



Sermon Series: Confusion in Corinth, Part 3

Sermon Title: Tongues & Prophecy

Speaker/ Date: Armin Sommer, February 21, 2021

1 Corinthians 14:1-25

We find here a clear and detailed teaching on two spiritual gifts - the gifts of tongues and prophecy in the context of public worship.

1 Corinthians 14:26b provides a key truth that shapes Paul's instruction.

Big Idea: Our public worship is to be understandable.

Paul offers several reasons that answer, "Why?"

Reason #1: Prophecy is more beneficial (14:1-5)

Paul doesn't forbid any spiritual gift; he does regulate their use. He points out the benefits of both tongues and prophecy. 1 Corinthians 14:1-4

The New T offers examples of different expressions/manifestations of "tongues-speaking."

1st. The listeners heard them speaking in their own languages (Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Mesopotamians, etc.). Acts 2:6

2nd manifestation of the gift is what some refer to as an unknown "prayer language." Some say it is the angelic tongue Paul mentions in 1 Corinthians 13:1. As we see in verses 14, it is a form of prayer where he refers to "praying in a tongue." It's a private devotional prayer language.

Paul commends its use; condemns its misuse. 1 Corinthians 14:5

3rd manifestation of tongues as a form of prophetic utterance. Paul is not commanding everyone to seek the gift of tongues. But he does commend and affirm the private use of a prayer language. If it is expressed in the church, it must be accompanied by a clear interpretation.

Reason #2: We Should Avoid Confusion (14:6-12)

1 Corinthians 14:6 - Notice the four underscored elements. They are inspirational statements and teachings – not equal to scripture but are

subject to evaluation, which we'll deal with next week.

Paul emphasizes the importance of clarity and illustrates it in several ways. **1 Corinthians 14:7–12**. Paul says, “If you just make noise, you’ll sound like a foreigner.” He’s driving home the point that tongues were ineffective when offered without interpretation in public worship.

Reason #3: We are to win unbelievers (14:13-25)

Praying in tongues is legit. But its benefit is on a spiritual level that is deeper than a cognitive (understandable) level. Both the spiritual and cognitive components are valid. If God has given you have a prayer language, it is to keep it between you and Him. Especially in a public gathering where unbelievers or inquirers (seekers) may be present. **1 Corinthians 14:13 - 15**

Our public behavior affects others. The Corinthian believers drew attention to themselves by their undisciplined use of tongues. It distracted and detracted from the teaching of God’s word and the communication of the Good News. **1 Corinthians 14:16–17**

But don’t summarily reject the reality of the gift. Paul cites his own experience for private prayer. **1 Corinthians 14:18–19**

Paul says basically, “Cease your childish need to be the center of attention. Grow up!” **1 Corinthians 14:20**

Paul says that tongues can become an instrument of judgment when their indiscriminate causes seekers to reject Christ. They conclude, “This is all ridiculous.” **1 Corinthians 14:21–25**

A clear, understandable word is better for the visitors to hear. We are to engage unbelievers, not repel them. We want people with prepared hearts to enter our gatherings, to hear the message of the cross, and to surrender to Christ.

Discussion Questions:

- What about the sermon stuck with you this week? What part challenged your thinking?
- If a Christian does not speak in tongues, should his or her salvation be questioned? Explain
- How should a pastor respond if someone stands up in the middle of his sermon and starts speaking in tongues?

- How does the person speaking in tongues know if an interpreter is present?
- If a person speaks in tongues, can they also serve as the interpreter?
- The Holy Spirit will never detract from what He is doing in one place to put the focus someplace else. Do you agree or disagree with this statement?
- Do you know anyone who legitimately speaks in tongues? Have you ever seen anyone pretend to speak in tongues? What is the difference?
- Should you seek to speak in tongues? Is it a sign of spiritual maturity? (Keep in mind the Corinthian church spoke in tongues)
- Do you believe that all believers have the ability to speak in tongues?

BIBLE VERSES

1 Corinthians 14:26b Everything must be done so that the church may be built up.

1 Corinthians 14:1 (NIV) — Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy.

Acts 2:6 (NIV) — ...Each one heard their own language being spoken.

1 Corinthians 14:5 (NIV) — I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be edified.

1 Corinthians 14:6 (NIV) — Now, brothers and sisters, if I come to you and speak in tongues, what good will I be to you, unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or word of instruction?

1 Corinthians 14:7–12 (NIV) — Even in the case of lifeless things that make sounds, such as the pipe or harp, how will anyone know what tune is being played unless there is a distinction in the notes? Again, if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle? So it is with you. Unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue, how will anyone know what you are saying? You will just be speaking into the air. Undoubtedly there are all sorts of languages in the world, yet none of them is without meaning. If

then I do not grasp the meaning of what someone is saying, I am a foreigner to the speaker, and the speaker is a foreigner to me. So it is with you. Since you are eager for gifts of the Spirit, try to excel in those that build up the church.

1 Corinthians 14:13 -15 (NIV) — For this reason the one who speaks in a tongue should pray that they may interpret what they say. For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my understanding; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my understanding.

1 Corinthians 14:16–17 (NIV) — **16** Otherwise when you are praising God in the Spirit, how can someone else, who is now put in the position of an inquirer, say “Amen” to your thanksgiving, since they do not know what you are saying? **17** You are giving thanks well enough, but no one else is edified.

1 Corinthians 14:18–19 (NIV) — I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. **19** But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue.

1 Corinthians 14:20 (NIV) — Brothers and sisters, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults.

1 Corinthians 14:21–22 (NIV) — In the Law it is written: “With other tongues and through the lips of foreigners I will speak to this people, but even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord.” Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers; prophecy, however, is not for unbelievers but for believers.

1 Corinthians 14:23 (NIV) — So if the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and inquirers or unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your mind?

1 Corinthians 14:24–25 (NIV) — But if an unbeliever or an inquirer comes in while everyone is prophesying, they are convicted of sin and are brought under judgment by all [meaning, “by all that is being taught”], as the secrets of their hearts are laid bare. So they will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, “God is really among you!”

