

Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas
Fredericksburg Bible Church

107 East Austin

Fredericksburg, Texas 78624

830-997-8834 jthomas@fbgbible.org

A1304 – January 27, 2013 – 1 Corinthians 14:26-40
Regulations For Speaking In Church

Alright, last time we covered 1 Cor 14:13-25 where Paul revealed his understanding of the purpose of tongues. As you see in 14:21 Paul linked speaking in a foreign language you never studied back to Isaiah 28. Isaiah was prophesying of the Assyrian invasion of the northern kingdom of Israel because of disobedience. And the reason behind their disobedience was their prophets and priests were like alcoholics. Isaiah pictures them as going into the bar and getting drunk and vomiting all over the table and Isaiah keeps trying to instruct them but they're so immature spiritually that he has to talk to them in baby talk, a little here, a little there, line by line, precept by precept and they didn't like that too much and so they rejected Isaiah and the foreign Assyrians came and took them into Exile. So tongues was a sign that God was about to send the nation Israel into Exile by a foreign power. And so Paul was glad that he spoke in tongues because it was a sign to his fellow unbelieving Jews that God was about to judge and perhaps they would repent and be separated from that generation that was going to come under the judgment of the Romans, a judgment which came in AD70. So tongues serve very little if any purpose after AD70; they may have trickled on for a few years but Paul says in 13:8 that they would cease along with the other verbal revelation gifts.

Today we come to 1 Cor 14:26 and Paul asks, **What is the outcome then, brethren?** The Greek says "What then is to be, brethren?" meaning "What should be done?" What should the church service look like? What are the rules and regulations for speaking in the assembly? Answer, **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.** At the time all these speaking gifts were still being given and there needed to

be a way for everyone with a speaking gift to exercise their gift in the assembly.

Today the only one of these speaking gifts still being given is **teaching**. So that pretty much solves what should be done today, **teaching**. Nobody should share a special revelation because God's word says nobody is getting a special revelation, nobody should speak in tongues because God's word says nobody is speaking in tongues, nobody should give a word of knowledge because God's word says nobody is getting a word of knowledge. So today there is no need to regulate a complex of speaking gifts in the assembly, you just teach the word.

But then they had other speaking gifts active, **psalmody, revelation, tongues, interpretation, word of knowledge, etc...**and with all these speaking gifts there needed to be a way to regulate the exercise of these gifts so that there was balance. You didn't want the tongues speakers to hog the entire service, you didn't want the prophetic speakers to hog the entire service, there needed to be balance, there needed to be order, there needed to be peace and the chief rule which stands over all the regulations is right there at the end of verse 26, **Let all things be done for edification**. And if it wouldn't edify others then it wasn't loving and it shouldn't be done. So everything must be done for edification, for the building up of others.

Now it is obvious that their church services were quite a bit different than what we have today. Today three or four people participate in leading the service according to a previously decided upon order of service. Then it sounds as if anyone was free to participate in leading the service and there was no previously decided order of service; **one has a psalm, one has a teaching, one has a revelation, one has a tongue, one has an interpretation**. And it sounds like Paul is describing a problem at Corinth, that all these people had different things to say and they were all saying them at the same time and it was chaos. So the umbrella commandment is **Let all things be done for edification** which is the short way of saying every spoken word in the assembly needs to be done to build others up and if it's not capable of doing that it shouldn't **be done**.

Now as I've inferred, all the gifts listed there are speaking gifts, not necessarily verbal revelation gifts, **teaching** wasn't a revelation gift,

teaching was just expounding what had already been revealed, so verbal revelation is not the common quality of each of these gifts. What is the common quality of all these gifts? They are speaking gifts. They all involve someone speaking in an audible voice before the congregation.

Now a brief aside on the speaking gifts. The speaking gifts each involve giving instruction, teaching or proclaiming the word of God. Therefore, when exercised in the assembly they are an exercise of authority. This is important in understanding what Paul will say, particularly in 14:33-36 which prohibit a woman from speaking in church. The reason basically has to do with the prohibition of women from teaching or exercising authority over a man. Speaking in the assembly, in the sense that you are the speaker and everyone else is the listener, is an exercise of authority. So before we go on turn briefly to 1 Tim 2:9. Now in context, according to 1 Tim 3:15 Paul is giving instructions for how various groups ought to conduct themselves in the household of God. In 1 Tim 2:9 he's addressing women. "Likewise, *I want* women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments," the woman's dress should not draw male attention, what should draw attention is verse 10, "but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness." If you're a godly woman then you'll dress modestly and put on good works. Verse 11, "A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. ¹²But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet." So in the assembly a woman must remain quiet, she cannot speak in the sense of having the floor, being the speaker. Verse 13 gives the first reason of two reasons and you'll observe neither reason has anything to do with culture. Culture changes but the two reasons Paul gives never change. First, a woman must remain quiet and receive instruction because of creation, "For it was Adam who was first created, *and* then Eve." Verse 14 gives the second reason, and it's because of the fall, "And *it was* not Adam *who* was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression." So women were and are to refrain from being the speaker in the assembly on the basis of those two historic events at the beginning of the human race. The speaking role in leadership is limited to men because a man was created before woman and the woman fell to deception not the man. So I'm taking it that this is parallel in a way to 1 Cor 14:26-40 where Paul is talking about speaking gifts in the assembly.

Speaking gifts are authoritative and women should not act in authority over men and that's what would happen if a woman took the floor in the assembly.

Now, this does not mean that a woman could not exercise her speaking gift outside the assembly in an appropriate context, teach her children or younger women or even men privately if her husband was present. Of course women could and should do those things. However, what is crucial to understand up front is that every speaking gift exercised in the assembly was an exercise in authority and seeing that men were present this should not be done. Paul doesn't give reasons here like he does in 1 Tim 2 but we can imagine he would give similar reasons if asked.

Now let's take a look at the five speaking gifts in 1 Cor 14:26. The first one is the person who **has a psalm**. This is something like an early hymn or praise song that someone wanted to share. And we know some of these were captured in Paul's epistles so I'll show you one. Turn to 1 Timothy 3:16. This is an early psalm or hymn that became well-known in Christian circles and we can tell it's a hymn from the rhythmic parallelism and assonance in the Greek, speaking of "the mystery of godliness" the hymn says:

“He who was revealed in the flesh,
Was vindicated in the Spirit,
Seen by angels,
Proclaimed among the nations,
Believed on in the world,
Taken up in glory.”

It recounts the career of the King from His birth to His ascension. And Paul admits that when some came to the assembly they wanted to share a **psalm**, a hymn. The second one is the person who **has a teaching**. Teaching is the exposition of Scripture. Expounding by translating and explaining the text of Scripture. Teaching was explaining what had already been revealed either from the completed OT or from the partial NT. There were people who came to the assembly and wanted to teach. The third one is the person who **has a revelation**. Revelation was the reception of verbal revelation from God. The content was either information regarding the present, which we call forthtelling or it was information regarding the future, which we call foretelling. But someone who had a revelation was a prophet because they

had received divine revelation. And someone may come to the assembly to share this revelation. The fourth one is the person who **has a tongue**. Tongues was the ability to speak in an unlearned foreign language. And Paul was not against tongues. I'm not against tongues. But the first and primary purpose of tongues was for unbelieving Jews outside the church. Yet if someone wanted to speak in tongues inside the church as here then there would need to be an interpreter. So he ties on the fifth gift here, the person who **has an interpretation**. Interpretation was the ability to translate an unlearned foreign language. I think that is one of the most interesting gifts. And yet I find it interesting that the Corinthians did not have a fetish with the gift of interpretation, only tongues. There was something about tongues they were attracted to but not so much to interpretation and so Paul has instructed them, if you speak in a tongue, pray that you may interpret that others might be edified. So we have five speaking gifts and Paul grants that when the Corinthian's came to assemble they may each have something to say and that's fine but it needed to be regulated so that it would edify others.

And verse 27 begins by explaining how they can speak in a way that edifies others. **If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and one must interpret.** This regulation shows that Paul allowed a secondary use of tongues in the assembly. The primary use was for evangelism outside the church. But if one insisted on using the gift of tongues then three rules must be followed.

First, **it should be two or at the most three.** He's speaking about two or three in a single meeting time. So if more than three people wanted to speak in a meeting they would have to keep silent and hold off till another meeting. This shows that the gift of tongues was controllable, you could keep silent. Pagan cults at the time emphasized being swept away into the divine, the evidence of this was ecstatic utterances. But biblical tongues is controllable. The reason only **two or at most three** is simply because there are other speaking gifts that need to be exercised in the meeting and if everyone spoke in tongues it would not give time for those gifted in other ways to exercise their gift. So **two or at the most three** tongues speakers per meeting.

Second, **and each in turn.** If someone was speaking in tongues and you wanted to speak in tongues you would have to keep silent until the first person was done. Again, this shows that the biblical gift of tongues was

controllable by the speaker. They could keep silent. So each would be given a **turn** to speak and once three had spoken no more were allowed.

Third, **and one must interpret**. Paul did not permit one to speak in tongues if there was no interpreter. This shows that those who had the gift of interpretation were known and if they were not present then you should just keep silent. As he says in verse 28, **but if there is no interpreter, he must keep silent in the church**; once again this shows that the gift of tongues was controllable by the speaker, he could keep silent. **and let him speak to himself and to God**. This would be speaking to yourself and to God silently, nobody would know you were doing this so it would not distract from the service. Those are the three rules a tongues speaker had to follow in the church. The reason was to keep order and so that it edified others. There's no use two or three people speaking in tongues simultaneously, that's chaos, and there's no reason to speak in tongues without an interpreter present, that can't edify.

Verse 29 and now he turns to regulations for the prophets. **Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment. 30But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, the first one must keep silent. 31For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted; 32and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets; 33for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints**. There are rules for the prophets as well, four to be exact. First, **two or three prophets** may **speak**. Again, this refers to the number of prophets that may speak during a single meeting, not greater than three. If a fourth wanted to speak he would have to remain silent. Otherwise those with the gift of prophet would overrun the meeting not giving others with other gifts the opportunity to express their gift. So **two or three prophets** in any single meeting.

Second, **and let others pass judgment**. The Greek is a command. **Others** who had the gift of prophet would be given the opportunity to **pass judgment**, meaning to compare what was spoken by the prophet with the Scripture and to decide whether or not what the prophet said was true or false. The basic rule for judging whether or not a prophet is true or false is whether or not what he proclaims is consistent with prior Scripture. So opportunity would be given for other prophets to judge and make a decision.

Third, **if a revelation is made to another who is seated, the first one must keep silent.** This refers to the prophet who is judging, if he receives a revelation concerning the first prophet the first prophet **must keep silent.** He cannot stand up and argue; he must let the one who received the revelation pass his judgment. At the time this was necessary because the NT canon was incomplete. They did not have all that we have and so God would reveal what was necessary at the time. The prophet who received a revelation and gave a judgment could not be interrupted.

Fourth, **you can all prophesy one by one.** You could not have multiple people prophesying at the same time, they had to each wait and in turn prophesy. Those are the four rules, two or three at the most, other prophets make judgments, judges not interrupted and one at a time. Finally the purpose, **so that all may learn and all may be exhorted.** If multiple prophets were speaking at the same time then you couldn't learn because it was chaos, nor could you be exhorted.

And further, verse 32, **and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets.** This could mean that the prophet could control his speech like the tongues speaker and not be swept away, or it could mean that prophetic utterances were subject to prior prophetic utterances contained in the Scripture. In either case, both are true. The prophet was not taken over by God, he was in full control, and whatever he said was subject to prior prophetic writings.

The reason is given in verse 33, **for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.** Universally God is a God of order. Chaos and confusion is never the result of God. God is the author of order and clarity and that's one of the litmus tests for seeing whether God is really back of something or not. And that's why all this barking like a dog and foaming at the mouth is obviously not of God, it's chaos, it's confusion and God is not a God of confusion but of peace. This is a universal truth. He never does that on a special occasion but in **all the churches of the saints...peace.**

Verse 34 and now we come to the section that some people say isn't even in the original text so they don't even comment on it. Others push it to the end

of the chapter because they don't see how it fits into Paul's argument. We'll avoid both tragic ways of mishandling the text. I already mentioned the basic reason these verses are included in Paul's argument, mainly because all the gifts mentioned in verse 26 are speaking gifts being exercised in the assembly, and since the exercise of speaking gifts was an exercise of authority over men then women were not permitted to exercise speaking gifts in the assembly. However, they could exercise them outside the assembly, just not inside, the exercise of authority inside was reserved for men.

So verse 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. 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.** Now, there are several things here. First, some people say the women are only married women because it uses the Greek word for a married woman and verse 35 indicates clearly they are married since if they desire to learn anything they should ask their husband at home. And so from this line of argument they reason that single women did not have to keep silent in the church. However, this reads a modern situation back into an ancient one. In the ancient world single women were under the authority of their fathers. This is stated in 1 Cor 7:37-38 to be the case. Single women remained in their father's home. This was for her protection. If she desired to learn something she could ask her father at home. So the argument that single women could speak in the assembly is an argument from total silence, not a permission granted. A single woman should ask her father at home. He was her authority. Second, some people say that a married woman could speak if she were properly veiled. This looks back to 1 Cor 11:2-16 and the issue of headcoverings. However, that passage referred to informal meetings outside of the assembly where women were throwing off an accepted cultural symbol of male authority. So it does not have anything to do with their attire inside the assembly. The rule inside the assembly is that women must keep silent. This was her act of subordination. As we have already seen, only one could speak at a time and if a woman spoke then she would be the leader not the subordinate. Verse 34 says this was consistent with the OT **Law**. Since there is no exact law stating this in the OT, probably the verse being referred to is Gen 3:16, in the section where God curses the woman after the Fall; he says that the woman's "desire will be for her husband." The Hebrew word for "desire" is used only three times in the Hebrew Bible. Once in Song of

Solomon for a good desire. The other in Gen 4 for sins desire for Cain, a bad desire. Since the Gen 4 usage is much closer to Gen 3 than the Song of Solomon and since the context is a cursing context upon the woman, the desire for her husband must be a negative desire. Therefore it is a desire to rule over him. God is saying that one of the negative consequences of sin upon women is they will desire to rule over their husbands. This desire is not a good one and godly women will learn to overcome it. In light of this desire Paul says to married women in verse 34, **The women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves.** The Greek word **keep silent** is *sigao* and means “to stop speaking” or “to keep silent.” They were giving into this fleshly desire by taking the opportunity to speak in the assembly and thereby exercising authority over their husbands contrary to creation and the fall. Paul says they should stop speaking. The Greek word **not permitted to speak** means they were not allowed to speak; Paul says if they did speak it would be contrary to **subjecting themselves** to their husbands. The Greek word for **subjecting** is *upotasso* and means “to rank yourself under an authority, to line up under an authority. A woman was to line up under the proper line of authority which, of course was her husband. And so if she spoke in the assembly she would not be under the proper line of authority but would be out of line. That is Paul’s point and that is why I have a problem with Kay Arthur instructing mixed groups, etc...that kind of thing, even though her husband permits it, God does not permit. So she may have good inductive Bible study methods, etc...but she’s outside the boundaries of Scripture. You can try and say it’s not a church but it is an assembly, which is what the word church means.

Now, verse 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.** There is an alternative to speaking in church, even asking a question was not permitted. What was permitted was for a woman to ask her husband a question at home. So it is a good desire for her to want to learn something. Paul was not against a woman learning something and I’m not against a woman learning something. It is a good desire to want to learn something. Paul just wanted them to ask their own husbands at home. Why? Because this would be subjecting themselves to their own husband, which is godly and proper. It respects his spiritual leadership in the home. What if they don’t know the answer? They can study and find out. They can go to elders at the

church if they need help. But the bottom line is **it is improper for a woman to speak in church** and therefore she should **ask her own husband at home**. This would honor her husband and honor God. What if her husband was not a believer? She could ask an elder at the church outside the assembly. What if she was not married? She should ask her father at home. What if her father was not a believer? She could ask an elder at the church outside the assembly. The bottom line is there are lines of authority that must be respected. Why? Because God's order in creation must be respected.

Verse 36, **Was it from you that the word of God *first* went forth? Or has it come to you only?** This expression is difficult to understand. Probably what Paul means is simply to say, do you at Corinth have some special standing that makes you exempt from the rules other churches follow? What makes you think you're so special that you can make your own rules? The answer of course was nothing. They were subject to the same standards as every other church. And therefore they had to follow the rules Paul outlined. Everyone had to speak in his turn and each speaking gift was limited to two or three so as to allow time for others, women were not permitted to speak. Everything had to be done in order, according to principle and for edification.

Verse 37, and here's Paul's conclusion, **If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual**, that is, a tongues speaker, **let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment**. Paul did not generate this out of thin air, this is not Paul's opinion, this is God's word. ³⁸**But if anyone does not recognize *this*, he is not recognized**, by God of course. The expression is interesting. The Greek word for **recognize** means "to disregard." The idea is that the believer knows what the Lord's commandment is but he disregards it. He doesn't want to follow it. So he is willfully disobedient. If the believer is willfully disobedient then God will not regard him, meaning He will pay that believer much attention. For example, if that believer was praying God would not pay much attention to his prayer. God pays attention to those believers who pay attention to His commandments.

³⁹**Therefore, my brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak in tongues**. In that time both of these gifts were active; **prophecy** for the writing of the NT and for instructing believers in new

truths; **tongues** for the evangelism unbelieving Jews and when coupled with interpretation for providing instruction to believers. Paul adds a note about not forbidding speaking in tongues because he has been so negative toward **40But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner.** This is the umbrella commandment Paul started with in verse 26, and like a bookend it closes things here; if the speaking gifts are exercised according to the regulations in vv 27-35 then things will **be done proper and in an orderly manner** and everyone will be edified. However, today the only speaking gift still being given is teaching, and so we don't have the difficulty of managing several different speaking gifts in a service, we just teach the word! Very, very simple; next week 1 Cor 15 and the gospel.

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