
1 Corinthians 14:1

(Verse1): "Follow after" (or pursue) charity or agape love, let it be the motivation for all that you do in your Christian life, especially when you gather together for public worship. Desire spiritual gifts, but not for the sake having the gift and showing it off!

This was a rebuke to the Church at Corinth, plain and simple. There was an insatiable desire (among the people) to speak in tongues, (in the church). This was a genuine spiritual gift, but those that desired it were not motivated by love to Christ or that the church might be edified.

It was a self-exalting, self-serving desire! Look at me!

Remember, Paul only spoke of (2) spiritual gifts in (C14), prophesying and tongues. Before we go too far, I want to point out a distinct difference between those that spoke in tongues at the Church at Corinth, from those that spoke in tongues on the day of Pentecost. *Acts 2:4-11*

Here at Pentecost, the speakers were given the ability (by the Spirit of God) to speak fluently in the languages of all the different people dwelling @ Jerusalem, who were from many foreign nations. Those foreigners from "every nation" understood every word!

In contrast: In Corinth, the speakers were speaking in languages, which no one in the church could understand. Paul's emphasis from last week was, this is NOT edifying to the church. If you do have this miraculous gift, you're exercising it in the wrong way. *1 Corinthians 14:2-12*

It's clear that Paul wrote to them about their church services when they "gathered together" for public worship. 1 Corinthians 14:4-5, 12, 26

If you "gather together" for public worship and speakers begin to speak in "unknown tongues" (foreign languages), how is anyone in the church going to be edified, exhorted; helped from the Word of God!

1 Corinthians 14:2,4,5,9

Understand the difference between what happened in the Church at Corinth from what on the Day of Pentecost. In Acts 2, the hearers from many nations UNDERSTOOD the apostles and those that spoke. They heard them speaking the wonderful works of God, (they heard the gospel) in their own native language.

In Acts 2: No one was confused, no one was saying, I don't understand! But in the Church @ Corinth, there was confusion. There were speakers, speaking in tongues/languages which no one understood.

Paul told them: This NOT beneficial or edifying to the church! The one who speaks in a foreign language that no one understands edifies no one but himself!

Therefore, Paul exalted the gift of "prophesying" above the gift of tongues; prophesying is preaching, speaking, testifying, and witnessing the truths of God; opening God's Word so that the hearers might understand and believe the wonderful works of God; be edified and helped! And so that unbelievers might be convicted of their sins and come to Christ, in repentance and faith!

1 Corinthians 14:9

Paul therefore gave instructions to the Corinthians about one who would speak in unknown tongues (languages) in the church. 1 Corinthians 14:5,13

If you're going to speak in an unknown tongue (in the church), you ALSO need to be able to interpret (or explain, expound, translate) what you said, so that the church might be edified and helped!

In fact, in 1 Corinthians 14:13, Paul exhorted those who were given the gift of tongues to PRAY for the gift of interpretation! (Ex: Andres Galavis)

Cp. 1 Corinthians 14:5, Ref. HE = the same speaker/interpreter.

If there was an interpreter present to translate/expound the foreign language of the speaker, what just happened? The church was able to understand the truths of God because it was translated into their own language, and the church was edified! Now you're "actually prophesying", now you're beneficial and profitable to the church, and the people of God are helped!

Let me remind you of the distinction in prophesying and tongues then and now; in the time of this letter, the NT was being written, God's truth was still being revealed. Today, we have the complete canon of scripture, there are no new prophecies or revelations being given by God.

The miraculous gifts of that time, (tongues, interpretation) which were designed to authenticate the truths being spoken/written have ceased.

In (Verses14-20): Paul rebuked the church for their spiritual immaturity in their desire for the gift of tongues.

They were more interested in exercising the gift of tongues that they might call attention to themselves, rather than speaking the truth in love so that the church might be edified, and so that Christ would receive all the honor and glory. And that Christ would get all the attention!

To speak in a foreign tongue without interpretation was of no profit to the church. Note: (V14), it is UNFRUITFUL, it doesn't benefit anyone in the church, because no one understands what I am saying!

(Verse18): Paul spoke with other tongues; other languages!

"YET IN THE CHURCH: 1 Corinthians 14:19-20 (Cp. 3:1-3)

1 Corinthians 14:21: Paul cites OT prophecy warning Israel of judgment for their refusal to hear/obey the Word of the LORD!

The people of Israel in Isaiah's time were rebellious and disobedient, God spoke to them through the prophet, but they refused to hear/obey the Word of the Lord.

Paul used this example of OT Israel to warn the Church @ Corinth that it was judgment against the people of God for God to send those to speak or teach the church in a language that no one could understand.

The LORD warned Israel by the Prophet Isaiah, if you will not heed God's Word, which is being clearly spoken to you, (in your own native language so that you understand it), God will send judgment upon you, in sending a foreign nation and people, to invade your land, who will speak and teach you "in words that you will not be able to understand".

Isaiah 28:9-12, Jeremiah 5:15, Deuteronomy 28:45-50

The gift of tongues was not given so that the church might become more chaotic and confused, but that the gospel might go forth (clearly and plainly) into every nation and language in the world, and that it might be understood by those that heard it!

Understand here that Paul makes this correlation between a church service in which one stands up to speak in an unknown/foreign tongue (which no one in the church understands) to what was judgment to the people of Israel in the OT!

God told them, since you refuse to hear my Word, I will send people to you who will speak with other tongues, words that you will not understand! This was punishment to the children of Israel!

BUT Paul was not teaching them that tongues was a curse, (it was a gift from God for the propagation of the gospel), but by their misuse of this gift from God, they were turning what should have been a blessing, and for the edification of the church, into that which did not profit the church at all!

1 Corinthians 14:22: Tongues a sign to unbelievers!

C. Hodge: When people are disobedient (to the word of the Lord), God sends them teachers whom they cannot understand; when (they are) obedient (to God's revealed will), He sends them prophets speaking their own language.

Consider this regarding the sign of tongues to both unbelievers and believers from this text, and from what we learned in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Deuteronomy:

Unintelligible teachers (those that speak with other tongues) are sent to people who have heard the Word of God, but they obstinately refuse to obey it; (so, hearing, they will NOT understand), but God sends His messengers that speak and prophesy the Word of the Lord so as to be understood to those who believe the truths of God.

God is not the author of confusion (14:33):

Gathering with the saints on the Lord's Day should not make you more confused about the gospel of Christ, but the truths of God should become communicated and spoken clearly, so that you might understand and believe. 1 Corinthians 14:23-25

Unintelligible tongues will drive sinners away; clear and understandable preaching, prophesying, testifying of the gospel will point them to Christ!