

THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Chapter 14a

Introduction

When believers come together to worship the Lord they experience the Lord's presence through spirit anointed speech. Paul lists examples of spirit anointed speech in verse twenty-six:

1 Corinthians 14:26 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...

All of these speaking gifts were being exercised by the believers in Corinth. But there were problems with their exercise of spirit anointed speech:

All of them were speaking in tongues at once, and there was no interpretation.

Those with the gift of prophecy were interrupting one another during the service.

The women were speaking out of turn in a way that caused disruptions and distractions.

Instead of experiencing the Lord's presence through spirit anointed speech, their meetings were a cause of reproach, both to "uninformed" believers and to "unbelievers," who accused them of being insane.

Paul gives them a principle to govern the exercise of their gifts. At the end of verse twenty-six he says, "Let all things be done for edification." "Edify" means *to build up*. You should only and always exercise your gifts in ways that encourage the spiritual growth and progress of others in the assembly. This is such an important spiritual principle that Paul uses the word "edify" in one form or another six times in this chapter, and it is implied in everything he says even when he is not using the word.

Your spirit anointed speech, when exercised in the assembly, is intended to encourage the spiritual growth and progress of the others who are present. That's the principle. How, exactly, do you apply the principle?

Paul gives you two ways to apply the edification principle in the meetings of the church. He says, #1 Your Spirit Anointed Speech Can Only Be Profitable For Edifying Others If It Is Understood, and #2 Your Spirit Anointed Speech Can Only Be Practical In Edifying Others If It Is Under Control

We're going to take two weeks to study chapter fourteen. This morning we will look at how your Spirit anointed speech can only be profitable for edifying others if it is understood.

#1 Your Spirit Anointed Speech Can
Only Be Profitable For Edifying
Others If It Is Understood
(v1-25)

In verse six Paul asks, "What shall I profit you?" by spirit anointed speech. The answer is a word he uses nine times in this chapter in various forms: *Understood, understand, understanding*. In the assembly of the church, you must only and always speak with understanding in order to profit others.

The Corinthians had lost sight of edifying others in their meetings. They spoke without understanding; others could not profit by their Spirit anointed speech and, thus, they were not edifying others.

Uninterpreted tongues were a major problem. Paul uses their practice of speaking with uninterpreted tongues as a prime example of what was wrong with their meetings.

1 Corinthians 14:1 Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.

Prophecy is a supernaturally inspired and anointed utterance conveying what is on the mind and heart of God; it is speaking forth the Word of God through the anointing of the Holy Spirit. It can be a foretelling of the future, but most often it is a *forthtelling* of God's

Word. It's exercise brings edification, exhortation, and comfort to the believers.

Prophecy can be exercised in a variety of ways:

One of the most common and overlooked ways prophecy is exercised is by the Holy Spirit calling your attention to a particular text or context of Scripture.

Another way the gift of prophecy often operates is in conjunction with the gift of teaching. As the teacher shares on Scripture, he is directed to say certain things that have a supernatural impact on the hearers. =Another way prophecy is exercised is by the Holy Spirit putting words into your mind and mouth.

Dreams can be prophetic; then as you share the dream, you are exercising the gift of prophecy.

Visions can be prophetic. These are not your own visualizations, but pictures that the Holy Spirit flashes into your mind.

Regardless how it is received, if the prophecy is shared in the assembly, it is Spirit anointed speech that can be understood by everyone. It is a message from God for His people.

The gift of tongues is different:

1 Corinthians 14:2 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.

The gift of tongues is the supernatural enablement to worship God through prayer and praise in a known or unknown language you have not naturally learned. Paul very clearly and unmistakably says that tongues is speaking *to* God, **not** to men. It is never a message from God for men. Thus, if you speak in tongues in the assembly, "no one understands" you. By definition, tongues **by itself** cannot edify other believers since your words are a "mystery" to them.

1 Corinthians 14:3 But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men.

1 Corinthians 14:4 He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church.

According to verse three, prophecy edifies others. According to verse four, uninterpreted tongues edifies the one who speaks in tongues, but not the others who hear it. That's why, in verse five, Paul encourages you to speak in uninterpreted tongues for your personal edification, but he discourages you from speaking in uninterpreted tongues for public edification:

1 Corinthians 14:5 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.

Paul clarifies what he is saying at the end of verse five, saying, "unless he interprets, that the church may receive edification." The interpretation of tongues is obviously a companion gift to tongues. The interpretation of tongues is the Holy Spirit giving you the understanding of tongues spoken by someone else or by yourself even though you don't know the language. And it is an interpretation, *not* a translation. Translation is a word-for-word transfer from one language to another. Interpretation is something that goes farther, explaining the meaning regardless the particular words spoken. The words are not as important in an interpretation as are the concepts being expressed.

Don't miss this point: In the assembly, uninterpreted tongues *does not* edify others, but interpreted tongues *does* edify others. The problem in Corinth wasn't their speaking in tongues; it was their failure to wait upon God for the interpretation of tongues so that all could be edified at their Spirit anointed speech.

As we go on in this chapter, keep in mind the spiritual principle Paul is establishing: Your spirit anointed speech, when exercised in the assembly, is intended to encourage the spiritual growth and progress of the others who are present.

1 Corinthians 14:6 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?

1 Corinthians 14:7 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?

1 Corinthians 14:8 For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle?

1 Corinthians 14:9 So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air.

You cannot edify others unless they understand what is being said. There must be a distinction between the sounds in order for sounds to be of any value to the hearer. Musical instruments must make distinct sounds in order for you to understand the song being played; a military trumpet must make distinct sounds if you are to understand the order being given.

1 Corinthians 14:10 There are, it may be, so many kinds of languages in the world, and none of them is without significance.

1 Corinthians 14:11 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.

1 Corinthians 14:12 Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel.

Paul says it again: You cannot edify others unless they understand what is being said. That being true, when you are assembled together with others, your gift of tongues needs the corresponding gift of interpretation:

1 Corinthians 14:13 Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret.

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

1 Corinthians 14:15 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.

1 Corinthians 14:16 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?

1 Corinthians 14:17 For you indeed give thanks well, but the other is not edified.

Paul mentions singing in tongues as a valid exercise of the gift of tongues. Whether you speak in tongues or sing in tongues, it needs to be interpreted. It is not enough that the Spirit seems to be anointing someone's speech. As wonderful as we might think it is to simply hear an utterance in tongues, Paul says it does not and can not build us up unless we also understand the prayer and praise that is being offered to God. With the interpretation, speaking or singing in tongues *does* edify. That must always be the goal of Spirit anointed speech in the assembly: To further others along in their spiritual growth and progress.

These rules about uninterpreted tongues in public are not applicable to your own private exercise of the gift of tongues. There is no need for interpretation when you are alone, speaking prayer and praise to

God. Some who speak in tongues *can* interpret their own speaking; but Paul never says it is necessary to interpret to make your private use of the gift valid.

I want also to re-emphasize something we've said before: Tongues is **not** a gift for every believer. It is not the sign that you are a Christian; it is not the sign that you have been baptized with the Holy Spirit; it is not even a sign of spiritual maturity. It is a gift that is distributed to some members of the body of Christ according to the will of the Holy Spirit.

You can't learn how to speak in tongues; no one can help you learn how to do it by giving you certain words to release your faith. It must be given to you.

How do you get it if it is given to you? God will show you!

1 Corinthians 14:18 I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all;
1 Corinthians 14:19 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.

Paul had the gift of tongues. He is not talking about a learned ability to speak various known languages; he is talking about the supernatural gift of speaking in a language unknown to himself, a language of prayer and praise to God. He exercised the gift even more than the Corinthians - *but not in church*. In church he would rather speak words others understood so that they might be edified.

To finish out his instruction to the Corinthians regarding uninterpreted tongues, Paul addressed their habit of all speaking in tongues at once during their meetings. It was bad enough that they didn't wait for an interpretation; it was even worse that they all spoke at once.

1 Corinthians 14:20 Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature.
1 Corinthians 14:21 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.
1 Corinthians 14:22 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.
1 Corinthians 14:23 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?

These verses are admittedly somewhat confusing. Paul tells you that tongues are a sign to unbelievers, but then he tells you that if the church is gathered and everyone is speaking in tongues the unbeliever will think you are insane! Here is what I believe Paul is saying:

The key is to remember that Paul is talking about uninterpreted tongues. If everyone is simultaneously speaking in uninterpreted tongues, it is a "sign" to unbelievers. What is it a sign of? The quote in verse twenty-one is from Isaiah 28:11-12. In Isaiah twenty-eight God is chastising His people. Since they would not heed the clearly understood word of God, He brought them into captivity. The Assyrians captured them and spoke to them in their own Assyrian language, with words that God's people could not understand. God had spoken to them with words they could understand, but they rejected His words and, so, He brought them under the control of a people whose speech they could not understand.

When you are being spoken to in words you cannot understand it is a "sign" of God's judgment. Whenever God quits speaking to His people in ways that they can understand and instead speaks to them in ways that they cannot understand it is a "sign" of God's displeasure and discipline for His people.

Apply this to the church at Corinth. Since everyone was speaking with uninterpreted tongues, people visiting the church concluded that there was something wrong with them since God wasn't speaking clearly to them in ways they could understand. It was a sign to them of God's judgment.

The Corinthians thought that their speaking in uninterpreted tongues was a sign of spiritual maturity; it was a sign of spiritual immaturity at its worst. In fact, Paul calls it spiritual "malice" since it actually hindered others in their spiritual growth and progress. Those who were "uninformed" - new believers - and "unbelievers" who came to church were hindered from understanding the Word of God.

They ought rather to speak with understanding in their assemblies:

1 Corinthians 14:24 But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all.

1 Corinthians 14:25 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.

When you speak with Spirit anointed speech that others *can* understand God empowers your words to affect others in their very heart and soul. Their spiritual eyes are opened so that they can make a decision for Jesus.

Conclusion

We discourage speaking in tongues and interpretation on Sunday mornings; in fact, we don't allow it at all. We encourage speaking in tongues and interpretation at smaller meetings - like the home fellowships. And we encourage your private use of tongues, with or without interpretation.

Is that Scriptural? *It is!* On Sunday mornings there are too many people who fall into the category of "unbelievers" or the "uninformed." We want to edify them. We want to move them along either toward a relationship with Jesus or in their relationship with Jesus. We are like Paul; in the church assembly we would rather speak five words everyone can understand that we may **teach** others than ten thousand words in a tongue. We design our Sunday morning services to emphasize the teaching of God's Word.

Love must control our exercise of all the gifts, including tongues and prophecy. Discouraging speaking in tongues on Sunday mornings seems to be the most loving thing we can do! It takes into account the greatest need we all have: To understand the Word of God. It is true that prophecy and interpreted tongues can be understood and do edify. But in a large group we can't always tell if the person who shares a prophecy or an interpreted tongue is genuine or a counterfeit. That kind of oversight is better exercised in a smaller group setting.

We will see some of these rules for the practice of the speaking gifts next Sunday in verses twenty-six through forty. For now we would encourage you who speak in tongues to exercise it privately; to exercise it publicly in smaller groups, when you are convinced

someone is there who has the gift of interpretation. And we would ask you to speak to yourself and to God on Sunday mornings - keeping your gift of tongues under control so that everyone can be edified by words that can be understood.