

I Corinthians 14th - Handout # 12

This chapter picks up the discussion on spiritual gifts begun in chapter 12. The discourse on love (agape) in chapter 13 was a digression which transitions back to the subject of spiritual gifts in the first verse of chapter 14: "Follow after charity (love) and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy." Love is the motivation in the exercise of spiritual gifts. Love would make us desire the gifts that would be a blessing to the body of Christ.

In this chapter Paul contrasts the gift of tongues to the gift of prophecy in relation to their ability to edify the body of Christ. He says if tongues are unknown, when exercised in the assembly of the saints, except they be interpreted, they edify the speaker only. But when the gift of prophecy is exercised, presuming it is in the language of the hearers, it edifies the hearers, both the body of Christ and unbelievers. So, prophecy in the assembly is preferred above tongues (unknown).

v. 2-4: Gift of tongues: speaking to God not men, edifies self. Gift of prophecy: speaking to men, edifies men (v.3, Edification, Exhortation, Comfort)

v. 5 So prophecy is of greater value to the body than the exercise of tongues without interpretation. Tongues do have value, but mostly to the one speaking.

v. 6 - 20, Giving examples which support the value of prophecy over tongues because prophecy is understood. If there is not proper understanding, where is the value? Where is the edifying?

v.12 seek that you may excel to edifying of the church

v.21 Tongues are for a sign to unbeliever (showing the power of God as on day of Pentecost) but prophecy for the believers. But if unbelievers come into assembly and hear tongues will they not say "these people be mad"? But if unbeliever hears prophecy (declared word of the Lord) they will bow and worship Him.

v. 21 - 40 : speaks to how gifts should go forth in the assembly in an orderly fashion. The assembly was very different from our services. They were probably free and allowed for widespread participation. No one particularly designated to be in charge or to give the word. Anyone could speak, thus they needed some guidelines. Two or three in a gathering to speak in tongues, with interpretation, two or three to give prophecy. If while someone was speaking, someone else had a prophecy, first speaker was to yield the floor to the new speaker. All this to support the concluding verse 40: "Let all things be done decently and in order."

v. 33 God is not the author of confusion

v. 34, 35 Let women keep silence (they could participate I Cor. 11:5) not ask questions

v. 36, 37 This message did not originate with you. Obey what I say.