



Thinking Maturely about Tongues & Prophecy (1 Corinthians 14:20-25)

- In this section of 1 Corinthians 14(v. 20-25), Paul challenges the Corinthians and us to think maturely about the right use of God’s gifts, understanding the purpose of tongues and to reflect on the effects of the use of those gifts among unbelievers.
- Seven statements we have learned about Paul’s corrective on spiritual gifts.
 1. Gifts are God-given (1 Cor. 12:7, 11, 18) not received by personal desire or prayer.
 2. Gifts are designed to build up and edify the church body (1 Cor. 12:7: “for the common good”; 14:3, 4b, 5b, 12, 17, 19- “instruct”, 26)
 3. Gifts are motivated and regulated by God’s essential, edifying, and eternal love that flow in and through God’s people to keep ministry properly focused on the building up of one another (13:1-13)
 4. Gifts like tongues were being corrupted (for personal benefit, private prayer language and uninterpreted) and counterfeited (1 Cor.12:3: spoke blasphemous messages about Christ and untranslatable gibberish that no one could understand 1 Cor. 14:2). The gift of tongues is a known spoken language that had not been previously learned. It is not a prayer language since it wasn’t for personal benefit. It is not evidence of spiritual maturity since the Corinthians had all the gifts (1:7) yet were characterized as “fleshly” (1 Cor. 3:1-3).
 5. Gifts are temporary tools God has given the church as a means for growing His body (Eph. 4:16).
 - They are not eternal like love and will all “be done away” with when “the perfect” comes in the eternal state of the new heaven and new earth (1 Cor. 13:8-10). Some gifts (6 of them) had a foundational purpose to establish the church and authenticate the message and messengers of Scriptural truth. This purpose was fulfilled when God’s Word was completed in the apostolic age (sign gifts: healings, miracles, tongues, interpretation of tongues along with two gifted men: the Apostles & Prophets – Eph. 2:20)
 - Paul said “tongues will cease” by themselves (1 Cor. 13:8) and this most likely happened when its purposes were fulfilled in the apostolic age (it had a revelatory purpose that in producing Scripture, authenticating purpose of Apostles & Prophets, confirming the transitional spread of the gospel to all ethnicities after Pentecost was done (Acts 2, 8, 10-11, 19), and judicial purpose (1 Cor. 14:21). The testimony of history confirms the cessation of tongues as they are not mentioned after around 57-58 A.D. and the early church fathers believed they had ceased and the only mention of tongues until 1901 in church history is connected to fringe heretics
 6. It’s important to make a clear distinction between gifts and God. The sign and foundation gifts fulfilled a purpose in the apostolic age, but God is still sovereignly able to do anything, anytime, anywhere and with whoever He desires. The one great miracle He continues to perform is the miracle of the new birth.
 7. You may disagree with the Pastor’s understanding of Scripture about the cessation of some of the gifts, but none of us can disagree about our need and duty to love each other as brothers and sisters in Christ as we seek to build one another up in the Lord.
- Paul adds three important truths to his corrective regarding the exercise of tongues and prophecy.
- ❶ **Don’t stay immature about exercising spiritual gifts (14:20)**
 - Paul calls all believers to grow up in their faith and understanding in two ways:

- **Stop being childish** about the gifts (“do not be children in your thinking...but in your thinking be mature”). Young children naturally tend to be self-centered, calling attention to themselves, and enthralled with anything showy or glitzy. Grow up by not being caught with only the experientially self-gratifying instead of seeking what is best for others.
- **Start being innocent like babies** (“in evil be infants”). Babies, while needy, have an innocence about them and the Lord wants us to stay away from perverting virtue to evil ends (like using your gifts for personal benefit, being divisive, creating confusion).

② Don't forget the intent of the gift of tongues (14:21-22)

- The gift of tongues was designed to confirm the message of God's Word (revelatory – Mark 16:17-20; Heb. 2:3-4); partially fulfill Joel's prophecy in Acts 2:16ff.); to authenticate the spread of the gospel to “all nations” (Luke 24:46-49; Acts 2, 8, 10, 11, 19); to edify believers when interpreted (1 Cor. 12:7; 14:3, 4b, 5b, 12, 17, 19, 26)
- Paul adds another purpose in verse 22: it is sign of judgment to unbelievers (particularly Israel). Paul uses Isaiah 28:11-2 to show how God promised to bring a foreign nation with a foreign tongue to judge them. This same promise is found in Deut. 28:49 and Jer. 5:15-17. This judgment led to transitioning the gospel message from the Jews to the Gentiles (all nations) after partially hardening the nation of Israel in their unbelief (Rom. 11:25) and grafting in many new Gentile believers (Rom. 11:11, 17, 30-32)
 - Tongues are a judicial sign to unbelievers while prophecy is given to believers.
 - This appears contradictory since Paul will illustrate the confusion tongues brings to unbelievers (v. 23) and the clarity and conversion prophecy brings to unbelievers (v. 24-25). Paul is stressing the intended end of the two gifts. Tongues can confirm an unbeliever in their unbelief and prophecy can convert an unbeliever from the unbelief.

③ Don't miss the impact of the gifts on unbelievers (14:23-25)

- Paul illustrates two effects the gift of uninterpreted tongues and the gift of intelligible prophecy can have on unbelievers.
- **Unintelligible tongues have a negative impact on unbelievers** who visit the gathered church. It pushes them away as it appears Christians are “mad” (insane)
- **Understandable prophecy have a positive import** on believers and unbeliever alike (double blessing). Not only can prophecy reveal God's sanctifying truth for believers so they are instructed but it can also be used by the Lord to reveal God's saving truth to unbelievers. The gift of prophecy can bless the lost in five ways (1-It convicts of sin; 2-it calls hearts to account; 3-it exposes the secrets of a sinners heart; 4-it can move a sinner to fall on their face and worship God; 5-it can make God's presence clearly known)