

## INTRODUCTION

This morning we are returning to our study of 1 Corinthians

Please take your Bibles and turn with me to chapter 14

Today we're looking at verses 6-12

*(6) But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking in tongues, what will I profit you unless I speak to you either by way of revelation or of knowledge or of prophecy or of teaching?*

*(7) Yet even lifeless things, either flute or harp, in producing a sound, if they do not produce a distinction in the tones, how will it be known what is played on the flute or on the harp?*

*(8) For if the bugle produces an indistinct sound, who will prepare himself for battle?*

*(9) So also you, unless you utter by the tongue speech that is clear, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air.*

*(10) There are, perhaps, a great many kinds of languages in the world, and no kind is without meaning.*

*(11) If then I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be to the one who speaks a barbarian, and the one who speaks will be a barbarian to me.*

*(12) So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church.*

*1 Corinthians 14:6-12 - NASB*

From our reading you can see we are looking at the spiritual gift of tongues once again

We first saw it mentioned in chapter 12, verse 10, in the list of gifts

It occurs again in chapter 12, verse 28 and in chapter 13, verse 8 and now the entire 14th chapter is devoted to the abuse of this gift

And so as you come to 14th chapter, you must not conclude that what you have here is a true gift, or you will violate every basic truth about spirituality and how the gifts operate

The only possible thing that could have been happening here was wrong, because everything else was wrong in their lives

And so Paul is really writing, just like he did in the first thirteen chapters, to correct an error in the Corinthian assembly

He is writing because there is a serious disorder

The selfish, pagan use of ecstatic speech was being justified as if it was the gift of languages given by the Holy Spirit

And even those who had the true gift had apparently perverted it, and were using it to speak in their own little private way, and to use it in the assembly when unbelievers who weren't even there, and they were using it as some kind of a way to lift themselves up to a level of spiritual superiority

If there is one thing common to the Corinthian church, it is that they had let every system in the world engulf them; and this is no different

All the rest of the stuff in their world had come into the church, why would not the world's approach to religion?

So the Corinthian church could never have been manifesting a true gift in the state in which they existed

I'll put it this way. Can a group of Christians who are worldly, divisive, opinionated, cliquish, carnal, fleshly, envious, strife-ridden, argumentative, puffed up, self-glorifying, smug, immoral, compromising with sin, defrauding each other, fornicating, depriving in marriage, offending weaker Christians, lusting after evil things, idolatrous, fellowshiping with demons, insubordinate, gluttonous, drunken, selfish toward the poor, desecrating the Lord's Table be expressing a true gift of the Holy Spirit?

Chapter 12 says they were cursing Jesus and saying it was by the Holy Spirit

Well, the answer is obvious

It would defy every single principle of spirituality if that were true

A believer either walks in the flesh or he walks in the Spirit

There is no argument about what the Corinthians were doing; they were walking in the flesh

And if you have a problem with that, read the third chapter, or read any chapter, for that matter

And when you are walking in the flesh, you are not manifesting a true gift in the true power of the Holy Spirit

That is a conundrum

That can't happen (<https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/1872/the-truth-about-tongues-part-2>)

\*This gift was in full operation during this time but it eventually ceased with the Apostles

We know that it would cease when Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13:8, "Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away."

When we looked at this verse in our study of chapter 13, we learned that Paul is saying that prophecy and knowledge will be done away (katargeo) or rendered inoperative when the perfect comes (v.10)

But tongues on the other hand will cease on their own

Both prophecy and knowledge are passive verbs in Greek and it means something has to act upon it for it to stop and verse 10 says what that is, "But when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away."

But the word "cease" (pauo) is totally different but what makes it different is the use of the middle voice rather than the passive

The middle voice is reflexive

In other words it acts towards itself

It indicates intense action on the part of the subject

Tongues will cease on their own

Literally, verse 8 says, "Tongues will stop by themselves."

That's the meaning that the middle voice gives to the verb pauo.

The LXX uses the middle form of pao 15 times to translate the Hebrew word that means "to complete," "to stop," "to finish," "to accomplish," "to end."

It has a finality to it

And the reflexive middle voice gives it the idea that it ends all by itself

According to church history that is exactly what we see

*Chrysostom who lived from AD 347-407, and who was perhaps the greatest of all the ancient writers said when writing, In his Homilies on First Corinthians, "This whole place is very obscure; but the obscurity is produced by our ignorance of the facts referred to and by their cessation, being such as then used to occur, but now no longer take place"*

*("Homilies on First Corinthians," The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol.12, ed. Philip Schaff [New York: Christian Literature Co., 1888]).*

In other words, by the end of the fourth century Chrysostom indicated that because tongues didn't exist anymore, the gift was difficult to define or understand

Augustine, who lived from A.D. 354-430 made the following comment on Acts 2:4: "In the earliest times, 'the Holy Ghost fell upon them that believed: and they spake with tongues,'...These were signs adapted to the time. For there behooved to be that betokening (or sign) of the Holy Spirit. . . . That thing was done for a betokening (or sign), and it passed away" ("Ten Homilies on the First Epistle of John," *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 7, ed. Philip Schaff [New York: Christian Literature Co., 1888]).

But according to charismatic and Pentecostal Christians, this gift is still in operation today

If it was gone by the fourth century then why did it show up again in 1901?

Pao in the middle voice means it would permanently cease on its own but on January 1, 1901 it shows back up when Miss Agness Ozman spoke in tongues.

Where has it been for 1800 years if it didn't cease?

As we will see later in verse 21, they had a purpose and when that purpose was accomplished there was no longer any need for the gift

\*But today, charismatic and Pentecostals are saying it is personal private prayer language

And they base it on 1 Corinthians 14:2

But as I pointed out verse 2 is not referring to a personal private prayer language

When it says "For one who speaks in a tongue (singular) or "unknown tongue" (KJV), which is gibberish, "does not speak to men but to God" or better "a god"

The Greek has no definite article, and such anarthrous constructions usually are translated with an indefinite article

Acts 17:23 has the same form of *theō* [god] and is used in reference to “*an unknown god*”. (MacArthur, John F., Jr. [\*1 Corinthians\*](#). Chicago: Moody Press, 1984. Print. MacArthur New Testament Commentary.)

No where in Scripture does it record using ecstatic speech or gibberish when speaking to God

In fact we are commanded not to in Matthew 6:7, “And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words.”

Even John 17 records Jesus praying in His high priestly prayer to the Father, It's all in an intelligible language

\*So in verses 1-5 of 1 Corinthians 14, coming off the love chapter (13), he wants the Corinthians to "pursue love"

They are to do it with intensity like a hunter chasing his prey or like one persecuting another

But they were also to desire spirituals

And in comparison of the gift of tongues and prophecy, they were to prophesy because prophecy is superior to tongues and because prophecy edifies the church and tongues not interpreted do not

His desire is for them to see that spiritual gifts are to edify the church

\*Now as we come to verses 6-12, he is further illustrating the need to communicate with speech that is clear and meaningful so the church will be edified

Notice the three areas he addresses in verses 6-12

The first is...

## **LESSON**

## **Personal (v.6)**

Paul inserts himself into his argument and says, "But now (that is, at the present moment), brethren, if I come (aor.subj. subj speaks of probability or intentional) to you speaking in tongues, what will I profit you unless I speak to you either by way of revelation or of knowledge or of prophecy or of teaching?"

In other words, if I came to you speaking in tongues and you didn't understand what I was saying, where would be the "profit" or "benefit"? I would only be "speaking in the air" (v.9).

### That's the entire point of verses 6-12

The only way you would profit from what I'm saying is if it's "by way of revelation or of knowledge or of prophecy or of teaching."

Any other way is purely selfish

And to say that tongues is a personal private prayer language is simply that

And you're not benefiting either because you do not understand what you're saying

Verse 2 says "no one understands"

All you're doing is speaking pagan "mysteries" (v.2) and worshiping false gods

The point of all gifts is to edify the church

And that's what prophecy does according to verse 3, "But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation" but one who "speaks in a tongue edifies himself."

And what is that if you don't understand what you're saying?

There is "profit" in "revelation, knowledge, prophecy" or "teaching"

There is no profit in tongues without interpretation

He further illustrates this by mentioning...

## **Lifeless Things (vv.7-8)**

These are inanimate objects: the flute, harp and bugle or trumpet

Each of those instruments make a distinct sound

Did you know in a full orchestra there are "approximately one hundred permanent musicians...16–18 1st violins, 16 2nd violins, 12 violas, 12 cellos, 8 double basses, 4 flutes (one with piccolo as a specialty), 4 oboes (one with English horn as a specialty), 4 clarinets (one with bass clarinet as a specialty, another specializing in high clarinets), 4 bassoons (one with double bassoon as a specialty). In theory, all woodwind players are expected to be able to play all auxiliary instruments in addition to their main instrument. Furthermore 5–8 horns, 4 trumpets, 4 trombones (one with bass trombone as a specialty), 1 tuba, 1 kettledrum player, 3–4 percussionists (of whom at least one must also play kettledrum), 1–2 harps and a keyboard player (piano, celesta, harpsichord, etc.). (<https://askinglot.com/how-many-instruments-are-in-a-full-orchestra>)

Each of those instruments make a distinct sound

Each note played on an instrument makes a distinct sound

My guitar is made up of six strings that represent 6 different distinct sounds or "tones" when played in the open position

Each string you press of any one of the frets produces a distinct sound or tone

If they were all the same note there would no distinction

Paul says in verse 7, "Yet even lifeless things, either flute or harp, in producing a sound, if they do not produce a distinction in the tones, how will it be known what is played on the flute or on the harp?"

The same is true of the "bugle" or trumpet

If it produced an "indistinct sound, who will prepare himself for battle?" (v.8)

So revelation, knowledge, prophecy, teaching, flute, harp, bugle...all utter or play distinct sounds that is profitable or beneficial to the hearer

You cannot claim that with tongues without interpretation

Paul sums all this up in verse 9-12 with...

### **Speech that is Clear (vv.9-12)**

He says in verse 9, "So also you, unless you utter by the tongue speech that is clear, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air."

If even inanimate musical instruments are expected to make sensible sounds, how much more should human speech make sense, especially when it deals with the things of

God? (MacArthur, John, Jr., ed. [The MacArthur Study Bible](#). electronic ed. Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997. Print.)

J. Vernon McGee says, "Let's get off this kick. Let's start making sense, if you don't mind." (McGee, J. Vernon. [Thru the Bible Commentary](#). electronic ed. Vol. 5. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997. Print.)

There are 196 countries in our world today with 7117 different languages

*Did you know that 86% of people use Asian or European languages? Roughly 150 to 200 languages are spoken by more than a million people. Conversely, there are around 46 languages that only have a single speaker! In Asia alone, there are 2,294 languages spoken, [in Africa 2,144](#), Americas 1,061, the Pacific 1,313, and Europe with 287 languages. (Source: [Ethnologue](#))*

*The exact number of languages spoken has always been surrounded by uncertainty.*

*This is partly due to the fact that there are still many parts of the world that have not yet been fully explored, including the Amazon and the highlands of New Guinea.*

*<https://www.theintrepidguide.com/how-many-languages-are-there-in-the-world/>*

*There are many languages in the world However, there cannot be communication between people who do not speak the same language.*

*(McGee, J. Vernon. [Thru the Bible Commentary](#). electronic ed. Vol. 5. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997. Print.)*

Paul makes that point in verse 10

He says, "There are, perhaps, a great many kinds of languages in the world"

But get this, "and no kind is without meaning"

The term that Paul uses for "tongues" in Greek is glossa

Glossa "always refers to a known language" (John MacArthur, Tongues, p. 16).

It can also refer to the physical member, the tongue (Lk. 16:24), but for the most part, when used of speaking, it refers to a known language.

Webster defines "tongues" as a "language" as well as the Scriptures

In 1 Corinthians 13:1, Paul used it to refer to the "tongues of men and of angels."

In Revelation 7:9, the Apostle John uses it when he said, "After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands."

In Revelation 11:9, he uses it to refer to "Those from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations..."

The true gift of tongues is a known language not gibberish

And it is "speech that is clear" and with "meaning" that we are to speak

And if the true gift of tongues didn't have an interpreter, Paul says in verse 28, "he must keep silent."

Paul inserts himself again in verse 11 when he says, "If then I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be to the one who speaks a barbarian, and the one who speaks will be a barbarian to me."

And what is the point or "profit" of that?

So Paul concludes in verse 12, "So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church."

Moffatt translates this, "Make the edification of the church your aim in this desire to excel."

Paul uses the subjective mood again but this time it means to be intentional

The Corinthians needed to be intentional in edifying the church and instead of themselves

The present tense is used too to indicate this should always be their purpose with the gifts

## **CONCLUSION**

So Paul wanted the Corinthians to understand that prophecy is superior to tongues

Tongues unless interpreted cannot edify

All spiritual gifts are given for the purpose of edifying the church

This gift ceased but it was highly prized among the Corinthians

And is so today among those who believe the gift is still functioning today

Spiritual gifts are meaningless to you unless you're a believer in Christ

And if you are a believer you are to use the gift the Holy Spirit has given you to spiritually build up the church

Let's make sure we're using our gifts with each other

If you're here today and you do not know the Lord Jesus that we have spoken of and worshiped this morning, you can know Him now

The Bible says that Jesus is Lord

He is the Word that became flesh

He came into this world for one purpose: to save His people from their sins

Have you been saved from your sins?

If not, confess your sin to Him now and repent or turn from them and turn to Christ confessing that He is Lord by believing in your heart that God raised Him from the dead

Romans 10:9-10 says when you do that "you will be saved."

Let's pray