

**Notes on the Greek New Testament**  
**Day 234 – August 22<sup>nd</sup> – 1 Corinthians 14:20-40**

**Works frequently referenced in these notes on 1 Corinthians**

John Drane	<i>Paul</i> , Lion Publishing, Berkhamstead, 1976
Leon Morris	<i>The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians</i> , Tyndale New Testament Commentary, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Ed., IVP, Leicester, 1985
Anthony C Thistleton	<i>The First Epistle to the Corinthians</i> , The New International Greek Testament Commentary, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2000

**Verse 20**

Ἀδελφοί, μὴ παιδία γίνεσθε ταῖς φρεσίν, ἀλλὰ τῇ κακίᾳ νηπιάζετε, ταῖς δὲ φρεσίν τέλειοι γίνεσθε.

"Nowhere does Paul state more clearly than in v.20 that the way in which speaking in tongues is used at Corinth minister to childish love of display or thoughtless self-centredness."  
Thistleton

παιδιον, ου n child

The negative present imperative μη ... γινεσθε suggests 'do not continue to be.'

φρεσίν Noun, dat pl φρην, φρενος f  
thinking, understanding

"It is indeed the characteristic of the child to prefer the amusing to the useful, the brilliant to the solid." Godet  
"Children love anything that shines or moves or makes a noise... Many modern Christians have the same mentality... They would rather be made to feel than to think ... fall too easily under the spell of virtuosi ... It shows lack of maturity in the things of the Spirit." Deluz

κακια, ας evil, wickedness

νηπιάζω be a child

τέλειος, α, ον complete, perfect, mature

**Verse 21**

ἐν τῷ νόμῳ γέγραπται ὅτι Ἐν ἑτερογλώσσοις καὶ ἐν χειλέσιν ἑτέρων λαλήσω τῷ λαῷ τούτῳ, καὶ οὐδ' οὕτως εἰσακούσονται μου, λέγει κύριος.

νομος is here used of the OT generally (cf. Rom 3:19; Jn 10:34).

γέγραπται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 s γραφω

The quotation is from Is 28:11-12, though the wording here differs both from the LXX and the Hebrew MT.

"Paul superimposes the parallel situations of Corinth and Isaiah 28 onto one another with the effect that the genuine force of OT scripture speaks creatively to a new situation. Ronald Clements explains the situation which Isaiah addressed. 'Isaiah found himself in conflict with certain priests and prophets of Jerusalem': their self-indulgence in festivities and drink had confused their speech and their thinking, and led them to mock the serious declarations of Isaiah about divine action. 'Isaiah turns back their mockeries on their own head by warning of the way God himself will punish them (v.11)... [with] the coming of the Assyrians.' 'Whom will he teach knowledge?' (28:9) alludes to Isaiah's wasting his time because the scoffers are too drunk, confused, and self-confident to care. The Hebrew of 28:10 suggests 'onomatopoeic ... representation of the din made by the revellers' who found Isaiah's rebuke 'foolish and childish,' while in 28:11 'the reference is clearly to the harsh-sounding Assyrian language which ... 'this people' would soon be hearing... [These foreigners] would soon be teaching them a lesson...' Bruce, Kistemaker, Allo and Schrage paint a similar background.  
"The two contexts match well. Those who are 'wise' and 'gifted' in their own eyes dismiss the plain message as 'childish,' when in reality it is the supposedly wise who think and act like children. Divine judgment, as so often occurs in life, has a dimension of 'internal grammar,' i.e., God permits the seeds of its own fall to operate. The disdain of plain speech comes home with a vengeance: if they want something other than intelligible speech, they can have it; however, it will serve as an uncomfortable judgment, for it will place many of God's own people for whom they ought to care in the position of *aliens and outsiders*...  
"This now accounts for many of the similarities to, and apparent divergences from, the LXX text of Isa 28:11-12, for Paul is *simultaneously quoting and applying the passage*." Thistleton

έτερογλωσσος, ον speaking a  
foreign/strange language  
χειλος, ους n lip  
λαος, ου m people, a people  
εισακουω obey

### Verse 22

ὥστε αἱ γλῶσσαι εἰς σημεῖόν εἰσιν οὐ τοῖς πιστεύουσιν ἀλλὰ τοῖς ἀπίστοις, ἡ δὲ προφητεία οὐ τοῖς ἀπίστοις ἀλλὰ τοῖς πιστεύουσιν.

ὥστε so that, with the result that  
ἀπιστος, ον unfaithful, unbelieving

Tongues, in the passage quoted, are a sign of (or upon) unbelief or disobedience: a mark of the judgement of God. It is strange therefore that Christians should prefer tongues to intelligible speech.

"In the public worship of the church the transference of experience of being alien prefigured in Isaiah 28 constitutes a sign of judgment rather than of grace; it is prophetic speech which proclaims grace." Thistleton

### Verse 23

ἐὰν οὖν συνέλθῃ ἡ ἐκκλησία ὅλη ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ πάντες λαλῶσιν γλώσσαις, εἰσέλθωσιν δὲ ἰδιῶται ἢ ἀπίστοι, οὐκ ἐροῦσιν ὅτι μαίνεσθε;

The language of vv 23f. is deliberately extravagant as Paul paints what Thistleton refers to as an 'impressionistic' scenario of the *whole* church together in one place and *all* speaking in tongues, etc.

συνέλθῃ Verb, aor act subj, 3 s συνεργομαι  
come together, assemble, meet  
ὅλος, η, ον whole, all, complete, entire  
εἰσερχομαι enter, go in, come in  
ἰδιώτης see v.16  
ἢ οἱ  
ἐροῦσιν Verb, fut act indic, 3 pl λεγω  
μαινομαι be out of one's mind, be raving

"The term carries the double meaning of emotional lack of self-control, expressed as 'raving,' and an unattractive, even frightening loss of rational *sanity*." Thistleton  
It is important to realise that Paul is here using two separate arguments to support two different points. The first, in vv 21 & 22, highlights the inappropriateness of Christians revelling in tongues. The second argument, developed in this and the following verses, shows that tongues convey entirely the wrong message to the unconverted. They might think that this "is simply one more mystery cult that whips its partisans into a frenzy of frothy enthusiasm." Hayes

### Verse 24

ἐὰν δὲ πάντες προφητεύωσιν, εἰσέλθῃ δὲ τις ἄπιστος ἢ ἰδιώτης, ἐλέγχεται ὑπὸ πάντων, ἀνακρίνεται ὑπὸ πάντων,

ἐλέγχω show (someone his) fault, convince  
(someone of his) error, convict

ὅπο παντων Thistleton means 'by all that is said'

ἀνακρινω examine, judge, evaluate

"As Calvin and Barrett note, the sense is closely parallel to that which John 16:8 ascribes to the work of the Holy Spirit – Paraclete." Thistleton

The Spirit is more evident in, and works more effectively through, clear proclamation of Christ than in ecstatic but incomprehensible speech.

### Verse 25

τὰ κρυπτὰ τῆς καρδίας αὐτοῦ φανερὰ γίνεται, καὶ οὕτως πεσὼν ἐπὶ πρόσωπον προσκυνήσει τῷ θεῷ, ἀπαγγέλλων ὅτι ὄντως ὁ θεὸς ἐν ὑμῖν ἐστίν.

κρυπτος, η, ον hidden, secret, private  
φανερως, α, ον evident, plain, visible  
πεσων Verb, aor act ptc, m nom s πιπτω  
fall, fall down

προσωπον, ου n face

"Since this is a conscious act of worship ... this *falling down* (NIV, REB) must not be confused with neo-Pentecostalist phenomena often described as being 'slain in the Spirit.' *To throw oneself to the ground* (in prostration) was used in the OT and in the first century 'as a sign of devotion, before high-ranking persons of divine beings especially when one approaches with a petition' BAGD." Thistleton

προσκυνεω worship  
ἀπαγγελλω announce, proclaim  
ὄντως really, certainly, indeed

"The effect of the prophetic word is to reveal to the man his state. His whole inner being is searched out. Those things he fondly imagined to be locked within *his heart* he finds reprovved and judged, and he can only ascribe this to the activity of God." Morris

"Allo suggests that the conviction brought about by prophetic speech stands in contrast to the Corinthian claim that it is speaking in tongues that provides the necessary sign of authenticity." Thistleton

### Verse 26

Τί οὖν ἐστίν, ἀδελφοί, ὅταν συνέρχησθε, ἕκαστος ψαλμὸν ἔχει, διδασχὴν ἔχει, ἀποκάλυψιν ἔχει, γλῶσσαν ἔχει, ἐρμηνείαν ἔχει· πάντα πρὸς οἰκοδομὴν γινέσθω.

Τί οὖν ἐστίν, ἀδελφοί 'What should be done, then, my friends.'

ὅταν when, whenever  
συνερχομαι come together, meet

Dunn believes that the following describes a "typical gathering for worship," but the stress is on ὅταν συνέρχησθε ... πάντα πρὸς οἰκοδομὴν γινέσθω

ἕκαστος, η, ον each, every

Many MSS add ὕμων after ἕκαστος. The shorter text is more likely to be earlier. ἕκαστος here with various ἔχει phrases means 'one contributes a psalm, another a teaching ...' It is not clear whether these are pre-prepared or spontaneous items.

ψαλμος, ου m psalm, song  
διδασχῆ, ης f teaching, what is taught  
ἀποκαλύψις, εως f revelation

"A revelation (NRSV, REB, NIV, NJB, KJV/AV) seems to suggest an act of divine disclosure on the spot. The word may indeed include this, but it does not exclude the communication of what came to be revealed by God through some experience or through biblical reflection prior to the act of worship itself." Thistleton

ἐρμηνεία, ας f interpretation, translation

Thistleton sticks here with the view he has expounded in 14:2,4,6,11,13 and 18-22. See his comment on v.27 below.

οἰκοδομῆ, ης f upbuilding, edification

A refrain throughout this chapter, cf. 3,5,12,26.

γινέσθω Verb, aor midd dep imperat, 3 s  
γινομαι

### Verse 27

εἴτε γλώσση τις λαλεῖ, κατὰ δύο ἢ τὸ πλεῖστον τρεῖς, καὶ ἀνά μέρος, καὶ εἷς διερμηνεύτω·

"We have argued consistently that all (or at least virtually all) the relevant passages in 12:1-14:26 which use διερμηνεύω or ἐρμηνεύω (especially 14:6 and 14:13) are more likely to refer to the persons who speak in tongues as themselves articulating what had otherwise been inexpressible in everyday speech... The syntax makes this understanding entirely compatible with this verse, even if on its own the Greek could be understood either in the traditional way or in the terms proposed here." Thistleton

εἴτε if, whether

δύο gen & acc δύο dat δυσὶν two  
πλεῖστος, η, ον (superl. of πολὺς) most,  
large; το π. at the most  
τρεις, τρια gen τριῶν dat τρισὶν three  
ἀνά prep used distributively with acc. each,  
each one

ἀνά μέρος may mean either 'in turn' i.e. one at a time, or 'by shares' i.e. each one being given a fair share of the time.

μερος, ους n part, piece, in part, partly

εἷς Thistleton suggests refers back to the τις at the beginning of the verse, 'let the one who speaks put it into words.'

διερμηνεύω interpret, explain, translate

### Verse 28

ἐὰν δὲ μὴ ᾗ διερμηνευτής, σιγάτω ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ, ἑαυτῷ δὲ λαλείτω καὶ τῷ θεῷ.

ᾗ Verb, pres subj, 3s εἰμι

διερμηνευτής, ου m interpreter

Thistleton, following Weiss, suggests that the sense is 'if he/she is not an interpreter' i.e. 'if he or she (the speaker in tongues) cannot put it into words...'

σιγάω keep silent, be/become silent  
ἑαυτος, έαυτη, έαυτον reflexive pronoun,  
himself, herself, itself

Here meaning 'privately.'

### Verse 29

προφήται δὲ δύο ἢ τρεῖς λαλείτωσαν, καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι διακρινέτωσαν·

'In the case of prophets, however,...' (bringing out the contrast implied by δε).

ἄλλος, η, ο another, other

διακρινῶ judge, evaluate, discern

"The utterance of a prophet is not to be given uncritical acceptance, but to be tested by those qualified." Morris.

"The 'others' are to 'distinguish between' (i) *prophetic speech which is God-given and coheres with the gospel of Christ and the pastoral situation* and (ii) *speech which is merely self-generated rhetoric reflecting the speaker's disguised self-interests, self-deceptions, or errors, albeit under the guise of supposed 'prophecy.'*... The authentic is to be 'sifted' from the inauthentic or spurious, in the light of the OT scriptures, the gospel of Christ, the traditions of all the churches, and critical reflections. Nowhere does Paul hint that preaching or 'prophecy' achieves a privileged status which places them above critical reflection ... *It is never infallible.*" Thistleton

Who are the *others* who are to make the judgement? The use of ἄλλος in the following verse might suggest the other prophets, but a wider use of the term is here probably intended. Allo understands 'the others' "principally" (but not exclusively) as "the leaders of the congregation."

### Verse 30

ἐὰν δὲ ἄλλω ἀποκαλυφθῇ καθημένω, ὁ πρῶτος σιγάτω.

ἀποκαλυφθῇ Verb, aor pass subj, 3 s

ἀποκαλυπτω reveal, disclose

καθημαι sit, sit down, live

πρῶτος, η, ον first, earlier

"It is quite conceivable that what is 'disclosed' or *revealed* to the second speaker is that the first has now unwittingly drifted into self-deceptive, manipulative, mistaken, or merely self-important discourse and has ceased to communicate what God's Spirit has revealed." Thistleton

σιγαω see v.28

### Verse 31

δύνασθε γὰρ καθ' ἓνα πάντες προφητεύειν, ἵνα πάντες μανθάνωσιν καὶ πάντες παρακαλῶνται

πάντες Adjective, m nom pl πας

"The dispute here is not whether all or some may prophesy; it is whether 'everyone' who has the gift of using prophetic speech also has the reflective and critical self-awareness and control to begin and especially 'to stop' (v.30) when the circumstances which are going on outside the speaker's immediate prophetic awareness warrant it. Paul insists that there are no exemptions to the rule that prophetic speech, like speaking in tongues, *remains subject to the ethics of controlled speech*, even if this necessitates a critical awareness of what one is doing, and what others are doing, when one's utterance is 'inspired' or 'given' by God." Thistleton

μανθανω learn, find out

παρακαλεω exhort, encourage, urge

### Verse 32

(καὶ πνεύματα προφητῶν προφήταις

ὑποτάσσεται,

ὑποτασσω put in subjection; pass. be subject, submit to

"Just as those speaking with 'tongues' had the ability to keep silent when they chose, so it is with prophecy. It is not an irresistible divine compulsion that comes upon a man." Morris

### Verse 33

οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν ἀκαταστασίας ὁ θεὸς ἄλλὰ εἰρήνης), ὡς ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῶν ἁγίων.

ἀκαταστασια, ας f disorder, insurrection  
εἰρηνη, ης f peace

"Probably we should place a full stop after *peace*, and take what follows with the next verse. There are not wanting those who favour the division of the AV, but it is difficult to think that such a high-sounding principle as the one we have been examining should be given simply as the custom of the churches." Morris

Paul is appealing to the Corinthians to conform to what is general practice in the churches. For his description of the church here cf. 1:2.

### Verse 34-36

"The translation and exegesis is immensely complex. Contextual factors are vital, including presuppositions about what the addressees were *assumed* to understand by language of which we know only Paul's part of the dialogue. Nevertheless, the main themes of 'controlled speech' and 'order' (14:24-40) continue." Thistleton

### Verse 34

Αἱ γυναῖκες ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις σιγάτωσαν, οὐ γὰρ ἐπιτρέπεται αὐταῖς λαλεῖν· ἄλλὰ ὑποταστέσθωσαν, καθὼς καὶ ὁ νόμος λέγει.

Verses 34-35 are displaced to after v.40 in a number of Western MSS, leading some, including Fee, to suggest that these verses are an early marginal gloss which found its way into the text in two different places. Such arguments are highly tenuous given the weight (or lack of weight) of the evidence. Other commentators (including Hayes and Barrett) suggest that the whole section vv 33b-36 is an interpolation. Ross, pointing out that only a handful of related MSS have these verses dislocated and none omit them, concludes "We are bound to accept the unanimous testimony of the manuscripts, however deeply we may regret that Paul expressed this opinion."

A second means by which some seek to avoid the difficulties of vv.33b-36 is exemplified by Odell-Scott who suggests that in verses 34-35 Paul is quoting a Corinthian view which he rejects. The ἡ at the beginning of v.36 introducing a resounding rhetorical rejoinder. This suggestion does not fit with v.33b. Ellis and Witherington stress that vv. 34 and 35 continue significant themes and use a significant amount of vocabulary from the previous verses – they are a continuation of the one argument.

γυνή, αἰκός f woman, wife  
 σιγατώσαν Verb, pres act imperat, 3 pl σιγαώ  
 see v.28  
 ἐπιτρέπω let, allow, permit  
 ὑποτάσσω see v.32

But Paul's appeal is not to mere custom. He appeals here to the law. Some suggest that the appeal is to Gen 3:16 but Bruce, followed by Thistleton, argues forcefully that the reference is to the creation narrative and to creation order (Gen 3:16, they argue, is descriptive (not prescriptive) of the *fallen* human condition). The principle is therefore of continuing importance and application even though its expression may change with cultural norms. What is the principle? It depends in part on what is demanded of the Corinthians in women 'keeping silent'. There are several views, but in light of 1 Tim. 2:11-14 it may be best to understand this as a prohibiting the women from passing judgement in the assembly on words of prophecy (v.29).

"We must therefore firmly keep in view that since 11:5 makes it clear that Paul approves of women using 'prophetic speech' their *silence* may allude either to 'stopping speaking' or more probably to the possibility of sitting in judgment over prophetic speech which may come from their husbands, i.e., 'sifting prophetic speech,' or to a constant invention of 'questions' cf. v.35) under the guise of 'sifting' what has been said." Thistleton  
 Paul calls for 'order' in the churches. The issue is not so much whether they may speak as it is the abuse of their right to speak.

### Verse 35

εἰ δέ τι μαθεῖν θέλουσιν, ἐν οἴκῳ τοὺς ἰδίους  
 ἄνδρας ἐπερωτάωσαν, αἰσχρὸν γὰρ ἐστὶν  
 γυναικὶ λαλεῖν ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ.  
 μαθεῖν Verb, aor act infin μανθανω see v.31  
 ἴδιος, α, ον one's own  
 ἄνηρ, ἄνδρος m man, husband  
 ἐπερωτάω ask, interrogate, question  
 αἰσχος, α, ον disgraceful, shameful

Again, we need to be careful to distinguish the abiding principle from its cultural expression. What is meant by ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ? The definite article is not used here (compare v.33b). Paul may therefore be using the term in its general sense and appealing to recognised custom — 'it is shameful for a woman to speak [or to speak in a manner challenging what has been said by others] in an assembly [of men and women]'.

### Verse 36

ἢ ἄφ' ὑμῶν ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ ἐξήλθεν, ἢ εἰς  
 ὑμᾶς μόνους κατήντησεν;  
 μονος, η, ον adj only, alone  
 κατανταω come, arrive, reach, attain

Paul rebukes the arrogance of the Corinthians in flouting all custom. "They must not think that they alone know what is Christian. The customs and thinking 'in all the churches of the saints' (verse 33) must be given due force." Morris

"It is a tragedy of church life that some are so weighed down by history that church activity becomes mere replication and routinisation while others are so concerned with novelty and 'relevance' that historical roots do not receive the respect that they deserve as part of a corporate memory and corporate identity." Thistleton

### Verse 37

Εἴ τις δοκεῖ προφήτης εἶναι ἢ πνευματικός,  
 ἐπιγινώσκέτω ἃ γράφω ὑμῖν ὅτι κυρίου ἐστίν·  
 δοκεω think, suppose, have reputation  
 εἶναι Verb, pres infin εἶμι  
 πνευματικός, η, ον spiritual  
 ἐπιγινώσκω understand, recognise  
 ἐντολή, ης f command, instruction

The theme of discerning the genuine from the false continues. The Corinthians must discern the truth of what Paul is saying. "Paul's axiom is entirely logical. God's Spirit does not contradict himself. He does not undermine his own prior disclosures and thereby cause 'confusion' or disorder (v.33a). If a prophet's utterance contradicts *apostolic* utterances (let alone biblical tradition), does not that of itself disenfranchise the currency of the prophetic utterance?" Thistleton  
 "The bearing of this on the way the New Testament writers viewed their inspiration should not be overlooked." Morris

### Verse 38

εἰ δέ τις ἀγνοεῖ, ἀγνοεῖται.  
 ἀγνοεω not know, fail to understand  
 ἀγνοεῖται Verb, pres pass indic, 3 s ἀγνοεω

There are variant readings here. The AV reflects the pres *act* imperat, 'let him be ignorant'. The passive is well attested and makes the better sense, 'anyone who ignores this, let him be ignored.' Metzger comments, "Although the external evidence may not first seem to favour ἀγνοεῖτω, several important representations of the Alexandrian texts unite to support the indicative. The alternation between active and passive forms of the same verb accords with Paul's usage in 8:2-3, whereas the use of the imperative form may have been suggested by Rev 22:11. In any case, the imperative gives a less forceful meaning than ἀγνοεῖται."

### Verse 39

ὥστε, ἀδελφοί μου, ζηλοῦτε τὸ προφητεῦειν, καὶ τὸ λαλεῖν μὴ κωλύετε γλώσσαις·

ὥστε so that, with the result that

Thistleton thinks μου should be retained.

ζηλω be jealous of, be very concerned about

'be eager to'

κωλυω hinder, prevent, forbid

### Verse 40

πάντα δὲ εὐσημιόνως καὶ κατὰ τάξιν γινέσθω..

εὐσημιονως properly, respectably

"The cognate noun εὐσημιοσύνη clearly means, *propriety, decorum, what is presentable in public*, and we do not doubt that Paul has in mind both *reverence and dignity appropriate to address to and from God*, and a *missionary or evangelistic* rather than strictly aesthetic dimension... 'fittingly' perhaps best conveys the Greek." Thistleton

τάξις, εως f order, division

κατὰ τάξιν 'in an orderly manner'

γινέσθω Verb, aor midd dep imperat, 3 s  
γίνομαι

"Everything in it [worship] must be done in as seemly a manner as possible, and with due regard for order." Morris