

## Greater Works Christian Church

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### Tongues – 1 Corinthians 14, Part 1

**Introduction:** Many try to keep others from speaking in Tongues, but the Bible clearly teaches the opposite. The truth is, we are never to keep people from speaking in tongues. Instead, we are to get others filled with the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in Tongues, and teach them how to use tongues in an appropriate manner.

#### **1 Corinthians 14:39**

Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues.

#### **1 Corinthians 14:39 (NET)**

So then, brothers and sisters, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid anyone from speaking in tongues.

#### **1 Corinthians 14:39 (AMP)**

So [*to conclude*], my brethren, earnestly desire *and* set your hearts on prophesying (on being inspired to preach and teach and to interpret God's will and purpose), and do not forbid *or* hinder speaking in [*unknown*] tongues.

Of all the translations I checked they all say, “do not forbid speaking in tongues.”

This verse tells us “do not” forbid to speak in tongues. This is directed towards all of us.

We are NOT to keep people from speaking in tongues, nor are we NOT to stop speaking in tongues ourselves.

**Question:** Have you ever been told to Not Speak in Tongues? Why were you told this (was there an explanation)?

#### **Tongues- *What is it?***

**Tongues-** The supernatural ability to speak in a language (or languages) not previously learned. These languages would include known languages of the world (i.e. Spanish, Farsi, Chinese, Japanese, etc.) as well as “tongues of angels” (1 Cor 13:1).

#### **Tongues are for these:**

1. A Sign to the Believer
2. A Private Prayer Language
3. For Strengthening the Church (with interpretation)

When Tongues are understood and used it is a powerful tool for building up the individual and the church.

**Question:** How has the use of Tongues helped you grow spiritually? How has Tongues benefitted you?

### The Proper Use of Tongues in a Corporate Setting

*Please read all of 1 Corinthians, chapter 14 before continuing with the study.*

#### 1 Corinthians 14:1-13

**(v.1)** Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual *gifts*, but especially that you may prophesy.

##### **Pursue** (1377, Grk.) *dioko*

- 1) to make to run or flee, put to flight, drive away
- 2) to run swiftly in order to catch a person or thing, to run after
  - 2a) to press on: figuratively of one who in a race runs swiftly to reach the goal
  - 2b) to pursue (in a hostile manner)
- 3) in any way whatever to harass, trouble, molest one
  - 3a) to persecute
  - 3b) to be mistreated, suffer persecution on account of something
- 4) without the idea of hostility, to run after, follow after: someone
- 5) metaph., to pursue
  - 5a) to seek after eagerly, earnestly endeavour to acquire

##### **Desire** (2206, Grk.) *zeloo*

- 1) to burn with zeal
  - 1a) to be heated or to boil with envy, hatred, anger
    - 1a1) in a good sense, to be zealous in the pursuit of good
  - 1b) to desire earnestly, pursue
    - 1b1) to desire one earnestly, to strive after, busy one's self about him
    - 1b2) to exert one's self for one (that he may not be torn from me)
    - 1b3) to be the object of the zeal of others, to be zealously sought after
  - 1c) to envy

We are to chase after love and have a burning passion for the gifts of the Spirit. ***This includes Tongues.***

*Does this fit in with the theological standpoint that the gifts (tongues) are not for today?*

Chasing after love, and to being zealous (passionate) for the gifts- this is the Biblical stance we are to take. We are not to take a lesser stance when it comes to love and the gifts of God.

***Just as we are to have a passion for God, we are to have a passion for the things that come from God.***

**Important:** The first verse of this chapter also helps us to see the context of Paul's epistle. First, we are to understand that this epistle is written to the corporate body, and we are to see that the church corporately (not merely the individuals) is to chase after love and be zealous for the gifts- together! The reason is because both the love of God and the gifts of God are for the edification of the whole body, as well as each member of the body.

Tongues are included in this. We as a body are to be zealous for Tongues and their interpretation. Tongues will help to build us up individually and corporately. Tongues are to be used to build the body as a whole. This edification may begin with the individual but will always flow to the body as a whole.

**Question:** When discussing Tongues (or any subject) knowing the context is a must. Paul is writing to the Church (corporate body), rather than the individual, about the proper use of Tongues. Why is this important?

**(v.2-5)**

Always remember, this was written to the Corporate Body about the Corporate meetings. On account of this the type Tongues that Paul is speaking of is the Tongues used or spoken in a Corporate Setting.

- 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.

**v.5) Wish (Grk. 2309) *thelo***

- 1) to will, have in mind, intend
  - 1a) to be resolved or determined, to purpose
  - 1b) to desire, to wish
  - 1c) to love
    - 1c1) to like to do a thing, be fond of doing
  - 1d) to take delight in, have pleasure

My (Robert A. Enos) Translation:

*"It is my intent that you all speak in tongues..."*

Or- *"It is my desire for you all to speak in tongues..."*

Here is where the understanding of Tongues begins to unfold. This is where the misunderstanding of tongues begins to unfold as well. It is my hope to bring in a greater understanding of Tongues and their use.

Verse 2 tells us, when speaking in Tongues we are speaking to God and not to men. The reason is, *"no one understands him"*. Others around you may not understand what you are saying when you speak in Tongues, but God understands the Tongues. We are told, *"in the spirit he speaks mysteries."* Verse 4 goes on to say, *"He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself"*. We find here the importance of Tongues for the individual. When speaking in Tongues we are speaking in a manner that God understands, and we are building ourselves up spiritually. Paul goes on to write in verse 5, *"I wish you all spoke with tongues"*, showing us his desire for all believers to speak in Tongues.

**Very Important:**

Even though Tongues for the individual is very important, this is not the context of this chapter. The use of Tongues in the corporate body is the context since Paul is making the comparison between Prophecy and Tongues.

Paul wrote, *"but he who prophesies edifies the church"*, and *"he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues"*. Many have read this and made the conclusion that Tongues are not very important for the church or the individual. However, an honest look at these verses proves that this is not what Paul was saying.

We must remember the context of what Paul is attempting to show us when we read this passage- *"for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification"*. The key word is *"unless"*, and the key phrase in understanding all of this is, ***"that the church may receive edification."*** The context is the corporate body, and more specifically the corporate services (such as our Sunday services). This is seen in verse 6.

**(v.6-13)**

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.

There are some very important things to glean from this passage when discussing Tongues for the corporate service.

*We should not come to each other (the individual or the body) speaking in Tongues unless the Tongues will be interpreted. This is a basic truth when discussing the proper use of Tongues.*

This does not mean that we can't speak in Tongues when others are around. We simply need to have the understanding that without an interpretation, Tongues is not to be brought to the people.

*In other words, it would be foolish for someone to stand in the pulpit on a Sunday morning and minister in Tongues. No one would know what was being said, so no one would be blessed.*

If there is an interpretation of the Tongues, then it would be acceptable to stand in the pulpit and speak in Tongues.

We read that, "*he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification.*" **This does not indicate that Tongues is a lesser gift than Prophecy, but that Tongues without Interpretation is the lesser gift in the corporate setting, simply because it is incomplete- the people won't know what is being said.**

When Tongues are interpreted then they become complete and are on the same level of importance and use as Prophecy. **The edification of the Church is the goal.** This is the reason why Tongues, as directed toward the body, is to be interpreted so that the body can be edified.

*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.*

This verse establishes where our hearts are to be in regard to Tongues (all the gifts). **Everything we do is to be for the edification of the church.** If it doesn't build up others in the corporate meeting we simply are not to do it (no matter what it is). Everything is to be done with others in mind.

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

Everyone that speaks in tongues should be able to interpret what they are praying so that it can be used in a corporate setting. Growing in this gift in this manner will benefit everyone in the church, and not merely the one speaking.

Everything we do as Christians should be to benefit others, including speaking in tongues. It should be our goal and drive to see the corporate body built up in love.

**Question:** When is it OK to speak in tongues? When is it not OK to speak in tongues?  
Remember 1 Corinthians 14:39 when answering this question.

**Conclusion:** In our next study we will continue through 1 Corinthians 14.

ALL the Gifts of the Spirit, they are to be used to edify others.

**1 Corinthians 14:26**

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.

Tongues are among the list of things that we are to use to build one another up in the Spirit. We can use them personally as well as corporately, but in both cases, they will bring edification.

**Question:** Every Gift of the Spirit is given to edify (build up) others. How do Tongues build up others spiritually?

Has this study helped you understand the proper use of Tongues in a Corporate Setting (Church)? If so, how?