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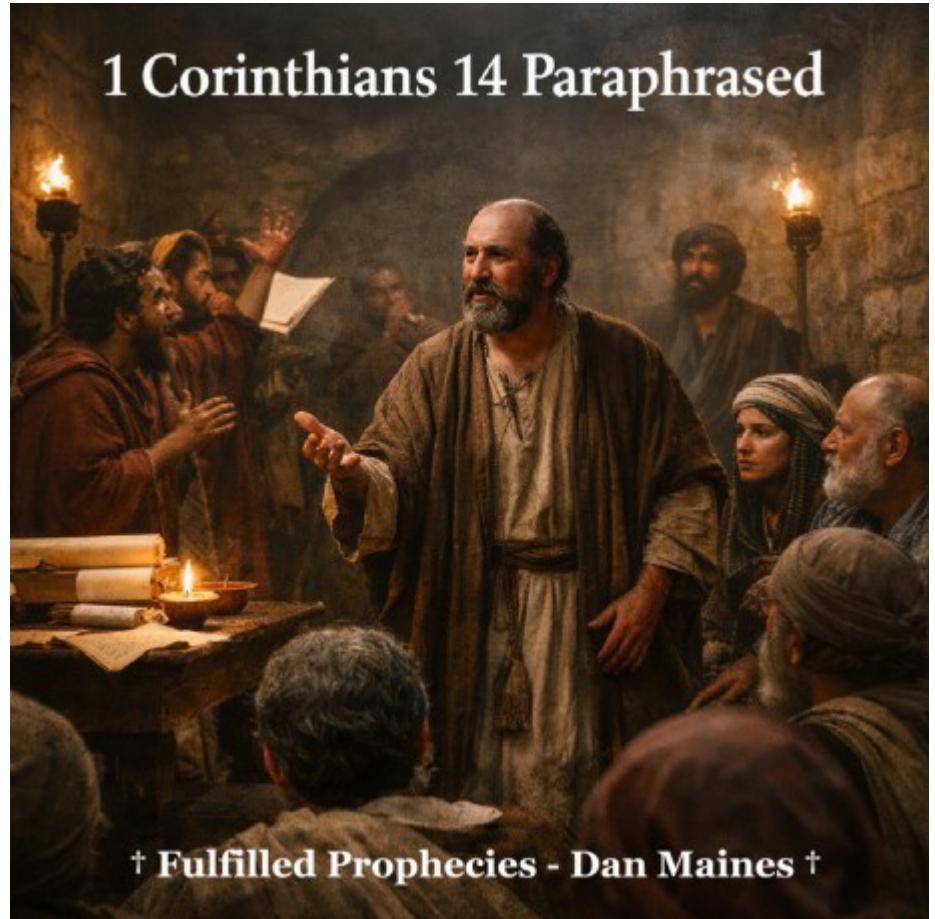
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1 Corinthians 14 Paraphrased



By Dan Maines

1 Corinthians 14 Paraphrased

Introduction

† Paul corrects disorder that had developed in the Corinthian gatherings where dramatic speech had begun to overshadow instruction that strengthened the church.

† The purpose of the assembly was always edification, encouragement, and clarity so believers could grow together in understanding.

† This chapter shows that understandable teaching benefits the church far more than speech that no one can comprehend.

1 Corinthians 14:1

Make love your aim, and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the ability to clearly speak God's message so others can understand it.

† Love remains the foundation for every spiritual gift (1 Corinthians 13:1-3).

† Speaking God's message clearly strengthens the church because believers can understand and grow (1 Corinthians 14:3).

† Irenaeus wrote that the early church valued teaching that built believers up more than impressive displays (Against Heresies 3.17).

1 Corinthians 14:2

Anyone speaking in a language others don't understand isn't speaking to people but to God, because no one understands what he's saying even though he may be speaking spiritual things.

† Speech that cannot be understood does not instruct the congregation (1 Corinthians 14:9).

† Paul is not condemning languages themselves, he is showing they must be interpreted to benefit the church.

† Clement of Alexandria emphasized that truth must be communicated clearly so believers can understand and grow (Stromata 1.5).

1 Corinthians 14:3

But the one who clearly speaks God's message to people strengthens them, encourages them, and comforts them.

† Instruction that can be understood builds faith and stability within the church (Romans 15:4).

† Encouragement and comfort were central goals of early Christian teaching.

† Eusebius described early gatherings as centered around teaching that strengthened believers (Ecclesiastical History 5.16).

1 Corinthians 14:4

The person speaking in an unknown language builds himself up, but the one speaking God's message clearly builds up the church.

† Paul's concern is the growth of the whole body, not individual displays.

† Church gatherings existed for corporate edification.

† Ignatius emphasized that unity and strengthening the church must remain the priority in worship gatherings (Letter to the Ephesians 5).

1 Corinthians 14:5

I want all of you to speak in languages, but even more that you'd clearly speak God's message. The one who clearly speaks God's message is greater than the one speaking in languages, unless someone explains what was said so the church can be built up.

† Understanding is the central principle throughout the chapter.

† Languages only benefit the church when interpreted.

† Clear instruction is always more valuable than speech that cannot be understood.

1 Corinthians 14:6

Brothers and sisters, if I came speaking in languages but gave you no revelation, knowledge, prophecy, or teaching, how would that help you?

† Paul appeals to simple logic. Words that cannot be understood cannot instruct.

† Teaching requires comprehension to benefit the church.

† The apostles always communicated truth clearly so believers

could learn.

1 Corinthians 14:7

Even lifeless instruments like a flute or harp must produce clear notes, otherwise no one can recognize the melody.

† Paul uses music as an example of clarity.

† Sound without distinction produces confusion.

† The same principle applies to speech in the church.

1 Corinthians 14:8

If the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who will prepare for battle?

† Clear signals determine whether soldiers understand instructions.

† Confusing communication leads to disorder.

† Paul applies this to teaching within the church assembly.

1 Corinthians 14:9

In the same way, if you speak words people can't understand, how will anyone know what you're saying? You'll just be speaking into the air.

† Communication must be understood to be useful.

† Words that cannot be understood produce no instruction.

† The church gathering must focus on clarity.

1 Corinthians 14:10

There are many languages in the world, and each one has meaning.

† Paul acknowledges that languages themselves are legitimate.

† Every language communicates meaning to those who understand it.

† The problem arises when listeners cannot understand.

1 Corinthians 14:11

But if I don't understand the language, I'll be a foreigner to the speaker, and he will be a foreigner to me.

† Communication fails when both sides cannot understand each other.

† Without interpretation, the message remains useless to the listener.

† Paul stresses mutual understanding.

1 Corinthians 14:12

Since you're eager for spiritual gifts, seek to excel in those that build up the church.

† Spiritual ambition must focus on strengthening others.

† The goal of every gift is edification.

† Ignatius emphasized that gifts must serve unity and growth in the church (Letter to the Ephesians 5).

1 Corinthians 14:13

So the one who speaks in a language should pray that he may explain it.

† Interpretation removes confusion.

† Once explained, the message benefits the entire church.

† This restores the purpose of instruction.

1 Corinthians 14:14

If I pray in a language, my spirit prays, but my mind produces no benefit to others.

† Personal spiritual experience does not automatically benefit the congregation.

† The church gathering requires understanding.

† Paul emphasizes the importance of both spirit and mind.

1 Corinthians 14:15

So what should I do? I'll pray with my spirit and also with my mind. I'll sing with my spirit and also with my mind.

† Worship involves both devotion and understanding.

† Prayer and singing should instruct and encourage others.

† Early Christian worship included both heartfelt devotion and

clear teaching.

1 Corinthians 14:16

Otherwise, if you're praising God in spirit only, how can someone unfamiliar say Amen if he doesn't know what you're saying?

† Participation in worship requires understanding.

† The congregation must hear a clear message to affirm it.

† Orderly worship allows everyone to participate.

1 Corinthians 14:17

You may be giving thanks well enough, but the other person isn't strengthened.

† Personal devotion without understanding does not build up the church.

† Edification remains Paul's primary concern.

† The assembly exists for mutual strengthening.

1 Corinthians 14:18

I thank God that I speak in languages more than all of you.

† Paul clarifies he isn't opposed to languages themselves.

† He personally possessed the gift.

† Yet he still prioritized understandable instruction.

1 Corinthians 14:19

But in the church I'd rather speak five understandable words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a language no one understands.

† Clear instruction is superior to impressive speech.

† Understanding builds faith within the congregation.

† This statement summarizes the chapter's central teaching.

1 Corinthians 14:20

Brothers and sisters, don't think like children. Be infants regarding evil, but mature in your thinking.

† Spiritual maturity requires clear thinking and wisdom.

† The Corinthians had been fascinated with dramatic displays.

† Paul calls them to mature understanding.

1 Corinthians 14:21

In the law it is written: By people of strange languages and foreign lips I'll speak to this people, yet even then they won't listen to me, says the Lord.

† Paul quotes Isaiah 28:11-12.

† Foreign languages were a sign of judgment against unbelieving Israel.

† This prophecy pointed to the coming covenant judgment.

1 Corinthians 14:22

So languages are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is for believers.

† Languages functioned as a warning sign.

† Prophetic teaching strengthened the church.

† This fits the approaching judgment upon Jerusalem in AD 70.

1 Corinthians 14:23

If the whole church gathers and everyone speaks in languages, and outsiders enter, won't they say you're out of your minds?

† Disorder damages the witness of the church.

† Outsiders would see chaos rather than truth.

† Paul insists on orderly worship.

1 Corinthians 14:24

But if everyone clearly speaks God's message and an unbeliever enters, he'll be convicted and examined by everyone.

† Clear teaching exposes the truth to the hearer.

† Conviction arises through understandable proclamation.

† This leads people toward repentance.

1 Corinthians 14:25

The secrets of his heart will be revealed, and he'll fall down and

worship God, declaring that God is truly among you.

† Truth revealed brings conviction.

† Understanding leads people to acknowledge God's presence.

† Early Christian preaching sought this transformation.

1 Corinthians 14:26

When you gather, each one may bring a song, a teaching, a revelation, a language, or an explanation, but everything must be done to build up the church.

† Early gatherings allowed participation.

† Every contribution had to strengthen the church.

† Order maintained unity.

1 Corinthians 14:27

If anyone speaks in a language, two or at most three should speak, one at a time, and someone must explain.

† Paul sets limits to prevent confusion.

† Interpretation ensured understanding.

† Structure protected order in worship.

1 Corinthians 14:28

If no one explains, the speaker should remain silent in the church and speak to himself and to God.

† Silence is better than confusion.

† The church gathering must remain understandable.

† Order was essential for edification.

1 Corinthians 14:29

Two or three should speak God's message, and the others should evaluate what is said.

† Prophetic teaching was tested.

† The church examined messages carefully.

† This protected believers from error.

1 Corinthians 14:30

If a revelation comes to someone sitting down, the first speaker

should stop.

† Mutual respect maintained order.

† Speakers did not dominate the assembly.

† Instruction remained cooperative.

1 Corinthians 14:31

You can all speak God's message one by one so everyone can learn and be encouraged.

† Teaching allowed the church to learn collectively.

† Encouragement came through shared instruction.

† Order ensured everyone benefited.

1 Corinthians 14:32

The spirits of prophets are subject to prophets.

† Spiritual inspiration never removed self control.

† True prophets maintained discipline.

† Disorder cannot be blamed on spiritual influence.

1 Corinthians 14:33

God isn't a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

† Order reflects God's character.

† Peaceful gatherings demonstrate divine wisdom.

† Every church followed this principle.

1 Corinthians 14:34

Women should remain quiet during the evaluation process in the churches. They aren't permitted to speak in that setting but should remain respectful as the law also says.

† The context concerns evaluation of prophetic teaching.

† Order and authority were maintained in the assembly.

† Tertullian described structured roles within early Christian gatherings (On the Veiling of Virgins 9).

1 Corinthians 14:35

If they want to learn something, they should ask their husbands

at home, because it's improper to disrupt the assembly.

† The goal is orderly learning.

† Public disruptions during teaching were discouraged.

† Respect for structure protected unity.

1 Corinthians 14:36

Did God's word originate with you? Or are you the only ones it has reached?

† Paul rebukes Corinthian arrogance.

† Truth did not originate with them.

† Apostolic teaching governed the church.

1 Corinthians 14:37

If anyone believes he's a prophet or spiritual, he must recognize that what I'm writing to you is the Lord's command.

† Paul asserts apostolic authority.

† Genuine leaders submit to God's command.

† The early church recognized apostolic instruction as authoritative.

1 Corinthians 14:38

If anyone ignores this, he himself will be ignored.

† Rejection of apostolic instruction leads to exclusion.

† Truth must be obeyed.

† The church maintained discipline for unity.

1 Corinthians 14:39

So my brothers and sisters, eagerly desire to speak God's message, and don't forbid speaking in languages.

† Paul balances correction with permission.

† Gifts were allowed but must serve the church.

† Edification remains the goal.

1 Corinthians 14:40

But everything must be done properly and in order.

† This command summarizes the entire chapter.

† Worship must reflect clarity and peace.

† Order allows the church to grow together.

Historical References

† Irenaeus wrote that clear teaching strengthened believers and preserved unity in the church (Against Heresies 3.17).

† Clement of Alexandria emphasized that truth must be explained so believers could understand and grow (Stromata 1.5).

† Eusebius described early Christian gatherings as centered on teaching and instruction (Ecclesiastical History 5.16).

† Tertullian recorded structured order within early church assemblies (On the Veiling of Virgins 9).

How It Applies To Us Today

† Churches must prioritize clear teaching over dramatic displays.

† Worship gatherings should strengthen believers rather than confuse them.

† Order, clarity, and unity remain essential for healthy congregations.

† Spiritual maturity focuses on building others up.

Q & A Appendix

Q Why did Paul emphasize clear teaching over languages?

A Because the church grows through understanding rather than confusion (1 Corinthians 14:3-5).

Q Were languages forbidden in the church?

A No, they were allowed but required interpretation so the church could understand (1 Corinthians 14:27-28).

Q What was the purpose of languages as a sign?

A They functioned as a warning sign connected to judgment on unbelieving Israel (1 Corinthians 14:21-22).

Q Why was order important in church gatherings?

A Because God is a God of peace and not confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33).

Q What is the central teaching of the chapter?

A Everything done in the church must build up believers and be done properly and in order (1 Corinthians 14:40).

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† 1 Corinthians 14

† Irenaeus, Against Heresies

† Clement of Alexandria, Stromata

† Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History

† Tertullian, On the Veiling of Virgins

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