

A Tale of Two Gifts - 1 Corinthians 14:1-40

Pastor Jason Dennett's notes

A.) Prioritization:

1 "**Pursue** love, and **desire** spiritual [gifts], but especially that you may **prophesy**."

- Here Paul is speaking of what he wants their **PRIORITIES** to be: to passionately pursue **LOVE**, to be open to the **GIFTS**, but especially the gift of **PROPHECY**. *God's Love for them, and God's Words to them, were to be their MAIN priority!*
- *Here's how the typical human lifespan of 70 years is spent: Sleep - 23 yrs; Work - 16 yrs; TV - 8 yrs; Eating - 6 yrs; Travel - 6 yrs; Leisure - 4.5 yrs; Illness - 4 yrs; Dressing - 2 yrs; Spiritual - 0.5 yrs*

B.) Comparison:

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. 3 But he who **prophesies** speaks **edification** and **exhortation** and **comfort** to men. 4 He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. 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.****"

- Paul makes some important **COMPARISONS** between Tongues and Prophecy: 1. They differ in their **DIRECTION** 2. They differ in their **COMMUNICATION** 3. They differ in their **EDIFICATION**.

- In this chapter alone, the word "**edification**" is used 4 times (v.3,5,12,26), more than any other chapter in the Bible! Obviously this is a major principle God's design for His church - it is to build people up, not tear them down! (Matt 16:18)

"A Builder Or a Wrecker"

As I watched them tear a building down, A gang of men in a busy town

With a ho-heave-ho, and a lusty yell, They swung a beam and

the side wall fell I asked the foreman, "Are these men skilled, And the men you'd hire if you wanted to build?" He gave a laugh and said, "No, indeed, Just common labor is all I need." "I can easily wreck in a day or two, What builders have taken years to do."

And I thought to myself, as I went my way, Which of these roles have I tried to play? Am I a builder who works with care, Measuring life by rule and square?

Am I shaping my work to a well-made plan, Patiently doing the best I can? Or am I a wrecker who walks to town, Content with the labor of tearing down?

"O Lord let my life and my labors be, That which build up for eternity!"

C.) Interpretation:

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? 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. 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. 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. 13 **Therefore** let him who speaks in a tongue **pray that he may interpret.**"

- Paul uses 2 examples from common life to show the importance of **UNDERSTANDING** God's communication to us: 1. Musical instruments and signals 2. Human Languages that are foreign
- It is interesting the emphasis the Lord gives to using our **MINDS** and our **INTELLIGENCE** in worshipping Him! (Matt 22:37; Isa 1:18)

D.) Elevation:

14 "For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. 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. 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**. 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. 20 Brethren, **do not be children in understanding**; however, **in malice be babes**, but in **understanding be mature**."

- [Paul declares that, in a public church setting, he **ELEVATES** the gift of Prophecy much higher than Tongues: 1. Uninformed people don't understand Tongues 2. Others aren't edified with Tongues 3. Prophecy allows for teaching to take place.](#)
- Notice the emphasis that Paul places on the ability of the worshipper to **CONTROL** their actions and exercising of the gift in v.15 - "**I will**" appears 4 times!
- Paul also places a high premium on Christians being **MATURE** in their spiritual understanding, but **BABIES** in terms of malice or evil. Unfortunately, we often do exactly the opposite in the Church! (Eph 4:11-15; 2Pet 3:18)

E.) Verification:

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," 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. 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? 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 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**."

- This is an interesting Scripture that Paul uses to demonstrate that

the gift of Tongues was foreshadowed in the Old Testament in **Isaiah 28,11,12**. It's vitally important to verify what we practice in our churches is Biblical - use the **G.A.T.E.** to check!

- Verse 22 is a difficult verse, as it appears to **CONTRADICT** v.23-25 where Paul says unbelievers won't understand Tongues. Bible scholars are split on this verse: **1. Tongues is a "sign" of judgment as in Isaiah 28:11 2. There was a "copyist" error in v.22**

*Respected Bible Scholar and translator **J.B. Phillips** thinks an ancient scribe mixed up Paul's word order in 1 Corinthians 14:22, and the verse should read: "**That means that tongues are a sign of God's power, not for those who are unbelievers but to those who already believe. Preaching the word of God, on the other hand, is a sign of God's power to those who do not believe rather than to believers.**" (NOTE: Phillips believes a copyist made an error - not the Holy Spirit!).*

- Notice the powerful effect of **GOD'S WORD** thru the gift of Prophecy can have when exercised properly in a church body...even towards unbelievers!! (Psalm 138:2; John 8:32; Heb 4:12)

F.) Operation:

*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.** 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. 29 Let two or three **prophets** speak, and let the others judge. 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. 33 For God is not [the author] of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints."*

- Paul lays out 7 "**RULES**" of Operation for these 2 Spiritual Gifts in church setting: **1.** There are allowed to be only 2 or 3 Tongues exercised at the church meeting **2.** They must take turn and not interrupt each other. **3.** They must be interpreted,

- or Tongues should cease being used at that meeting. 4. Words of Prophecy can be uttered by 2 or 3 persons 5. They must speak in turn, not interrupting 6. What is said needs to be judged by God's Word 7. This must be done in an orderly fashion, without confusion.
- Notice the Lord's desire for **order, intelligence, and peace** in church meetings. All these elements combine to produce **EDIFICATION** by the Holy Spirit! All of these reflect the nature of God Himself - and so bring Him glory in the Church!

G.) Submission:

34 "Let your **women keep silent** in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but [they are] to be submissive, as the law also says. 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. 36 Or did the word of God come [originally] from you? Or [was it] you only that it reached?"

- Apparently, there were Corinthian women in the local church that were **DISRUPTIVE** during the services by asking their husbands things, out loud, and **DISTRACTING** the focus of the meeting from Jesus onto themselves!
- Paul was simply teaching them to **HUMBLE** themselves, and be **SUBMISSIVE** to God's word, which is sorting that all believers are commanded to do! (1Pet 5:5-9; Phil 2:5-11)
- You have likely heard the expression "butting your head against a wall." In November 2009, police in Wisconsin, found a dead seven-point buck that apparently lost a head-butting contest with a rival buck. The winning deer was made of concrete; it was a statue! In the same way, when we are "**butting our heads**" against God's Word, refusing to submit to His order and structure, it will only result in us hurting and damaging ourselves!

H.) Conclusion:

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**. 38 But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant. 39 Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to **prophecy**, and do not forbid to speak with **tongues**. 40 Let all things be done

decently and in order."

- With his apostolic authority, Paul wants the Corinthians to acknowledge that his **INSTRUCTIONS** for their church services, are divine commandments from the Lord Jesus Himself!
- **Paul ends this section with some final encouragements** to them to be open to the Lord speaking to/thru them; to be sure to not forbid the exercise of Tongues; to be sure that their services (and spiritual gifts) are conducted decently and in an orderly fashion - which glorifies God!

Some Big Ideas & Main Points:

1. GOD *wants you to be KNOWLEDGABLE* about spiritual things! - Are YOU growing in the Word??
Do you have healthy daily habits?? (Q-3)

2. GOD *wants His Church to be EDIFIED* and built up! - Are YOU helping to build it?? With your Time, Talents, Treasure??

3. GOD *wants to SPEAK to you, and thru you!* - Are YOU open to it??

4. GOD *has spiritual GIFTS* for you! - Are YOU seeking them?? Discover, Develop, Deploy them!