

Evotional

Sermon title: “I do not want you to be ignorant – Spiritual gifts in worship.”

Bible passage: 1 Corinthians 14:26-40.

Speaker: Neil Durling.

Date: 13.7.14.

Message:

²⁶What then shall we say, brothers and sisters?

- Please note that this is not a blueprint for worship, as it's not complete – there is no mention of the use of scripture.

When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation.

- I think Paul is saying that each person should have the opportunity to share – not that they must! When he speaks of a revelation he is thinking of a specific matter revealed by God.

Everything must be done so that the church may be built up.

- This is the aim. The church should be built up through worship. Built up doesn't just mean feeling good about ourselves; we might be built up through God challenging us in some way, just as much as encouraging us. We must provide space for these gifts to be used to help build us up.

²⁷If anyone speaks in a tongue, two – or at the most three – should speak, one at a time, and someone must

interpret. ²⁸If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and to God.

- When someone speaks in a tongue (angelic or another human language) in a worship service there should be an interpretation. Please note that, as God doesn't dictate to us, several people might have the “gist” of the interpretation which reflect the same theme, but aren't identical word-for-word.

²⁹Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said.

- At Bessels we encourage people to share prophecies with the ministers and elders, then weigh them.

³⁰And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. ³¹For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. ³²

- The point of prophecy is to instruct and encourage.

The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. ³³For God is not a God of disorder, but of peace – as in all the congregations of the Lord's people.

- Some people say they can't “switch off the power”. This seems to be license to show off (in my humble opinion!). Paul makes it clear that you are in control and not a robot that God switches on or off. I know some folk who are worried about spiritual gifts for this reason. Don't fear – God isn't going to make you look dumb, because God brings peace through worship.

³⁴Women should remain silent in the churches.

- Silent can be interpreted as “keep secret” or “hold peace”. There's no way round it. Paul is telling women to keep quiet in worship services... This is huge...

They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. ³⁵If they want to enquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.

- As we look deeper into these verses (rather than ignoring them because they're uncomfortable) let's remember the cultural position of women:

- Jewish men said: “It is a sin to teach a woman the Torah (the first five books of the Old Testament).”
- They would pray everyday: “I thank God that I am not a pig, a Gentile or a woman.”
- Other letters of the day would only mention the most important person if it was addressed to more than one person (e.g.: Master and slave). Therefore, letters didn't mention women when written to married couples.
- Women were only fully accepted into the husband's family when they had given birth to a boy. You could give birth to fifty girls, but they weren't boys!

- It is into this cultural context that Paul writes about women. I think this is a specific digression (which Paul loves in his letters) to the Corinthian Church. After all, in 11:2-6 Paul says women can pray and prophesy. Also (12:28), Prophets are second only to Apostles and therefore have standing and influence in the church. Therefore, women have standing and influence in the church.

- Some might say: “Hang on a minute Neil – aren't you playing fast and loose with Scripture to fit your views?! Why are you taking Paul literally on the use of spiritual gifts in worship, and then not doing the same here?!?” All specific verses must be read with the context of the entire Canon of Scripture. Paul's theme here is that worship should be done in a fitting and orderly way to build up the church, and so receive the peace that God offers. The specifics in the first part fit with this, but the second part doesn't today. Moreover, women were involved in leading Israel and the early church. Moreover, moreover (!), we do allow women to speak in church today – how boring would it be if they didn't! I think that, in this specific case, women who had been second-class citizens for so long, had found equality with men through their new found freedom in Christ. Could it be that they were abusing the spiritual gifts they had? Or/and; were they interrupting the services? They

worshipped in synagogues at this stage where the women sat at the back and couldn't hear (?). Maybe they were shouting out to their husbands, and so Paul tells them to ask their husbands when they get home.

- If we are going to take this literally, then we must do this with all of scripture. That means: Women wear hats, no long hair gents, no mixed-fabric clothing, no bacon sarnies, no lobster bisque, etc.. Do you see the point?

³⁶Or did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached? ³⁷If anyone thinks they are a prophet or otherwise gifted by the Spirit, let them acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command. ³⁸But if anyone ignores this, they will themselves be ignored. ³⁹Therefore, my brothers and sisters, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. ⁴⁰But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.

- We should be eager to prophecy and not forbid tongues. And all this should be done in a fitting and orderly way. Why? Because it strengthens the church.

Questions:

1. How do/can we provide space in worship services for the gifts of the Spirit to be used?
2. How do you feel when someone speaks in tongues in a worship service?
3. Has God ever spoken through you prophetically?
4. Women should be silent – what do you make of Neil's line of thought here?
5. Are you eager to see prophecy at Bessels?

Prayer:

Father God, Thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Amen.