

# 1 Corinthians 14

## 1 Corinthians 14.1-11

**V1** – What was better than all gifts? Love

- Were they to want spiritual gifts, in addition to having love? Yes
- What was the situation with the gift of prophecy? They had undervalued it
- The gift of prophecy included both preaching, as well as seeing into the future
- Paul put the emphasis on prophecy, instead of speaking in tongues
- This must have been quite a blow to the Christians at Corinth

**V2** – What were some of the big problems with speaking in tongues? The message was addressed to God, not to others, and no-one else could understand the message

- Why did Paul call the messages "mysteries"? Because no-one could understand them

**V3** – But what are the advantages of exercising the gift of prophecy? People are edified, exhorted, and comforted by the message (because they could understand the message)

**V4** – How does Paul summarize the difference between speaking in tongues and prophesying? The gift of tongues edifies only the person who does it, but the gift of prophecy edifies the whole church

**V5** – What was Paul's desire concerning the gift of tongues? That they could all do it

- But what was his view concerning the gift of prophecy? It would still be of more value
- When is the gift of tongues of some value? When there is an interpretation following it

**V6** – This is Paul's first conclusion: There is not much value to the gift of tongues, if there is no interpretation

**V7** – What two examples does Paul use to illustrate the gift of tongues? The flute and the harp

- Can a "message" be delivered with a flute or harp? Not if the person plays only one note; even with playing different notes, it is not easy to give a message on the flute
- Why can't they deliver messages? Because there is no distinction of sounds
- Notice: The flute here is not like a modern flute, but like the "Pipes of Pan" (a series of pipes made of bamboo and tied together)
- Where else had Paul used musical instruments to make a point? *1 Cor. 13.1* – the gong and the cymbal
- What does this indicate about Paul? He must have had a musical background in his life

**V8** – What is the next illustration that Paul used? The bugle

- What is unusual about the bugle? There are no keys on the instrument

Optional question: For those with a background in the band: How then does a person change the notes that are being played? The notes are based on overtones. The player tightens up his lips and thinks about a higher note, and the instrument goes up

- What are some famous tunes on the bugle? "Charge" "Taps" "Reveille"

**V 9 – What is Paul's application?** Speaking in tongues is like blowing one note over and over on the bugle – there is no message that can be delivered that way

**V 10 – How many languages are there in the world today?** Between 3000 and 5000

-Where did all the languages come from? Read **Gen. 11:1-9** – the Tower of Babel

-Why did God give mankind all the languages? To keep them from being arrogant (many people have great difficulties learning a foreign language) – they keep us humble

**Optional question: Does anyone know the name of the artificial language that some want to make an international language?** Esperanto – the rules of grammar are consistent, and

there are no exceptions (very different from English) –It was first developed in 1887, but it has never been adopted as a secondary language for any country in the world

-Why will it never work? Because of the word of God in *Gen. 11.1-9*

**V 11 – The origin of the word "barbarian":** It originally meant someone who was not Greek

-Then it came to mean any foreigner; today it means a wild person

Read **Acts 28.2, Romans 1.14, Colossians 3.11**

-If I speak in a language that other people don't know, how does it make me look and sound? Like a wild person (think about the last time you heard someone speaking in a foreign language)

## **1 Corinthians 14.12-19**

**V 12 – Is being zealous (enthusiastic) always a good thing?** No – Read **Romans 10.1-3**

-What did they need to do, in addition to having zeal? They needed to remember to edify the church (in other words, to do what is best for the whole congregation)

-Did the gift of tongues do this? Generally no (especially when the message was not interpreted)

**V 13 – What should the tongues speaker pray for?** The gift of interpretation

-Why? So that the whole church might be edified

**V 14 – What does the gift of tongues do for the human mind?** Nothing – there is no a challenging message to think about

**V 15 – What does this verse say about our public prayers?** That we should have the right attitude (spirit), but we should also understand what we are saying

-What does this say about memorized prayers and prayers of the catechism? Most of the time people do not even realize what they are saying

-Is there anything wrong with writing our prayers out in advance? Absolutely not

-We have our songs written out, and the sermon is written out

-We need to think about what we are going to say and put real thought and meaning into our words

-What does *v 15b* say about our singing? We should understand the songs that we are singing

-What would this say about singing songs in a foreign language that people do not

**know?** It would be wrong

-Some denominational churches (especially at Christmas time) sing songs in Latin, and the people really do not understand what they are singing

So in both our praying and our singing, we are to have the right attitude and also know what we are doing

-There should be no empty reciting of prayers or songs

**V 16 – What does "amen" mean?** It means: truly, verily, this is the truth, I agree with what was just said, etc.

-For background:

**Read Deut. 27.15-26, Psalm 106.48, Nehemiah 5.13, Nehemiah 8.6, Revelation 5.14, Revelation 7.11-12**

**-What is Paul's point about saying "Amen"?** If we have not understood the language that the person was speaking in, how can we say Amen? -an excellent point

**-Note:** It does not seem necessary that we all say "Amen" after a prayer, but the New Testament does allow it

**V 17 –** It might sound great to the person who is speaking and who can understand the foreign language, but to everyone else, it is just noise

-Here is another good lesson for those who conduct the worship service: they should speak clearly and distinctly and loud enough for everyone to hear

**V 18 – Since they liked to brag about the gift of tongues, what did Paul say?** If you want to brag, then listen to this: I can speak in more languages than all of you put together

**V 19 – But what was Paul's decision?** He preferred to speak 5 words in a known language, instead of 10,000 in an unknown language

-This clearly shows that the gift of tongues could be controlled

-It was not an ecstatic utterance, as our Pentecostal friends claim today

-They supposedly lose control and "fall" into tongues, but Paul's words here indicate just the opposite: it was entirely controllable

-This is a powerful argument against the Pentecostal movement!

## **1 Corinthians 14.20-25**

**V 20 – How had the Corinthian Christians been acting like babies?** In bragging about the gift of tongues

**-In what area of life should we be like babies?** In evil things

**-In what sense should we be babies in evil things?** Examples: We should not know how to pick locks, or how to hot-wire a car, how to break into a house, how to operate a Ponzi scheme, etc.

**V 21 – Read Isaiah 28.11-12 –** This is a reference to the Assyrians

-God was using them to get the Israelites to repent

-This is another indication that "tongues" refers to known languages, not the language of angels!

-Also: **Read Acts 2.4** – This was not the language of angels, but known foreign languages which a person had never studied

**V 22** – **What was one of the original purposes of the gift of tongues?** To impress non-Christians (as on the Day of Pentecost)

**-But how would it have impressed them?** With the gospel of Christ (not in the skill of the person speaking in the foreign language)

**-But what was the most important gift in terms of the local congregation?** Prophecy (remember that it included preaching)

**V 23** – **What would happen if all kinds of people were speaking in tongues and a visitor entered the worship?** He would think that the Christians were crazy ("mad")

-This is interesting; they were concerned about the impression that they were making on visitors, just as we should be today

**-Have you ever heard several foreign languages being spoken at the same time?** It is very confusing (or: "madness")

**V 24** – **But what happens if a visitor enters the worship and someone is prophesying and preaching?** The visitor will be edified and encouraged to obey the gospel

**V 25** – **How will the preaching in worship disclose the secrets of a person's heart?** We find out that we are sinners – Remember the woman at the well in *John 4*

**-So which is more important: the gift of prophesying and preaching, or the gift of tongues?** Obviously the gift of prophecy

## **1 Corinthians 14.26-33**

**V 26** – **What does the word "psalm" refer to?** The reading of a *Psalms* from the Old Testament

-This verse is used by some false teachers today to prove that we can have solos in worship, but the verse does not prove that, and we have no examples of anyone ever singing a solo in worship

**-What were the other things that Paul mentioned as being a part of their worship?**

Teaching from the Bible, a revelation from God, a message in a foreign language, and the translation

**-What was Paul's requirement for anything that was done in worship?** It had to be for edification (the building up of each person)

**V 27** – **What requirements did Paul put on tongues?** Two or three had to do it; there had to be an interpretation; they had to take turns

**-Why did 2-3 have to participate?** So that no one person could become arrogant with that gift

-They had to take turns. The meaning: the gift of tongues was controllable. People did not just suddenly break into tongues (as the Pentecostals do today)

**V 28** – **What did Paul say about the situation where there was no-one with the gift of interpretation?** They should keep quiet (no tongues)

-This again points to the fact that they could control this gift.

**Review: What regulations did Paul place on the gift of tongues?**

1. Two or three at a time
2. Each in turn (not spontaneous)
3. There had to be someone to interpret
4. If there was no interpreter, then they were to keep quiet

**-Which one of these regulations is violated today in Pentecostal churches? ALL OF THEM!**

**V 29** – What is the next gift that Paul discussed? The gift of prophecy

**-What gift went along with the gift of prophecy?** The gift of judgment (to determine if the first gift was from God)

**V 30** – Can two people give revelations at the same time? No – Paul continues to emphasize order in worship

**V 31** – What is the purpose of order in worship? So that more learning can take place

**V 32** – Were the Old Testament prophets able to control their gift of prophecy? Yes – in other words, they were not just suddenly overwhelmed with a prophecy

**V 33** – What is the ultimate reason that there is to be order in worship? Because God is not a God of confusion

-This is the reason that our worship services are planned out in advance; some people want a "spontaneous" worship, but the Bible does not endorse that at all

-Rather, God has always wanted order in worship

-This is why we post the songs, why we use songbooks, why we know in advance who is going to do what in the service

-Some people have severely criticized our congregation for this, but this is what the Bible requires of us

## **1 Corinthians 14.34-38**

**V 34** – What is the next regulation that Paul placed on the church? The women were not allowed to speak (during worship when men are present)

**-Does the word "church" here refer to the "church assembled" or the "church dispersed"?** Obviously the church assembled; if it referred to the church dispersed, then women could never say anything at all at any time

-The church building is still not mentioned, so it does not mean just in the church building, but in any worship service (whether it is a "devotional" in someone's basement, a "teen devo" at camp, or whenever worship is taking place), then women are to keep quiet

-There only two exceptions:

**1.** In making the Good Confession, and the only reason that this is an exception is because in the book of *Acts*, people generally responded to the gospel after a preacher delivered a sermon, and they confessed Christ as their savior

**2.** Women are to participate in the singing, because of *Ephesians 5.19*, where Christians are told:

"...speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord..."

-In other words, "speaking" is allowed in the form of singing, but not in the other acts of worship

**-Why are women to keep quiet during worship?** As a sign of subjection; this goes back to *Genesis 3.16* – **Read Gen. 3.16**

-Also: **Read 1 Peter 3.5-6** – Sarah called Abraham "lord" and was in subjection to him

-There are no New Testament examples of women preaching or in any other way leading in worship when men are present

-In *Acts 16.13*, only Jewish women were present, and when Paul and Silas arrived, they did the preaching, not the women

-Some people say that the daughters of Philip prophesied in worship (*Acts 21.9*), but there is no evidence that they did this during worship

**-Read Acts 21.10-12** – Agabus prophesied about Paul, but it obviously was not during a worship service

**V 35** – **What should a woman do if she has a question during worship?** She is to ask her "husband" at home

**-And if she does not have a husband?** The Greek word for "husband" is also the exact same Greek word for "man"

-There are not separate Greek words for these two concepts; the translation is determined strictly by the context

-so she should ask her "man" – a brother, an uncle, her father, her son, or some other man in the congregation (such as an elder, deacon, etc.)

**-Read 1 Tim. 2.12** – The woman is not allowed to teach over a man (in a formal classroom setting)

-Notice: Priscilla and Aquila met with Apollos privately and taught him the word of God more accurately (*Acts 18.26*)

**-Is there any evidence that v 35 is a cultural requirement that does not apply to us today?** No evidence whatsoever

**V 36** – **Did the gospel originate at Corinth?** No, they were not to change Paul's requirements here about women speaking (or about anything else in this chapter)

-Again, these were not cultural things – this was and is the word of God for all future generations

## **1 Corinthians 14.37-40**

**V 37** – Paul: What I am telling you will be confirmed by those with the spiritual gifts

-So these things were commandments from the Lord (again indicating that these requirements were going to be for all generations of Christians)

**V 38** – **What if someone claimed to have a spiritual gift and contradicted Paul?** Then that person was a fake

**V 39** – What was greater than the gift of tongues? The gift of prophecy

**V 40** – What is the grand conclusion of this chapter? Our worship is to be done in a decent and orderly way

-no "ad lib" comments

-no "off the cuff" comments

-no off-hand jokes or other things that were not planned

-Worship is to be orderly, and the goal is edification (not being spontaneous)

-This goes against the ideas of many people today (both in the denominational world and in the Lord's church), but this is what the Bible commands

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