

## 1 Corinthians: Outline of chapter 14:

1-25: Tongues is an inferior gift; amplifies 1 Corinthians 12:28

26-35: The regulation of tongues

36-40: The importance of living by doctrine

14:1. Pursue love [in one's spiritual life: personal for God the Father and God the Holy Spirit; unconditional love for mankind and occupation with the Lord Jesus Christ] and seek the spiritual gifts [when you assemble], but more [important than the non-teaching spiritual gifts such as tongues is prophecy] that you may prophesy [an example of a teaching spiritual gift in the early Church].

In the spiritual life one must advance with two columns. The first is a doctrinal column and the second is the grace-column: "But grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. . ." (2 Peter 3:18a) The doctrinal column (subjects in Scripture) must be maintained by daily perception of doctrine via a prepared pastor. (There are hundreds of doctrinal subjects the believer must learn.) The second column must be maintained by our daily application of doctrine which increases our grace understanding and results in love for God the Father, God the Holy Spirit, the Lord Jesus Christ and unconditional love for all mankind.

Paul is addressing the Corinthian Church and not the individual believer. This explains why the three verbs in the imperative are all in the plural. Furthermore, one cannot command an individual believer to seek a spiritual gift as per the second command. (Spiritual gifts are distributed by the Holy Spirit at salvation according to His will.) As a church, they are told to seek men with teaching gifts which edify the saints i.e. the gift of prophesy or pastor-teacher rather than other gifts [which do not edify the Christian believers].

Teaching gifts are important since without the communication of God's word the Christian cannot be edified spiritually. The essential teaching gifts for communicating doctrine to believers were prophesy, apostleship and pastor-teacher in the pre-canon period of the church. In the post-canon period only the teaching gift of pastor-teacher remains. (The Greek word "mallon" (more) is a comparative and implies that Paul is comparing non-communicative type of sensational gifts with the sensational gift of prophecy.) One can never develop a love for God through the gifts of healing, miracles or tongues, but through some type of communicative gift.

The gift of prophesy in the early church was not only used to warn Christians of personal and collective disasters about to take place, but also was used to communicate Church Age information. If the prophet understood church age-doctrine, he could communicate under the filling of the Spirit. The subjunctive mood indicates that the prophet had the potential of communicating to Christians as long as the prophet sufficient spiritual growth and a clear understanding of the spiritual life.

Verses 2-6: The contrast between the gift of tongues and prophesy:

14:2. For the one [Christian] who communicates in a language [a foreign language through the gift of tongues; Acts 2:5-11] does not communicate to mankind in general [to the members of his own congregation who do not understand that particular foreign language], but to God [only God understood when the Corinthians were speaking in Tongues to their fellow believers] for no one [in the Corinthian Church] hears [with understanding for they did not know that language], but he [a Corinthian believer with the gift of languages] communicates mysteries [unknown by the majority] by means of his [human] spirit.

The Greek word μυστήριον (musterion) is different from the English word mystery. In English when we think of a mystery we think in terms of a murder mystery, but the Greek word was used in a much different way. It was used by the fraternities and sororities for their secret doctrines. Thus, the Greek word ‘musterion’ related to knowledge understood by a few, the members of the fraternity or sorority, but not by the general public. So, the phrase “communicates mysteries” means that only a few understood the gospel message communicated through the gift of Tongues (only the ones who understood the language being used by that gift).

The Holy Spirit would provide gospel information directly to the human spirit (“by means of his spirit”) of the one with the Gift of Tongues in whatever language was pertinent at the time of gospel presentation. From the human spirit this gospel information went directly to the vocal cords bypassing the soul of the individual with the gift. (This explains why even the one possessing the Gift of Tongues did not understand what he was communicating.) Therefore, God the Holy Spirit had to provide another spiritual gift namely, the Gift of Interpretation. The person with this gift had the supernatural ability to understand what was presented by the one with the Gift of Tongues, and as such could explain to others who did not understand what was taking place.

The Corinthian believers were using their spiritual gift of ‘languages’ incorrectly. For the most part, they were using it to impress their fellow believers in the Corinthian Church. In those situations the only one who did understand was God. Occasionally, Jewish unbelievers did attend, and they of course did benefit from hearing the gospel through this miraculous Gift of Tongues.

14:3. But one who prophesies [a communicator in the early Church] speaks to men [Christians in the church] for edification and exhortation and consolation.

These are the three objectives in communicating the Word to the members of a congregation namely edification, exhortation and consolation. Edification is the teaching which builds the structure of the spiritual life in the souls of believers. Exhortation is the teaching which rebukes believers when they are in error. Consolation is the teaching which comforts believers in suffering or difficulty. God’s Word when taught correctly by the communicator edifies, exhorts and comforts.

The timing of the edification, exhortation and consolation of a communicator (presently pastors only) may not be in harmony with the desires of the particular members of the congregation. When the pastor’s message edifies, it will apply to all; when his message exhorts, it will have an immediate impact upon those who are in need of a particular exhortation which will benefit them

if they do not react subjectively to the exhortation. Consolation is pleasant for all especially to those who are in some type of suffering or difficulty. The bottom line is that the pastor cannot coordinate his teaching ministry with the individual desire of a particular member. Thus, a member may want to be consoled when the pastor is exhorting the congregation etc. In such a case, the individual member must be patient. (If however the pastor has a recorded ministry, the member who is seeking answers to his problems may order the pertinent recorded message or messages)

14:4. He who speaks in tongues [in the church] edifies himself [arrogance], but he who prophesies [communicates God's Word], edifies the church.

The gift of tongues was never designed for the edification of the members of a local church, rather it was designed to evangelize unbelievers (primarily Jewish) who functioned outside of the local church.

14:5. Now, I wish [Paul's strong desire to reach his fellow Jewish unbelievers] that you all spoke in tongues [for the purpose of evangelization], but even more that you would prophesy. And greater is the one who prophesies than the one who speaks in tongues unless he interprets [through a person with the Gift of Interpretation; in this case interpreting some foreign language into Greek] so that the [Greek speaking] church may receive edifying [the church could receive some edification if the message delivered via the Gift of Tongues was properly interpreted via the Gift of Interpretation].

Assuming there was only one spiritual gift available. Under those circumstances, which one would be preferable in the local church? In the church, a communicative gift is essential whereas other gifts such as Tongues are not. However, if all the Corinthians possessed the Gift of Tongues, it would be helpful in evangelizing the Jewish unbelievers coming into Corinth from all parts of the Roman Empire.)

14:6. But now brethren, if I come to you speaking in tongues, what [how] will I profit you unless I speak to you [with a communicative gift] either by way of revelation [as the future book of Revelation] or of knowledge [what would be in the epistles] or of prophesy [near or far prophecy] or of doctrine [from the gift of teaching or apostleship]?

14:7. Yet even lifeless things, whether flute or harp produce a meaningful sound, if it [the flute or harp] does not produce a distinction in tones, how will it be known what is played on the flute or on the harp?

In the church in Corinth, many spoke in Tongues which had no meaning to the Greek Christians in the church. As musical tones must have meaning so must language be understood by those who are listening.

14:8. For if the trumpet does not give a clear call who will prepare himself for battle?

In the ancient world all battle commands were given by trumpet sounds. These trumpet sounds had to be understood by the officers and soldiers otherwise there would be defeat in battle.

14:9: So also you, unless you utter by a language a speech that is clear [intelligible], how will it be known what is spoken for you will be speaking into the air.

When the Corinthian believers spoke in Tongues in their church, it was unintelligible to the Greek believers. They were speaking to the air.

14:10: There are perhaps a great many kinds of languages in the world and none without meaning.

The Lord created many languages at the Tower of Babel to discourage internationalism.

14:11: If then I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be to the one who speaks a barbarian, and the one who speaks will be a barbarian to me.

14:12: So also you, as long as you are enthusiastic about spiritual gifts seek that you may abound [in the gifts] to the edifying of the church.

In a worship service, the congregation must emphasize gifts which communicate since the members are edified through the teaching of doctrine.

14:13: Therefore, let the one who speaks in a tongue [the super natural gift of giving the gospel in a foreign language] pray that someone may interpret [have the gift of interpretation].

In this way, he and others will understand what is being said. Remember that even the person with the Gift of Tongues did not understand what he was saying since his soul was not involved.

14:14: For if [a hypothetical 3<sup>rd</sup> class conditional clause] I pray in a foreign language [not known in the congregation nor by the one praying], my spirit [human spirit] prays, but my mind is unproductive [the gift of tongues is not related to the mind so it would not benefit the individual].

Now that Paul has mentioned prayer in verse 13, he decides to use it as an illustration. If it were possible to pray in Tongues (a hypothetical situation) there would be no purpose since the mind would not be involved.

14:15: What then is the conclusion? I will pray with my spirit, and I will pray with my mind. I will sing [hymns in worship] by means of my spirit; I will sing by means of my mind.

Hypothetically, if a person could pray via the gift of tongues, it would be of no benefit to the person since his mentality would not be involved. However, if Paul were to pray in the normal way through the use of his mind, then both his mind and human spirit would have been involved.

Correct prayer and singing depends on coordination between the mind and the human spirit. Therefore, the frame of reference for pray and singing is the language in which a person thinks. If a person could pray or sing in an unknown foreign language, but he can't the coordination of mind and human spirit is destroyed.

14:16: Otherwise if [a hypothetical 3<sup>rd</sup> class conditional clause] you bless [an expression by teaching, singing or praying] by means of the human spirit [this is the person with the gift of tongues operating without the use of his soul], how shall he [the believer who does not know the language the person communication via the Gift of Tongues] who occupies the room of the ungifted [there is no one present with the Gift of Interpretation] say [future for logical progression] “Amen” at your giving of thanks [for the person and work of Christ] since he does not know what you are saying [he doesn’t know the language].

14:17: For you are giving thanks well [a believer using his spiritual Gift of Tongues to pray; he prays well since the Holy Spirit is eloquent in any language], but the other person is not edified [since the language is not understood].

14:18: I thank my God that I speak with Tongues more than all of you.

Since Paul was so desperately concerned for the salvation of the Jews, he was very thankful for his Gift of Tongues which he used outside of the church. “My prayer and heart’s desire is that Israel might be saved.” Furthermore, Paul used this wonderful gift without ever abusing it (never tried to impress Christians with this gift).

14:19: However, in the church I desire to speak five words with my mind so that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a foreign language [via the Gift of Tongues].

In the church, Paul used his gift of apostleship to communicate doctrine to the Christians. He never used his Gift of Tongues in the church.

14:20: Brethren, stop becoming children in your thinking [with emphasis on sensational things], yet in malice become infants [infants are free of mental sins since they lack the brain development and vocabulary], but in your thinking become mature [establish correct values through correct thinking from truth].

The distortion of the Gift of Tongues caused the Corinthians to act like children with emphasis on emotion and stimulation. A person will never grows spiritually if he centers his life on emotional stimulation.

Children usually are not strong in mental attitude sins such as malice since there mentality is not so developed. A baby six months old is not going to be malicious because there is not enough mental development to be malicious.

14:21: In the Torah [the entire Old Testament was called the Torah by the Jews] it is written, “With foreign languages [gentile languages, not Hebrew] and by the lips of foreigners [Christians whether Jew or gentile communicating the gospel in a gentile language to Jews living in other countries. Paul for example could have communicated the gospel in the language of Pontus to a Jewish person from that area.] I will speak to this people [Jews] and even so they will not listen to me [most will reject the gospel message delivered via the Gift of Tongues],” says the Lord [quoted from Isaiah 28:11, 12].

14:22: So then Tongues are for a sign [a miraculous sign) not to those who believe, but to [Jewish] unbelievers, but prophecy is [for a sign], not to unbelievers but to those who believe [the gift of prophecy in the early church was designed to communicate information to Christians].

Some other signs the Lord provided for the Jews were as follows: the virgin birth as prophesied in Isaiah 7; the two deaths in Isaiah 53, and the two signs regarding the birth of Christ in Luke 2:12.

Isaiah 28:11, 12 prophesied that Jews would be evangelized in gentile languages as warning of the approach to the 5<sup>th</sup> Cycle of Discipline. Since this warning was not heeded, the 5<sup>th</sup> Cycle of Discipline was administered in August of 70 AD according to Luke 21:20-24.

21:20. "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies [four Roman legions under the command of Titus], then know that her desolation is near.

21:21. "Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains [mountains north, south and east], and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, furthermore those who are in the country [those outside of Jerusalem] must not enter her [the city];

21:22. because these are days of judgment, in order that all things which are written may be fulfilled [Leviticus 26:27-33 (27-39); Deuteronomy 28:49-67].

21:23. "Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people;

21:24. and they will fall by the edge of the sword [1.9 million], and will be led captive [97 thousand] into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled [70 AD to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent].

14:23: Therefore, if [hypothetical situation] the whole church assembles together in the same place, and all speak in tongues and persons [believers] who mind their own business [*ἰδιῶται*] or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are mad? Yes, they will. [A Greek clause beginning with the Greek negative *ouk* expects a *yes* answer.]

If a person were to enter a church and all were speaking different languages at the same time, would that person not assume that he had just entered an insane asylum? Once I was invited to a public prayer meeting in Seoul, and when it came time to begin, I assumed that one person at a time would pray for all to hear, but to my amazement all began to pray out loud at the same time. I found it impossible to even think in such a raucous environment much less pray effectively.

14:24: But if all prophesy [one at a time], and an unbeliever or a person who minds his own business [a believer with common sense] enters, he is convinced [that this teaching is true] by all [which he hears]; he receives discernment by all [which he hears].

14:25: The secrets of his frontal lobe are disclosed [he is challenged in his frontal lobe], and so he will fall on his face [he will get into an attitude of worship because he is impressed by this particular gift] and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you [Corinthians].

The gifts of prophecy and knowledge were used to communicate the gospel to unbelievers and doctrines related to the spiritual life of the Church Age to believers. When done properly and in proper order, these teachings were very effective.

Verse 26-28: The use of tongues in a church service:

14:26: How is it then brethren, that when you assemble, each one has a psalm [of doctrinal lyrics accompanied by a 10 string instrument and sung by the congregation: like congregational singing today accompanied by an organ or piano], has a doctrine [teaching categorically presented], has a revelation [the use of prophesy which orients the believer to the plan of God], has a tongue [the use of foreign languages in a service to evangelize unbelievers who were not native to Corinth], has an interpretation [the interpretation of what was communicated through the gift of foreign languages: Tongues]. Let all things be done for edification [one of the purposes of communication is to edify, to build up Biblical teachings in the believer's soul].

14:27: If anyone speaks in a tongue [a foreign language], *it should be* by two or at the most three, and each in turn [only one person communicates at one time: they speak in rotation], and one must interpret (A person with the Gift of Interpretation must be present when the Gift of Tongues is functioning),

The church service is designed to communicate doctrine to the believers assembled, and to communicate the gospel message to those unbelievers who may have entered into the assembly. Thus, all spiritual gifts utilized in a worship service must be for the purpose of communication. If it doesn't communicate, it doesn't belong in the worship service.

14:28: but if there is no interpreter, he [the person with the gift of Tongues] must keep silent in the church, and let him speak to himself [an idiom for thinking] and to God [appreciating God in his thoughts].

All spiritual gifts were designed to be controlled by ones volition. If a believer has the Gift of Knowledge, he should communicate God's Word in a proper way at the proper time. In the same manner, if a person has the Gift of Languages (Tongues), he should use his volition to communicate the gospel in a proper way at the proper time. God designed all spiritual gifts to function in a rational and polite manner.

Under the concept of pseudo Tongues, Christians work themselves up emotionally to the point of being ecstatic. In this state the vocal cords can make strange sounds with the proper amount of

air movement. When utterances come from an ecstatic believer forcing air over his vocal cords, it never produces any meaningful utterance, only meaningless noises.

14:29: Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others [believers] discern [listen with discernment].

In the first three centuries, Christians usually met in homes to hear the Word of God taught. (During times of persecution they would meet in fields or catacombs.) Since homes were not large enough to hold a large congregation, they would conduct two or three services and rotate the audiences. So, for the 1<sup>st</sup> service one prophet (representing a communicator) would communicate to his audience. Then a 2<sup>nd</sup> prophet would communicate to those attending the second service etc. In other words, each audience consistently listened to the same communicator.

There were probably times however, when two or three prophets communicated to a single audience. In that case, only one speaker was permitted to speak at a time.

14:30: But if something is revealed to another [prophet] who is seated [one of the prophets of verse 29], the first one must keep quiet [Only one prophet was allowed to speak at a time.]

Apparently, in Corinth, they would have 2 or 3 prophets communicating simultaneously to the same audience. Thus, no one in the audience could listen intelligently through this noisy milieu. So, Paul put an end to this nonsense.

14:31: For you may all prophecy one by one [in rotation] in order that all [in the congregation] may learn and all may be encouraged [exhorted from the teaching of the word].

14:32: and the spirits [God the Holy Spirit communicated revelation to the human spirits of the prophets.] of the prophets are subject [under authority] to the prophets [the responsibilities and regulations of the ministry].

The prophets had the responsibility to learn God's word and plan. Then, he had to communicate God's message in rational manner. This means that the prophet (any communicator) had to have good control over his emotion. (A crying communicator (today an evangelist or pastor) is out of control!

14:33: for God is not [the author] of confusion, but of order [as opposed to disorder] as in all the churches of the saints.

In communication, one speaks while the others listen. Otherwise, there will be confusion. If certain members of the congregation have poor manners and are speaking or moving around while the communicator is speaking, it makes it very difficult for the communicator to teach and for all in the audience to listen.



14:34: Women must keep silent in the in the churches for it is not permitted for them to speak, but let them subject themselves [be under authority] just as the Law says [Genesis 3:16b “and he (the husband) will rule over you”].

Women have never been given communicative gifts which would give them authority over men such as the gifts of Tongues, prophesy, apostleship which gifts functioned in the pre-canon period of the Church Age. (There were prophetesses in the pre-canon period, but their gift only functioned toward other women). In the post-canon period of the Church Age no woman has ever been given the gift of Pastor-Teacher and so, no woman should ever communicate to adults in a church.

Furthermore, women have a tendency to talk in a Bible class situation when they disagree with the communicator and so react to his message or when they do not to understand some point (They are curious and want an immediate answer from the one seated next to them).

14:35: And if they [married Christian women] desire to learn anything [about the Word] and [let’s assume] they do, let them ask their husband at home [need to discuss in privacy under the husband’s authority] for it is improper [disgraceful] for a woman to speak in church [either to communicate doctrine to adults as a pastor or to speak while another is communicating God’s Word].

14:36: Did the word of God come from the ultimate source of you? Has it [the word of God] come to you only [are you special]?

Doctrine circulating in the soul of the believer does not get there magically nor does it accumulate automatically in the believer’s soul. Rather, the believer must accept the authority of some communicator and put himself consistently under that person’s teaching ministry.

Though the highest authority in the early Church Age was the gift of apostleship, some Corinthians had rejected the authority of the Paul. So, Paul has to remind them that his authority and instruction came from the Lord.

14:37: If anyone thinks [subjective thinking related to arrogance] he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord’s commandments.

There were those who had the gift of prophecy in the Corinthian Church. However, many who claimed to have this gift or thought themselves to be spiritual giants weren’t. In any case, no one can function properly in a position of authority or be spiritual unless he recognizes and accepts all legitimate authorities.

14:38: But if anyone is ignorant, he continues to be ignorant [unless he changes his mind about learning].

Some believers in Corinth were ignorant and proud of it. Arrogant believers are unteachable. A person in a state of ignorance must get back into fellowship, and under God’s authority come to

realize the need to learn under a knowledgeable person with a communicative spiritual gift. If not, those believers will remain ignorant of God's plan for their entire life (2 Peter 3:18).

14:39: Therefore, my brethren [those in the Corinthian Church should seek out those with communicative gifts], desire earnestly to prophesy [in order to receive some teaching] and do not forbid to speak in Tongues [under its proper function and regulation],

The gift of Language (Tongues) had a purpose until August of 70 AD. So, Paul gave the command not to forbid the communication of the gospel in the local church via the gift of Tongues. However, after the fall of Jerusalem, the Gift of Tongues no longer existed. (You may read the booklet on Tongues by R. B. Thieme Jr.)

Since Corinth was a port city, many merchants and travelers would have to come through Corinth. Many of these unbelievers having nothing to do while waiting for a ship, would enter the church in Corinth. At some point during service, a Corinthian Christian with the Gift of Tongues might communicate the gospel to these visitors.

14:40: But all things [in the church] must be done properly and in an orderly manner [under proper authority].

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