

God of Peace: Church of Chaos?

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Date: 08 October 2023

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[0 : 0 0] 155 in the church bibles that's first corinthians chapter 14 beginning at verse 26 what shall we say brothers and sisters when you come together each of you has a hymn or a word of instruction a revelation a tongue or an interpretation everything must be done so that the church may be built up if anyone speaks in a tongue two or at most three should speak one at a time and someone must interpret if there is no interpreter the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and to god two or three prophets should speak and the others should weigh carefully what is said and if 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 for god is not a god of disorder but of peace as in all the congregations of the lord's people women should remain silent in the churches they are not allowed to speak but 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 or did the word of god originate with you or are you the only people it has reached if 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 but if anyone ignores this they themselves will be ignored 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 brilliant thanks katherine for reading that good morning saint silas um if we've not met my name is martin ayres i'm the lead pastor here and we are in a series looking at this letter first corinthians we've got to this section and i don't know what you thought as we had those verses read but there were some verses in this morning's reading that um i think i described earlier in the week as startling uh someone else on the staff team said they looked pretty wild so uh whatever we uh whatever we're making of that let's ask for god's help as we turn to his word uh let's pray together heavenly father we thank you for your word we thank you so much that you are a speaking god who speaks words that bring life and light to us we ask that the words of my mouth and the thoughts and reflections of all of our hearts will be pleasing in your sight oh lord our rock and our redeemer amen so uh we've got this um great tv program we've got into as a family through our kids sort your life out i don't know how many of you are fans have sort your life out um uh each week it's great stacy solomon and her team they go to these houses it's absolute chaos people who have hoarded things like you would never have dreamed margaret has 203 lipsticks 203 jenny had over 40 umbrellas and these houses are absolutely swimming in clutter they open cupboards and everything falls out on them in one episode they open the garage door and one of the team cries at the state of the garage the dining

table is covered in junk the bath is completely unusable because belongings are just piled high inside it i don't know where they wash and the family what happens is they move out for a week and stacy and her team they get to work you've got rob the carpenter you've got dilly the professional organizer and they clear every room and they clean every surface and they um they organize and they redecorate with the aim to restore joy to this family then a week later you get the big reveal and um there's emotion everywhere tears as the family are brought back into their house room by room and they can see that it's their stuff but everything has just been straightened out for them and it's this fresh start order from the chaos and it makes you want to go off and tidy your own house or at least organize your cutlery drawer or something achievable it's a fresh start um well we're in our series uh in our morning services and the apostle paul is our stacy solomon right he is and the project is sort your church out and we're listening in as we heard it read and i hope you could tell things are not in good shape in this church in corinth did you notice in verse 27 he he tells them that the people speaking in tongues should speak one at a time and then in verse 31 he says you can all prophesy in turn so this is a church doing everything everywhere all at once and as paul gets to

work to bring order to the chaos he's giving us principles that can help us to make our meetings ones where god is pleased to be at work for his purposes now since chapter 12 paul has been teaching about um grace gifts as he calls them gifts of the holy spirit they call them spiritual gifts um so what will the the sorted out spirit-filled church look like well our first point is this the spirit-filled church is up building joining in the work of god you can find the the points inside the notice sheet the spirit-filled church is up building paul tells us what's on god's agenda for his church in verse 26 if we just look there what then shall we say brothers and sisters when you come together each of you has a hymn or a word of instruction a revelation a tongue or an interpretation everything must be done so that the church may be built up that's been the big idea over the last few weeks that christians meet together and as christians we need to meet together with other christians to be built up and there is more to our gathering than that and back in verse 25 that we finished off with last week paul described this hope that a visitor could come into church and inquire and be so struck by the the kind of manifestation of god among his people at work that they would fall down and worship god exclaiming god is really among you that was verse 25 at the same time when we plan our meetings and when any of us plan to attend our meetings the goal is that god's people might be built up that's the principle now when paul gets more specific about what was going on in corinth we begin to realize that we just it's very hard for us to visualize quite what a gathering of a first generation church really looked like throughout this passage as we read it it's good to remember that that we're not being called here to replicate exactly what was going on nor can we quite imagine what it would have been like notice the words he uses in verse 27 he talks about them gathering and each of them bringing a hymn a word of instruction a revelation a tongue or interpretation he talks

later about prophets speaking and it's not clear to us what the distinction is between those different terms i mean we're familiar with a hymn but the idea of how is a prophecy different from a revelation or a word of instruction i just don't think we know that today and yet what we can see is that all of these ideas that paul's describing are to do with speech whether it's that we're singing words of truth to one another or we're always speaking to one another and what paul wants is that christians when we gather will join in the work of god by using our speech to build up god's people and by building up by being built up what paul is describing here is being strengthened as christians in our faith so strengthened so that we're growing to maturity in christ we're living fruit-filled lives as we're transformed by what we learn about jesus and having a sense of security in what we believe that we're strong in our faith and hope and love that's this idea of being built up as god's people and so paul builds on what he said last week that what he wants in our gatherings is that things are intelligible that we can understand the language that we're using so that it fills our minds with truth and and builds us up so in verse 27 he he describes that he says if anyone speaks in a tongue two or at most three should speak one at a time and someone must interpret if there is no interpreter the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and to god so we were thinking the last couple of weeks about this gift of people praying to god in a language that others around them can't understand and paul's saying if there's no one there to interpret it he's discouraging the use of that gift in the gathering because it's not helpful for other people on the other side paul wants the church when they meet together to strive to excel in a different gift the gift of prophecy so look at that in verse 29 two or three prophets should speak and the others should wear carefully what is said and as we thought about last week um in acts chapter two when we hear about the gift of the spirit given to every believer now now that jesus has risen and ascended every believer in jesus has the holy spirit living in us we all have the ability to prophesy to speak god's truth to one another in a way that's strengthening and leads to the building up of people and as we've been in this series i've had conversations with people in our church about their own experiences of god being at work like that prophetically um david in our church family um david and heather yorston if you know them he was talking about when he went to a wedding in kenya when they were living in kenya and a very secular wedding no mention of god jesus the bible and um you could go up during the evening celebration there was an open mic for people to go up and say nice things and he got up and as he got up um some of the guys who maybe drunk too much there was some g-ringing because they knew he was a missionary and he got up and he said something about the couple and then he and then he read from one corinthians chapter 13 and he said as he started reading the bible the whole room stopped there was silence as everyone listened intently and he said it was this moment as though god's word was breaking through among these people and that was in a gather a crowd that weren't uh in a church setting and but um other stories from people heard about a friend who sent a

postcard to to another christian because um she was really struck by a proverb in the book of proverbs and if you know proverbs in the bible often the sayings have two sides to them and she was really struck by how encouraging the first half of this proverb was so she she wrote the proverb out on a postcard and she sent it to a friend and the friend the second half of the proverb she'd barely given any thought to was about envy and um her friend formed her said thanks so much for sending that postcard i don't know how you knew but i have been really struggling with envy and it was so helpful to think about that proverb and um she'd never given that any thought god was kind of speaking through that that verse in a way that she hadn't even envisaged when she sent the postcard when we have our prayer ministry team at the back of church after the service um i've had the experience of going there sharing something to have prayed for and um a couple of people there praying with me and for me and that and then a few days later one of them texting me because they've been praying about that and as they've prayed they've just had a sense that there was a scripture that was especially relevant to that situation and they've shared that and it's been a helpful way of applying god's word then um when i um i got very ill some years ago and had to have brain surgery and when i went through that process three different people who didn't know each other all shared with me the same portion of scripture that they thought would be helpful for me in what we what i was going through and we were going through remarkable all um sharing the same bit as god impressed those verses on me for my encouragement and the great thing about hearing stories like that is that they they raise our sense of expectancy that that we might walk into church or be meeting up with other christians and be praying that god could use us in these kind of ways by by giving us words of truth that can help encourage and strengthen the people around us that's our first point about the spirit-filled church that it's to be up building joining in god's work secondly our second point the spirit-filled church is ordered reflecting the peace of god so paul effectively says now get control of yourselves to this church if you look at verse 29 two or three prophets should speak and the others should wear carefully what is said so we heard last week about how with old testament prophecy we don't need to weigh it up old testament prophecy in the bible in the old testament it's god's word with authority for us but new testament prophecy needs to be weighed up against scripture when someone comes and says look i think god might be saying this or i think god i've got a sense that god might be saying that it's something that we have to weigh up we can ask questions about it is this consistent with the scriptures does it go against something in the scripture um is it does what this person is saying does it fit with kind of scriptural wisdom as we kind of grow in our kind of knowledge of the word of god does this seem a wise thing that the person is saying or does it seem foolish we can apply kind of our common sense to that we can ask does this word from this person does it glorify god or or is it more kind of man-centered or glorifying someone someone else now that kind of testing process is important so that we're not led astray into thinking that god might be saying something that he's not saying so paul wants prophecy to be weighed up in the early church there and but he's also looking to bring order to the gathering and in verse 30 he says what i think is actually exactly the opposite of what we might expect him to say if you look at verse 30 and if 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 so we might think he'd say while someone's prophesying if a revelation comes to someone who's sitting down they should wait for the person to finish paul says they have to stop for that person to get up it's there is mystery here um but maybe there were guys in corinth who once they got the microphone you just couldn't get them off it and so he's saying look there is a time to speak but there's also a time when you've got to stop and let somebody else and maybe they said well i can't control myself it's the spirit at work in me so paul kicks that into touch in verse 32 if you have a look for god is um he says the spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets in other words you can stop if you want if you know that you should and we need to know when we need to stop and then the reason he gives rooted in the character of god so here verse 33 for god is not a god of disorder but of peace as in all the congregations of the lord's people we should know when to speak and we should know when to be quiet and it's at this point as part of these same principles of order that we get this statement about women verse 34 women should remain silent in the churches they are not allowed to speak but 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 now what the bible says about men and women is very counter-cultural for us in 21st century glasgow and and we need to be aware of that and we do need to be open to that it is a good test of our own attitudes towards god and his word when he

says things that we find challenging or confronting but before we get to that point we need to do some work to discern what paul really means here especially because just a few pages ago in chapter 11 of the same letter paul spent a considerable amount of time talking about what women should wear on their heads in that culture when they are praying or prophesying in church so clearly paul assumes that women will be participating in the life of the church in the ministry there will be prayer and prophecy going on from women when the church meets together and elsewhere when paul lists people to commend in his letters um he includes women in those lists as well as men so we can see that there were women in the early church who were prominent in their exercise of their gifts for the good of the church as part of mission teams and ministry teams but here he says verse 34 women should remain silent verse 35 it's disgraceful or shameful for a woman to speak in the church so i take it that he is talking about something specific and i think the most natural way to understand that is that he's giving instructions that are still following on from the subject that he was describing in verse 29 that after people have been prophesying and sharing prophecies in the church it should be weighed up and that's something that i guess the church as a whole may have been involved in that process of weighing up a prophecy but the process of testing and weighing it up was probably ultimately for the church leaders to make a judgment call on do we think this is from god that god is saying this and let's remember how especially challenging that process would have been for the church in this

[20 : 11] first generation they've heard the gospel from a missionary apostle the apostle paul they don't have bibles they've got the old testament scriptures but they the new testament has not been written yet they've probably got an earlier letter from paul they may have had access to some fragments of the gospels or of sayings of jesus but they don't have the full canon of scripture to weigh up prophecy against it would have been a real task of discernment for the early church and it may have involved questioning discussion together and paul may be saying here to the women in particular that they need to submit to the leadership of the church the appointed leaders as they do that weighing up task after prophecy has been given by men or women now why wouldn't women be part of that process well the reason that paul gives here is that it's what the law says at the end of verse 34 and paul has used that phrase of the law says already in this chapter we looked at it last week in verse 21 and there when he talked about the law he quoted from the prophet isaiah so it looks as though when paul's talking about the law at this point he's using it as a general term for the whole of the old testament the law and the prophets as sometimes it's described the whole old testament and it's not at all clear where it says in the old testament that women should be in submission to the leadership of the church so i think it's most likely that when paul says that without elaborating he's still referring back to what he alluded to in chapter 11 in chapter 11 he spoke about men and women and he clearly alluded from his for his principles to genesis chapter 2 um in chapter 2 of um well in chapter 11 the points we looked at uh from there were that men and women are different by god's good design in ways to be thankful for and to display and just as important as that men and women are dependent on each other we are interdependent we need each other and in chapter 11 paul rooted that principle in the character of god that god himself the one god is three persons the father the son and the spirit they're all distinct they all have different roles and they're all equal equally divine and in a similar way god has designed men and women to be complementary distinct but equal equally made in god's image and there are moments in the new testament like 1 timothy chapter 2 and here may well be another example where those differences in roles for men and women are something to reflect in church life as well as in home life paul might be concerned here in these instructions that wives didn't speak in church after prophecies in a way that might undermine their own husbands i think it's more it's more likely that he's concerned more generally that women in corinth were to show their submission to church order the church leaders by being quiet at that specific moment when the elders were weighing up prophecy and that would fit with why paul is writing it here as another way that he wants the church to display order in their meetings so for us today then how do we apply that well probably in a very limited way the specific application because we don't actually have that moment as a practice in our church gatherings we don't have in the formal part of our meetings a time when prophecies are being weighed up like that we are a church where there is order and people have leadership responsibilities so perhaps one application of the principle here in chapter 14 is that we could all men as well as women in church life we could all find ourselves in situations where the way we speak to the leaders or speak about the leaders or even the way we ask questions of the leaders either shows that we are

submitting to the leadership or that we're trying to undermine it by the way that we ask those questions or speak so just as there's a time when people with the gift of tongues are being told here to be silent in verse 28 and a time when the prophets are being told to be silent in verse 30 paul is saying there's also a time when the women are to be quiet probably when the church elders were weighing up prophecy so what do we do when we find god's word confronting one temptation is that we rail against it and kind of deny its authority so that brings us to our third point that paul comes to if he's saying if the prophets in corinth didn't like what they were hearing or the tongue speakers or anyone else didn't like it our third point is this the spirit-filled church is submissive accepting the word of god so let's look together at verse 36 he says or did the word of god originate with you or are you the only people it has reached if 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 but if anyone ignores this they will themselves be ignored evidently some people in corinth were priding themselves on being particularly prophetic and paul says well a key mark of having the holy spirit of being gifted by the holy spirit is that you will acknowledge my authority as an apostle that the apostles like paul have authority in the church and jesus appeared risen again to the apostles and he commissioned them to take the gospel out so they had this unique authority in the church and for us today it's through the new testament that we receive that apostolic word so it's a helpful reminder verse 36 that the word of god didn't start in corinth and it didn't start here at saint silas it didn't originate with us and so it's not for us to modify it for our times or as we see fit rather the word of god came to us and originated us as the spirit took the word and gave birth spiritual life to us so we've had three principles as paul sorts the church out in corinth the spirit-filled church is up-building joining in the work of god it's submissive to the word of god and it's ordered so how do we put those principles into action as a church today well the third point means that we want to be a bible-based church submitting to god's word together as we hear it read and preached and as we open it in other places during the week our midweek meetings and things because a key mark of being a church gifted by the spirit is that we're submissive to the authority of scripture and from the first point our goal when we come together is that we be building one another up and we be built up it's edification that we would grow as we learn christ and allow ourselves to be transformed by what we learn of jesus and that means we strive to be intelligible as a church we try and avoid jargon that would alienate people we've got we just it's one of the ways that we discuss um songs and hymns that we use so uh we we meet uh the band leaders uh will meet from time to time with me and we'll discuss potential new songs new to the church whether they're old or new songs and um we've had times one of the things we look at is intelligibility so um not so long ago i brought a hymn to that group um and it's an absolute cracker of a hymn i mean it's a gem okay and i wanted us to sing it as a church and uh they wouldn't do it okay and the reason they wouldn't do it is because the language is just not clear today the language is not clear enough and there are other great things we can sing we don't and they were right they were right i was sad but they were right and so it's good to think through how we we don't want to alienate people by using language that they can't understand we want to be built up and we need to aim for our meetings to be ordered as well as paul is straightening out that church in corinth we don't want to have different people speaking at the same time we don't want to have people talking over each other we give our services a kind of a shape to them that we hope that week by week we'll all find helpful we also want to have plenty of time for one another ministry ministry where we helpfully lovingly speak to one another and that that we hope and pray that will include speaking god's word prophetically to each other so we encourage people to see coffee time as a moment for that arriving early before this before this service to spend time together and encourage each other we encourage people to join a midweek fellowship group growth group or a roots group as a way of being in a place where we can build each other up with our words so verse 39 Paul brings the whole section this whole section of the letter to an end with a great summary in verses 39 and 40 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 so it is though verse 39 is a good warning not to be too conservative when it comes to god's grace gifts and some of us will need to hear that perhaps particularly if we've um seen them misused or handled strangely that we we're not to um uh be too conservative about them and then verse 40 is a good warning that god is deeply concerned that our meetings are ordered and that brings us back to that key truth about god in the passage verse 33 if we just look there again for god is not a god of disorder but of peace and he invites us to display that sense of his orderliness as we meet together god showed that he's a god of order in creation in genesis chapter one the forming and the filling as

he spoke powerful words creatively to there was chaos and he brought order we see that he's a god of order in the person of jesus the man who was on that boat overnight and the furious squall and the wind the waves the chaos and he spoke and immediately he became calm when he crossed the sea of galilee and he he met the man of the tombs and he was cut and bleeding because he was so overpowered by demonic powers and they tried to shackle him and he was living in a graveyard and jesus speaks powerful words and drives the demons out of the man and mark tells us when they came out from the town and saw the man he was sitting down he was clothed he was in his right mind jesus sees chaos and he brings order in the chaos and we see it in our own lives that when you come to see who jesus is and you turn back to god through him and you you you put your faith in him bit by bit he he sees the chaos in our lives and he he puts things in the right order again and we can display that order when we meet together to worship him and to point each other to him let's pray together let's just have a moment of quiet to reflect on god's word to us gracious heavenly father we praise you for the gift of one another may your spirit be at work whenever we gather together would everything be done for the building up of your people so help us we pray to grow in wisdom that our meetings would be marked by order by love by submission to your word by the full exercise of your spiritual grace gifts to us and by visitors finding truth in jesus and discovering for themselves that you really are among us for we ask these things in jesus name amen thank you thank you thank you thank you