

28. The Epistle of 1Peter—4:10

“The Gifts of the Holy Spirit” Pt.10

(7/11/18)

Tonight, we’re going to finish up our topical study on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit—next week we’ll get back to our study in 1Peter.

But tonight, we want to finish looking at the **gift of tongues**—so turn to 1Corinthians 14 where Paul spends a considerable amount of time talking about this gift.

What is the gift of tongues?

Speaking in tongues is the supernatural ability given by the Holy Spirit to communicate to God in a language you never learned and do not understand.

This phenomenon first took place on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4).

What is the purpose of the gift of tongues?

Tongues is both a *prayer* language and a *praise* language, both of which are directed at God not man—

1 Corinthians 14:2 (NKJV)

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.

Tongues is never God speaking to man it is always man speaking to God—“*What about v.20-25?*”—we’ll get there in a minute.

When Paul says in v.2 that when someone speaks in tongues, “*no one understands him*”—he is speaking in general terms.

That’s not to say that, on rare occasions, someone might be present who knows the language that was just spoken—but most often the language spoken will be unknown to those in the congregation.

1 Corinthians 14:4 (NKJV)

⁴ He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself...

Tongues is the only gift which is used to build us up personally because it’s primary use is for personal devotions (prayer and praise).

1 Corinthians 14:4 (NKJV)

⁴ He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, **but he who prophesies edifies the church.**

And again, that’s because the proclamation of God’s Word is what builds up the whole church.

1 Corinthians 14:5 (NKJV)

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.

The Corinthian Christians had elevated the gift of tongues above every other gift (like so many charismatic Christians today) to the point that they felt it was THE gift to have if a person was to be considered a ‘spiritual’ person.

And as such they were using the gift chaotically in their church services.

But as Paul has been pointing out—even though tongues is a great gift for personal devotions (it builds up the individual who uses it)—when it comes to the corporate assembly of God’s people what’s important is that *every* Christian present be built up.

That happens when prophecy is taking place (speaking words from God)—but also if someone speaks in tongues and someone is there to interpret that—“**the church** (as a whole) **may receive edification.**”

“I wish you all spoke with tongues...” (v.5)

I thought Paul already said, “*Are all apostles, are all prophets, do all speak with tongues?*” (12:29, 30)—the implied answer being *no*, why, then, would he say here, “*I want you all to speak in tongues*”?

In chapter 12, Paul is talking about the exercise of tongues in a corporate church service, followed by interpretation.

He is basically saying in chapter 14 that even though tongues can be used by God to build up the Christians present (only if there is an interpretation given)—this is still not the norm for a corporate church service.

The norm is *prophecy* for public gatherings and *tongues* for private devotions.

And so here in chapter 14, he’s talking, in part, about the private, devotional use of tongues—which I believe is available to every child of God—but still isn’t the best gift for public meetings.

1 Corinthians 14:6 (NKJV)

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?

Now Paul begins to make his case for the superiority of any speaking gift (over tongues) that communicates to God’s people His Word (thru prophesy, word of knowledge or teaching) using a language everyone present can understand—because again, the main goal in a corporate church service is that all be edified.

1 Corinthians 14:7 (NKJV)

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?

In other words, the whole idea of listening to and enjoying music is that each person in the band or orchestra has to play on key and must follow the arrangement of the notes of each song if the audience is going to be able to recognize and enjoy the music being played.

1 Corinthians 14:8 (NKJV)

8 For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle?

There are certain notes arranged in certain ways that when played on the trumpet tell soldiers on the battlefield when to charge and when to retreat.

If the person with the trumpet went out there and started playing “*Flight of the Bumble Bee*” no one would know what to do—those sounds would be unfamiliar to troops in battle.

1 Corinthians 14:9-11 (NKJV)

9 So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue [physical organ in your mouth] 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.

If you’ve ever been to a foreign country and needed directions but couldn’t speak the language and the person you were talking to didn’t speak English—then you know how frustrating that can be.

Language only communicates if you understand the meaning that has been assigned to the sounds (words) being spoken—if not they are meaningless noises. (give examples)

And so, Paul uses 3 examples—musical instruments; a trumpet used in battle; and everyday conversation to prove his point that unless sounds have meaning attached to them—to the people that hear them, they are meaningless and therefore useless noise.

1 Corinthians 14:12 (NKJV)

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.**

In other words, “*You Corinthians who think that speaking in tongues is the ultimate spiritual gift—understand that, in a public meeting the way you excel spiritually is by speaking in a language everyone understands so that everyone is edified (built up spiritually).*”

1 Corinthians 14:13 (NKJV)

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

Paul is saying that the only time exercising the gift of tongues in a public service is acceptable is if God gives you the interpretation, so you can tell everyone else what you just said in the way of praise and thanksgiving; or if someone else is present with the gift of interpretation.

The gift of interpretation

1 Corinthians 12:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another *different* kinds of tongues, to another **the interpretation of tongues.**

1 Corinthians 14:5 (NKJV)

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.

1 Corinthians 14:13 (NKJV)

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

This is gift that must be in operation whenever someone speaks in tongues in a public church service—if not then no one is allowed to speak in tongues the rest of that service.

Just as tongues is speaking in a language you’ve never learned and do not understand—the gift of interpretation is translating a language you’ve never learned and do not understand.

The gift happens as the Holy Spirit starts laying on your heart (like a prophecy) what a person who has just spoken in tongues has said.

1 Corinthians 14:14 (NKJV)

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

(Comment from last time why God gives us a gift that by-passes our intellect)

1 Corinthians 14:15 (NKJV)

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 says that when it comes to prayer and praise he will do both in tongues in his *private devotions*; and in his known language in the *public service*.

1 Corinthians 14:16-17 (NKJV)

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. (Comment)

1 Corinthians 14:18-19 (NKJV)

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.

“**Ten-thousand**” is the largest number in the Greek language and is often used to represent an infinite number. (Explain)

Now the next few verses are without a doubt the most confusing in this chapter (and possibly in the entire Bible).

1 Corinthians 14:20-22 (NKJV)

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

Now verse 22—“**Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers...**” seems to contradict Paul’s earlier statement in v.2 that tongues is *never* used by God to speak to *people*.

But here it seems that Paul is saying that God *does* use tongues to speak to unbelievers.

Remember, that in Acts 2, on the Day of Pentecost, Peter didn’t preach the gospel in tongues to the unbelievers present—but in a language they all understood.

Further, notice that Paul said that tongues were a **sign** to unbelievers not a *message from God* to unbelievers.

But then in v.23-25 he seems to totally contradict what he just said in v.21-22—

1 Corinthians 14:22-25 (NKJV)

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. 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. (Comment)

This apparent contradiction is such a problem that J.B. Philips in his paraphrase of the New Testament put a little footnote by this passage saying that *Paul must have been confused when he wrote this—that he made a mistake in what he wanted to say.*

That’s ridiculous because Paul was writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit—Who is never confused nor makes mistakes!

When you read God’s Word and you think there’s contradictions—know this, you just don’t understand what He is saying because God’s Word never contradicts itself!

When Paul said,

1 Corinthians 14:21-22a (NKJV)

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...

In verse 21 he was quoting out of Isaiah 28:11-12 (give background).

So, in that context the tongue (language) of the Assyrians would be a *sign* (not a message that unbelieving Israel would understand verbally)—a sign that God's judgment had come upon this apostate, idolatrous nation.

But when it comes to a public assembly in the N.T. church, the purpose is not to judge unbelievers—but to reach them with the gospel.

And those unbelievers who come to church are demonstrating that they are *open* to God and *want* to hear what He has to say.

Therefore, don't speak to them in tongues (which in the O.T. was a sign of judgment upon hard hearted unbelievers)—but speak to them clearly through prophecy (the proclamation of God's Word in their own language) so that they can hear, understand, repent and be saved.

And so when Paul said in v.22—

1 Corinthians 14:22 (NKJV)

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.

He was saying the clear presentation of God's word (prophecy) is for those who believe—which would also include those who 'desire to believe' and have come to church to hear what God has said. (Elaborate)

God never hides His truth from a heart that is open.

But if a person continues to hear the clear teaching of God's Word and yet continues to reject it—at some point God withdraws the ability to understand and all that's left for them is judgment (just as He did with Israel).

Matthew 13:3, 10-15 (NKJV)

³ Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying...

¹⁰ And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?"

¹¹ He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. ¹² For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. ¹³ Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. ¹⁴ And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: *'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive; ¹⁵ For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.'*

2 Thessalonians 2:9-11 (NKJV)

⁹ The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, ¹⁰ and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. ¹¹ And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie,

Now, even if Paul's illustration in v.21-22 is a little *cloudy*—his application in v.23-25 is clear.

The “**Therefore**” in v.23 indicates that Paul is about to draw a conclusion from the illustration he has just given.

1 Corinthians 14:23-25 (NKJV)

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.**

Only the Word of God can penetrate the human heart and reveal the sin that is there so that a person will repent and be converted. (Hebrews 4:12)

And the only way that will happen is if we speak it in their own language through prophecy which again is simply proclaiming the clear teaching of God's Word.

This happens all the time in our church as God's Word is being taught. (Explain)

1 Corinthians 14:26 (NKJV)

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.

Paul is rebuking them for letting their public meetings, which should have been used for God's glory and the edification of all who were present—to become a circus where everyone wanted to get into the act and because of their carnality and pride tried to grab attention and recognition for themselves to show everyone how spiritual they were.

Some have used this verse to justify their belief that in the local church meeting there should be no pastors or formal teaching but that everyone should be able to say or do whatever they feel the Holy Spirit is prompting them to do or say—in order of course! (Explain)

1 Corinthians 14:27-28 (NKJV)

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.

Again, if tongues is exercised in a church service there must be present someone who can interpret—or else the gift can't be used.

You don't need to pray to interpret tongues when you use it in your private devotions—only in the public church service.

And neither does there need to be an interpretation in a public church service if you're praying or worshiping quietly in tongues and not standing up and speaking out so others can hear what you're saying. (Explain)

1 Corinthians 14:29-32 (NKJV)

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.

Sometimes people, as we have already talked about in this series, will justify weird behavior by saying they were “taken over” by the Spirit.

But here Paul says even while ministering in the Spirit, a person is never out of control.

1 Corinthians 14:33 (NKJV)

³³ For God is not *the author* of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

Paul placed definite restrictions on the use of the gift of prophecy and tongues or any gift in the public assembly because—chaos and edification are incompatible.

“But isn't that quenching the Spirit?”—apparently Paul didn't think so.

I would say that when Paul gave these ‘rules’ to govern the function of the gifts in a church service he *was* looking to quench the spirit—the spirit of those who were trying to use the service to ‘showcase’ their own spirituality!

1 Corinthians 14:39-40 (NKJV)

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.