

## Body Ministry in Practise

Brynmawr Family Church Sermon  
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> May 2012

### Intro-

- Corinth must have been an interesting place to do Church planting. In his letter to the Church in Corinth Paul writes to address various issues which have arisen. One of the issues is inappropriate use of spiritual gifts

### Read 1Cor 14:1-40

#### **We need both love AND gifts-** v14 'Pursue love and desire spiritual gifts'

- Some pursue love but not spiritual gifts. They think love is the way to get people saved and to minister to the body of Christ but they close themselves off to any spiritual gifts. This means they cut themselves off from the very power of God to truly bless others.
- Jesus had compassion on the crowds and so He healed them- His compassion for people led Him to use spiritual gifts to bless them. The lepers were moved by the fact that Jesus was willing to become ceremonially unclean by showing love to them by touching them, restoring their dignity as people. However, if they were blessed by this, they were completely blown away by the fact that Jesus healed them of their leprosy.
- Jesus had compassion on the Samaritan woman at the well and so spoke into her life through words of knowledge. She was amazed that He took the time to speak to her, being a Samaritan when Jews would normally avoid Samaritans. However, what really blew her away was the insight Jesus had into her life through the word of knowledge. This is what convinced her that not only did this man care about her but also God cared about her (we know He is God in the flesh, but she didn't at first).
- Spiritual gifts are to be used as an expression of God's love to people- God's love has a supernatural element to it! Spiritual gifts display to people that not only do we care about them, but God does too. Sure, a good deed will also show this, but the supernatural element brings in a convincing assurance that God truly cares about them.

'..my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.' -1Cor 2:4-5

- Some people pursue spiritual gifts and have very little love. Everything becomes about them and their ministry. They become users of people and end up nullifying any ministry. They leave a trail of broken lives behind them. They become filled with pride and arrogance. Paul in chapter 13 showed how ugly and useless gifts were without love- 13:3- it profits nothing.
- Where are we at as a Church? How much do we rely on one or the other? Paul says we should be firing on BOTH cylinders. How are you doing as a person? Are you strong on one and weak on the other?

#### **We are to share only what is beneficial to others-** v9 'Unless you utter.. words easy to understand..you will be speaking into the air' – v23 'if ..all speak with tongues..will they not say that you are out of your mind?'

- The Corinthian Church was very blessed with spiritual gifts and for this Paul gave God thanks- 1Cor 1:5-7. However, they were immature in the way that they exercised their gifts. One example of this was a misuse of the gift of tongues. It

would appear that in their meetings there was a series of people addressing the congregation in different tongues, but no interpretation would take place. The result was that those who were believers were not edified and those who were visitors thought they were mad.

- Paul could have reacted by banning the use of tongues in a gathered assembly, but this he did not do (v39 'do not forbid to speak in tongues'). In verse 15 he gives the right approach- 'I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with understanding'. Although we encourage congregational free worship by singing in the Spirit we must get the balance right between tongues and English as corporate worship is more than just about us as individuals. We can get lazy or self-indulgent by an over-use of tongues without any effort to actually pray with our minds. V26 says '... let ALL THINGS be done for edification'. I may think I'm really spiritual speaking in tongues whilst someone else is sharing, but if I am not keeping it quiet enough I can cease to be a blessing to others and become irritating, and disruptive.
- Although congregational worship or prayer in tongues for a set time may not require an interpretation anymore than many people speaking English at once does, when a person addresses the congregation or raises their voice so as to be sharing their prayer or song to God with the whole congregation listening this requires an interpretation. This is the first of the clauses in verse 28 onwards where Paul advocates silence- i.e if there is no one to interpret.
- Do you have the gift of tongues? Would you like to receive it? Ask God and ask Him to fill you with His Spirit. Tongues needs to be spoken out- trust God and speak out in faith. Do you already have tongues? Have you ever given a tongue to the whole congregation with someone present who can interpret? Why not step out in this area as God leads you? Have you ever given an interpretation? Again, why not seek God for an interpretation of your own tongues or of other peoples. Do you sing in tongues? Do you also interpret what you are singing? Why not pray for God to give you the gift of interpretation?

**We all have something to share-** v26 'Whenever you come together each of you has..'

- This verse is saying that we are all to participate in sharing during times of worship, not only a limited group of 'spiritual giants'. Some churches are all about the person at the front. Some churches are very lively in their worship, and this is good, but that does not make it biblical. True biblical worship is full of life, but also is about the whole body of Christ participating using spiritual gifts, not just a few. Some think they need to be a leader in order to share something- this is not true, this verse says we all have something to share.
- This verse mentions that one shares a psalm. The one sharing the psalm should not think this is any less valid than the one who prophesies. It is the beauty of variety which God has placed in the body. Let's bring our contributions.
- Things which stop this happening are:
  - Fear
  - Unbelief
  - Apathy
  - Not being filled with the Spirit
  - Distraction.
- Having children does not exclude us from sharing what God gives us. Don't neglect your children during the worship, but equally don't think that just because you are looking after your children that it stops you being able to bring something key to the meeting that will be just what is needed. Also we need to try to engage our children in the worship and to bring their own contributions. Worship should be a family experience.

## **We must share decently and orderly- v40**

- We need to be aware of where we are at as a Church. Corinth had a lot of sharing going on, but the sharing was disorderly- people didn't take turns. Our danger is not usually that we have so many contributions that we get out of order (although we do at times get disorderly), it is more that we don't have enough contributions and there are too many silences in our worship. Many Churches today would fall into this category compared to the Church in the New Testament.
- Paul addresses how people are to share, summarising it in verse 40 by the words 'decently and in order'. Another way of putting this would be – remain sensitive to the Holy Spirit and each other.
- Paul uses the word 'silent' 3 times in this last passage from verse 28 to the end of the chapter. He does not mean complete silence but a voluntary submissiveness, being sensitive to God and each other. How do we know he doesn't mean complete silence? Because in verse 28 he says when there is no interpreter present the person with the gift of tongues should 'keep silent in the Church' and 'speak to himself and God'- this is therefore not a complete silence but a sensitivity to God and others. The person should restrain themselves according to the situation, still using the gift, but not disruptively to the flow of what is happening in the meeting.
- The next time Paul uses the word 'silent' is in verse 30 when a prophet is prophesying and someone else wants to prophesy. Here Paul says the first speaker should keep silent. Here he is not saying that what they were sharing was of no worth, but rather he is urging restraint as to the length of what is shared during body ministry, to make room for others. If one person hogs it and goes into preaching mode then others do not get a chance to bring their contribution. Therefore we need to keep our contributions on track and to the point for true biblical body-ministry to take place. Prophets cannot use the excuse that 'the anointing meant I had to share' as Paul says the spirits of the prophets are subject to the control of the prophets- verse 32. This means they are actually free to start and stop at will (although God sovereignly can bypass this). The key is a submissive spirit.
- Have you ever been in a meeting when two people pray or share accidentally at the same time. Usually both stop and then both start again and then stop again and then they work out who is going to go first. Sometimes I have been in meetings when both share and none stops for the other. This is what Paul was addressing here- one needs to be submissive to the other or else disorder breaks in.
- The last time Paul uses the word 'silent' he addresses the women. It would appear that some of the women were particularly guilty of disrupting the flow of the contributions by asking questions or sharing their opinions. Paul says this is shameful (verse 34). Although it might appear that Paul is saying they are not permitted to speak at all in the meetings (verse 34) this is not the case, as he encourages them to pray and to prophesy (1Cor 11:5). What he is banning is speaking in an out-of turn, disruptive way to the flow of what God is doing in the meeting. Both men and women can be guilty of this, but certain women in Corinth were known for it and it showed a lack of submission. We need to learn to be in tune with the Spirit in meetings so that what we share has a flow and relevance to what God is doing. There is nothing worse than arriving at the very throne of God and then someone takes things completely off on a tangent by taking ages to share something bewildering and completely irrelevant to everything God has done up to that point in the meeting.
- In our meetings we have an overseeing leader. Their role is to keep things on track. In the Bible local leaders are given the task of oversight of the Churches, being shepherds to the flock and answerable to the chief shepherd- Jesus. In our

meetings although some things can presently at the size we are be shared without checking them out first (e.g. a simple prayer in the flow of what God is doing, a short scripture fitting in with the flow or theme of worship etc.) we need to be open to loving correction when we share in this way. However, some things need to be checked first with the person overseeing the meeting. Such things would include:

- A directional word to the Church
- A word which would change the direction of the meeting
- Anything which requests a response from people or a time of ministry
- A testimony or anything which may take time to share, e.g. a long scripture reading
- Something which you are unsure of
- Anything which may be a rebuke, challenge or have the potential to unsettle people
- Anything which may be controversial or bring a specific doctrinal slant
- The overall principle is- if in doubt check it out.
- We need to be big enough to accept we will all make mistakes- love covers over a multitude of sins- i.e. Forgive one another when we get it wrong, and forgive ourselves when we mess up. If we are too fearful of making a mistake we will never try anything new. The key to spiritual gifts is COURAGE.
- Is 54:2 'Enlarge the place of your tent'- let God stretch you in worship this year. Choose to make progress in both loving God and people and also in using spiritual gifts.

### **Summary**

- Pursue love AND desire spiritual gifts
- Share only what is beneficial to others
- We all have something to share
- Share decently and orderly