

I Corinthians

Chapter 14:1-40

¹ **Pursue love, yet earnestly desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophecy.**

Pursue > (Strong's) to put to flight, pursue, by implication to persecute

Earnestly desire > (Strong's) to be jealous, to have warmth of feeling for or against

Wuest Translation > *Be constantly pursuing this love, earnestly endeavoring to acquire it.*

Prophecy > (MacArthur) Like that of the apostles, and unlike that of pastors and teachers, however, the unique office of prophet ceased to exist while the church was still very young. Judging from Paul's pastoral epistles (1 & 2 Timothy and Titus), prophets ceased to function in the church even before the end of the apostolic age. In those letters he makes considerable mention of church leadership—elders, deacons, deaconesses, and bishops—but makes no mention of prophets.

But when Paul wrote this letter to Corinth, prophets were still very central to the work of that church. In fact, nowhere in this letter is there mention of a pastor, elder, or overseer. The prophets seem to have been the key leaders in the early days of the church (cf. Acts 13:1). Because this was obviously the case in Corinth, Paul was compelled to give some principles for the prophets to follow

² **For the one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to people, but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries.**

Speaks in a tongue > (Simply Bible) "**Xenoglossia**" > "speaking in tongues" —that is, speaking in a language which one has never learned or known The term *xenoglossia* is defined in Chambers's dictionary as "the spontaneous use of a language which the speaker has never heard or learned. No scientifically attested case of xenoglossia has ever come to light." From Greek, *xeno* strange, *glossa* tongue."

This phenomena, which can rightly be described as "the gift of tongues", is the ability to speak fluently a language one has never studied, had any exposure to, or "known" in any natural sense. Yet one can speak it as well as people who do know it as their mother tongue. This phenomena is not evident in the world today.

The fact that xenoglossia (xenoglossy) is not evident today, does not mean that it has never occurred in the past. When it did happen, however, it was a miraculous event, because it is not a natural or innate human ability.

(Acts 2:4 > and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak in foreign languages as the Spirit granted them to utter divine things.)

The miracle recorded here was not in the hearing but in the speaking. The apostles "began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." The apostles were not speaking one language whilst the people were hearing different languages to that which was spoken.

The apostles were actually speaking in the other tongues that people were hearing. They were languages native and familiar to the hearers, but completely new to the apostles — languages which the apostles had not learned by study, or by natural exposure, yet were suddenly able to speak.

“Glossolalia” > “ecstatic utterances” —that is, uttering language-like but unintelligible sounds usually in a state of elation. The term “glossolalia” is defined in Chambers’s dictionary as “the phenomena of spontaneously uttering unintelligible sounds believed to form part of an unknown language or languages.” From Greek, *glossa* tongue, *laleein* to talk.

Glossolalia or “ecstatic utterance” is a common phenomenon, practiced by many religions, pagan as well as “Christian”. You can make recordings of it, examine it, write histories and case studies about it. You can even practice it yourself if you so choose.

No one understands > (Uteley) Tongues at Corinth seem to be unknown, articulated sounds. At Delphi (Temple of Apollo) one special person (usually a woman) would utter inarticulate sounds, then another would interpret these for the ones present. This procedure seems to parallel the experience of "tongues" at Corinth. There is no "interpreter" in Acts!

³ *But the one who prophesies speaks to people for **edification, exhortation, and consolation.***

Edification > (Strong’s) (the act of) building, a building

Uteley > This is the third test used to evaluate spiritual gifts (see contextual Insights at chapter 12, C). Do they edify, or build up, the church? This theme is repeated over and over again in this chapter, 1 Cor. 14:3,4,5,12,17,26.

Exhortation > (Precept Austin) (*paraklysis* > *pará* = side of + *kaléo* = call) refers to calling to one's side or one's aid which can be for the purpose of providing solace, comfort, consolation, exhortation, encouragement.

Consolation > (Precept Austin) (*paramuthia* > *para* = towards, beside, pictures one coming to another's side of one to stimulate or comfort + *muthéomai* = to speak) literally describes speaking to someone coming close to his or her side and speak to them in a friendly way.

(Might there be three interpretations of the use of "Tongues"?)

1. A spoken language ... as we saw in Acts 2
2. A true worship of the Lord/coming from the Holy Spirit ... requiring an interpreter/also from the Holy Spirit ... to be understood.
3. Gibberish made to sound spiritual ... fully emanating from the individual

If the above is accurate > the only one that is practiced today cannot be #1 or #2 as the rules given are not being followed.)

⁴*The one who speaks in a tongue **edifies himself**; but the one who prophesies edifies **the church**.*

Edifies himself > (Ryrie) In his emotions and worship but not in his mind, since, without interpretation, he does not understand what he is saying

The Church > (Utley) This is the term *ekklesia* with no article which refers to the entire body of believers. Paul's desire is that all believers, not just a select few, be blessed in gathered worship.

⁵***Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but rather that you would prophesy; and greater is the one who prophesies than the one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edification.***

Constable > Paul acknowledged the value of the gift of tongues, even though it also required an interpreter. Nevertheless, he made it clear that the ability to prophesy was more important ("greater is one who prophesies"). The issue, again, is private versus public benefit. Since Paul depreciated speaking in tongues without interpretation ("unless he interprets") so strongly, it seems very likely that this is what the Corinthians were doing in their meetings. The real issue was not a conflict between tongues and prophecy, however, but between unintelligible and intelligible speech.

Wuest Translation of the first two phrases > *Now I desire that all of you be speaking in tongues, but I prefer that you impart divine revelations to others which you have received.*

⁶*But now, brothers and sisters, if I come to you speaking in tongues, how will I benefit you unless I speak to you either by way of **revelation**, or of knowledge, or of prophecy, or of **teaching**?*

Revelation > (Precept Austin) (*apokalupsis* from *apó* = from + *kalúpto* = cover, conceal, English = apocalypse) literally means cover from and so the idea is to remove that which conceals something. It conveys the idea of "taking the lid off" and means to remove the cover and expose to open view that which was heretofore not visible, known or disclosed. It means to make manifest or reveal a thing previously secret or unknown.

Teaching > (Precept Austin) to give instruction in a formal or informal setting with the highest possible development of the pupil as the goal

⁷Yet even lifeless instruments, whether flute or harp, in producing a sound, if they do not produce a distinction in the tones, how will it be known what is played on the flute or on the harp? ⁸For if the trumpet produces an indistinct sound, who will prepare himself for battle?

⁹So you too, unless you produce intelligible speech by the tongue, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will just be talking to the air.

Charles H. Spurgeon said: 'I am afraid that many of my ministerial brethren must imagine that when Scripture tells them to "Feed My sheep," it means "Feed My giraffes," for they put the food so high that people would have to be giraffes to reach it.' 'Always put the food down where the sheep can get it. It should be the ambition of the preacher of the Word to use language so simple and so plain that everybody can understand.'

¹⁰There are, perhaps, a great many kinds of languages in the world, and none is incapable of meaning. ¹¹So if I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be unintelligible to the one who speaks, and the one who speaks will be unintelligible to me.

Unintelligible > (Strong's) *barbarous* > barbarous, barbarian

Utley > This was an onomatopoeic word (i.e., *barbaros*) for the strange sounds of other languages to the Greeks and Romans, especially the tribal groups to the north of the Roman Empire. The Greeks and Romans said that these tribal languages sounded like "bar, bar" to them. Hence, the term "barbarian."

Wuest Translation > *So many kinds of voices, it may be, exist in the world, and not one is without its particular significance. Therefore, if I do not know the meaning of the voice, I shall be to the one who is speaking a person who utters confused and unintelligible sounds, mere jargon, and the one who is speaking will be to me just such a person too.*

¹²So you too, since you are eager to possess spiritual gifts, strive to excel for the edification of the church.

¹³ *Therefore, one who speaks in a tongue is to **pray** that he may interpret. ¹⁴ For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unproductive.*

Pray > (Precept Austin))(proseuchomai from pros = toward, facing, before [emphasizing the direct approach of the one who prays in seeking God's face] + euchomai = originally to speak out, utter aloud, express a wish, then to pray or to vow. Greek technical term for invoking a deity) in the NT is always used of prayer addressed to God (to Him as the object of faith and the One who will answer one's prayer) and means to speak consciously (with or without vocalization) to Him, with a definite aim

Wuest Translation > *Therefore, let the one who speaks in a tongue be praying that he may be unfolding the meaning of what he is saying, for if I am praying in a tongue, my spirit is praying, but my intellect confers no benefits upon others.*

¹⁵ *What is the outcome then? I will pray with the spirit, but I will pray with the mind also; I will sing with the spirit, but I will sing with the mind also.*

¹⁶ *For otherwise, if you bless God in the spirit only, how will the one who occupies the place of the **outsider** know to say the "Amen" at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you are saying? ¹⁷ For you are giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not edified.*

Outsider > (Strong's) *idiotes* > a private or unskilled person

Robertson > Jewish rabbis employed *idiōtēs* as a loanword in the form of *hedyot*. It became a term of disparagement applied to those common, uneducated people who did not know or study the Law ... *Idiōtēs* occurs six times in the New Testament. In Acts 4:13 the rulers and legal experts label the disciples as *idiōtēs*; the other five instances are Pauline. Paul said of himself that he was unskilled in speech (2 Corinthians 11:6).

¹⁸ *I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all; ¹⁹ nevertheless, in church I prefer to speak five words with my mind so that I may **instruct** others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue.*

Instruct > (Precept Austin) (*katecheo* from *katá* = down or intensive + *echeo* = sound, our English "echo") means to literally to sound down on or into the ears. From this the derived meaning is "to inform" or "to instruct orally." The idea is to re-sound, to re-echo, to teach by by insistent repetition into the ears as the Arabs do when learning the Koran (learning aloud).