

1 Corinthians 14

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Tape #8149
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Let's turn in our Bibles to 1 Corinthians, chapter fourteen, as Paul concludes this three chapter series on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In chapter fourteen, verse one, he sort of combines both the thirteenth and the twelfth chapter. The thirteenth chapter of course, is devoted to love.

And he declares, *Pursue* (or follow after) *love, and desire spiritual gifts*, (Now in chapter twelve, he closed it by saying, earnestly desire the best gifts. Here he is saying desire spiritual gifts.)

but especially that you may prophesy. Now he is going to compare the gift of tongues with the gift of prophesy. And as he compares the two gifts for the use within the church, the gift of prophesy is definitely a superior gift. So Paul said, desire spiritual but especially that you may prophesy.

²*For he who speaks in a tongue* (the glossa) *does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.* The gift of tongues is the gift whereby God enables us to communicate to Him in the Spirit, bypassing the narrow channel of our intellect. So often, we find that words are inadequate to express our feelings that rise from the Spirit as we are grateful to God for His goodness, for His blessings, those things that He has done for us. So the Spirit helps our infirmities and the infirmity of human language and the infirmity or the weakness of our intellect. We can commune to God in the Spirit. Now God is a Spirit and they that worship Him must worship in Spirit and in truth.

Writing to the Roman church (Romans 8:26), Paul said, for the Spirit also helps our infirmities or our weaknesses for we always don't know how to pray as we ought. But the Spirit will make intercession through us with groanings, which cannot be uttered because it knows what is the mind of the Father. So it's a great gift for a person's own devotional life in worshipping God, in praying and in His communication with God. So he that speaks in an unknown tongue really isn't speaking unto men, but unto God, for no man

purpose is to seek the edification of the whole church, the whole body. Thus prophesy is a preferable gift to be operated in a public assembly such as this, than of the gift of tongues.

Now Paul said, ⁵*I wish you all spoke with tongues*, He is not demeaning the gift as we have said, we are told to covet earnestly or earnestly desire the best gift. There is no better gift to assist you in your prayer life and in your communication with God than the gift of tongues. But that means it finds its highest use in your own personal devotional life, as you in your own personal devotional life are worshipping God. It's a very edifying thing to worship Him with the gift of tongues. I wish you all spoke with tongues, that you all knew this blessings, that you all were able to communicate to God with the help of the Holy Spirit, this way.

but even more (if I had a preference) that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, As far as it's in the church and the use of the gift within the church, it is much better to exercise the gift of prophesy than the gift of tongues.

unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification. Now the gift of interpretation of tongues is an accompanying gift to tongues. The purpose is that if the gift of tongues is exercised in a public assembly, that someone would get up and speak in tongues, we wouldn't understand what they were saying unless someone with a companion gift of interpretation could then give to us an interpretation of what was said in tongues. If there is no interpretation, then the tongues are just meaningless sounds to us. They don't help us. They don't edify us. They don't say anything to us. It's just noise as far as we are concerned. So unless there is an interpreter that through the interpretation, the whole church might be edified.

⁶*But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you unless I speak to you either by revelation, by knowledge, by prophesying, or by teaching?* Now this is a strange sentence as the middle of the sentence fits with both ends of the sentence. But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you? That is the question. If I just come and I speak in tongues, what profit it is going to be to you?

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reveille. They had the various trumpet signals to direct the armies. So Paul is making reference to this, how that the trumpet was used in battle. But it had to have a distinct pattern of sound for it to actually communicate to the men the orders that were being given.

⁹*So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air.* If you are just speaking in an unknown tongue, nobody understands it, it's just noise in the air. Nobody knows what you are saying. You can't really say, Amen, because I really don't know what you are saying. So it's just taking up time. You are being edified, but no one else is.

¹⁰*There are, it may be, so many kinds of languages in the world, (there are a lot of different languages) and none of them is without significance.* Language is an interesting thing. It is a covenant or an agreement between people that certain sounds are expressing certain ideas. It is marvelous that we can communicate to one another with these sounds. Now as long as we are in agreement that this sound means this particular thing, we are able to communicate to each other, our thoughts and our ideas in the language that we call English. This is just an agreement that these sounds mean these things. It takes the covenant between us that we agree that this is what these sounds mean.

Now it is possible to make an agreement with a friend and make up sounds and begin to communicate in your own little private language, as long as you have an agreement that the particular sound indicates or signifies that particular thing. So we can say okay, let's make up a language. "Ugh", means let's go get a cup of coffee after church tonight. "Nugh" means good idea. Who's buying? And so after church I could come up and say, "Ugh" and you would "Nugh". We would take off and people would wonder what's going on. But we have an agreement that this is what this sound means. As long as we have that agreement, we can communicate in sounds, but it takes the agreement.

What is always weird to me, is to stand on the street corner of a foreign country, where they speak a language that I do not understand. Standing on the streets in China or in Japan, and hearing the people talk to each other, I stand there bewildered. I wonder, what are they communicating with those sounds? Now, they are communicating, quite obviously. Every sound has a significance as long as we have agreed that this is what the sound is conveying, but unless we understand and have entered

giving the interpretation, they will follow it with a prophesy. And it's very easy to discern whether or not it is an interpretation of the tongue or if it is a prophesy. Because if the interpretation, or the supposed interpretation comes forth as God speaking to the church, to exhort them to praise, or to exhort them to trust, or to exhort them to seek His face, then that's a prophesy. He that prophesies speaks to the church for edification, for exhortation and for comfort. He that speaks in an unknown tongue, is speaking to God, these divine mysteries or is worshipping God or is praising God. Thus it would follow that a true interpretation would be addressed to God, praises, worship or whatever, declaring the glorious works of God, the marvels of God's creation, perhaps. It's more like the Psalms that extol God. Where, as in the Psalms, you read, I will praise You, Oh God. I will extol You among the nations and going on. Thus the interpretation follows that it would be the interpreting of the thanks or the praises unto God. So, we get this taught a little more clearly in the next few verses. Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel. So if you speak in an unknown tongue, in church, then pray that you may interpret.

¹⁴*For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays,* Now, this a very interesting statement. In Ephesians, chapter six (Ephesian 6: 11-20), where Paul tells us to put on the whole armor of God, after we have put on the whole armor and are entering into the battle, fully armed, he said, praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit. Praying in the Spirit. And so when I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prays. Praying, he said, in the Spirit. He encourages them to do that.

In the Book of Jude (Jude 20), we read where Jude exhorts us to keep ourselves in the love of God. That is couched in, building up yourself on the most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

When I pray in an unknown tongue my spirit prayeth, though my understanding is unfruitful, which means that it is one of the highest forms of worship, because Jesus said, God is a Spirit and they that worship him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth. So it is a marvelous way to worship God,

Quite often in the Pentecostal churches, the abuse of the gift is so common that it is disruptive. It is often times disrupting the spoken Word of God, which is often the exercise of the gift of word of wisdom and word of knowledge or prophesy. So you are disrupting the use of the higher gift to exercise a lower gift. It doesn't follow that the Holy Spirit would interrupt Himself.

So it's interesting. One of the fathers of Pentecost, Donald Gee, one of the only theologians from that movement, in his book on the gifts of tongues, when he gets to the gift of tongues in the book as he is defining the various gifts and their uses, when he gets to the gift of the use of tongues, the chapter of the book is entitled, Tongues and Interruptions. Unfortunately, it often is that within the Pentecostal movement.

So Paul then affirms that he is not really putting down the gift itself, just the improper use of it. For ¹⁸*I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all; I have the gift. I exercise the gift. I, no doubt, exercise it more than all of you.*

¹⁹*yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.* So though I have the gift, Paul said, and I exercise it regularly. Yet when I am in church, I don't exercise the gift. I would rather speak to you in words that you can understand. I would rather speak five words that you understood than to stand up and stand and speak for an hour, in tongues, the exercise of that gift, which would be meaningless to you because you don't understand what is being said.

²⁰*Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes,* As far as the area of malice goes, be like a child. But not with understanding, let's reason this out, Paul is saying. Don't be children in your understanding.

but in understanding be mature.

Now he quotes an interesting passage from Isaiah (Isaiah 28:11-12). He said ²¹*In the law it is written:*

"With men of other tongues and other lips

Now this next verse is the most difficult of all. In fact this next verse is so difficult that J.B. Phillips, in his translation, takes the liberty of changing the translation. Because the verse as it stands seems to be immediately contradicted by the verses that follow immediately after it. As Paul is explaining the verse, it would appear that he is totally contradicting what he has just said. So much so, that J.B. Phillips has taken in hand to change his translation to what he thinks Paul actually said. Now we don't have any of the original manuscripts to look at. All we have are copies of copies of copies of manuscripts. None of the original manuscripts exist to the present day, which is unfortunate in one way. It is a blessing in another way. If we had the original manuscripts, every body would be worshipping them. They would become icons. They would be cutting them up into little pieces and you'd be buying them, putting them in a frame in your home. You would be going by, kissing it or whatever. So God had freed us from original manuscripts. The problem with not having original manuscripts, we can't be sure that when someone was copying one of the early copies, that he didn't make a mistake in his copying it. If there is any place where I think that there could be a copier's error, it would be in this verse. I think that there is here a copier's error. I'm not certain. I'm not saying that for certain, but from the way the whole thing flows, it would appear that this verse is completely contradictory to the immediate verses that follow. So it is extremely difficult to instruct on this without making an assumption that perhaps we do have a copier's error.

Now in our statement of faith, we declare that we believe that the Bible is the divine, infallible, inspired Word of God in its original writing (note 2 Timothy 3:16). But in that we are making an allowance that perhaps somewhere along the line and perhaps with the Corinthian epistle, early in the copying, one of the fellows copying made an error. And his copy became copied by others. Thus the error was transferred on through. I don't say that that is so, but it would appear to be so. Let's look at it as though that's the way it was. J.B. Phillips does and this is how he handles it.

²²*Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe* (Therefore tongues are for a sign, to those who believe, leaving out the word "not". Tongues are for a sign for those that believe, *but to unbelievers; but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe.* (Prophesying serves for them that believe not. So the way it is translated, the way it is here, it would seem that Paul is saying here that tongues is

whatever. You'll get an extra grade for the class.

²⁶*How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. Seek to edify the whole body. Their services must have been a real confused mess in Corinth. Everybody was doing their own thing. Everybody was seeking to draw attention to himself by the exercise of spiritual gifts or spiritual phenomena. God never intended the spiritual phenomena to be sort of showcased, to be put on display, to attract attention. Unfortunately, that has become the case in many places today. It becomes an attention "getter", a showcase. People aren't at all edified by that. Seek to edify!*

²⁷*If anyone speaks in a tongue, (Now if this gift is exercised, these are the guidelines. These are the rules.) let there be two or at the most three (In other words, two or three, but don't go beyond that.), each in turn, and let one interpret. (Don't interrupt each other. Paul is setting out an order here now. If this gift of tongues is to be exercised in the church, it's to be exercised under definite limitations. Two or at most three, that in course and one person interpreting.)*

²⁸*But if there is no interpreter (further guidelines), let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God. There are always those who do not want to take responsibility for their own actions. They try to blame the Holy Spirit for some of their folly. Oh, the Holy Spirit just took over and I couldn't help it, you know. No, that isn't so. The Holy Spirit just doesn't take over and put you in the back seat. You are always in control. He will work with you. He doesn't take control. You can't really blame the Holy Spirit and say well, the Holy Spirit forced me to do it or I, you know, I couldn't help myself. That's wrong! You can help yourself. You are responsible yourself.*

So with the gift of prophecy, ²⁹*Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. When a person is supposedly speaking for God, and quite often they use the words, "Thus saith the Lord". They will preface the prophecy with, "Thus saith the Lord". Well maybe it isn't the Lord speaking. So we are to judge. Maybe they will "Thus saith the Lord" and*

as in all the churches of the saints. Of all the churches, Corinth was probably the most disorderly of all.

³⁴*Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak;* Now, earlier on when we were in the earlier part of this letter, chapter eleven (1 Corinthians 11:5), Paul spoke of the women praying or prophesying in the church without their heads being covered. He did not say that it was wrong for them to pray or to prophesy, period. But what was wrong is that they weren't wearing their veils and in Corinth it was an important thing for a woman to wear a veil, lest she be thought to be one of the many prostitutes from the temple of Aphrodite. Because the badge of the harlots from the temple of Aphrodite was to go around unveiled. They would go around without veils. So they were immediately recognized as a prostitute. So Paul said the women in Corinth should wear veils. And when you pray or you prophesy with your head unveiled, it's sort of dishonoring your husband.

So what he is saying here, let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak, he's not talking about their praying or prophesying. It isn't an absolute gag on women in the church, *but they are to be submissive, as the law also says.* And now we understand what Paul is talking about.

³⁵*And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church.* Now, the early church and as the custom of the Jewish synagogue, where the men sat on one side up against the wall, the women sat on the other side, up against the wall. There was the space in the middle where the teacher would stand and would instruct. Now, evidently as the instruction was being given, sometimes the wife would call across the room to her husband. She might say, honey, what's he talking about? What's he mean by that? Is he talking about us? So Paul said, if you want to learn, wait until you get home. Ask your husband when you are at home because it's a shame the way you are speaking out in church that way.

³⁶*Or did the word of God come originally from you? Or was it you only that it reached?* That is through the gifts and the exercise of the gifts. Now where Paul really sort of, well, it's sort of clever. There may be those that may be

desire that the Spirit of God flow through us, out unto this needy world. And so we offer to You our bodies, that they might indeed become the temple of the Holy Spirit. That He would use us, to bring Your love, Your Word, Your joy, Your peace to others. Bless us this week. May we know the joy of having our lives as an instrument through which You accomplish Your purposes. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.