

1 Corinthians Chapter 14

NKJV Notes by Pastor Bob Caldwell

Prophecy and Tongues

v. 1 Pursue Love - Paul concluded his initial teaching on the use of spiritual gifts in chapter 12 saying, "Yet I show you a more excellent way" (v. 31). He went on in chapter 13 to describe love and its supreme value. Here in chapter 14 Paul returns to where he left off in 12:30.

Desire Spiritual Gifts - Spiritual gifts are not to be seen as being an opposition to the primary need for love. Rather, love is to become the force that can direct gifts to be used in the way that is the most edifying for others.

Prophecy - This is a gift that is both "foretelling" and "forth telling." Foretelling is seen in telling the future in the following examples: Acts 11:27-30, 13:1-2, 20:23, 21:10-13. Forth telling is to teach the word in a way that is directly related to the people who are taught. Examples include Isaiah 1:1-23, Jeremiah 7:1-25, Malachi 3:8-12 and 1 Corinthians 14:24-25.

v. 2 Speaks in a Tongue - The primary gift of tongues is a vehicle for a person to praise to God deeply from the heart. Examples of this are recorded in Acts 2:8-11 where they spoke "the wonderful works of God."

v. 3 Edification - The Greek word used here is "oikodomé" and literally means to build something up. The idea here is that edification is something that builds up a person's spiritual advancement.

Exhortation - These are words that call a person to action. The Greek word Paul uses is "parakléisis", which contains a sense of calling someone forward or summoning someone to action with gladness and joy.

Comfort - These are words that bring healing and strength to a weary soul. In the Greek, Paul used "paramuthia", which combines a sense of consolation and encouragement into one word.

v. 4 Edifies himself - The primary value of tongues is the spiritually renewing impact it has upon an individual believer.

v. 5 All Spoke with Tongues - Paul makes clear that he is not opposed to this gift, only its misuse, which he will discuss in the next section.

Tongues Must Be Interpreted

v. 6 I Profit you - Paul makes it clear that his primary concern is that whatever happens during a general gathering of believers, the goal is what produces the greatest benefit for the greatest amount of people.

Revelation - This refers to the understanding of God's word that comes through insight given by the Holy Spirit within a believer's own spirit (Eph. 1:17-20).

Knowledge - This is the gift of the Spirit where God gives a person understanding of something or someone that they would not have known unless the Holy Spirit revealed it.

Prophecy - This is the proclamation of truth that has a direct and very personal impact upon a person's life (14:3, 14:24-25).

6 Teaching - This is the organized presentation of truth that uses reason, logic and intellect.

v. 9 Speaking into the Air - This refers to the perception of the person who observes someone speaking in tongues. It does not mean that it is not a genuine gift of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:39).

v. 11 Not Knowing the Meaning - In 1 Corinthians 7:11 Paul gives three examples of situations where sounds or words that are heard but not understood are of no value to those who hear them. These practical examples are to help build Paul's argument that the gift of the tongues has little value for anyone except the edification received by the one who utters the tongues (v. 2-4)

v. 12 Edification of one's Church - Paul comes back to the core value he previously discussed relating to the Corinthians' questions about eating meat sacrificed to idols: our actions must be determined by what is best for others, and what builds up their relationship with God.

v. 13 Pray that he may Interpret - Based on the need for public meetings to be done so that everyone in attendance is edified, Paul gives room for the gift of tongues if the person who speaks in tongues is also given a gift to interpret what is said.

v. 14 My Spirit Prays - We know from the example in Acts 2:26-28 that the gift of tongues is given to express the wonders and glory of God from our inner most being during prayer and praise.

v. 15 The Conclusion - Paul's conclusion is that there is a place for prayer and worship that is a direct expression in tongues. This is to be done alone (v. 2) and not with non-believers or those uninformed about the gift of tongues (v. 23). There should also be a place where it is best to pray, sing, and worship in a way that the intellect is the vehicle of that praise.

v. 16 Amen - Logically, it makes sense that when people gather for corporate worship they cannot share in that worship if they have no clue what you are praying or singing about.

v. 18 I Thank God - Paul in no way seeks to minimize the great value tongues can have in the life of a believer. He therefore makes sure they know he has found great benefit in worshiping and praying in tongues in his own private devotional life.

v. 19 Five Words with my Understanding - Paul was a man who believed that he should do his best to edify and serve those around him in every situation. The last thing he would want to do is confuse a person about God because of tongues.

Tongues a Sign to Unbelievers

v. 20 In Malice be Babes - The Corinthians had the reputation of being quite ignorant about their faith, but they were very skilled in attacking and neglecting each other. Paul tells them to mature in their understanding while also abandoning the skills of manipulation and abuse they'd developed.

v. 21 It is Written - Paul quotes Isaiah 28:11,12. Paul's choice of proof text is essential to understanding some common confusion that arises with v.22 and 23. Paul uses this section of Isaiah to explain that centuries earlier, God warned that he would use foreigners speaking a different language as a sign to unbelieving Israel. When the Assyrians took authority over Israel, it was a clear sign of judgment. The same is also true of how Jeremiah prophesied about the Babylonian captivity (Jer. 5:15). When the apostles were speaking tongues at Pentecost (Acts 2:3-12), the Jews should have known that God's judgment originally prophesied and historically fulfilled by the Assyrians and Babylonians was about to happen again because of their rejection of Christ.

v. 22 A Sign - This statement seems to be out of harmony with what will be stated in v. 23, which tells us that tongues are not a sign for unbelievers. In fact, if unbelievers are exposed to tongues they would conclude that those involved are "out of their minds." What Paul is referring to here is that the speaking of tongues is an important prophetic clue about impending judgment that any educated Israelite would not miss. See the note on v. 21 for more details.

v. 23 Out of your Mind - Paul's heart for the lost and unlearned Christian clearly comes through in this verse. Paul is intentionally different than the types of people who claim that they are too spiritual to limit things that may appear utterly ridiculous and off-putting to non-believers.

v. 24 If all Prophecy - Paul now makes it clear why prophecy is a gift that can serve both the believer and non-believer and is therefore of greater value when people are gathered together to meet with God.

v. 25 God is Truly Among you - Prophecy is given by God to speak God's word in a way that it strikes the deepest and most personal issues in a person's life. These are words that make it clear that God is truly speaking through the gift of prophecy.

Order in Church Meetings

v. 26 Each of you has - One of the strong points of the Church of Corinth was that there was a high level of ministry involvement from all the believers. They came to worship services ready to share in the ministry with each other. Paul supports that "All Things" should be a part of the church ministry. His only concern in that all things are done orderly so that all people attending would be spiritually built up.

v. 27 Two or at Most Three - They are now given specific guidance on how to maintain order and edification. They are to limit tongues to only two or three times, and then only if they can be interpreted.

v. 29 Other Judge - Edification and order is only kept if people are not misled by "prophecies" that are not genuinely given by the Holy Spirit. They must be judged by those in authority at their meetings to assure they are in line with scripture.

v. 33 Not the Author of Confusion - The example given in verses 30-32 is to avoid confusion by only allowing one prophecy to be spoken at a time. A person through whom the Holy Spirit gives prophecy is not to claim he had no control over waiting until it is proper to give the prophecy. He is to be submitted to the others in the meeting and act in a way that maintains order.

v. 35 Shameful for Women to Speak in Church - This must be interpreted in the context of the rest of this letter. One of Paul's concerns has been that the liberty that Christ has given women not be expressed in a way that disrespected the culture in which they live. This is clear from 11:4-16 where Paul is very strong on respecting the cultural customs of women such as wearing veils in public and women having long hair and men having short hair. Obviously if you are in a culture where it would be odd to wear a veil, then this same principle would require women not to wear a veil, etc.

In ancient times for women to function in the role of a man i.e. (public speaking) would be seen as shameful and disrespectful. Paul is asking that this cultural norm be respected. This seems to be no relation as to women exercising spiritual gifts as women are referred to giving prophecies in the New Testament (Luke 2:36, Acts 2:17, 21:9).

v. 36 Originally from - Paul asks them to face the facts about their arrogance when it comes to their gifts and ministry of the Spirit. They are not the source of scripture or the first church, the mother church.

v. 37 Thinks himself to be - Paul exposes the false spiritual pride that was so evident in the leaders of their church. They assumed that they were so spiritual they did not need to be held accountable for their theology, practices, and methods of ministry.

v. 38 Arrogant - If, after all Paul has taught, some claim to still not understand or accept Paul's teaching then he says their arrogance is their choice. Let them then remain so; there's nothing more he can say.

v. 39 Desire...do not Forbid - The bottom line is don't avoid gifts of the spirit, just use them wisely.