

The Right Kind of Spirit Quenching – *1 Corinthians 14:26-40*

Introduction – We come to the end of this discussion about spiritual gifts, their purpose and use in the corporate worship service, as well as Paul's correction of their misuse and abuse. Spiritual gifts do not prove spirituality. Gifts are for the edification of the body and not to puff up the individual. Tongues and prophecy are useful but not as important as the fruit of the Spirit which will continue long after the purpose of the Word-gifts have ceased. And in the church, prophecy is more important than tongues (which were a sign of judgment on unbelieving Israel).

These final charges surround the requirement of decency and order in the assembly during worship. Our culture (including our current Christian culture) has a hard time with these final charges. We must open our Bibles aware of the individualistic, egalitarian, sentimental, and feminist air that we breathe. And before we open our Bibles we must already, honestly conclude that whatever is in there is from the Lord, is true, and is good (v37).

Order, not Ego (vv26-33a) – Remember again that the church in Corinth is full of divisions and factions, emphasizing one teacher over another, thinking they are more spiritual because of their mystery-wisdom or their showy, individual gifts. They don't discern the Lord's body in these factions, not partaking the Lord's Supper together and not making sure all receive to partake. And so I do not take the first half of v26 as simply a statement of fact, but a lead up to the correction in the second half of the verse – because they weren't doing these things for the edification of the body, but to puff themselves up (1 Cor 8:1). They come with a flurry of words without the thought of others and so Paul corrects this (v27, 29, 31). We also can fall into an ego-centric style of worship where its all about my own personal worship experience. In Corinth's day, if you had a tongue, but no interpreter, Paul says keep silent (v28). It is to be done one by one so that all may be encouraged (v31) – together. Orderly, planned out, structured. This can sound to modern ears like quenching the Spirit (1 Thess 5:19), except Paul is writing Spirit-inspired instructions and so it must be the right kind of spirit-quenching. This is in opposition to the pagan-out-of-control-ecstatic utterances throughout the city. In contrast, Paul commended the Colossians for what he heard of their well-ordered worship (Col 2:5). The precise flying of the Blue Angels, wings only 18" apart, is not boring – it is exuberant.

Testing Those Spirits – “*Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge*” (v29). What should occur if the judges (probably the ruling elders of the church) revealed that the prophecy was false? “*But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent*” (v30). False prophets, and false teachings were a real problem in the first generation (2 Cor 10-13, 1 John 4:1, 1 Thess 5:19-21, 1 Tim 4:1-2). In fact, later, Paul will warn that there are false teachings in Corinth by some who taught that there is no future resurrection of the dead (1 Cor 15:12). Any prophecy was subject to the Law and to “*the traditions*” (1 Cor 11:2) which Paul had been giving in his ministry as the New Testament was being written. You didn't just get to claim you had a word from the Lord and have it untested – which would lead to confusion and not peace (v33a). And this was also the right kind of spirit-quenching. We need more of that today as we hear far too often, “having spent much time in the Word and in prayer, the Spirit has led us to repent of our attitude of hatred to such and such a victimized group and change our position on...” (for instance, who could get away with 2 Tim 3:1-7 today?). Which leads us to our next “problem” text.

Order, not Egalitarianism (vv33b-35) – There are so many interpretations of these verses. A first read without the context of the letter seems to flat out prohibit women from making any noise in the worship service. But what have we learned? We already saw that it was important in the worship service that the worship of God by His image-bearers required that male and female distinctives be clear (1 Cor 11). In that chapter, however, it was also clear that women could pray and prophesy in the assembly, provided their long hair, a symbol of authority and her distinct femaleness, was prominently displayed (11:2-16). We also know that women are not allowed to teach or have authority over a man in the worship service (1 Tim 2:11-12), and the reasons are not culturally bound, but rooted in creation and the events of the Fall (1 Tim 2:13-14). In the first century, there were women who were given the gift of prophecy along with the men (Acts 2:18-quoting Joel, Acts 21:9, 1 Cor 11:5). But they were not to be in the position of judging the prophecies or the appropriateness of the tongues and interpretations. That was left to the “judges,” the authority of the church (i.e. the elders who sat in judgment over the proceedings in the worship service). That “law” was to be

submitted to (vv33a-34). An appropriate place for a wife to call into question a prophecy or a teaching was at home to her husband because for her to speak (in an authoritative way where it might appear she was ruling in the assembly) would be shameful (not distinguishing the Male-Female distinctives of the Imago Dei).

God's ways are not the ways of misogyny or egalitarianism; He is opposed to the idea that men are better than women or that they must function in the same way in order to be equals. Paul says that effeminate men, soft men, will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor 6:9). One application of this is that husbands must labor in the Word so that they can answer godly wives. And godly wives should respect the Word and their husbands.

No Cherry-Picking God's Word (vv36-40) – Paul's tone is strong now; he knows how big the stakes are in this. The order that the Lord wants in worship is authoritative with real consequences. Corinth was not getting an exemption or a special revelation (v36) and anyone who was truly a prophet or spiritual would prove it by acknowledging Paul's apostolic authority and teaching as true (v37). Let the ignorant remain ignorant; the sheep hear Jesus' voice (v38, John 10:16). Paul knows he is writing Scripture and therefore there is no cherry-picking his teaching (or the rest of the Word). The Word and the Spirit equip us today as well, but with the decency and order of God's ways (vv39-40). God is to be worshiped with reverence and godly awe (Heb 12:28-29).

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Notes for Little Saints

God loves to have us come and worship Him on the Lord's Day. But He wants us to come with decency and in _____ (1 Cor 14:37).

Did you do the VBS program a week ago? What were the five steps of a sacrifice?

- 1 –
- 2 –
- 3 –
- 4 –
- 5 –

So we see that God is a God of order. The passage today (1 Cor 14:26-40) has several instructions on the orderliness in a worship service. Can you list three of them?

- 1 –
- 2 –
- 3 –

Our worship is to be a pleasing aroma to God. Hebrews 12:28-29 tells us how that is to be for us. Write out those verses.