



1 Corinthians (2013) - Lesson 14D

Chapter 14:26-40

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- There are probably as many ways to conduct a church service as there are churches
 - Styles vary from denomination to denomination
 - And even within a certain tradition, individual congregations will each have their own style
 - Musical styles, the order of events, the approach to teaching, the schedule for the Lord's Supper
 - But despite all our differences, the Christian gathering has maintained a remarkable consistency over the centuries
 - We have songs of praise, whether with instruments or not
 - We have prayers, whether aloud or privately
 - We have the Lord's supper, whether every week or occasionally
 - We have teaching, hopefully from the text of scripture
 - We have recitation of creeds, testimonies, personal confessions, announcements, collections for the saints, hails and farewells, and occasionally something out of the ordinary
 - This pattern is more than habit...it's a fulfillment of the purpose of the gathering
 - We gather for the same reason a sports team practices together
 - We each have a role to play, but our role is meaningless apart from the rest of the team
 - We depend on the gathering for our chance to serve Christ by serving His people in our spiritual gift
- As Chapter 14 ends, Paul is ready to leave this church with a prescription for how everyone gets their chance to serve properly
 - Paul wants everyone to play their part, but he also wants every contribution to edify
 - Like a sports team, everyone has to participate in a coordinated, selfless manner ensuring the team is successful
 - Church is no place for prima donnas
 - The only One in the spotlight is Christ
 - We're all supporting cast members, role players
 - So to end his discussion on spiritual gifts, Paul leaves correction and returns to teaching to explain how the church gathering should proceed

1Cor. 14:26 What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.

- What is the outcome then, Paul asks?
 - Today, we would probably say something like, "So what?"
 - In other words, after all Paul's said about spiritual gifts, the need to edify and respect the priority of gifts, so what do we do now?

- How does the body of Christ work together with a diversity of spiritual gifts to edify each other?
 - How do we juggle these priorities?
- Paul answers his own question by instructing the church on how to conduct a church service properly
 - His solution is deceptively simple
 - It's general enough to allow a wide variety of styles and traditions
 - But it ensures the service will serve its intended purpose of edifying believers and glorifying the Lord
- First, Paul says when you assemble...
 - Paul starts with a simple statement, but take note Paul never prescribes the frequency of assembly
 - Earlier when teaching on the Lord's supper, Paul had said "as often as you gather"
 - In fact, no New Testament writer ever prescribes the frequency of the gathering of the body
 - Nevertheless, the expectation is that we gather regularly
 - The writer of Hebrews says:

Heb. 10:24 and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,

Heb. 10:25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

- While no specific frequency for our gathering is prescribed in the Bible, we are called to never forsake the assembling together
 - To forsake means to desert or give up on something
 - It doesn't mean to miss church occasionally
 - It means to stop going to church services altogether
 - This is not an option for any Christian
- And when we assemble, Paul says each one is to arrive at the gathering with the expectation that they have something to offer for the benefit of other believers
 - Paul says each one has something
 - We shouldn't pass by those simple words too quickly...each one
 - Not some, not a few, but each one
 - Everyone should come ready to offer something to the body of Christ
 - If you routinely come to church and leave having given nothing to the assembly, then you haven't met the purpose in gathering
 - Can we go to our workplace and contribute nothing everyday? Can we attend school and accomplish nothing day after day?

- Even if we assemble for an entertainment event like a concert or a sports game, we still contribute something
 - We contribute our money to fund the event
- If we gather for a service project, we contribute our labor
- If we gather at a wedding we bring gifts
- If we gather at a funeral we bring words of encouragement
- Virtually every gathering of people functions only because of the contributions of the individuals assembled
- Church is no different
 - In fact it's all the more the case
 - Since our gathering has no purpose apart from giving opportunity for us to use our spiritual gifts
 - Therefore, Paul says everyone is to bring something
- Is that your mindset when you leave your home on Sunday mornings?
 - Do you get in your car for the drive to church with the mindset that you're bringing something for someone else?
 - Are you thinking about who you want to pray for or pray with?
 - Do you consider who might need some encouraging words?
 - Do you have a testimony to share? A teaching to offer, whether to a child or adult?
 - Are you bringing an instrument to play, a card to give someone?
 - Are you bringing your checkbook or wallet?
 - All of these things and many more are the means by which we edify fellow believers
- But we have to discipline ourselves to think this way about church
 - Otherwise we'll miss the chance to play our part
 - And the gathering is diminished as a result
 - We have a diversity of gifts for a reason
 - So everyone is important
 - Don't ever think your participation or attendance isn't important to this gathering
 - It's eternally important
- As Paul lists examples of different contributions, he includes a wide variety of gifts from across the spectrum of priorities
 - He says one comes with a psalm, another with a teaching, another with a revelation, one with a tongue and another with an interpretation
 - A psalm refers to a moment of praising the Lord in worship
 - Today, we'd say a song of praise
 - A teaching refers to any form of instruction, whether at the pulpit, in a class or

one-on-one during a conversation in Fellowship Hall

- A revelation refers to a statement of prophecy or offering someone a word of counsel under the guidance of the Spirit
- A tongue and interpretation refers to the gift we studied earlier, speaking in a foreign language while another person interprets
- Even though some of these gifts have a greater potential to edify than others, nothing is excluded from the gathering
 - Everything has a place and a reason to exist
 - So long as everything is done for the purpose of edifying the body, Paul says
 - That's our ultimate test as we make decisions about what to include or exclude from the assembly
 - Can we allow drama skits? Solo musical performances? Movie excerpts? Original songs?
 - In every case the question is, did it give someone a chance to use their talent and express love for the Lord and His church?
 - Does it edify the believer and testify to the glory of Christ?
 - These are the tests we should apply
- But they are not the only tests we must apply
 - There is another equally important test for what to include in the gathering and how to orchestrate everyone's contribution

1Cor. 14:27 If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and one must interpret;

1Cor. 14:28 but if there is no interpreter, he must keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God.

1Cor. 14:29 Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment.

1Cor. 14:30 But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, the first one must keep silent.

1Cor. 14:31 For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted;

1Cor. 14:32 and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets;

1Cor. 14:33 for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

- The additional test is respectfulness
 - Are we contributing our gifts in a respectful manner
 - Respectful to the purpose and value of our gifting
 - Respectful to the needs of others
 - Respectful to the purpose of the gathering
 - Respectful to Christ
 - Paul uses some example gifts to illustrate his point, and once again, Paul includes

the gift of tongues in his list to correct the church's use of this particular gift

- If someone in the body has the gift of tongues and intends to contribute with their gift, then it must be done in a respectful way
- Speaking in a foreign tongue no one understands should only be done in the gathering if someone is available to interpret
 - An interpretation could come from someone with a gift of tongues
 - Or it can come from someone who speaks the language naturally
- But without an interpretation, the speaker should remain silent keeping the gift to himself out of respect for the gathering
- Then notice Paul says that even if interpretation is available, the use of speaking in tongues should be limited to no more than 2 or 3
 - We limit tongues in the gathering out of respect for the limited edification afforded by this gift
 - As well because we need to leave room for others' opportunity to contribute
 - Furthermore, tongues are to be used only one at a time
 - If two or more people are trying to speak over one another, then we are being disrespectful to one another
- If you've ever been exposed to the modern version of "so-called" tongues practiced in some churches, then you will notice they typically operate in direct violation of this biblical mandate
 - As I've witnessed it, the room is filled with multiple people attempting to speak in something they think is tongues
 - There are far more than two or three allowed to speak
 - Everyone is speaking at the same time, so it's a confused cacophony of useless noise
 - And of course, no one makes any effort to interpret
 - We need go no further than v.28 to see that such behavior is unbiblical
 - And if it is contrary to the word of God, than it cannot be the product of the Spirit
- But in case we think Paul is singling out tongues, he gives similar counsel for one of the most important spiritual gifts: prophecy
 - He says prophecy is also limited to 2 or 4 utterances in the gathering
 - And after each person speaks a prophecy, the rest of the gathering is to immediately pass judgment on what is said
 - Passing judgment means to discern whether the word was truly prompted by the Spirit
 - Paul holds prophecy to the same standard as any other gift
 - Is it done with respect to the gathering?
 - And in respect to its purpose?
 - In particular, Paul is concerned about any gift of utterance leading to chaos when used without the necessary respect

- In the case of prophecy, Paul asks that if a revelation is given concerning someone who is seated, then a special test must follow
 - He's talking about a situation where someone is standing and speaking to the congregation in some manner
 - And while this person is standing, one who is seated, that is someone who did not have the floor to speak, receives a revelation from the Lord
 - Paul says that the one who is standing should stop speaking long enough for the one seated to add his voice to the gathering
- Paul's point is that the movement of the Spirit must be respected by all
 - The Spirit may move in a way contrary to our order of service
 - When that happens, we make room for it, but only to the extent that we can discern it is from the Lord
 - The gathering isn't a free-for-all, but it does need to remain flexible
- Paul gives the rule for how speaking gifts operate in the gathering in vs.31-33
 - Paul says that everyone can contribute to the edification of the body by speaking in turn
 - But the spirits of the prophets are always subject to the prophets
 - Paul means that we aren't acting out of control
 - Prophets of the Old Testament weren't robots who acted possessed and spoke without control over their bodies
 - On the contrary, these men were always in full control of their faculties
 - When they spoke, they spoke inspired words, but they never lost control over their mouths or bodies
 - Similarly, Paul reminds the church that just because you have a speaking gift doesn't mean you've lost all self control
 - If you cry out in the middle of a church service, speaking over the top of someone else, you can't claim that the Spirit made you do it
 - The Spirit has never worked that way in past, and He's not working that way now
 - We are to remain in control at all times, carefully selecting the opportunity to contribute and always with respect and according to the rules established in scripture
 - If we can't control ourselves in this way, then we are not operating by the Spirit
 - We are indulging our flesh
 - Or worse, we're under the influence of a false spirit
- When it comes to gifts of utterance, Paul says let's be careful to keep everything we do in the gathering sensible, understandable and respectful to the Lord
 - Because God is not a God of confusion
 - In other words, our God doesn't produce confusing, nonsense displays
 - That's not how He operates, for it does not glorify Him to do so
 - The implication of Paul's words is that when we see a gathering operating in a

fashion contrary to these instructions, we simply can't be watching something produced by the Lord

- For the Lord is not a God of confusion, so if confusion reigns in the gathering, then the Lord's Spirit is absent
 - He's been pushed to the side, and in His place the flesh has taken over
- To conclude the chapter, Paul gives one additional command to ensure a respectful gathering

1Cor. 14:34 The women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says.

1Cor. 14:35 If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church.

- In the context of individuals contributing teaching and revelation to the gathering, Paul commands that women may not speak
 - In modern culture, these commands raise concerns
 - Is Paul saying that a woman with a speaking gift can never use it?
 - Was he a misogynist? No
 - First, let's not divorce Paul's words from the context of this chapter
 - Paul didn't insert these words out of thin air
 - He's in the middle of a line of thought, teaching on how to ensure a respectful, edifying gathering
 - Secondly, Paul has just been addressing the use of speaking gifts
 - All speaking gifts work to edify in a similar manner
 - They teach spiritual truths, whether by revelation, or correction or teaching
 - So it's in that context that Paul asks that women refrain from contributing to the teaching, because women teaching men is contrary to respect
 - Elsewhere Paul writes:

1Tim. 2:11 A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness.

1Tim. 2:12 But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.

- ◦ Paul equates a woman teaching a man with a woman having authority over a man
 - Anyone who teaches someone else becomes an authority over that person
 - And in the proper order of the family and church body, the Lord has appointed men to lead
- Therefore, Paul instructs women not to take a teaching role in a gathering that includes men, because they assume a position of authority over the men when they teach

- Notice in 1 Corinthians 14:34 Paul says that they should remember that they are to submit to male authority
 - We discussed headship earlier in this book, so I won't repeat the lesson here
 - Except to reiterate that this order is God's design and not one we're free to rethink or change in response to culture
- On the other hand, Paul is not prohibiting a woman from using her speaking gift
 - He only asked that it not be used in the context of the main gathering because it challenges male authority
 - Instead, women with teaching or other speaking gifts can exercise their gift through their husbands or fathers in the gathering
 - And they can use them when teaching children or other women
 - If that sounds unfair or limiting, remember that in most churches the women and children constitute the majority of the church body
- We all have plenty of opportunity to edify with our speaking gifts, whether men or women
 - In fact, we can have women speaking during the gathering in a non-teaching role
 - Women could perform scripture readings without commentary, sing worship songs, give mission updates, announcements, and offer prayers
 - These speaking roles don't suggest authority over others
 - But teaching is reserved for times and places where women aren't taking positions of authority over men
- Just in case any husbands are feeling smug at this point, you should notice that Paul called us out also in v.35
 - Paul said that since the wives are called to respect our authority, we in turn need to be ready to answer their questions
 - In other words, men are expected to be the teachers in their homes
 - Husbands, if you desire a godly wife who respects your authority, then you had better give her something to respect
 - We need to know our Bible, for that's our obligation
 - Certainly, wives are called to know their Bibles just as much as the husbands
 - But if your wife knows more than you, then you have a problem
 - You need to race ahead, so that as she has questions about scripture during the gathering, she can seek your counsel confident that you'll have something helpful to say
 - Ladies, if you know the Bible better than your husband, don't slow down... keep the pedal to the metal
 - And challenge your husband to catch up and pass you as you both pursue Christ through His word
- When everyone is doing their part in the assembly with respect and according to the word of God, then the gathering functions in a beautiful, balanced way

- We have latitude but don't have a right to work outside the guidelines of scripture
 - We have an obligation to serve others in Christ, in love and with a desire to edify
 - This is Paul's summary

1Cor. 14:36 Was it from you that the word of God first went forth? Or has it come to you only?

1Cor. 14:37 If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment.

1Cor. 14:38 But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.

1Cor. 14:39 Therefore, my brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak in tongues.

1Cor. 14:40 But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner.

- Paul asks sarcastically if the Corinthian church was the author of God's word?
 - Or perhaps this church is the only place on earth that knows what God has said?
 - Paul's pointing out that they don't have a corner on the truth
 - That God's instructions came to them no different than any other place
 - So Corinth didn't have the right to make up their own rules for the gathering and claim they were operating under instructions from God
 - God didn't tell Corinth something different than He told everyone else in His word
 - Our brothers and sisters who repeat the Corinthian mistakes in tongues or women teaching men or other guidelines are working against the word of God
 - They can't claim to be enlightened or to have new revelation
 - They can't claim to have a greater portion of the Holy Spirit
 - Or to be more sensitive to His leading
 - Just as Paul says, if anyone thinks he is more spiritual than others, then let him show that spiritual maturity by greater obedience to God's word – not less
 - And God's word has spoken on the proper use of the gifts in the body
 - If a brother or sister fails to acknowledge that Paul's teaching is a command from the Lord, then we aren't to recognize them
 - We are to separate from them for our own good and as discipline to them
- Meanwhile Paul finishes saying, desire the greatest gift of prophecy over the rest but don't despise lesser gifts like tongues
 - Each has its place in the body when used respectfully and in love
 - All things we do should be done properly
 - Everything must be orderly, in control
 - And with a potential to edify believers
 - As we operate under these constraints, we please the Lord
 - And we serve Him as He called us

- To the glory of His name before the nations