

# The Gifts of Speaking

*Corinthians Explained*

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**Bible Text:** 1 Corinthians 14:1-3  
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## **Bethel Netherlands Reformed Congregation**

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Congregation, you know that a church is called in the Bible the body of Christ and in the body of Christ all the members have to work together, right? The hand and the head and the feet and all members have to cooperate so that means that we need one another, we need you, we need each other, that means to also unite us. We all have different needs, different concerns, different weaknesses, different strengths, we know that and therefore we need to assist one another like in a marriage, husband and wife assisting one another, so in the church we have to be there for one another in all different types of needs.

So let me mention three words. Edification, we need to edify one another because we are sometimes off the road and just not thinking straight and not biblical so we need some people to edify the other. Edification is not only coming from the minister and the elders, it needs to come also from the members, as we will see. And the second word I thought of is exhortation. We need to exhort one another and encourage and say, "Come on. Do it. Read that Bible. Come to church and repent ye." So exhort and to put a little pressure on the other in the congregation. And the third word I thought of is the word comfort. You know, if we keep our eyes open, we see that people need comfort and need also consolation and we need to provide that for one another. So edification, exhortation, comfort, and now we know that the Lord can give edification through the Bible and preaching, and the Lord exhorts himself, right, and the Lord can give that true comfort, and we know that is also provided in sermons, edification, exhortation, comfort. We know at Catechism classes, yes, also there edification, exhortation, comfort. At house visitation, edification, exhortation, comfort. But not only that, it's also the members among each other and that brings us also to 1 Corinthians 14 when we read the first three verses you will see those three words come back.

1 Corinthians 14, the main verses are 1, 2 and 3.

1 Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy. 2 For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries. 3 But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.

So the theme for this morning's hour sermon is "The Gifts of Speaking." Three thoughts: speaking to God privately in tongues. I repeat that, speaking to God privately in tongues. Secondly, speaking publicly to each other in prophecies, verse 3, "he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort." So it was a gift not only of speaking in tongues but also a gift and there's still the gift of prophecy and the gift of prophecy is those three things, edification, exhortation, comfort. It is for one another. And in the third place, speaking of women at home as you see in verse 34 and 35, "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church." So the gift of speaking: speaking to God privately in tongues; secondly, speaking publicly to each other in prophecies; and in the third place, speaking of women at home.

Congregation, for the next Sunday, next week, Sunday, we hope to begin a series on passion. We always preach seven Sundays before Easter on the passion of the Lord Jesus Christ. So for a while we won't come back to 1 Corinthians, so this is for now the last one about 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 14, and maybe it's a little bit too much for one chapter, for one sermon, but we'll see how far we come.

So in chapter 14, it begins first with, "Follow after charity." That reminds us of the previous chapter, right, the love chapter, the most important gift is love. Faith, hope, love, the most important one is love. So, "Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy." That's the best gift to prophesy, to edify, to exhort, to comfort. And then verse 2, "For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries." So that's why we said in the first thought, speaking to God privately in tongues.

Let us summarize that doctrine of the speaking in tongues. In the first place, I repeat what I have said before, that speaking in tongues is not speaking gibberish. It's not speaking something unintelligible. It's not just noise. Speaking in tongues in the Bible is speaking a language. So there is no different if we speak a language and speak in a tongue. Speaking a tongue is the same word, the word "glossa." So we don't agree with Pentecostals who say, "No, we also speak in tongues and no one understands it. It's kind of a private, mysterious, ecstatic language that we speak to God." It's not a language, they say. It is something strange and mystical and exciting.

No. Speaking in tongues is speaking in a tongue like the English tongue, the French tongue, so it is also special tongues the Lord teaches his people, and in those days it happened that people did not go to school for it, and that suddenly they began to speak a different language and others say, "Hey, how is that possible? I was raised in that language and he speaks it perfectly and are they not Galileans? How is that possible that they speak that language so perfectly even without accent?" And sometimes people said, "I don't understand that language, do you?" And then someone said, "Yes, actually I do." And that person interpreting did not understand it by nature either. He did not go to

school either but he also received the gift to understand that language and he just translated it.

So the first thing I would like to say and emphasize about speaking to God privately in tongues is that it is a real language, and if it is not a real language, it is demonic. If it's not a real language, it is from the devil, there is something absolutely wrong with it. The best thing to understand this is to go back to the Acts of the Apostles 2. "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place." Remember? "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind." Remember the sound of the wind? "And it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost," right, "and began to speak with other tongues," he says, "as the Spirit gave them utterance. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue," our own tongue, "wherein we were born? We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God." So on the day of Pentecost they began to speak in tongues, the same thing as later on they spoke in tongues, just a language and the wonder of it was that they did not learn that language, that they were given to speak that language, and that other people also could understand the language. But it was not something ecstatic and often it was something temporary.

So keep it mind, that's the first point regarding speaking in tongues, it is a real language. But secondly, what does it say in verse 2? "For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God." See? So when people spoke in those tongues, they did not speak to each other, to men, but they spoke to God. That was also true in Acts 2, "we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God." So they're praising God and magnifying God and praying to the Almighty One in those languages. So if speaking in tongues becomes something to speak to people, it is not according to the Bible. When it's gibberish it's wrong when it is spoken to the fellow members to give them a message. No, speaking in those languages was not meant to speak to people, it was meant to speak to God in a very special way.

"He that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries." So suppose to explain it, suppose that I would suddenly begin to speak Chinese and I had never studied that language. But suppose it would come and that I would start praising God in Chinese and that one of the members here would say, "I understand it. He is praising the Lord for this reason," and that person has not studied Chinese either but has received that insight and then tomorrow it's gone, tomorrow I can't speak that language anymore and that language cannot be interpreted anymore. Something like that happened in those days. I haven't heard much of this happening still today, you? I hear people talk about speaking gibberish and something unintelligible and to each other and all those wrong things, but I don't hear that people suddenly begin to speak a different real language and that somebody understands that and translates it to God's glory.

And the third lesson is that the people speaking in different tongues did not address the congregation, right, they spoke unto God. It is a mission tool. It is a mission tool. Look at verse 22, "Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe." So we're not talking about prophesying yet, that was my introduction, edification and exhortation and comfort. That is for the congregation and for the people and it was for the believers. Speaking in those tongues is meant as a mission tool that attracts people like on the day of Pentecost, right? The people were in awe, they said, "How is this possible? How can this be? This is so awkward. This must be from God. This is divine." That was the purpose, to draw attention to prove God exists and that is what speaking in tongues was. And therefore the Apostle Paul says when he compares prophesying to speaking in tongues, he says, "I'd rather speak five words with my understanding of my mind than 10,000 in a different tongue." Verse 19, "Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue."

So there was at that time nothing wrong with speaking in tongues if it was a real language, and if they spoke it in the sense for unbelievers, and it was spoken to God. And even the Apostle Paul says that he spoke quite often in those languages. He did quite often. Again, I don't hear much about it anymore if at all, but in those days, they were special, right? In those days there was speaking in tongues, yes, there was, but not in the Pentecostal way. So therefore we also may not say that speaking in tongues is a must, and if you can't speak in tongues, you don't count like in many, not all, Pentecostal churches where they teach you must speak in tongues otherwise you're not measuring up. You have to be touched with the Spirit.

So again, do we believe that speaking in tongues is still a gift? Well, I don't see any indication in the Bible that it is now forbidden and that it may not be used anymore. I don't read that, so I can't say if it's absolutely wrong to have it now, but the thing is I don't see it the way it's written in the Bible. I just don't see it and that might be, I say it carefully, it might be because it was a mission tool. In those days the New Testament was not finished yet, it was not on paper, so in that sense I understand.

So let's go to the second thought: speaking publicly to each other by prophesying. So he's talking about prophesying there. I had a talk with a young man a couple of weeks ago and he said, "Why don't we prophesy in church anymore? Why don't we prophesy in church anymore? It's all over in the Bible, prophesying in church." I said, "What do you mean by prophesying?" He said, "Well, just prophesying, right? Just prophesy, just predict the future. That's what prophesying is, isn't it," he said. I said, "No, I don't think so. Not necessarily." "Yes," he said, "but I have studied Greek and in Greek there is the word prophetes, and prophetes means to predict the future." I said, "Young man, you're wrong because in the first place the original language in Greek means also to proclaim, prophetes also means to proclaim. And secondly, the original meaning of the word is not that important, what's more important is how it was used in a certain time, right?" Many make that mistake. Many who have no formal education in that, they go to a Bible program or website and they just click on the word and they say, "The original meaning

is this." Whatever. The original meaning is not so important, it is how it was used in those days it was written.

So I'm not interested in the original meaning of prophetes, I'm interested in how it is used by Paul and he uses this and he uses it in a very clear sense, right, in 14, verse 3, "he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort. He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church." So we need people with the gift of prophecy to edify the church not only in the elder and deacon views in the pulpit, in the congregation. We need people with a special gift of prophecy, meaning people that can edify and exhort in a warm and kind and loving way, and we need people who are comforting others. And that's male and female, young and old. We need one another. We need the gift of prophecy and not everyone has that gift, even of God's people have that gift but it's an important gift and I think, yes, that gift still exists and I see that gift still.

"I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying. Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?" So the young man I talked to, I had to kind of budge, right, that word prophesy in this chapter means something else than predicting the future although I admit in the New Testament there were some people like the daughters of Philip who prophesied and Agabus who prophesied. So I admit in those days there also existed to predict the future but that's only a little bit. We don't hear much about it. It's most of the time teaching, edifying, comforting, exhorting.

So that means there is a responsibility for one another. So I researched that expression "one another." I found that is probably key in understanding the prophesying. One another. So I made a list of words from the Bible, one another, edifying one another, right, and exhorting one another, and comforting one another, and what else? "These things I command you that ye love one another. Be kindly affectionate one to another with brotherly love and honor preferring one another." Do you see that? It is in John 15 to love one another, and Romans 12, be kind to one another, and honoring one another. And Romans 15, "therefore receive ye one another. And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. For brethren, ye have been called unto liberty only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh but by love serve one another." Serve one another. Are you serving in the congregation? Are you serving in your communication? In your friendship? As a parent? As a husband? As a wife? As a family member? Whoever you are, are we exhorting one another, admonishing one another, being kind to one another, serving one another, forbidding one another with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering forbidding one another in love and being kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another? "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another. Therefore comfort one another."

So there's lots of work to do in the congregation as a member. You know, being a member of the church is not getting something out of it, being enriched and to grow through it, it's also to give, to be part of the congregation. Not only sitting in the pew on Sunday and wave a little bit and don't see each other for a week anymore, but it's during the week to see one another, to visit one another, to pray for one another, to be kind to one another, to comfort one another. Not to provoke one another. Not to envy one another. And of course, we see here in the background the Lord Jesus, the way he edified, the way he comforted his people, the way he was exhorting them, the way he was kind to them, the way he was forgiving them. Oh, if we may resemble the Lord Jesus, we need a new heart for that. We need to be born-again for that reason. We need a different mindset, a different heart and we need love poured out in the hearts. "The greatest of these is charity." We need that love for one another, for the people in your pews sitting next to you. Do you love them?

If the whole congregation was loving the way you love the congregation, would it be a loving congregation? When you look around in the church here, do you love those people? If everyone would love one another the way you love, how much love would there be? If serving is important and would you say we are a serving, comforting congregation, warmth and togetherness and unity? How much do you participate in that? How do you put into that? How much do you invest in that?

You know, again, I often have said that I don't think I would have preached on this if I would not have preached a series, but it is becoming so clear from the word of God, the gift of prophesy is mainly not to predict the future but is that edifying, is that exhorting, is that comforting. So keep your eyes open and phone someone and talk to someone and visit someone and invite someone. And don't then talk about only small talk at home, in your marriage, when you're raising children. Speak about those most important things and ask for friends in the congregation, ask for people placed on your route, on your road. Say, "Lord, may I have some people I can relate to, some people I can talk to, some people I can listen to?" Ask for real friendship and also be a real friend, be a member of the church and seek the Lord for that.

I'm reading James 5, "Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." And Proverbs 11, "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise." So winning souls is wise. "To the weak become I as weak that I might gain the weak." Do you want to gain the weak? "I am made all things to all men that I might by all means save some." You know, not so "I know it all" attitude, but just understanding and empathy and yet being firm and biblical.

So consider that true prophet. You know, think of the way the Lord Jesus spoke to that Samaritan woman. Yes, he was the prophet but he also gives an example on how to deal with people. Think of how the Lord Jesus spoke to those people that brought children unto him, that he said, "Suffer them not. Don't be in the way. Let them come unto me." Think of how the Lord Jesus spoke to those two men of Emmaus, edifying, exhorting, comforting. Think of how the Lord Jesus spoke to Thomas, what a profit, what a warmth,

what a serving, what a real exhortation. Or think of how the Lord Jesus restored the Apostle Peter. That's all in the background. Think of all those examples and if they begin to mean something to you, and if you may have something yourself in your heart of that. It makes all the difference.

So being a member is not only to get something out of it but rather using the gift and giving. Christ came to seek and to save them that are lost. Reach out to the lost ones. Are we lost ones ourselves maybe? Do we see the social lost? The financial lost? The mentally lost? But especially the spiritual lost?

Seek the best gifts, seek to prophesy and the Lord Jesus, he also edified, right? Let me just give one more example of edifying and exhortation and comfort and then go to the last one. Edification, "O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you that ye should not obey the truth before whose eyes Jesus Christ has been evidently set forth, crucified among you?" Are you falling back into those old patterns of works, foolish Galatians? Don't you remember that Christ is evidently set forth, crucified among you? Among you crucified, preached? What an edification that is. An exhortation, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is but exhorting one another," to come to church, "and so much the more as you see the day, the last day approaching." And don't only be an onlooker but if possible also a participant by coming to church. Isaiah 40, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins."

So prophesying is a real special word. So maybe at home you can just slowly read through this chapter again and just pick out all the details about prophesying. That brings us to the last thought: speaking of women at home. Congregation, I'm not so sure why the Apostle Paul inserted those two verses, 34 and 35. I'm not sure what is the context. It seems that those two verses are a little lost but yet we believe also in the inspiration of the Holy Spirit so it must be there. It must have to do with the confusion in the congregation and also we have the word "prophesying," I suppose, because that prophesying is quite a bit promoted but he also steps on the brakes now. So he says, "Let your women keep silence in the churches." Do you see that, in the churches? Not in the streets. Not at home. But in the churches, in the assembly, in the worship service, and some say and also in the membership meeting.

"Let your women keep silence in the churches," not silence at all completely. Oh, absolutely not. Let the women be prophets. Let them edify. Let them exhort. Let them comfort. Let them serve. Let them do all those things we have read to "one another" in the congregation but not in the assembly.

"Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak," in that sense, "but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law." You know, I heard of a well-known female pastor that she was confronted with this text and she said, "I don't care for what the Apostle Paul says. I listen to Jesus. Jesus is so generous and so loving and he revealed himself first to women after his resurrection, so

that was just the culture during the time of the Apostle Paul, right? It was just a cultural thing but now we live in a new time and we have equality and why not? And what's wrong with women? Is that not sexism?" But you know, there are three reasons why we say that is still valid. In the first place, it is the Apostle Paul, right? Was he not inspired? Secondly, the Apostle Paul refers back to creation in previous chapters. Adam was first made, then Eve. And the Apostle Paul refers to the fall, that through the fall the desire will be to your husband and he shall be ruler over you.

So when you connect those words, then it is apparent that this is still the truth, it is still not permitted. And you ask me, "Why?" I'm not God. I don't know. I can't find a reason for that. You know, some have tried to explain that and have said, "You know, women are so emotional, so warm, so empathizing. It's harder for women to be objective in case something goes wrong." Is that true? Maybe, but I don't think we can find the real reasons. I think it's the Lord's wisdom and the Lord's will.

And yet, as I said, women are called to teach. Don't you see that from the Bible? Not in the worship service. Not Catechism classes. At home, yes. With little kids, yes. But what about Titus 2:3, 4, 5? "The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things." Teachers of good things. We need women teaching good things. "That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed." So you see, the Apostle Paul also writes about that to Titus. There is a real role, an important role for women, to teach, at first to teach younger women, to teach one another, and to teach children in that sense. Teachers of good things. That's not a small thing, so maybe a little bit going in the background, but although not publicly and not in the church services, yet important.

"And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home." You see, at home. That's not [unintelligible] thing. That's not in old culture. That's the Bible, right? "For it is a shame for women to speak in the church." Strong language. Somehow it does not fit with her place. Somehow it would not generate unity and peace. I don't know. I don't know how to explain it.

So it's not the strongest side of men to be leaders because leaders in the good sense of the word, are also important and needed and "ye fathers provoke not your children to wrath but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." So let us not leave the edification of the children up to their mothers. Fathers, fathers, you also need to be prophets. Fathers, don't provoke your children to wrath with your authoritative attitude but bring up in the nurture, nurture them, be a prophet for them, be enough at home. Be a real father like a father pitying the children so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. Just give your real presence at home and sacrifice and don't leave the upbringing altogether up to the mothers. Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

So as I said, men are not good at leading through the fall. Through the fall there is something of that harshness and that selfishness in us men. Have you heard me? So may I



also say this? There is also through the fall something in women that they have a problem with authority, right? And that mix of being such a husband with that kind of harshness and prone to provoking to anger and then a wife who is by nature not so willing to surrender and be subjected, that is a perfect mix for tension and problems at home. So men need to be nurturing people and admonishing people and need that prophesying attitude but women as well to have unity at home and unity in church and unity in our church community.

Let all things be done decently and in order. Be responsible for being a prophet at home and in closing, to think it through today in what sense the Lord Jesus was a prophet, how edifying his words. By the way, edifying in the original language means "to build up; to form." So the Lord Jesus is not building up people in themselves but he makes them to grow in grace and he's building his church. So the Lord Jesus, he edifies and he so seriously and warmly and biblically, of course, exhorts and what a comfort he comforts with. Meditate on those things and may the Lord bless. Amen.