love for one another and the Lord.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162.

Often, we feel shy about asking for a gift. We think if we have dropped perhaps a thousand hints, that our desires would be made known. But not everyone picks up what we are putting down, and our desires are often overlooked, because interestingly, not everyone is a mind reader.

However, Paul tells us to “Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that we may prophesy” (1 Cor. 14.1). God is inviting us to be bold about our desires and proactive about receiving the gifts that we would prefer. Of course, we must always be content with what we receive and very thankful for it. “Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you’” (Heb. 13.5). And certainly, that is always enough to know and have.

But just like a wedding registry, that some sign up for, we can “by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let [our] requests be made known to God” (Phil. 4.6). We have been invited to pursue gifts, so let’s feel free to do it.

Prophecy seems to be, along with love, a summum bonum gift. So why not pursue it? Those in the Old Testament who pursued it, did it to “give thanks and to praise the LORD” more efficiently (1 Chron. 25.3).

Solomon spoke about the good and bad side of prophecy: “There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, but the tongue of the wise promotes health” (Prov. 12.18). Just like Paul explained, prophecy is to be used for one-on-one edification, exhortation, comfort, and corporate edification (1 Cor. 14.3, 4). And the gift is never used to cause damage.

And the epitome of correct usage: “Open your mouth for the speechless, in the cause of all who are appointed to die. Open your mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy” (Prov. 31.8, 9). “She [but surely it is he, too] opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness” (Prov. 31.26).

James warns, as we seek this gift of prophecy, to be mindful of the onus that accompanies it: “let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment” (Jms. 3.1). It is a disclaimer from our heavenly Father: “Be mindful of the gifts you request. Some come with harsher side effects.”

But as we grow in the LORD, maturing in Him (1 Cor. 13.11, 12), our gift list changes. Those gifts that we desired early on in our walk of faith, may have increased to other or additional requests. We have the confidence and encouragement from Paul, that to eagerly seek, pursue, and desire new gifts is OK with God; but always being faithful in the use of each gift that has been given, for the good of the body of Christ. It is never polite to cast a gift aside. Ever. Each must be utilized and cherished with respect to the Giver. “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights...” (Jms. 1.17).

No matter what other gifts we may pursue, we must always remember love (1 Cor. 13.13). Because without love, everything else is pointless. But with it, we can ask for all the gifts, and may even receive them, if God finds us faithfully using each one to His glory. “Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things” (Matt. 25.21).

Every gift points to Jesus—praise, adoration, honor, and glory—for His sacrificial love that He desires we share with the world He came to die for. Otherwise, those gifts were given in vain.

For reflection

1. What does it mean for you to seek the gift of being able to prophesy?
2. Prophecy is not about telling the future. It’s telling about Jesus, to encourage, edify, and bring to saving

grace. How will you speak this native language of the faithful today?

3. How can your use of the gift of prophesying help your church to mature in the Lord?

Paul reckons this gift as a higher one because it is used for the common good. He always gives the greater honor to those gifts that will be used for the benefit of everyone. John Chrysostom (344-407), Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians 35.1

Pray Psalm 125.1, 4, 5.

Pray that God will envelop your church in peace, that all may speak His Word to one another in love and service for the building-up of the Body of Christ.

Sing Psalm 125.1, 4, 5.

(St. Gertrude: Onward, Christian Soldiers)

LORD, do good and care for those upright in heart.

Those who turn to evil shall from You depart.

Sinful men may increase on their way to hell!

Save Your people, let your peace abound in Israel!

Refrain, v. 1

All who trust in Jesus, strong as Zion stand!

Naught shall ever move them from their promised land!

2 Concerning Tongues

Pray Psalm 103.1-6.

Bless the LORD, O my soul;
And all that is within me, *bless* His holy name!
Bless the LORD, O my soul,
And forget not all His benefits:
Who forgives all your iniquities,
Who heals all your diseases,
Who redeems your life from destruction,
Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies,
Who satisfies your mouth with good *things*,
So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.
The LORD executes righteousness
And justice for all who are oppressed.

Sing Psalm 103.1-6.

(Old 100th: *All Creatures that on Earth Do Dwell*)

O my soul, bless the LORD's great Name! His many benefits proclaim:
He pardons sins and heals disease, and from the pit grants us release.

With mercy rich and steadfast love He satisfies us from above,
revives our youth, works righteousness, and justice serves for the oppressed.

Read 1 Corinthians 14.1-19; meditate on verses 6-19.

Preparation

1. Why does the Spirit give the gift of tongues?
2. What is the relationship between tongues and understanding?

Meditation

We can summarize Paul's teaching succinctly as follows: Tongues are known languages (cf. Acts 2.1-12). Speaking in tongues—in languages that one has not learned but which, by the Spirit, one is able to employ—is a spiritual gift (1 Cor. 12.8-10). Not everyone will receive this gift, however (1 Cor. 12.30, where the construction in the Greek requires a negative answer). All speaking in tongues must be for edification or instruction, that is, for building-up others and the church in Christ (1 Cor. 14.12, 17, 19). Private use of tongues, for self-benefit only, is contradictory to the Spirit's purpose in giving gifts (1 Cor. 12.4-7). Thus, any speaking in tongues in the assembly of God's people must be with interpretation, either by the speaker or another interpreter (1 Cor. 14.13). In the absence of an interpreter, those who have the gift of tongues should be silent (1 Cor. 14.27, 28).

It does not surprise us that the Corinthians had managed to use this gift with confusion and boasting. After all, they were babes in Christ, childish in their understanding (v. 20). It appears some in the churches in Corinth were misusing this gift as a way of vaunting their supposed spirituality. The result was neither worship nor edification but confusion and division.

He commended them for being zealous for such spiritual gifts (v. 12); but he reminded them that the edification of the church—not the mere satisfying of self, and much less the vaunting of self—is the only proper use for any of the gifts of the Spirit. Lose that focus and what the Spirit intended as a gift can end up being an ego-booster and a stumbling-block.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162.

“For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare for battle?” (1 Cor. 14.8).

Can you imagine what would’ve happened if the folks standing around Jericho hadn’t blown their horns and trumpets as instructed? Here is what they were told to do: “It shall come to pass, when they make a long blast with the ram’s horn, and when you hear the sound of the trumpet, that all the people shall shout with a great shout; then the wall of the city will fall down flat” (Josh. 6.5). What if, instead of a long blast, it had been merely a little toot? The walls of Jericho might still be standing.

The sound emanating from the Church today doesn’t seem to be rallying the troops. Could it be that we are speaking in uncertain terms, in tongues misunderstood?

God gave a tutorial on how to be understood:

“Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain!”

“Blow the trumpet in Zion, consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly;
gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders,
gather the children and nursing babes; let the bridegroom go out from his chamber,
and the bride from her dressing room.

Let the priests, who minister to the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar;
let them say, ‘Spare Your people, O LORD, and do not give Your heritage to reproach,
that the nations should rule over them.

Why should they say among the peoples, ‘Where is their God?’” (Joel 2.1, 15-17).

Our message is *the* quintessential message; it must be understood correctly, else why give it?

On the Day of Pentecost, when this gift first appeared as a sound of rushing wind in the form of divided tongues as of fire “they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave the utterance” (Acts 2.4). Suddenly and with great power. It most definitely was not some mediocre mumbling of gibberish with much self-aggrandizement. It was the Holy Spirit infusing Himself into, then bursting out of the people of God, for His glory and the benefit of others.

We, the body of Christ, must be at the forefront of speaking certain and sure sounds.

Perhaps God’s word to us through Joel is a good start: Blow the trumpet clearly, consecrate a fast of repentance, call for a sacred assembly of believers, gather all the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the leadership to corporately ask for forgiveness and restoration, and pray that God, in His mercy, will let our voices be raised together, fully understood, to share the Good News of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. And to clearly proclaim the additional Good News of the gift of His Holy Spirit, Who gives us understandable utterances for God’s glory and the good of others.

Henceforth we, like Paul, would rather speak clearly five understandable words than ten thousand words of uncertainty (1 Cor. 14.19). Give us utterance, Lord, with power—not a toot.

For reflection

1. Scripture insists on understanding as part of faith. What is understanding?
2. What opportunities for “speaking certain and sure sounds” will you have today? How should you prepare for these right now?
3. Whom will you encourage today to be faithful in their calling as a witness to Jesus?

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Paul concludes that the gift of tongues has not been conferred with the view of giving occasion of boasting to a few, without yielding advantage to the Church. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on the 1 Corinthians 14.12

Pray Psalm 103.17-22.

Pray that, as you grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus, you will grow in love for your fellow church members, and that you will seek only to edify and encourage them in all you do or say.

Sing Psalm 103.17-22.

(Old 100th: All Creatures that on Earth Do Dwell)

But evermore to those who fear the LORD brings lovingkindness near;
His righteousness to them extends and to their children without end.

He rules upon His throne in heav'n; His sovereign rule o'er all is giv'n.
You angels, bless the LORD, rejoice, who live in strength to heed His voice.

All you who serve Him, bless the LORD, all you who heed His righteous Word!
Let all throughout the cosmos whole unite to praise Him, with my soul!

3 When to Be Like Children and When Not

Pray Psalm 96.1-4.

Oh, sing to the LORD a new song!
Sing to the LORD, all the earth.
Sing to the LORD, bless His name;
Proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day.
Declare His glory among the nations,
His wonders among all peoples.
For the LORD *is* great and greatly to be praised;
He *is* to be feared above all gods.

Sing Psalm 96.1-4.

(Mit Freuden Zart: *All Praise to God, Who Reigns Above*)

Sing to the LORD! O, bless His Name! All nations tell His glory!
Salvation's tidings loud proclaim; let earth rehearse His story!
For God is greatly to be praised; His throne above all gods is raised!
Fear Him and sing His glory!

Read 1 Corinthians 14.1-25; meditate on verses 20-25.

Preparation

1. How should we not be like children?
2. How should we be like children?

Meditation

Paul established that the Corinthians were “babes in Christ” because of their penchant for divisiveness and other behaviors unbecoming the followers of the Lord. Add to that flaunting their presumed spirituality by abusing the gift of speaking in tongues. Using this gift—or any of God’s gifts—for selfish purposes is not a mark of maturity. Even the gift of tongues must be used for building others up in the Lord, or it must not be used at all.

The Corinthians must stop being like children in their thinking (“I, me, mine!”). Instead, they must become mature in their thinking, and that means seeking to prophesy more than to speak in tongues and focusing on the edification of the church rather than on one’s own interests. Then they would properly be like true children of faith, relating to one another without malice or mere self-interest (v. 20).

Besides, Paul continued, speaking in tongues without interpretation makes the church look foolish to the world (v. 23). But speaking words of encouragement, exhortation, and conviction—the work of prophesy, which only believers can do (v. 22)—unleashes the Word to reach the hearts of those who need it, whether believers, that they might increase in sanctification, or those who have no faith in Christ that they might be “convicted by all”, their sinful hearts exposed, and they may come to true knowledge of God (vv. 24, 25).

Believers have the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2.16). We must learn to think like Jesus so that we will in all things act like Him.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Because Paul had already said to the Corinthian church, “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ” (1 Cor. 11.1), he felt no qualms about using himself as an example: “When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things” (1 Cor.

13.11). He was appealing to their ability to think linearly: “Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature” (1Cor. 14.20).

Paul wanted them to know that childlike thinking in malice is to be desired; but childishness in understanding God’s Word, His Law, and His desires for mature behavior, is to be put away and thoroughly grown out of.

God’s disappointment with us, His people, is clearly stated then by Paul: “With men of other tongues and other lips I will speak to this people; and yet, for all that, they will not hear Me” (1 Cor. 14.21; Is. 28.11, 12).

God speaks to us in our own language, at our various levels of maturity; yet for all that kindly condescension, some still refuse to hear Him. And that is a dangerous stance to take, for willful immaturity is wickedness.

David summed it up this way:

“Do you indeed speak righteousness, you silent ones?
Do you judge uprightly, you sons of men?
No, in heart you work wickedness;
you weigh out the violence of your hands in the earth.
The wicked are estranged from the womb;
they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies.
Their poison is like the poison of a serpent;
they are like the deaf cobra that stops its ear,
which will not heed the voice of charmers,
charming ever so skillfully” (Ps. 58.1-5).

And Who could ever charm more skillfully than God?

We must mature in Christ—we have His mind—knowing that it is within the realm of possibility (1 Cor. 2.16; 3.16). God would never ask us to do anything that He had not gifted or strengthened us for (Ps. 18.1; 2 Cor. 12.9).

If we need an occasional rest from the rigors of adulthood in Christ, we can always set aside some time to “be innocent babies when it comes to planning evil” (1 Cor. 14.20 TLB). In fact, when you think about it, we should do that every day! What a relief. Feels good to just let that go, doesn’t it? We never have to plan one more evil thing, ever (Matt. 10.16).

Now that we have freed up some extra time for good, we can knuckle down on the things that matter: Love, speaking prophetic words about Jesus to everyone in our Personal Mission Field, and doing the good works God “prepared beforehand that we should walk in...” (Eph. 2.10).

Infantile, Mature, Followers and Leaders—Oxymoronic Christians. IMFLOC. It’s a compliment.

We listened, we heard, we heeded, and we followed our Skillful Charmer.

For reflection

1. Why is it so hard to make progress in maturity as a Christian?
2. How can believers help one another in this important work? Whom will you encourage today?
3. What do you consider to be your greatest challenge in becoming more mature in the Lord?

Love always remains firm and stable, unchanged and unchanging. Christians should be like children, void of guile and malice; yet

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they should not be unskillful as to the word of righteousness, but only as to the arts of mischief. Matthew Henry (1662-1714),
Commentary on 1 Corinthians 14.20-25

Pray Psalm 96.8-13.

Offer yourself to the Lord this day as a living sacrifice. Ask Him for opportunities to show His love to others and to encourage them in or tell them about His salvation. Let the creation around you today prompt you to praise the Lord out loud.

Sing Psalm 96.8-13.

(Mit Freuden Zart: *All Praise to God, Who Reigns Above*)

Bring offerings sweet to Him, our LORD, in holy garments praise Him!

Tremble before Him, all the earth; among the nations raise Him!

The earth is fixed, it will not move; the peoples will His justice prove.

Exalt the LORD and praise Him!

Let heaven sing with lusty voice; let earth and sea sing sweetly!

Let fields and trees in Him rejoice, for He is coming swiftly

to judge the world in righteousness, the peoples in His faithfulness.

He comes; exalt Him greatly!

4 Did We Mention Edification?

Pray Psalm 142.1-3.

I cry out to the LORD with my voice;
With my voice to the LORD I make my supplication.
I pour out my complaint before Him;
I declare before Him my trouble.
When my spirit was overwhelmed within me,
Then You knew my path.
In the way in which I walk
They have secretly set a snare for me.

Sing Psalm 142.1-3 (5, 6).

(Dix: For the Beauty of the Earth)

With my voice, O LORD, I cry—hear my plea for mercy, LORD!
My complaint mounts up on high, bringing You my troubled word:

Refrain vs. 5, 6

LORD, You are my Refuge strong! O receive my plaintive song!

When my spirit faints away, You my falt'ring pathway know;
where I take my journey they traps have hidden to my woe.

Refrain

Read 1 Corinthians 14.1-28; meditate on verses 26-28.

Preparation

1. What did people then bring to the worship of God?
2. What was the guiding principle for worship?

Meditation

Paul did not miss an opportunity to remind the Corinthians that life in the Body of Christ is all about building-up one another and the church in the Lord. Mutual edification was obviously missing in the churches in Corinth, so Paul taught about it in nearly every topic he addressed.

But what does it mean to be built-up in the Lord? Who should do this? How?

Individual believers are built-up in the Lord as they become more and more like Him. The Spirit of God, working with the Word of God, seeks to renew us in Jesus throughout our soul and body (2 Cor. 3.12-18). As that renewal continues and advances, we become more like Jesus. This is the great privilege we have with one another, to be instruments in the Spirit's hands for helping others grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus (2 Pet. 3.18).

The local church grows as a body as it increases in unity and maturity unto the measure of Jesus Christ (Eph. 4.12-16). True church growth is not necessarily numerical. It is in the first instance spiritual. Our churches increase in becoming the Body of Christ as unity and maturity characterize all we are and do.

In each case, growing in love is the primary fruit of true growth. We contribute to growth in others and in our church as we identify and use our gifts for the building-up of our brethren and our church. And this is everybody's calling and privilege in the Kingdom of God and Christ.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

God's hope for us is that we grow up in all things into Him Who is the head of the Church, Jesus Christ, "from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love" (Eph. 4.15, 16).

There are many amazing artists in our family, I am not one of them.

Today when I was finishing up my quiet time with the Lord, I received a text from our granddaughter, Evalena, who *is* one of the amazing artists in the family. I was still meditating on and ruminating about a line from Psalm 81, where God says: "You called in trouble, and I delivered you; I answered you in the secret place of thunder..." (vs.7). In my mind, "secret" and "thunder" did not coalesce.

God whispered to me, "Evalena is an artist, ask her what she sees in My words." So, I did. "I don't know how to see this. What are your thoughts?"

Here is her response: "Possibly only in the eardrums of those willing to hear? You know that quote, 'if a tree falls in the forest and there's nobody around to hear it, does it make a sound?' Maybe He answered all those willing to hear the sound?"

In her artistic mind's eye she saw that secret place as the personal eardrum, and the thunder as God's Word—powerful and majestic—but heard only by those who choose to listen. Are we personally there when the tree falls in the forest to hear its whooshing sound? Do I hear His thundering Word when He speaks it?

Evalena edified my mind and heart and taught me how to see that verse.

The Body of Christ is full of believers who can edify one another. Some bring a psalm, some offer teaching, others a word of revelation and prophecy, and the couple who bring a tongue and an interpretation (1 Cor. 14.26). But all the gifts are centered and focused on the truths found within the Word of God. "Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him. Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you and you be found a liar" (Prov. 30.5, 6).

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Heb. 13.8).

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (Jn. 3.16).

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2.8-10).

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5.8). These are all pure and true words that we put our full trust in.

Open up the secret place in your life and hear the whooshing sound of God's love for you. According to Evalena's theory, it can be as loud as thunder, but if we do not listen, we will not hear.

Be edified by God's Word. Be edified by the Body. Then seek to edify others.

"Let all things be done for edification" (1 Cor. 14.26).

For reflection

1. Ultimately, God causes all our growth (1 Cor. 3.7). How is God speaking to you these days? What are you hearing from Him that is edifying your soul?

2. Whom will you be able to encourage and edify today? How should you prepare for this important opportunity?

3. Where do you need to grow? How are you praying that God will send people to edify you in the Lord?

Religious exercises in public assemblies should have this view; Let all be done to edifying. As to the speaking in an unknown tongue, if another were present who could interpret, two miraculous gifts might be exercised at once, and thereby the church be edified, and the faith of the hearers confirmed at the same time. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on 1 Corinthians 14.26-28

Pray Psalm 142.4-7.

We are to build others up in the Lord and to have people in our lives who build us up as well. Ask the Lord to give you some fellow believers whom you can edify and who will edify you.

Sing Psalm 142.4-7.

(Dix: For the Beauty of the Earth)

LORD, look to my right and see: None takes notice of my plight.

Is there refuge left for me? Is my soul out of Your sight?

Refrain vv. 5, 6

LORD, You are my Refuge strong! O receive my plaintive song!

Hear my cry, LORD, I am low! They are strong who seek my soul.

Jesus frees from every foe; He will keep and make me whole!

Refrain

Out of prison lead me, LORD; thanks and praise to You shall be.

Righteous men armed with Your Word will Your grace bestow on me.

Refrain

5 Peace, Order, Edification

Pray Psalm 25.4, 5.

Show me Your ways, O LORD;
Teach me Your paths.
Lead me in Your truth and teach me,
For You *are* the God of my salvation;
On You I wait all the day.

Sing Psalm 25.4, 5.

(Festal Song: *Rise Up, O Men of God*)

Make me to know Your ways, teach me Your paths, O LORD!
My Savior, all day long I wait and seek You in Your Word.

Read 1 Corinthians 14.1-36; meditate on verses 29-36.

Preparation

1. Who can prophesy during a worship service?
2. To what end must they prophesy?

Meditation

If Paul was describing a typical gathering for worship, we must admit that what he outlined looks almost nothing like what we do in worship.

Paul was writing about when the people “come together” “in church” (vv. 26, 28), that is, when “the whole church comes together in one place” (v. 22). What he describes is broadly participatory, everyone having something to offer for the instruction and edification of the whole church (v. 26). He mentions a few of the components of a worship service—prophesying, that is, speaking for edification; singing or perhaps reciting a psalm, sharing an insight into God’s revelation, speaking in a tongue or providing an interpretation. Everyone, of course, could prophesy (v. 31) because everyone should be ready to stimulate others to love and good works (prophecy, we recall, is the native tongue of the faithful; cf. Heb. 10.24). All who wish to prophesy to the whole church—and these were house churches, so probably maxed out between 20 to 30 individuals—must take turns and be respectful to one another. Those leading in this aspect of worship would have been members acknowledged by all as having the gift of prophecy, which seems to be a step up from the normal prophesying all could do.

Women, however, were not to speak in church (v. 34). They should share their thoughts at home, and if they had questions, they should look to their husbands (v. 35). This would provide excellent incentive for husbands to fulfill their God-given role of leading the household (cf. Gen. 3.16).

Does this mean that no women would have the gift of prophecy or would be allowed to prophesy in the church? I doubt that; Paul seems to be speaking of a norm for the churches, but not an iron rule. Philip, we recall, had daughters who were prophets, and Paul felt at home among them. And Priscilla seems to have been ready to lead even an apostle to a clearer understanding of God’s Word (Acts 19.24-26; 21.8, 9).

These guidelines are intended to bring peace, order, and edification to the church. In verse 36 Paul reminded the Corinthians that this is the Word of God which came not to them, but to him, and which he proclaimed not just to the Corinthians but everywhere he taught.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

I remember, as a youngster, experiencing the joy of letters, sounds, and thoughts joining together on the page

as written words formed sentences, ideas, and stories. One of the ways I express glee over something is to compare it to the sound of walking on marble floors in a library. Does it get any better than that?

Suffice it to say, I love reading. Holding a book, feeling the paper, catching the gentle smell emanating from the page, and getting lost in the turn of a phrase...ahh, bliss.

And the best book of all? God's glorious Word. Talk about an amazing smell—is there anything to compare with the aroma of a leather Bible with featherweight pages?

I have read in books about writing that for powerful, creative writing one cannot beat these opening lines: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1.1) and, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (Jn. 1.1).

Which brings us to its Author: God, Who is “not the Author of confusion but of peace” (1 Cor. 14.33).

All—men, women, and children—are invited to read God's writings day in and day out. No one is prohibited from reading it. There is no ban in the Church keeping anyone from absorbing each word, meditating on each line, cherishing each promise, and pondering every principle.

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Ps. 119.105).

“Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; for I am called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts” (Jer. 15.16).

“I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food” (Job 23.12).

In God's Word we are satisfied with a feast of good reading, good promises, grand truths, and exceptional writing. Its authorship impeccable—every word goes together, it all makes sense, never a disagreement of thought or form—from cover to cover.

It is wasted time spent quibbling about who gets to do what, where and when, or how and why.

It is what it is. Rejoice. God is the Author. He is never confusing. He is in charge. He is Sovereign. He knows what He's doing. Let's just go with it and reap the bounteous benefits and beautiful love and salvation found within. Peace, Order, and Edification will flow with “showers of blessings” (Ez. 34.26) for those who do it His way.

Which is always the best.

For reflection

1. Why do you think our worship today doesn't look much like worship in Paul's day? Is this a problem?
2. Worship is certainly a good work, so we should expect the Bible to teach about it (2 Tim. 3.15-17). What would you expect to learn from Scripture about worshipping the Lord?
3. Who we are as Christians comes down to what we believe about Scripture and the use we make of it. What do you believe about Scripture? What use does Scripture have in your life?

[T]he instruments of this edification are psalms, teaching, tongues, revelations, and interpretations. . . . Paul does not attribute all of these to a single person, because the Holy Spirit does not so distribute these gifts that all of them are conferred on a single person. Instead, each person receives their own gift, as is mentioned in chapter 12. Wolfgang Musculus (1497-1563), Commentary on 1 Corinthians 14:26

Decently and in Order: 1 Corinthians 14

Pray Psalm 25.11-18.

Confess your sins to the Lord and ask Him to bless you as you submit to His Word and follow Jesus today.
Plead with Him for mercy and grace to help in all your times of need.

Sing Psalm 25.11-18.

(Festal Song: *Rise Up, O Men of God*)

For Your sake, LORD, forgive. All they who fear You, LORD,
shall know Your blessings day by day and follow in Your Word.

Your friends are they who fear and seek Your holy face;
Your covenant with them You share and save them by Your grace.

Be gracious, LORD, to me; my heart is weighed with woe.
My troubles and affliction see; let my transgressions go.

6 A Final Word

Pray Psalm 84.1-4.

How lovely *is* Your tabernacle,
O LORD of hosts!
My soul longs, yes, even faints
For the courts of the LORD;
My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.
Even the sparrow has found a home,
And the swallow a nest for herself,
Where she may lay her young—
Even Your altars, O LORD of hosts,
My King and my God.
Blessed *are* those who dwell in Your house;
They will still be praising You.
Selah

Sing Psalm 84.1-4.

(Holy Manna: *Brethren, We Have Met to Worship*)

LORD of hosts, how sweet Your dwelling; how my soul longs for Your courts!
Let my soul with joy keep telling of Your grace forevermore.
Like a bird upon the altar, let my life to You belong.
Blessed are they who never falter as they praise Your grace with song!

Read 1 Corinthians 14.1-40; meditate on verse 37-40.

Prepare

1. What did Paul claim about his writing?
2. How must we do “all things” in the church?

Meditation

Paul puts an exclamation point on his discussion of spiritual gifts, the more excellent way, and how God’s people should comport themselves in worship: He insisted that his teaching is the very Word of God (v. 37).

So, are we following this Word from the Lord? Identifying and using our gifts? Seeking daily to increase in love? Working for the edification of our brethren and our church? Doing all things decently and in order? If, like true prophets, we know the Word of God, and if the Spirit of God is working in us, we will recognize the character of God and acknowledge the authority of God in the words of the apostle Paul.

The Corinthians had a choice: Hear Paul and change their ways to reflect his teaching. Stop insisting they know better than the Lord how to live their Christian lives and build His Church. Stop making their faith a means of puffing themselves up at others’ expense. Start living as Paul has been teaching, with the mind of Christ and for the glory of God in all things.

Or choose to be ignorant and remain ignorant (v. 38).

For those who would hear him, Paul again urges them to learn the language of the faithful, the language of prophesying for mutual edification and love (v. 39). He does not forbid speaking in tongues, and neither should we. But we must work together in all we do to show the beauty of the Lord—decency, order, and peace—in all we do (v. 40).

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162.

Imagine having the kind of confidence Paul had: “the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord” (1 Cor. 14.37).

However, this is not really something we must imagine, but a confidence we most certainly have. For every word of God is pure (Prov. 30.5), and His Law is truth (Ps. 119.142). In fact, “the entirety of [His] word is truth” (Ps. 119.160). And so, every time we speak a word of God’s we can boldly claim, “I’m speaking the word of the Lord!”

Want to always be right? Speak the word of the Lord.

Want to always be believable? Speak the word of the Lord.

Want to always be decent and orderly? Speak and obey the word of the Lord.

Want to always be Kingdomly active? Speak, obey, and do the word of the Lord.

Want to be a prophet and spiritual? Acknowledge that the things Paul wrote are the word of the Lord.

Want to always please the Lord with your prophetic words?

“For the LORD delights in you” (Is. 62.4).

“The prayer of the upright is His delight” (Prov. 15.8).

“The blameless in their ways are His delight” (Prov. 11.20).

“Those who deal truthfully are His delight” (Prov. 12.22).

We will never go wrong proclaiming the Word of God.

We will never mess up by doing things decently and in order.

But we must always make sure that, as the Angel warned Balaam, “only the word that I speak to you, that you shall speak” (Num. 22.35). And then as Balaam learned, “The word that God puts in my mouth, that I must speak” (Num. 22.38). That Word. And only that.

For it is in speaking the pure and true Word of God, that confidence is imparted to proclaim—like Paul—“This is the word of the Lord.” Yep. I said it.

For reflection

1. How confident are you in your ability to talk to a non-Christian friend about the Word of God? To share the Gospel?
2. Do you talk with others about what God is teaching you from His Word? Should you? Explain.
3. Whom will you talk with today about what God is teaching you from His Word? How should you prepare for this?

The way to keep peace, truth, and order in the church, is to seek that which is good for it, to bear with that which is not hurtful to its welfare, and to keep up good behavior, order, and decency. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on 1 Corinthians 14.36-40*

Pray Psalm 84.5-12.

Pray for strength to serve the Lord today. Ask Him to give you opportunities to edify your brethren in the Lord and to glorify Him in your everyday life. Look to Him to shield and protect you always.

Sing Psalm 84.5-12.

(Holy Manna: *Brethren, We Have Met to Worship*)

Blessed are they whose strength is founded in Your strength, O LORD above.

All whose hearts in You are grounded journey in Your strength and love.

Though they weep with tears of sadness, grace shall all their way sustain.

Decently and in Order: 1 Corinthians 14

In Your Presence, filled with gladness, they shall conquer all their pain.

LORD of hosts, my prayer receiving, hear me, help me by Your grace!

In Your courts I stand believing; turn to me Your glorious face!

LORD, our sun, our shield, our glory, no good thing will You deny
to those who proclaim Your story, and who on Your grace rely.

7 Two Standards

Pray Psalm 51.15, 18, 19.

O Lord, open my lips,
And my mouth shall show forth Your praise...
Do good in Your good pleasure to Zion;
Build the walls of Jerusalem.
Then You shall be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness,
With burnt offering and whole burnt offering;
Then they shall offer bulls on Your altar.

Sing Psalm 51.15, 18, 19.

(Aughton: *He Leadeth Me*)

Now build Your Church, raise high the wall of those who on Your mercy call.
And take our lives and let them be sweet sacrifices, LORD, to Thee!
Refrain vv. 15, 18
LORD, open now our lips to raise to You sweet songs of joyous praise!
Thus let Your favor on us fall, and build and strengthen Zion's wall!

Review 1 Corinthians 14.1-40; meditate on verse 12.

Preparation

1. What should our attitude be toward acquiring spiritual gifts?
2. As we use our gifts, at what should we aim?

Meditation

I'm struck by two words in this verse: "zealous" and "excel." These are standards which ought to characterize our lives in the Kingdom of God. I wonder if they do.

The first standard pertains to *acquiring* spiritual gifts. Paul commended the Corinthians because they were zealous for spiritual gifts. Their zeal was a bit misguided, but he addressed that in chapters 12-14, and here he simply commended them for being eager to discover and use the gifts God's Spirit gave them.

To be zealous for something is to think about it often and exert oneself toward it, to achieve and enjoy it. The *Oxford Dictionary of English* defines zeal as "great energy or enthusiasm in pursuit of a cause or objective." Is this how we approach obtaining the gifts of the Spirit?

A second standard sets the bar for our *use* of spiritual gifts. As we use the gifts God gives us, what are we hoping to accomplish? Draw attention to ourselves? Check something off a to-do list? Please the pastor? Or are we sincerely giving it our best shot to contribute something to the edification of our brethren and our church?

We need to think like Jesus about this and all matters. After all, we have the mind of Christ and His Spirit dwells within us. Why would we settle for anything other than full zeal and persistent excellence concerning our calling from Him?

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

The angel Gabriel was sent to a virgin named Mary, who was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph. And Gabriel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS" (Lk. 1.30). Gabriel also told her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that

Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God” (Lk. 1.35).

After receiving this astonishing news, Mary’s response was not about herself—neither self-effacing nor self-vaunting—or full of questions like: What, how, when, where, or why? Her perfect response was thus: “Behold, the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word” (Lk. 1.38). And the angel Gabriel, fully satisfied by her heart’s correct attitude, and not needing to offer any other words of explanation, departed from her.

Jephthah’s daughter had the same amazing response, even after she discovered she had been inadvertently offered up in a vow to the LORD by her father, “...do to me according to what has gone out of your mouth...” (Judg. 11.36).

Which brings us to Paul’s words to the church in Corinth, and to us: The Holy Spirit will come to dwell in you and will give you gifts to serve God, the Church, and others—gifts for Kingdom work. Do not think yourselves either worthy or unworthy; you are merely recipients of the gracious gifts of God for His service. And I recommend this as your response: “Let it be for the edification of the Church that I seek to excel in the use of this gift” (1 Cor. 14.12).

“LORD, I hope for Your salvation, and I do Your commandments” (Ps. 119.166).
“...whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10.31).

Mary and Jephthah’s daughter were both human beings, gifted with seemingly impossible circumstances, who thrived and overcame because they sought their strength from the LORD. No doubt, the bar has been set high. But we too can rise to our gifted Kingdom work because, “With God nothing will be impossible” (Lk. 1.37).

Let it be to me according to Your Word.
We dare not “settle for anything other than full zeal
and persistent excellence concerning our calling from Him.”

For reflection

1. Would you say that your response to Scripture is consistently, “Let it be to me, Lord, according to Your Word”? Explain.
2. Sometimes the Word leads us into challenges beyond our strength, like Jephthah’s daughter. How should we respond to such challenges? Are you facing such a challenge today?
3. Zeal to obtain spiritual gifts, excellence in using them: Can you say that these are your standards? Explain.

The building up of the church is Paul’s touchstone in everything he says. John Chrysostom (344-407), Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians 35.5

Pray Psalm 51.14-17.

Pray that God will use you today for the building-up of other believers and of your church. Call on Him to make you zealous for spiritual gifts and to excel in everything you do for the edification of others.

Sing Psalm 51.14-17.

(Aughton: *He Leadeth Me*)

Deliver us, from guilt, O LORD, You Who have saved us by Your Word;
and let our tongues Your mercy bless, and sing of Your great righteousness!

Refrain v. 15, 18

LORD, open now our lips to raise to You sweet songs of joyous praise!

Decently and in Order: 1 Corinthians 14

Thus let Your favor on us fall, and build and strengthen Zion's wall!

No sacrifice, no offering would You have us, Your people, bring;
but broken spirits, cleansed of lies, and pure hearts You will not despise.

Refrain

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. In what sense can we speak of the gift of prophesying as “the native tongue of the faithful”?
2. What does it mean for an individual believer to be “built-up” in the Lord?
3. How can we know when our church is growing more into the likeness of Jesus?
4. Which spiritual gifts are you currently using? What standards guide your gaining and using the gifts of the Spirit?
5. What’s the most important lesson you’ve learned from this part of our study of 1 and 2 Corinthians?

For prayer

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