

Dr. Gary Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Lecture 30, 1 Corinthians 12-14, Paul's Response to the Questions Concerning Spiritual Gifts, 1 Corinthians 13-14

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This is Dr. Gary Meadors in his teaching on the book of 1 Corinthians. This is lecture 30, 1 Corinthians 12-14, Paul's Response to the Questions Concerning Spiritual Gifts. 1 Corinthians 13-14.

Well, here we are again, and we're in chapters 12 through 14 of 1 Corinthians. Today, we're going to do chapters 13 and 14 as we conclude our text look from chapters 12 to 14. After today, the next lecture will be on the question of gifts, the controversy of gifts, and the theological debate that involves that.

I'll give you a little bit of an overview of that and some suggestions about how to study it if it's an issue in your setting. Then, after that, we'll move on to 1 Corinthians 15. Alright, page 193, this is note pack number 14.

We're on page 193 at the bottom. Spiritual gifts and the law of love: You'll notice that we've put the law of love as monitoring in both chapters 13 and 14. In this particular scenario, the classic 1 Corinthians 13 provides a middle to the treatment of gifts that run through chapters 13 and 14.

These three chapters flow together and need to be themed together. They should not be separated. You need to ask how 13 contributes to an understanding of the problem of divisions in the community, the problem of overemphasizing lesser gifts, the problem of disunity, and the need for unity and diversity.

That's what 1 Corinthians 13 is addressing. It has become an absolutely classic chapter in the Bible. It's been pulled out and used just about everywhere.

If you were to Google 1 Corinthians 13, you'd probably get thousands of hits in terms of how it's been used in so many settings. It is a classic statement about love that fits almost any culture and any time. However, that's not why it was originally produced.

It was produced to cause that community to get in touch with their integrity, their Christian ethics, and their priorities in terms of public worship and the exercise of gifts as they heard this read. Paul did a marvelous job of nailing how we should be living in regard to the community. Paul frames the value of gifts in terms of the community, a community that should prize communication over individual spectacular expressions, perhaps even status-seeking exercises.

This makes the relational nature of the body and brings the ethics of the body into view. Love is the queen of ethics. There's a lot we could say about love.

We almost need to take an excursus and just talk about love in the Bible. But unfortunately, we're already pressing our time limits by quite a bit. Tongues is merely the occasion to bring a people problem to the table.

What better theme to adjudicate relational ethics than the biblical principle of love? 1 Corinthians 13 has become an international classic that crosses almost all religious boundaries. It's good to read this chapter out loud just for its own sake and let the tones sink in as you receive it in your ears. It's that kind of a chapter.

Now, love's importance in 1 through 3. The contrast of love to these representative gifts is not to bifurcate love from Christian truth. It says, if I speak in the tongues of angels, of men and of angels, but do not have love, I'm a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and I have a faith that can move mountains, but I don't have love, I'm nothing.

Do not read this and say that Paul thinks that these other things are not important. That's not the point because that's not the need. There is a need to regulate what's going on between these individuals and their giftedness.

And it's only love that it can address that. So, the purpose of the context is to promote the principle of ethics and the principle of unity around how they treat one another. So don't jump the gun on that and try to bifurcate between prophecy and truth and all those sorts of things and the idea of love.

Contextually, Christians' needs are dominantly social, and love manages the social community. The Old Testament presents love as a covenant loyalty, regulating the relationship between God and humans and humans and humans. Love does not create the criteria for guiding relationships but rather applies those criteria in the community.

Let me say that once again. It's not the purpose of love to dictate what you do. It's the purpose of love to regulate what you have decided to do because it's right.

Now, there's a huge difference there. Some people use love or the concept of love as a crowbar to achieve what they think is right or what they want. That's not the purpose of love.

Love manages the decisions that have already been made about how things ought to operate. God has given us the truth. He's given us adequate information, and we need to pursue that.

And love causes us to pursue it in an appropriate manner. So, you need to get love into its place and not extrapolate it out as if it is God in some sense—love's actions in 4 through 7. Love is patient.

Love is kind. Does not envy. These are just good classic ethics, good classic characteristics of integrity between people.

We can't do any better than just read that text. What is your definition of love? What is a broader biblical definition of this construct? Friends, love is not merely a motivator for behavior. Love is behavior.

Love is the management of behavior. Let's think a little about defining love and what it is. On page 195, I've given you a chart.

You'll notice that love at the bottom of my pyramid, and it's a kind of technical statement. And it's a statement that captures the verses off to the right. Deuteronomy is at the bottom, followed by the Johannine material.

It captures it. Love is the cognitive adjustment of mind, will, and values to divine revelation in order to fulfill the preceptive will of God. Love adjusts the way we think.

If you love me, keep my commandments. And so, when you get to love, love is perhaps the biggest theme in the Bible apart from God. And it's a huge concept.

In the Old Testament, love, faithfulness, and so forth are what we call covenant terms. God loves Israel, which means he's made a decision to take Israel on. Think about even John 3.16. God so loved the world.

It's not saying how he felt about the world necessarily, even though it affects feelings. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son. He loved them in the sense of covenant love, of covenant loyalty, and therefore created a way in which his creatures could become reunited with him through the salvation that Christ provided.

So, love is a hard term to get your arms around. And you'll never get your arms around love if you just accept your cultural sense of it, like Valentine's Day, Christmas, and those kinds of things when everybody feels good about each other and towards each other.

Love is more than that. It's the cognitive adjustment of everything about us, our worldview, and our whole value system, to special revelation because love doesn't operate on its own.

It does not originate opinions. It does not originate information. But it operates based on the information that it's provided.

Love's result is responsible action. Love is an activity toward the object's love. That's how you can love your enemies.

Because it's talking about how you relate to them, it's talking about your responsible action toward them. Love is going to do the greatest possible good.

And how do you define good? You define it through biblical revelation. To do the greatest possible good toward the object's love. And so, love is never separated from the scriptures.

Because love operates on the basis of scripture. Love is kind. What does it mean to be kind? Love operates that way, but you've got to have criteria for what kindness is.

And if you talk to a Muslim about kind, and you talk to a Christian about kind, you may come up with two different ways of speaking. And so, the fact is that we've got to realize that love doesn't operate on its own. Love is a servant.

A servant of the teaching of God. It also manages the content of the teaching within a community—love's endurance in 8 through 13.

Love never fails. Prophecies fail. They'll cease.

Where there are tongues, they will be stilled. Where there's knowledge, it'll pass away. Now, once again, Paul's not bifurcating these categories.

But he's describing the nature of love in relation to categories as you move along. Love is going to continue to operate while everything else has its role in the progress of history. But love is forever, beginning and ending.

We're going to talk a little more about some of the details of this text in our excursus on the debate about the gifts. Because this becomes a major player in that. So we're not going to discuss that at the current moment.

How this section interfaces with the cessation issue will be addressed in the excursus that follows the treatment. The concluding statement of 13:13 seems awkward to some. Why did Paul note faith and love seemingly out of the blue? This is a famous triad.

Faith, hope, and love. Here's a Google for you. Google faith, hope, and love and see how much shows up.

I mean, even Augustine did his Enchiridion on faith, hope, faith, love, and hope. Or faith, hope, and love. This is a triad in Paul.

And here again, I could pour so much information into certain things, but we just can't do it. I have a complete seminar that I do on this phrase of faith, hope, and love because it's a repetitive triad in a number of texts that is very, very programmatic for Paul's missionary preaching.

And I can't really go into how it functions at this point. But I think that it is a key to the organization of Paul's epistles. Sort of the coat rack that Paul hangs things on as he gives people information that he writes back to them.

He doesn't have to repeat all that information, but he can conjure it up through terms like faith, hope, and love. Amazing. You can also go to my website and get information on that particular triad if it's of interest to you.

And I intend to do more on that in the future. Now, Garland comments here at the bottom of 195. Paul probably added faith and hope to love to allow the familiar combination to balance the triad of prophecy, knowledge, and tongues.

In other words, the literary nature of this passage is so balanced that he goes back to a familiar triad, such as prophecy, knowledge, and tongues, when he has already mentioned them. So, literarily, he might have done it for that purpose. But he was so prone to use these three words.

And I'll tell you something else. If you look these three words up, you will discover that the order is not faith, hope, and love. The dominant order is faith, love, and hope.

Faith is theology. Love is ethics. Hope is the motivation and the future.

And it's always integrated into faith and love. If you take faith and love and think about Paul's epistles that I mentioned last time, of always being theology and practice, theology and practice. Faith is theology.

Love is practice. It's the ethics, theology, and practice.

Hope is being integrated, and eschatological issues are being integrated into both of these as motivation for the future. You should live now because of the future. Well, that's a big theme that I love to talk about, but not now.

The practical application of the concept of love in chapter 14. And I will just leave 13 as much as I love it. I can just read it to you.

You can read it, but I'm asking you to make it your little assignment to read this chapter out loud so that you can listen to it. You might have someone else read it. You might have a recording of the Bible that you can listen to.

And as you hear these terms, connect them to your Christian life and worldview. And see how they frame who we are in terms of our relationship to the world. Most of these terms are constructs of relationships.

How we treat other people. How we relate to other people. Kind is not just me, myself, and I. Kind is me and somebody else.

And so, they're constructs that talk about relationships. And that's what this whole 12 to 14 is about. We've got some messed up relationships.

Paul also gives some positive teachings to try to straighten those things out. Now, 14. Paul begins chapter 14 with the exhortation to pursue the way of love.

You see, we're not through with love. 13 states it. 14 practices it.

It's the loving thing to do to follow the directions of how to alter the gifts in a public worship setting that chapter 14 lays out. Evidently, the Corinthians were exercising their gifts in some sort of irresponsible manner. It probably goes back to the themes that we've already seen within this congregation in Roman Corinth of elite, status, and the problem of people having things against each other.

A manner not befitting a philosophy of the body as a community. A manner not befitting, that is, their irresponsible living. A manner not befitting a philosophy of the body as a community.

I forgot my water, but I'm not going to take time to get that from you. The gift of tongues seems to have been the most abused, probably because it was the most outward of anything. Status has probably entered the assembly at every level.

Interestingly, those who thought that tongues would provide status actually chose the wrong end of the continuum. Isn't that ironic? There's an old spiritual song that says, the only way up is down. The only way up is down.

If by the way of the cross you go, the only way up is down. And James says, if you humble yourself before God, he will lift you up. The Proverbs talk about humility in the sense that if you just do your job, your gifts will be known in the gate.

In other words, you will be known, and people will take note of you because you're a person of integrity, and you do your job. But they were trying to force themselves into positions of prominence in a new community that they've entered in ways that were not appropriate. Maybe that's why Paul is a little soft, if you please, in how he critiques them.

Because he understands that, in one sense, they're trying. In one sense, they're pursuing Jesus. But in the other sense, they can't get rid of their baggage.

And he's going to try to teach them how to get out of those problems. And it seems that he was successful as we look into 2 Corinthians and see where he is. Interestingly, those who thought that tongues would provide status actually got the wrong message.

Paul's basic point in chapter 14 is that love is more concerned with understandable communication and community edification than with outward show. Understanding and communicating are more important than status. If you want to have a good status in the Christian community, be the kind of person that people say. He helped me to understand.

That's the greatest compliment a preacher can get at this door after a church service. Pastor, I've read that passage for years. And I never really got what it was about.

But this morning, I saw it. And it makes so much sense to me now. That's a compliment.

If when you're at the door, someone comes up to you and says, Pastor, that was a great sermon. I don't really know if I understood what it meant. But that was a great sermon.

Then you ought to just cry. You haven't achieved your purpose. The development of Paul's argument is set forth by Boyer, who was a former professor of mine.

It's followed here with some slight revisions just for organizational purposes. Paul argues that the value of tongues is relative in 14:1-19. The issue in these verses clearly turns on intelligible communication or effective communicative action between speakers and listeners. Speak so people understand.

What good does it do to babble? It may make you seem important, but nobody got it. And that's bad. Paul argues that the value of tongues is relative.

The value is observed by contrast. Prophecy is more desirable, according to verses 1 and 5. Prophecy is for the community, verses 3 and 4. Tongues is self-serving, verse 4. Tongues is subordinate, verse 5b. Edify, in verse 5, is the key.

It occurs in verses 3, 4, 6, 12, and 19. Just read the text and live by what the text is saying. There are not really enigmatic things going on in this text.

And it's almost universal and normative in terms of a congregation operating well. Even if you don't operate with the gifts as they're stated here, that's irrelevant. How do you operate as a congregation? Operate this way.

Let love take the lead. Love means that you embrace unity and diversity. And that you show the Christian traits of goodwill toward one another.

In understanding the meaning of prophecy, a number of views have been proposed. This section lays out his observations from the defining literature. I've noticed some things here.

Number one, the definition of prophecy is subject to the interpretive paradigms applied. Thistleton is thinking out loud. He has some lengthy sections on each of these categories.

Many people come to this text, and they've already made their minds up about what it means. Therefore, they stilted the material because they poured it into their own mold. It's called the mirror method.

You come with your baggage, you look in the mirror, and you tend to see your own reflection. Secondly, prophecy is educational. It builds up a person.

Prophecy brings the Old Testament to bear upon the developing New Testament. These are views that have to do with how prophecy functions and what it means within this context. E.R.L. Ellis is a fine scholar who has now gone from us.

But if you find his materials, they're worth having what he calls the reinterpretation of scripture. The prophet helped people to understand that Jesus really was the fulfillment of the Old Testament.

Prophecy is spontaneous, revelatory, and inspired preaching. Some think that this prophecy was sort of secondary to the apostles. Individuals with whom God directly communicated, and they re-communicated those ideas.

Which is what Old Testament prophets did. So, the New Testament prophet would be in that same vein. Prophecy is focused on the believing community only.

The Old Testament prophets spoke to the entire setting. But Israel was a civil situation of a mixed audience. Whereas in the church you're supposed to be on the same page.

Prophecy works within the church in the New Testament. Where prophecy worked in a larger setting in the Old Testament, but some of that has to do with a civil organization like Israel.

As opposed to the church as a group under another civil organization. What do 14.2 and 3 tell us about the nature of tongues in this context? Verse 2, for anyone who speaks in a tongue, does not speak to people but to God. Indeed, no one understands them.

Now, we've been talking about tongues as language. Acts view it that way. Later on, in chapter 14, it is viewed that way.

But here's an aspect. In fact, the King James Version used to add the word unknown tongue. To distinguish between those items.

Does not speak to people but to God. Indeed, no one understands them. They are utter mysteries by the Spirit.

But the one who prophesies speaks to the people, for they're strengthening, encouraging, and comforting. Anyone who speaks in a tongue edifies themselves legitimately.

But the one who speaks in a tongue, but the one who prophesies edifies the church. So we're back to the same thing, back to the same theme.

In edification, intelligent communication and effective communication is what should be prominent. Not other things. Not that they're illegitimate.

But they just don't fill the space adequately. Passages relating to tongues as a supernatural usage of language. They are in Acts and probably some of the ones in 1 Corinthians.

Particularly in chapter 12. But some are in chapter 14. One has to look at each of those in their own context.

Obviously, 1 Corinthians has a special issue. Not mentioned or treated in any other epistle. All other passages use glossa, which is the word for tongue.

Clearly, it refers to spoken languages. So, this utterance had to be interpreted. And in a public assembly, that was required or just don't use it.

It is a unique thing. Now, the exact nature of tongues in 1 Corinthians is highly debated. We talked to you earlier in chapter 12.

About the fact that the pagans in the pagan temples. And the oracles of that ancient Greek world. Spoken tongues as well.

Just like the young girl with the pythonic spirit. They probably used something that was like speaking in tongues. And then her owner interpreted that.

Whatever setup they had. To whoever was paying him money. It was a bad setting.

And yet, those religions of the ancient world. Operated with an unknown tongue approach to things. How much of that did the Christians at Corinth?

Who had lived in that kind of environment expected to see that carried over? How much did they force that carryover? There are some issues.

I've read scores of pages. And just sort of rethinking through these notes. In the commentaries.

In terms of how much we don't know. And yet, at the same time. Particularly in terms of the pressure of this kind of tongue.

Only in Corinth. So, the exact nature is highly debated. In foreign languages, it seems clear.

1 Corinthians has not found scholarly agreement. Along the lines of nature, some of this is in chapter 14. Particularly in verses 1-5.

Some say tongues is an angelic speech. Well, they speak Greek and Hebrew. So why? I'm just kidding.

Tongues have miraculous power to speak other languages. That would be Acts. Tongues are liturgical, archaic, or rhythmic phrases.

Whatever that is. It took a miracle—the gift of interpreting the tongue speaker.

To be able to communicate what the idea was. And yet, there is power to use this liturgical piece. I think is probably imported.

It's not a part of what Corinthians is about. Unless it was used in the pagan temples that way. And then maybe we see some borrowing from it.

Tongues as ecstatic speech. It would probably be a dominant view. Tongues are the language of the unconscious.

Most ecstasies were unconscious when they prophesied. And when they spoke in their tongue. Which the oracles in the Greek setting.

Took as a sort of a prophecy. But they were speaking in tongues to do it. But there is ecstatic speech when they were conscious.

And spoke perhaps this young lady in Acts. Was in that same sort of a vein. So, the exact nature of tongues is highly debated.

Just read the literature. We are not going to unpack all of that here. The only common denominator about tongues.

In some first Corinthians text. Is that it was speech to God. Not humans in this early part of chapter 14.

That required the parallel gift of the interpretation of tongues. In order to make it useful.

To the worshipping congregation in order to make it legitimate to the interpreting congregation.

If you spoke in an unknown tongue. If you spoke in an ecstatic speech. There had to be someone who conveyed to the congregation.

What it is that you said? If that could not take place. It couldn't happen.

That was the rule. Paul was very strong about that. And so, it was a unique problem I think in Corinth. That just doesn't surface exactly the same way in some of the other epistles.

14:5 The lead verb maybe translated wish or desire. This is when Paul says I wish you were all like me. I have spoken in a lot of tongues. And here again maybe both and rather than either or is involved here. Where you've got languages and where you've got this devoting, subjective aspect of worshipping God.

Which could have been a possibility. Is Paul's statement of I wish you were. Is that a concession to them? Or is it conciliatory to try to identify with them? Those are a couple of ways it could be viewed.

Henry Chadwick captured in a colorful manner what's going on here. He said that. I'm sorry I didn't bring my glasses. I'm having trouble focusing.

Paul poured a douche of ice cold water over the whole pitcher of tongues. When he talked about their value and how to use them. Paul said I would have you all speak but rather. Now I would like all of you to speak. But even more. Now I want you all even more but I would rather you do something else. I mean it's pretty clear.

What's important and what is not important. In the simple reading of the narrative. This relative value is observed.

By the need for understandability. That's the guiding force again. In verse 6. Now brothers and sisters, if I come to you and speak in tongues. What good will I be to you. Unless I bring you some revelation, or knowledge. Or prophecy. Or word of instruction.

Teach so people can understand. The rationale of understandability. Is delineated in 7 to 17.

Even in the case of lifeless things that make sounds such as the pipe or the harp. How will anyone know what tune is being played unless there is a distinction in the notes. That's a fascinating statement.

What kind of music do you listen to? What do you like? Are you a classical music fan? Well, I love almost all forms of music. Nearly, not all, but many and I have to admit I'm not a devotee of classical music. In the sense of telling you who it is. And what it is. What movement, and so forth and so on. I couldn't even distinguish Beethoven from another of the composers.

I don't have that much knowledge of it. In fact, when I listen to it. I feel like I'm hearing the same thing.

From a different record, so to speak. That's not unusual. Why? Because I haven't learned to listen to that. So, it doesn't communicate to me. I play the banjo.

The first record I ever had about the banjo was an instrumental banjo album of about 12 different songs.

When I listened to that record, I still remember that day, I became angry. I thought I had been sold a defective record because every song on that record sounded exactly the same.

Some of my former colleagues feel that way about the banjo that it always sounds the same.

But now that I've played it. And I know the songs. I can distinguish massive differences between each of the tunes, just like a student of classical music Can distinguish massive differences between each of the tunes. So, Paul uses a very, very universal illustration here if you have music appreciation.

If you don't have tongues appreciation. What good does it do? It's just blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. Communication is the most important thing, according to Paul.

It's interesting to me that the issue of tongues. Never rises anywhere else in the New Testament. Why isn't it in Ephesians? Or in the Pastoral Epistles? These are some of the massive books about how the church operates which these books set the pace for church order. Furthermore, it never occurs in the Apostolic Fathers' writings.

I just checked this recently on Accordance. It's not there. They're the earliest witness to the Apostolic Period.

Now I'm sure that there's some record of this in other places somewhere. But it's very sparse.

This is a unique problem related to the Roman Colony in Corinth. And related to the Corinthian Christians.

And doesn't seem to be surfacing very much anywhere else. When someone finally finds an answer. Everyone can agree about that.

It will solve a lot of our interpretive spilling of ink. The relative value is observed by the need for understandability. The rationale of understandability is delineated in 7 to 17.

Music, language, the conclusion in verses 9 and 12. In verse 9. So, it is with you unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue.

How would anyone know what you're saying? You'll just be speaking into the air. And then in verse 19. But in the church, I would rather speak 5 intelligible words.

To instruct others than 10,000 words in a tongue. Of course, we have a song that celebrates that particular sentiment. So, the primacy of understanding is at the top of the ladder.

And we don't need to labor that. The simple narrative makes it as clear as it can be. Paul argues that the purpose of tongues was to be a prophetic sign.

Here comes a very interesting part of the chapter in 1420. Tongues then are a sign, not for believers, but for unbelievers. What? Prophecy, however, is not for unbelievers, but for believers.

What's going on? So, Paul has a take on what tongues do. Remember, we've got a public worship setting. They are probably being audited by people other than the initiates who are involved in the worship.

What happens when they come in and listen to an evocative of address? Brethren, tempers Paul's rebuke of the Corinthians.

And he is, in chapters 12 to 14, much more congenial but instructive—Tempers Paul's rebuke of the Corinthians' immaturity. Interestingly, the theme of spiritual immaturity comes up again at the end of the present chapter.

Let the one who is ignorant be ignorant. We measure our spiritual maturity by accounting for all of God's truth, not just our area of concern. Carson notes at least some Corinthians wanted to measure their maturity by the intensity of their spiritual experiences without consideration of other constraints, such as love's demand that brothers and sisters in Christ be edified, and thus they became mature or advanced, wittingly or unwittingly, in evil, and immature in their thinking.

They caused harm instead of good. Paul wants to reverse this trend and draws us to that. Paul's development of tongues is a sign, however, a sign for unbelievers. Well, how is that? Well, Isaiah 28:11. Maybe I should read that to you. Isaiah 28.11. Listen to it.

I'm in the NIV. This has to do with Judah's situation with Ephraim. Let me go back to verse... I'm having trouble focusing here again.

Verse 28:11, excuse me. For it is, verse 10, do this, do that, a rule for this, a rule for that, a little here, a little there. Very well, then.

Okay? When you go into captivity, this is what's going to happen. Very well, then. The point of Isaiah is this.

When Israel gets into captivity, into Babylonian captivity, they're going to know they're not where God had them because when they walk out, like me walking out in the middle of Hong Kong, they're going to hear people gibberish that they do not understand. They were unbelieving about God's telling them about judgment, and now they're going to wake up to the fact that they should have listened to God in the first place. Because what God said is that strange and foreign lips are going to get your attention eventually.

And Paul comes back and takes that as an analogy, I think, to this particular situation and tries to inform them that tongues are a sign. The context of 28:11 is that since Israel has rejected God, rejected God's message, presented to them in their own language, 28:10, that's back in Isaiah, they would have to learn their lessons from the foreign speech, I said Babylonian, of the Assyrian invaders in 28:11. Thus, in Isaiah, the sign of tongues is a sign of judgment to those who did not believe—a judgment upon Israel for unbelief.

In this illustration, the tongue is a foreign language. And Paul is saying in this setting, in verse 21 and following, that tongues are a sign, not for the believers, but for the unbelievers. Prophecy, however, is not for unbelievers but for believers.

They understand. And so, picking up from Isaiah, he says that the presence of tongues should help people to realize, particularly those who happen to come into the congregation, that they don't know what God is saying because they do not understand what is being said in this public worship. As a result of that, they cannot advance their understanding.

It becomes a sign of their unbelief that they do not understand. Now, that is not an adequate foray. We'd need probably a half hour to 45 minutes for an adequate foray into this use of Isaiah 28 and how it plays out here, according to the interpreters.

But it's a sign to those who don't believe. When they hear this, they'll say, oh, this is something miraculous. Perhaps as in a temple, when the oracles spoke in tongues, and they didn't understand.

Now, they come over to the Christian community and experience something similar. It's a sign to them, in a sense, of what could be a broad spectrum of issues, that there is a God present, but that they do not understand the speech, and that's not going to draw them to God the Christian way. In this illustration, a tongue was used as a foreign language.

So, tongues are a sign for unbelievers, not believers. In what sense are tongues a sign to unbelievers? In the same sense, the Assyrian tongue was a sign to unbelieving Israel. It was a sign of judgment.

In fact, tongues exercise a judgmental role when unbelievers view the tongue speaker as mad, and that would imply ecstatic speech. Contrast this with 14:22, a reference to prophecy as a sign to believers. Listen to verse 22.

Tongues, then, are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers. Prophecy, however, is not for unbelievers but for believers. Communication, using an illustration about how tongues does not serve that purpose well.

I'm rushing a little bit, but anyway. Page 199. Paul gives the guidelines for regulating the use of gifts in the assembly.

The early church services were marked by several things. Look at verse 26. What, then, shall we say, brothers and sisters? He's beginning to wind down.

When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Notice they're linked again. Everything must be done so that the church may be built up.

There again, the goal is edification. If anyone speaks in a tongue, two, or at the most three, should speak, one at a time, and then someone must interpret. If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and to God.

It seems the speaker didn't even know what they were saying. It was a devotional language between them and God, and the miracle was that some interpreter could say what they had said. They were probably anxious to hear.

And once again, we can't really get into this adequately because we do not have enough parallel material to be able to unpack it appropriately. It was real. It was even sanctioned by Paul.

However, Paul viewed it as not being the most useful way to worship God. Two or three prophets should speak, and the other should weigh carefully what is said. Notice, it's not naive reception.

And when a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop, for you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets.

That's a statement against ecstatic speech. For God is not a God of disorder, but of peace, as in all the congregation of the Lord's people. So, the description that we're getting here in Corinth, which we get nowhere else in terms of how the church met and worshipped, either in the New Testament or in the Apostolic Fathers.

And I just find that amazing. This could not have been a very normative way of doing things, or it would have branched out into other settings, but it just doesn't seem to have done that. That's not an argument that it's illegitimate, but it is certainly a very curious issue that we have to think about and ask where we are putting our priorities if we are insisting on fulfilling what's happening in 1 Corinthians 14.

Then a most interesting text arises, which we mentioned to you earlier in our introduction. He says at the end of verse 13 that we have another problem with where it stops and where it starts. For God is not a God of disorder but of peace.

We could stop there. The 2011 NIV puts a dash, which means it's moving on to another thing, as in all the congregations of the Lord's people. But some would start verse 34 with 33b or end.

But the main point is 34. Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak.

But it must be in submission as the law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home, for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church. It just kind of plops down right there.

Well, we've talked before about how big of an issue this is in terms of views about just what that means. And I've given you, repeated for you in the notes here, the outline of this passage and its views. Some say it's a face value, and so, therefore, it is a prohibition for women to speak.

But that ignores the problem of 1 Corinthians 11, where women are validated to speak, even prophesied. And it seems contradictory between chapter 11 and here. How do you work that out? I think face value is a very naive approach to that.

Chapter 14, the prophecy context equals no authoritative teaching. The statement is addressed to women, that because it's prophecy, male-dominated, they should not speak authoritatively. Some hold that view.

Some see it as an interpolation. In fact, Payne and then Fee, following Payne, Payne did a major study of the primary manuscripts of Vaticanus particularly, where there are marginal notes in this chapter that seem to indicate that verses 34 and 35 were entered into the chapter at a later date. That it's a textual variant involved here.

And that it wasn't part of the original text. Now, that's not a liberal approach to this. This is held by Fee and some others as a valid explanation of why the incongruity of this text seems to show up.

So, that's a valid approach to this. And it's not what some might immediately say, well, that's just a liberal dicing up the Bible. No, there's validity to this, and you can read the literature in Fee and Payne.

The next one is feminist Pauline patriarchalism. Fiorenza is a Catholic liberal, and she just thinks Paul hates women. Five statements relate to family codes and not to public assembly.

Ellis tries to see this context as internal rather than external, which most would disagree with. Earle Ellis was a fine New Testament scholar, but for some reason he took that line with this particular passage. Not many or any of them follow that.

The biggest view is that it is a slogan. Kaiser has written on this. Talbot seems to think it's the best option for others, and other writers bring it up as a slogan.

Let me show you the pressure to do that. You've read 35 and 36, but look at 34 and 35, but look at 36, or right after that negative statement about women, or did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached? That's very sarcastic. Now, who's that addressed to? The slogan view sees Paul addressing, as much as it just drops in here, a certain group in the congregation that was denying women the opportunity to speak, which Paul had already validated in chapter 11.

And you can see why when he gets here, and he's reminded about this group, he says what they say. For a slogan, it's a pretty long statement. But that view seems to be one of the best ways to solve two problems.

One is, how can 11 and 14 be correlated? And then, furthermore, why would he make such a negative statement about women at this particular point? And the answer is that he's putting words in the mouth of a group who want to shut women up. He's already validated their prophesying. And he is sarcastic.

He didn't give an extended response but sarcastically said, did the word of God originate with you? How can you say they can't speak the word of God? Or are you the only people it has reached? And then he comes back with another interesting statement. If anyone thinks they are a prophet or otherwise gifted by the Spirit, let them acknowledge that what I, Paul, am writing to you is the Lord's command. There is a statement of pretty heavy authority.

And then, even worse, if anyone ignores this, they will themselves be ignored. The old translation is that if anyone is ignorant, let them be ignorant. The point would be either way, with the translation of 38, the point would be that if you don't accept what Paul's teaching is, there is no place for us to start a conversation.

Because my teaching is God's authority. I am a spokesman for God. And you need to listen.

So, working out verses 34 and 35 may not be easy. I think the slogan view is an attractive explanation of it. And for me and my money, that's where I'll go.

Now I've given you a bibliography on this. If you're interested in looking at that further, you can do that. These regulations, verses 37 and 38, have divine authority.

Paul is not backing off. This takes me back to chapter 2, verses 6 to 16. Where did you get your information, Paul? I got it from God.

And you better listen. I'm an apostle. God has appointed me the apostle of the Gentiles.

He has called me up into the third heaven. He has given me the mystery to share with you. And if you don't want to listen to it, we have no grounds for conversation.

Because the grounds for conversation is based on being able to accept and to pursue the words of God. Pretty straightforward. And I think it's pretty straightforward.

It has no room for debate. Verse 39. Notice the conciliatory nature here.

Not conciliatory in the way of giving in, but just trying to keep them on board. Therefore, my brothers and sisters be eager to prophesy. And do not forbid speaking in tongues, but everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.

Get your public worship under control so that it can achieve the purposes for which it was designed. Wow. We haven't, just believe me, we haven't even scratched the surfaces of 12 to 14.

There is so much. It's just impossible to do. All I can do is try to raise questions and leave you hanging so you'll be motivated out of curiosity to research these texts yourself.

You know, as a faculty member many years ago, when I was on, we gathered and tried to ask the question, or we asked the question, what makes a good teacher? For a whole day and a half, this was discussed in groups. And when it was all said and done, we had one answer to what makes a good teacher. And the answer was a curious learner makes a good teacher.

If you've lost the curiosity to know in your life, if the study doesn't appeal to you, if you don't want to learn, then I would suggest that you not do ministry because the church doesn't need anybody else doing ministry that doesn't care about knowing and conveying that knowledge to others. Your role, if you're a ministry leader, is to engage at the deepest and most intense level an understanding of God's word so you can share it with others.

And if that's not a passion for you, why would you be in ministry? You know, you can be a good Christian without being in ministry. Learning needs to be a passion for God's leaders. When that passion wanes, the passion to be a good communicator, to be one that helps others understand, then you need to ask yourself, why am I here? I

would hope that you would first ask yourself, where did I lose the passion? Try to revive it.

But if it isn't your passion, step aside. Let someone fill your place. And try to find that passion to help in whatever way you can in the Christian community.

To communicate. To communicate means you have to know something. You have to achieve the ability to speak God's word to others to understand that word and unpack it so that others can move forward in their Christian life.

That's what Paul's after here. Even public worship requires that. Public worship is just not a time to gather and emote with each other.

Public worship is a time to learn and to advance your understanding of God. Because it's in that advancement that you worship. When you learn something new about God, it raises your heart and your mind to Him in worship.

And that's what worship is. Worship isn't just whether you're happy. Worship is whether you're learning something about God that drills you to the depth of your soul.

Well, we're going to come back to the next lecture and talk about the controversy over gifts in terms of the exercise, particularly the miraculous level of gifts in today's congregations. Is it the same as it was in the first century? Because Paul's not correcting. The fact that they shouldn't be doing it at all.

He said the tongues is okay, do it. But I'd rather you do something else. He never put it down in the sense of not being legitimate.

The question is, what about today? What about the gifts of healing? Are there faith healers in our Christian culture? So, we're going to talk a little bit about that controversy so that you can have some information that you can incorporate, continue to research the question and come to your own conclusions.

Thank you for your attention. You have a good day.

This is Dr. Gary Meadors in his teaching on the book of 1 Corinthians. This is lecture 30, 1 Corinthians 12-14, Paul's Response to the Questions Concerning Spiritual Gifts. 1 Corinthians 13-14.