

Bible Study January 31, 2024

I Corinthians 14 Prophecy and Tongues

Considering the theme of love in Chapter 13, Paul continues to encourage the church to pursue love in the building up of the church.

Verses 1-5 Paul make the case that speaking in tongues is only beneficial to the one speaking. The speaker is not talking to the church but to God. Paul is not telling the church no one should speak in tongues, but to pray that more would prophesy. This is in effect what we call today teaching and or preaching. God speaks through His written word and its interpretation by the teacher and or preacher. That is why a minister is called a Teaching Elder. Paul wants all to speak in tongues, if effect, spend more time with God in prayer. But he also encourages prophesy, that the speaker will communicate all that comes to mind from God to the church. He also instructs that unless someone is there to interpret for one speaking in tongues, it should be done in private and not in public.

Verses 6-19 Paul continues to illustrate one speaking in tongues without an interpreter does not build up the church, but only oneself. Any spiritual gift that is not shared with the church is a misuse of the gift. Edification, the building up of the church, comes from understanding the one with the gift, and what God is saying through them. Paul also helps the church understand that God speaks to and through our inner spirit and our mind, especially when we link our knowledge of Scripture and listening to what God intends us to hear and understand. This is why the gift of prophecy is better for the building up of the church.

Verses 20-25 Only children would speak in tongues without an interpreter. The greater calling is to care for the needs of others. He illustrates from Scripture Isaiah 28:11 where the Assyrians speaking in their own language communicate to Israel God's displeasure with them. Speaking in tongues can drive unbelievers away, where prophecy can lead an unbeliever to repentance and faith.

Verses 26-40 Orderly Worship When the community comes together for worship, a suggested order is given: A hymn, a lesson or reading, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. The goal is not causing confusion but understanding. Things are to be orderly, taking turns, and even time for interpretation and translation. Paul calls upon the person speaking in tongues to consider doing it in

private, as personal prayer to God. Jesus says in Mt. 6:6 “But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in private, will reward you.” As people speak, let others speak, and the body discerns the message. Similar to the congregation and the Session, discerning the sermon or the Sunday school lesson. God is a God of reason and peace, not chaos and confusion. And this is for all the churches, to follow and to assimilate.

Paul has written it is permissible for women to pray and to prophesy (I Cor. 11:5), They are not permitted to talk, (keep silent), during the service. This is similar to our tradition of all keeping silent during worship except during singing, congregational prayers and readings.

Paul’s writings are authoritative from the Lord, just as the OT and NT writings by the prophets and the apostles. The main point of the chapter is summed up in verse 40: “But all things should be done decently and in order.”