

## 1 Corinthians 14

Good evening and thank you for joining us. I hope you had a wonderful Christmas and got a chance to reflect on all that the Lord has done. Would you please turn in your bibles to 1 Corinthians 14? Over the last few weeks, we've spent some time talking about gifts of the Spirit.

Chapter 12 talked about gifts of the HS

Chapter 13 talked about the importance and supremacy of love

And now chapter 14 Paul goes back to the gifts and talks about the often misunderstood gifts of tongues and prophecy.

The title of tonight's message is OFTEN MISUNDERSTOOD

Let's pray

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul spoke of prophecy and the gift of tongues only in the context of the other gifts of the Spirit. Now, the Bible will focus on the gifts of prophecy and tongues, and how they should function in church body life.

1-2

**1 Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. 2 For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.** If you've seen or been involved in a hyper-Pentecostal church, this should be your first red flag.

Often in those churches a tongue is followed by a supposed interpretation - something like, "Thus says the Lord, listen to me..." It's as if the utterance in tongues is God's Spirit speaking to the group.

But this is not what the Bible says! Tongues isn't God speaking to man. It's man speaking to God.

Over the years, specialists have done a linguistic analysis of people speaking in tongues and have concluded they are not speaking a “real” language, but just jabbering in “gibberish.”

This isn’t surprising in light of verse 2, because tongues aren’t intended for human ears. We should expect tongues to sound in ways we don’t comprehend because Paul plainly says, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.

Of course this doesn’t mean that all unintelligible speech is the legitimate gift of tongues. Some, not understanding the gift of tongues, may imitate or fake it just to try and demonstrate they have the gift.

**3 But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men.** Prophecy is often thought of as "foretelling the future," but a word of prophecy may or may not contain a predictive element. The purpose of God conveying a word of prophecy is "edification, exhortation, and comfort..."

This is what prophecy does: it builds up, stirs up, or cheers up - whichever is needed most.

### SHOW THIS GRAPHIC:

**Edification** is “building up.” It’s a construction term, and speaks of our being “built up” in the Lord. A word of prophecy will build someone up, not tear them down.

**Exhortation** is encouragement. It’s like the speech from the coach in the locker room before the big game, rallying the team to go out and perform as they were trained to perform. A word of prophecy will encourage someone, not discourage them.

**Comfort** has the idea of not only consoling, but also strengthening. A word of prophecy will strengthen, not weaken someone. **CLOSE PIC**

In verse 4 we see the difference in prophecy and tongues in whom they edify.

**4 He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church.** If no one understands the tongue - or language spoken - then it only just benefits the one who expressed it. Prophecy on the other hand is God's message to the whole Church. Everyone gets blessed by a word of prophecy

**5 I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification.** I personally speak in tongues. It's a wonderful way to praise and worship God. Yet unless it gets interpreted my speaking in tongues only benefits me - not the rest of the church.

But those who speak in prophecy edify the church. And the focus here is that the church may receive edification more than the individual.

There are things that are fine for a Christian to do in their own devotional life, which are not OK to do in the gathering of saints. Sometimes when I'm by myself worshipping I'll be shouting out the worship lyrics. But if I were to do that here, I'd be a distraction, disruptive, annoying, and even self-exalting.

The gift of tongues is one of those things that are ok to do in a personal devotional life, but not OK to do in the church setting, with few exceptions we'll get to shortly.

**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?**

Paul explains that he could give a new revelation, an insight into truth, a word of prophecy or by teaching. Each of these are a benefit to others. But if he spoke in a tongue, they wouldn't understand what he was saying.

7-8

7 Even things without life, whether flute or harp, when they make a sound, unless they make a distinction in the sounds, how will it be known what is piped or played? 8 For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare for battle? 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. **SHOW PIC** Most little kids love to bang on a piano, or pots and pans. The kid normally has a blast doing it. But for anyone else within earshot, the whole experience is unpleasant. **CLOSE PIC**

So it is with tongues. Someone talking to God with the gift of tongues may be blessed, but no one else is. Therefore, if someone is going to speak in tongues unto God, they're to do so unto themselves, and not among others.

10-11

10 There are, it may be, so many kinds of languages in the world, and none of them is without significance.

11 Therefore, if I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be a foreigner to him who speaks, and he who speaks will be a foreigner to me. It's interesting, most modern linguists believe all languages come from one original language. Language is so complex because languages exist as whole systems, not as small parts put together.

**12 Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel.** We've talked over the last few weeks about how the Christians at Corinth were enamored with spiritual gifts, but they had forgotten the purpose of those gifts! See church isn't for self-centered entertainment, or to show off super-spirituality, it's to build up the saints

**13 Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret.** " If someone is going to speak in a tongue, there must be an interpretation, so there can be the edification of others.

If tongues are directed to God, how can a legitimate interpretation be edifying to others? The same way our reading of Psalms or praying aloud can edify. The prayer, praise, or plea of someone to God can identify powerfully with our own heart before God, and we can agree with what someone else says to God.

If you're in a small group of believers, waiting on God in worship, and the Spirit prompts you to speak in tongues, and you do - and no else in the group interprets what you've uttered; then you, the person who uttered it, needs to pray for the interpretation. Because if the tongue never gets interpreted no one can benefit from what was said. And the purpose of any church gathering is the benefit of all

**14 For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful.** If someone is perfectly satisfied with their ability to relate to God through their understanding, they really have no need for the gift of tongues.

But if the day comes when they desire to relate to God beyond their ability to understand, they should seek God for the gift of tongues.

Now verse 14 brings up a big question about tongues. If I don't understand what I'm saying when I speak in tongues, then how do you actually speak in tongues? Everyone's experience may be slightly different, but generally, 2 things are important to know.

1<sup>st</sup>, Tongues doesn't happen as one just opens their mouth and God "takes over" their tongue.

2<sup>nd</sup> tongues is not repeating a word or phrase faster and faster until God "takes over."

Actually, the language of tongues works much like languages we understand. A word or a sound occurs to our mind, and we vocalize that word or sound, trusting God is prompting them, and He understands what they say, and that in the Spirit what we say is perfectly appropriate for the moment.

15 What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding. " Paul says I can pray, or even sing in tongues, or I can pray or sing in a language I understand. It all depends on the time and the place

16-17

16 Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say "Amen" at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say? 17 For you indeed give thanks well, but the other is not edified. Notice, tongues is called "your giving of thanks." The gift is us speaking to God, not God speaking to us. It's always a prayer or praise. And the idea here is that time and place are crucial.

If no one understands my blessing of the Lord, if no one understands my thanks to God, they can't say "Amen" with me. When I am gathered together with other believers, I can't just do

my own thing and say, "Well, it blesses me." I must have a concern for others, also.

This is why Paul mentions the "uninformed" person. This is either an unbeliever, or a believer who simply doesn't understand the gift. It's not loving to use a gift that they wouldn't be able to understand.

And if the point of our meeting is to love and minister to this uninformed person; then why would I use a gift that I know they won't understand and can't appreciate?

This is how we view it at CC. Like in Corinth, our public meetings are full of folks just getting started in their Christian life. If I started speaking in tongues, the novice would either be confused, or think I'm weird. This is why Paul writes in verse 18-19

**18 I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all;**

**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.** Paul saw great value in the gift of tongues for his own devotional life before the Lord: Yet, when he gathered with other Christians, his concern was to be a blessing, not with getting a blessing.

**20 Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature.** In other words, spiritual gifts and common sense go together. A baby only cares about himself. And this is how some Christians behave. But being spiritual is being sensitive to the setting.

Paul here quotes from Isaiah 28

**21 In the law it is written:**

**"With men of other tongues and other lips**

I will speak to this people;  
And yet, for all that, they will not hear Me,”[fn]  
says the Lord.

22 Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe. At first, verse 22 seems to contradict what Paul just said. I thought tongues were for the informed believers, but here we're told there're a sign to unbelievers?

The key here is understanding the context of Isaiah 28. The Prophet Isaiah had predicted Assyrian invaders would capture Jerusalem. The Assyrians spoke a foreign language. Thus, when the Jews heard this unknown tongue being spoken in their streets it was a sign that judgment had come. So, for them, tongues was a sign to unbelievers - but it was a sign of judgment!

When an unbeliever enters a public gathering and hears someone speak in tongues - and they become confused, it's a sign of judgment. The unbeliever's uncomfortable reaction is proof of their unfamiliarity with the things of God. It's a sign they're living alienated from God.

23 Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those who are uninformed or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind? The fact they freak out over the tongues, and think you're crazy, is proof they're unfamiliar with the things of the Spirit... But that's not the first impression we want to make is it?

24-25

24 But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all. 25 And thus[fn] the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down



on his face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you. Though tongues is confusing to an unbeliever, prophecy is clear, compelling, and convicting.

In the church's public gatherings the gift of prophecy is preferable to tongues. A word from God utters truth, and people are built up, stirred up, and cheered up.

And the same happens when we teach Scripture, for it's nothing but prophecy that's been penned. Through the Word we all get built up. That's why at Calvary our public gatherings are devoted to the teaching of the Bible

**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.** The gatherings at Corinth were being dominated by a few spiritual show-offs. Church meetings needed some structure, some discernment, some restraint, and a whole lot of love! And in verses 27-28 we see the only time it's appropriate to use tongues in church.

**27 If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret. 28 But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God.** It's popular in Charismatic meetings where everyone starts speaking and singing in tongues simultaneously. Yet our passage teaches that's not a biblical practice. Each should take their turn. The use of the gift of tongues should be followed by an interpretation of that tongue.

So if there's no one present who can interpret the tongue; then that's enough of the gift for that moment.

Notice though a couple of points here... First, the person with tongues has the on/ off switch. **If there's no interpreter let him**

**keep silent** - he can. When you speak in tongues the Spirit provokes the utterance, but you still control the volume and mute button.

This whole notion of "The Holy Spirit made me!" is contradictory to what the Bible has to say. The whole 'begin slain the spirit, barking like dogs, holy laughter, goes against the Bible.

I don't doubt their love for the Lord, I'm sure they are sincere in their love for God. But those practices are not scriptural.

But it's not just tongues that needs to be done orderly...

**29 Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge**  
Realize, the gift of prophecy, as with all the spiritual gifts, is subject to human error. In **Jeremiah 14:14 And the LORD said to me, "The prophets prophesy lies in My name. I have not sent them, commanded them, nor spoken to them; they prophesy to you a false vision, divination, a worthless thing, and the deceit of their heart.**

Hopefully, people who purposefully prophesy deceit are few and far between, but we all can be self-deceived. Well-meaning believers can get worked up into an emotional lather, and mistake their own imagination for a message from God.

This is why prophecies need to be judged. People have made major life decisions on what they thought was a prophecy - which wasn't. We need to put all prophecy to a test by making sure it corresponds with Scripture.

**1 Thessalonians 5:19-21 19 Do not quench the Spirit. 20 Do not despise prophecies. 21 Test all things; hold fast what is good.**

30-32

**30 But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. 31 For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may**

learn and all may be encouraged. **32 And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.** Whenever someone speaks in the public gathering of the church, or in a small group, it needs to be done in a controlled and orderly manner. Each person should show restraint and take a turn. You can have a hundred tongues, or a thousand prophecies, but if no one learns or is encouraged, then it's not good for the church.

Verse 33 is the key verse for the chapter..

**33 For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.** When there's no order, people get hurt. **SHOW PIC** You've heard of folks being stampeded at a soccer match. There's no crowd control. **CLOSE PIC**

And this can happen in church. When there's no order, needs go unmet. People get neglected when there's no organization. God is into order because God loves people.

The bible clearly tells us if there's confusion and disorder at a church meeting, it isn't from God.

To be sure God may do things we don't understand, and things that may even seem strange or unpredictable to us, but there will not be a general atmosphere of confusion or weirdness.

**34 Let your[fn] women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says.** Remember, Paul has already qualified this statement. In 1 Corinthians 11 he mentioned women praying and prophesying in church.

Clearly this doesn't mean a woman can't open her mouth in church. Again, it comes back to time and to place.

It's widely believed that the ladies in Corinth were getting carried away with the vocal gifts, and were usurping the authority of the

male leaders. The Corinthian women needed to remember what Paul had said earlier - in the church and home the men should lovingly lead and the women should willingly let them

**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.** It's important to know that Paul uses the ancient Greek verb *laleo*, which means, "to talk, question, argue, profess, or chatter."

Among the Christians in Corinth, there seems to have been the problem of women chattering or disrupting the meetings with questions. Paul is saying, "Don't disrupt the meeting. Ask your questions at home."

In the Jewish synagogues, men and women sat apart. The Corinthian church may have adopted the same kind of seating arrangement, but with many women from Gentile backgrounds, they didn't know how to conduct themselves at a church meeting. Paul teaches them how.

Again, because Paul assumed the right of women to pray and prophesy under proper authority in 1 Corinthians 11.

**36 Or did the word of God come originally from you? Or was it you only that it reached?** The Corinthians thought of themselves as a special case. Paul reminds them that Christianity isn't their exclusive property. Corinth wasn't the birthplace of the Bible. They weren't an exception and neither are we.

**37 If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord.** Some people think that if they are really spiritual, they don't have to obey God's word on these matters. In their own minds, they are so spiritual that the rules don't apply to them. But if we are really spiritual, we will stick to

the Word of God, and not go beyond it or try to bend it to meet our personal bends.

**38 But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant.** [fn] Paul pretty much describes how he regards those Corinthian Christians who would contend with him on these matters; they are ignorant. And anyone who didn't recognize the authority of Paul's teaching shouldn't be recognized as a legitimate servant gifted by God.

**39 Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues.** When we come together as a church, it's far better to be a blessing to someone else; therefore, prophecy is much more useful than tongues.

Even though Paul carefully regulated, and even discouraged the use of tongues in the church, he didn't forbid it. At the same time, he greatly encouraged its use in one's personal devotions.

The gift of tongues is not to be despised. It especially has a valuable place in personal devotional time. But the gatherings of the church should emphasize prophecy and mutual blessing.

**40 Let all things be done decently and in order.** God is a God of order and peace, and He wants order when the church comes together. When the gifts of the Spirit are given an unscriptural focus, it discredits the true work of the Holy Spirit, and often leads people to deny the gifts because they see unbiblical excess.