

### The Corinthian Call: Desire the Gift of Prophecy | 1 Corinthians 14:1-5

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- Verse 1 –
  - Paul's injunction to the Corinthians cannot be applied fully to the church today because the manifestation gifts have ceased. In that day, however, they were instructed to **follow after charity** and to have a **desire...that ye may prophesy** more than the other spiritual gifts.
  - We must not miss the heart of the instruction: **follow after charity**. The word **follow** is a present, active verb, thus, *chase after or pursue*. A believer should *strive for* the unique Christian love called **charity** even though he/she likely does not display all of its attributes.
  - In Numbers 11:25-29 there were 70 elders given the gift of prophecy. Moses' prayer was, "**that all the Lord's people were prophets.**" The gift of prophecy was a gift that was related to the Lord's direct work with and through Israel, and most often related to end-times redemption.
  - With the instruction to desire prophecy over the other gifts, we must assume that spiritual gifts can be *desired* and are not sovereignly chosen by God.
- Verse 2 –
  - Other than a hint in 1 Corinthians 13:1, this concept of an **unknown tongue** is new, with all previous descriptions of tongues appearing to be *known* tongues.
  - This particular *glossolalia* (from the Greek γλῶσσα [glossa]) is one that **no man understandeth** and is a language by which the speaker **speaketh mysteries**.
  - This is perhaps the manner in which Paul heard a voice on the road to Damascus which was not understandable by the others who heard (Acts 22:9).
  - Note that when Paul was in Ephesus, he **laid his hands upon them...and they spake with tongues, and prophesied**. This seems to be what also happened in Corinth (Acts 19:6).
- Verse 3 –
  - To prophesy is to share a revelation that came from God that would be otherwise unknown.
  - The purposes listed for prophecy are
    - **edification** (οἰκοδομή [oikodome] building up to completion),
    - **exhortation** (παράκλησις [paraklasis] - to come alongside and call),
    - **comfort** παραμυθία [paramythia] -to come alongside with a story. The name *Barnabus* is linguistically related, coming from *para-muthos*).
- Verse 4 –
  - Concerning speaking **in an unknown tongue**, it does edify, but only the one who speaks. This was one reason why prophecy was a gift more to be desired.
  - Self-edification is not sinful, but is not something to prioritize.
- Verse 5 - Paul restates his case that the gift of prophecy is superior to the gift of tongues. Paul's had no issue with a person who spoke in tongues (even desired it), but **except he interpret** the message given in tongues, it was only for self-edification. An interpreted message is, by its very nature, a prophetic message.

### The Limitation of the Gift of Tongues | 1 Corinthians 14:6-12

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- Verse 6 –

- The desire of Paul was to **profit** the Corinthians, and speaking in tongues would not do that (it was for self-edification only - v. 4).
- Though the gift of tongues and other manifestation gifts have ceased, our desire should be for gifts which are for the **profit** of other believers.
- Of the list given here (**revelation, knowledge, prophesying** and **doctrine**), only **doctrine** remains as an area in which we can speak.
- What a profit indeed it would be if we could excel in doctrine.
- Verses 7-8 –
  - Paul uses an illustration from *lifeless* instruments, noting especially their use in communicating some message beyond music, such as a bugler or drummer in the army.
  - Verse 8 is often used out of context by preachers, used to call the church to uniformity of "vision." In my opinion, the Scripture is weakened when we do not keep Biblical illustrations within their Biblical context.
- Verses 9-10 –
  - Paul encourages the use of speech that is **easy to be understood**.
    - The Greek word εὖσημος [eusemos] is only used here in the New Testament, and literally means *a good sign*.
    - There is no equivalent English word, but Paul very well may be speaking of words that are well-crafted to display the meaning rather than ease of understanding.
    - Complex thoughts may require complex words. Unintelligible words are spoken **into the air**.
  - NOTE: People should not use this verse as an excuse for not being able to understand complex presentations. If you are unable to understand a complex issue, don't blame the speaker. Rather, go back and *study to show thyself approved*. Complex issues require prerequisites.
- Verse 11 - Continuing the emphasis on clear speech rather than speaking in tongues, Paul uses the word **barbarian**, a word which, in its day, simply referred to someone who did not speak Greek.
- Verse 12 - Paul reiterates his argument, with the emphasis on **the edifying of the church**.

## The Need for Meaning | 1 Corinthians 14:13-19

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- Verse 13 - Because tongues is not a gift for today, this instruction is not necessary for those who speak in tongues, because their "gift" is fabricated. However, those who think they are speaking in tongues should at least acknowledge that there is a misuse of their "gift."
- Verses 14-17 - The need for understanding both in prayer and in singing is emphasized in these verses. If a **unlearned** person cannot hear and say **Amen at thy giving of thanks**, then he cannot be **edified**, which Paul has already stressed as the importance of Spiritual gifts.
- Verses 18-19 –
  - Paul testifies that he speaks **with tongues more than ye all**.
    - This, in itself, is not reason to support speaking in tongues today (especially when those using the verse as support fail to emphasize the fact that Paul de-emphasized his gift).
  - His prayer was that the *sound of his words* would affect the thinking of his hearers.
    - He uses the word *κατηχέω* [katecheo], translated **I might teach**.
    - The word is the ultimate result (the kata prefix) of *echos* (sound). If someone *adopts the sound of my mouth as their own thinking* then I have been something more than a **sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal** (1 Cor. 13:1).