

1 Corinthians 14:1-28

Speaking in tongues

The church at Corinth was very young and immature, especially in their mindset of spiritual gifts. Paul addresses this young Christian mindset in chapters 12-14 by telling the believers that spiritual gifts are given by the Holy Spirit and their purpose is to build up the church. Many believers were using tongues as a way of showcasing their connection with God. This had come as a result of their pagan worship where speaking in mindless gibberish was an outward expression of your connection with the pagan idol. The speaking of "tongues" carried over into the church because of the immaturity of the believers. The attention was drawn to the person speaking instead of benefitting the community. Therefore, Paul has to address this specific spiritual gift because it was being abused, like many churches do today. Back in Chapter 12 Paul expressed how every spiritual gift is not given to every individual, but specific gifts are given to specific individuals so that everyone has a part to play in glorifying the Lord through the body of Christ.

v. 1-4 – Let love be your highest goal (NLT), follow the way of love.

Prophecy – builds up the church more than any other gift...why?

What exactly is prophecy? Edifies, comforts or encourages the church. Main expressions of prophecy: Preaching, teaching, spontaneous exhortation. (The words God wants to be spoken at just the right time, to the right person/people)

Tongues – supernatural speech in which the Christian speaks in a language which he or she does not ordinarily know. (Acts 2:8-11) – People spoke in tongues after receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:46, 19:6)

However, in Acts 8:15-17 and 1 Corinthians 12:30, people received the Holy Spirit and didn't speak in tongues. This means that tongues does not equal receiving the Holy Spirit.

v. 3 – Prophecy on the other hand, builds people up, encourages them and comforts them.

v. 4 – reiterates what Paul was saying in chapter 12 – the gifts of the Holy Spirit are for the building up of the church, not for self-edification. Love thinks of others and not of self.

v. 5 – Paul would rather the Corinthians have the gift of prophecy than tongues, not because he thought tongues was an invalid gift but because prophecy would strengthen the whole church. At the time they were fighting against each other. Paul desired a unified church that focused on bringing people into God's family instead of a family reunion that causes everyone to argue.

v.6-12 – like a musical melody or a call to arms – a person's speech needs to be intelligible otherwise the church will not profit from what is being said.

The same also goes beyond just speaking in foreign languages – the Greek word is glossa and refers here to the word “the” affixed before it which means a part of the organ and not a foreign language.

Paul is indicating also here that if you speak in a confusing manner, regardless of what you are saying, then you are just a bunch of hot air because no one can understand you.

It makes me think of our philosophy at BCM on speaking. Our goal is life change, not information – I don't want to sit here and preach in a way that is so spiritually deep that you can't go and do what the Bible calls you to. Many of us are educated way beyond our obedience.

When listening to someone speaking or preaching – don't look for depth, instead listen for obedience, stuff that helps you confess your sin and grow in your walk with the Lord.

v. 10 – known languages, Paul said this because of the gibberish language being spoken by the Pagan worshippers.

v. 12 – make the edification of your church the aim this desire to excel.

v. 13-17 – I love what Paul says here because essentially he is saying that the Christian life cannot be focused on just emotions/experiences or just logic. Healthy worship as a follower of Jesus must include both spirit and truth, both mind and heart. We must sing songs and listen to messages with both emotion and understanding.

v. 17 – Use of Amen in the church – people would say Amen after statements they would agree with in church (many churches still do that) – but in this reference, they couldn't say it because they can't understand you!

v. 18-20 – stop thinking like children and think like adults

v. 21 – Isaiah 28:11-12 – Paul applies Isaiah's prophecy from God about how His people wouldn't listen to the prophets of the OT. So, he sent people who didn't even speak the language that God's people spoke to bring judgement on his own people. Paul used this to strengthen his support of tongues being a sign for unbelievers- because of all the different languages spoken throughout the Gentile world, tongues helped spread the gospel rapidly.

v. 22-25 - As a sign for unbelievers – this means that the gift of tongues has no place in an assembly of all believers. However, if everyone is speaking in tongues and there is such confusion, the unbeliever will reject the community, making the gospel disgraced and discredited.

Speaking in tongues is weird if you can't understand it because you don't know the language. Therefore, an interpreter is needed (coming up in the next section). That is why it is better to use the gift of prophecy so that unbelievers would be convicted of sin after hearing what the preacher/teacher had to say.

Talk about praying for chairs before every challenge – I pray for nonbelievers to be convicted of sin and be brought to worship God.

v. 26-28 (a call to orderly worship) – The early church was an interesting place. There was no order of service. One person might stand up and read a psalm, while someone else might do some sort of teaching that wasn't predetermined, while someone would speak in tongues and someone else would stand up and say I have a revelation from the Lord. Therefore, the church was using their gifts. Paul doesn't dismiss this method but says there must be control instead of chaos. Everything must be done with a view to edification.

Just because something is spectacular or sensational doesn't mean it has a place in the church. Edification equates to spiritual growth for a body of believers.

Here we see 4 rules of how to run a church gathering:

1. All things must be done for building up the people of God.
2. If anyone were to speak in tongues let only two or at the most three people do so
3. They must take turns not randomly or over each other.
4. There must be an interpreter – if there were no interpreters, the speakers must be silent.

v. 33 – Paul ends with this command, God is not the author of confusion, but of peace. The same should be of a gathering of believers. If there is disorder then you can be sure that the Spirit of God is not in control.

So What

The Corinthian church was using their spiritual gifts to please themselves and make themselves look good in front of others, not help their fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. The key word was not edification but exhibition.

Paul constantly reiterates that the spiritual gifts are to build up the church (vs. 3, 12, 17, 26) and that tongues ends up building up the person speaking. What we can learn from the church in Corinth is that our goal is to always seek to build. Our goal as the body of Christ is to build up God's people, the church so that those who do not know him will be convicted of sin and desire a relationship with the loving God of the universe and the gospel would be proclaimed.

Wiersbe, "The principle of edification encourages us to major on sharing the Word of God so that the church will be strengthened and grow. The principle of understanding reminds us that what we share must be understood if it is to do any good." (pg. 114)

Now What

Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-13

You have been given gifts so that you will seek to build. Are you doing that? Do you just say nice things hoping it will help others or do you truly seek to build up the body of Christ? When you seek to build then you are truly using your gifts to edify believers. And it doesn't have to be just words, it could be serving someone, listening to someone, or even just living a life filled with joy that encourages others.

You have to seek to build, it doesn't just happen. Can you imagine what would happen if we all sought to build each other up within the church? The church would grow in America like it is growing everywhere else in the world. The gospel would be spread and people would truly desire a relationship with the God that loves us! We would see families changed, marriages healed, lives saved!

Seek to build