

Greater Works Christian Church

Robert A. Enos

Founder and Lead Apostle

Tongues – 1 Corinthians 14, Part 2

Introduction and Recap: As we have been learning, the book of 1 Corinthians was written to the church in Corinth, not an individual. Chapter 14 was written about the corporate use of Tongues in the Church (assembly), not the individual use of Tongues in private.

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).

1 Corinthians 14:39

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

We are NEVER to keep people from speaking in Tongues. Instead, we are to keep Tongues in its proper place and perspective.

1 Corinthians 14:1

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

We are to “Chase After” Love (Agape) and to have a burning Zeal and Desire for the Gifts of the Spirit. In this way the Gifts and Fruit operate together.

The Proper Use of Tongues in a Corporate Setting, Continued

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

1 Corinthians 14:14-33

14 For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful.

When we speak in Tongues it is our own spirit praying as it is empowered by Holy Spirit. The natural mind is unfruitful because the prayer is not coming from the mind, but the Spirit. If we were to speak in our natural language we would say our mind is fruitful in that the prayer is coming from the mind, but our spirit would be unfruitful. In this verse Tongues would flow from the Spirit, not the mind. Remember, fruit is something that is produced. This is why fruit is a great image to use.

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 tells us that he will sing and pray in Tongues (the spirit) and in his natural language (understanding). Singing and praying in the spirit edifies himself while singing and praying in his natural language edifies those around him.

Paul shows that both of these are important. We all should build ourselves up as well as those around us. If we don't build ourselves up we will have nothing to build others with.

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.

Paul continues to make this point. If we speak and pray in Tongues without an interpreter how will those around us be blessed. "Amen" means, "So be it". It is a covenantal word meaning we are in total agreement with the statement we give our Amen to. If a person doesn't understand what was just said how could they give an Amen (agreement) to something they didn't understand?

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.

Even though Paul fully understood the great importance of speaking and praying in Tongues, his heart was to build-up those around him. Speaking and praying in Tongues without interpretation would only build himself up. This is why he says, *"I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue."*

Remember, that this would be Tongues without an interpreter. Tongues with interpretation is equal with Prophecy. Prophecy edifies others.

20 Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature.

Those that are Mature in their understanding tend to be less self-centered and less self-exalting. The mature are more concerned with others. This is one of the key points of this chapter and book. It seems as if Paul was wanting to get the people of the church to think of others before themselves.

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.

Tongues are to grab the attention of the unbeliever, especially the Jewish people. Tongues (with interpretation) was to be used in a corporate setting to capture the hearts of the unbeliever, as well as to build up the believer.

Important Note:

Isaiah 28:11-12

11 For with stammering lips and another tongue He will speak to this people,

12 To whom He said, "This *is* the rest *with which* You may cause the weary to rest," And, "This *is* the refreshing"; Yet they would not hear.

Speaking in Tongues was prophesied by Prophet Isaiah. Notice that Tongues and the "Rest of the Lord" are closely related. Tongues edifies the believer and brings rest to his/her soul.

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.

Keep in mind that the Tongues spoken of here in v.23 would be Tongues without interpretation. Prophecy is spoken in a known and common language whereas Tongues are spoken in an unknown language. If Tongues is interpreted it is equal to Prophecy.

Notice the importance of Prophecy (v.24-25). Prophecy brings conviction and reveals the secrets of the heart. This can cause a person to turn to Christ as Savior. Keeping in mind that Tongues with Interpretation is on par with Prophecy, then Tongues and Interpretation would do the same thing as Prophecy.

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 key phrase in this section is, "each of you..." In other words, everyone in the Church has a Psalm (song of praise to a musical instrument), a teaching, a tongue, a revelation, an interpretation. Everyone has these within them and is to be used to build up others.

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.

This is the “order” of Tongues in a corporate service. Two or three can speak in turn as someone interprets what is spoken. This keeps thing flowing properly and is better understood by the congregation.

If there is no one to interpret the Tongues there is to be no Message in Tongues given. In a corporate service, a message in Tongues without interpretation is confusing and out of order.

Note: V.28 says, “*But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God.*” To put this another way, “*If there is no interpreter don’t give a Message in Tongues to the congregation. Speak in a manner that you and God can hear without disrupting the corporate service.*”

- 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.

Just as Paul gives guidelines for the proper use of Tongues, he also gives guidelines for the proper use of Prophecy.

V.33 tells us, “God is not *the author* of confusion but of peace”. Paul is attempting to remove the confusion without shutting down the Gifts of the Spirit (including Tongues and Prophecy). The Peace of God should be the end result of all the Gifts of the Spirit.

Note: V.34-36 deals with women and the corporate service, which is off subject. We will deal with these verses in another study.

Conclusion: When we read this chapter (chap. 14) in its context we can clearly see that Paul was not in any way trying to keep the believer from speaking in tongues- quite the contrary. Paul simply was clearing the air and removing the confusion surrounding Tongues.

1 Corinthians 14:37-40

- 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 prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues.
- 40 Let all things be done decently and in order.

The things that Paul wrote in this chapter about Tongues are the commandments of the Lord. These did not originate with Paul but the Lord.

We are to, “desire earnestly to prophesy”. We are to pursue this as with all the Gifts.

As we stated in an earlier study, we are never to keep people (or ourselves) from speaking in Tongues. We are merely to use them properly in the corporate setting. Paul wasn't after shutting any of the Gifts down. He merely was teaching how to use them, “decently and in order.”