

## The Blessing Of Preaching – 1Corinthians 14:1-5

Bible Study ~ 5/24/17

Grace Church of Lockeford

Paul discussed the diversity within the body of Christ and the diversity of gifts in ch. 12. He demonstrated that love must be part of our exercise of gifts in ch. 13. Now in ch. 14 he combines the two, as he will be giving regulations about the use of tongues. But first he exposes the fallacy in viewing tongues as the best gift by defining what is more beneficial for the church. **He begins by explaining...**

### 1. The Priority Of Preaching v. 1

“Pursue” is an active imperative. We are to actively pursue love. We don’t wait for it to happen, or wait for it to be formed in us, we pursue it! We seek after it and hunt it down. Spiritual gifts are to be desired. This word speaks of having a passion, enthusiasm, and zeal for them! Spiritual gifts are not a boring hum-drum thing. They are exciting! They are to be exercised with passion!

However, above both of those things, pursue and desire prophecy. “Especially” is the Greek word μάλλον (mallon) meaning *instead, more or rather. To a greater degree or extent.* It is a comparative adverb which means that our pursuit of, and desire for prophecy is to exceed our pursuit of love or desire for gifts.

Prophecy is not primarily foretelling the future. It is the proclamation of God’s truth. It is the Greek word προφητεύω (prophēteuō) meaning *prophecy. To make a representative declaration of the mind, will, or knowledge of God.* This is what we do in preaching. Preaching the truth of God’s Word is more important than the pursuit of love or spiritual gifts. Why? Paul gets to that in the next four verses.

What a blessing it is when we pursue love and desire spiritual gifts. Why does love have to be pursued? Because love for those who are different than you is not a natural thing. It is a God thing. The Body of Christ is to be known for its love. Who do I need to work at loving this week? What steps will I take to love them? Love is the life blood of Christianity. Spiritual gifts are the expression of Christianity, preaching is its food. We cannot grow apart from the food of God’s Word. **Therefore, Paul goes on to describe...**

### 2. The Purpose Of Preaching vv. 2-3

v. 2 tells us that the one who speaks in a tongue, speaks to God, not men. Paul explains why this is true in the second half of the verse. “For” or because. The reason he only speaks to men and not God is because no one can understand. Tongues are always languages that exist in the world. Here the problem is that no one in the congregation speaks it! This is cast in a negative light here. If you are speaking in a language that no one understands, you are benefiting no one. They don’t understand, they can’t make sense of what he is saying. Though his spirit may be speaking mysteries, it isn’t profitable. “Spirit” here is translated with a small “s”. It is understood as referring to the human spirit. The spirit of the one doing the speaking. He is speaking mysteries, but they do not benefit others because they cannot understand.

In contrast to the exclusively personal benefit of speaking in tongues when no one understands the language seen in v. 2; prophecy is beneficial all the time. Prophecy or preaching has three positive effects here in v. 3. The first is “edification”. “Edification” is the Greek word οἰκοδομή (oikodomē) meaning *building or edification.* The idea is that of *building up.* It is *the act of bringing something closer to fullness or completion; understood as if assisting in the construction of an incomplete building.* This is what preaching does for the body of Christ, the church! It brings us closer to completion, to maturity.

The second positive effect is that of “exhortation”. Exhortation is the Greek word παράκλησις (paraklēsis). Very similar to Paracletos, a word used to describe the Holy Spirit. It means *comfort or encouragement.* It is *the act of earnestly supporting or encouraging.* This is the effect that preaching has on the believer. It encourages us to continue in the faith being steadfast and immovable! The final

positive effect is “comfort”. This is the Greek word παραμυθία (paramythia) meaning *consolation*. It is *the act of giving relief in affliction*. God’s Word is what gives relief in affliction! If someone is going through a trial, walking up to them and speaking in a language they don’t understand is not going to provide comfort! What they need is to be fed by the food of the Word!

The purpose of proclaiming God’s truth is to benefit the body of Christ! Speaking in tongues that no one knows fails to do this because no one understands! Our desire should be to build up, encourage, and comfort the body of Christ. That is accomplished through prophecy, or the preaching of the Word. Do I have a desire to see people know Christ better through His Word? Am I being built up by the Word so that I can build others up? Where do I turn for comfort? What comfort do I offer others? It is a blessing to know that God’s Word can build us up, it can encourage us, and it can bring us comfort. How vital is God’s Word of truth! **Because it is so vital, Paul describes...**

### 3. The Preeminence Of Preaching vv. 4-5

v. 4 states that speaking in tongues edifies yourself. How? The speaker knows what he is saying. This is an important point against a modern “tongue” or gibberish. Those who have the real gift of tongues know what they are saying. The purpose of an interpreter is simply affirmation (2 or 3 witnesses). It does no good for anyone else The word “but” is contrastive here. In contrast to self-edification, a preacher edifies the church. “Church” is the Greek word ἐκκλησία (ekklēsia) meaning *assembly or church*. It refers to *an orderly congregation specifically of those who trust in Jesus as the Messiah*.

This is a very important point. Why? Because of the purpose of Spiritual gifts. Turn to [Ephesians 4:11-16](#). To speak in church and only build yourself up is to violate and abuse the gift you have been given! It was given for the purpose of building up the church! Not yourself. Therefore, if no one can understand the language being spoken, it is meaningless, keep silent. Paul is very clear. The purpose of Spiritual gifts according to *ch. 12* and *Eph. 4* is the edification of the body of Christ. Someone who speaks in tongues without an interpreter only edifies themselves. Therefore, to speak in tongues without an interpreter is an exercise of sinful pride, it has no desire to edify the church. The focus is self-promotion.

Paul has an earnest desire in v. 5 that the Corinthians be able to speak in tongues. He wants them to speak in languages. Why? For evangelistic purposes! He wants people to hear the gospel and be saved! However, in the church, Paul has a different desire. “Even more” is the same word used in v. 1, translated “especially”. Paul wants them to speak in tongues, but more than that, he wants them to prophesy. Why?

Because preaching edifies the church! Therefore, it is greater than speaking in languages. Especially if there is no interpreter! The goal of a church assembly is for the people to be edified. Prophecy is greater. This is a comparative statement. There is also an exception given. Unless there is one who interprets. The “he” who speaks in languages is different than the “he” who interprets. Again, we see that the goal is the edification of the church. If there is no interpreter, no one is edified and therefore tongues should not be used.

Preaching is greater than tongues because it directly edifies the body of Christ. Tongues only brings edification if there is an interpreter. The force of Paul’s argument here is that we should endeavor to prophesy or to preach rather than speak in a language no one can understand. The goal is the edification of the church. Therefore, preaching is preeminent. What a blessing to know that God’s desire is for us to be built up! The proclamation of the truth of God’s Word is the responsibility of every believer. This is not just the pastor’s job or that of the elders. Every believer needs to proclaim the truth of God’s Word.

**CHALLENGE:** Only speak words that build up, comfort, and encourage the body of Christ!

“Following on his demonstration of the importance of love, Paul insists that edification must be the prime consideration. Does one’s gift help other people? That is the important thing.”<sup>1</sup>

“He urged the Corinthians to value prophecy above tongues because it can edify and lead to conversion since it involves *intelligible* “inspired” speech.”<sup>2</sup>

## V. 1

Pursue – διώκω diōkō *pursue; persecute. To strive after ⇔ chase – to strive for something, conceived of as going after something with the intent to catch it.* Finite verb, present, active, imperative, second person, plural.

Love – ἀγάπη agapē *love. Love (Christian) – a strong, non-sexual affection and regard for a person and their good as understood by God’s moral character; especially characterized by a willing forfeiture of rights or privileges in another person’s behalf.* Direct object, noun, accusative, singular, feminine.

Desire – ζηλώω zēloō *be jealous; strive for. To be zealous – to be or become marked by active interest, passion, and enthusiasm for something, often a cause or faith.* Finite verb, present, active, imperative, second person plural.

Spiritual – τὸ πνευματικόν to pneumatikon *spiritual. Spiritual gift – a gift or endowment characteristic of the presence or enabling of the Holy Spirit.* Substantival adjective, accusative, plural, neuter.

“With this Paul links *eagerly desire* (the same word as in 12:31) *spiritual gifts*; those gifts as the outworking of love will build up other believers.”<sup>3</sup>

Especially – μᾶλλον mallon *instead; more; rather. More (extent) – to a greater degree or extent.* Comparative adverb.

Prophecy – προφητεύω prophēteuō *prophecy. To prophecy (inspired) – to make a representative declaration of the mind, will, or knowledge of a god, as in his agency, under his influence, or indwelt by him.* Finite verb, present, active, subjunctive, second person, plural.

“If the readers will pay particular attention (μᾶλλον) to the activity of **prophecy** (in contrast to speaking with tongues, v. 2), this will serve the good of others, since Paul will show that the aim and effect of authentic prophesying is (i) to build up the whole community (vv. 4, 5, 17; cf. 8:1, 10; 10:23); (ii) to exhort or to comfort (vv. 3 and 31; cf. 4:13, 16; 16:12, 15); and (iii) to console or to encourage (v. 3; cf. 1 Thess 2:11; see introduction to 14:1–40, above).”<sup>4</sup>

“Prophecy, then, is a means of building up Christian character, of encouraging and strengthening people, and of giving them comfort in their distress.”<sup>5</sup>

“Prophets, above all, *build up* the community (8:1, 10; 10:23; 14:4, 17).”<sup>6</sup>

“Our modern *preaching* is the successor of *prophecy*, but without the inspiration.”<sup>7</sup>

## V. 2

Tongue – γλῶσσα glōssa *tongue; language. Language (supernatural) ⇔ tongue – any language but often referring to a language one has never studied and a supernatural ability to speak (or be understood) in it.*

Noun, dative of means, singular, feminine.

“Unless there is someone there with a special gift of interpretation, what is spoken in ‘tongues’ is quite unknowable to mankind.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 7, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 183.

<sup>2</sup> Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), 1 Co 13:13.

<sup>3</sup> Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 7, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 183.

<sup>4</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1083–1084.

<sup>5</sup> Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 7, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 184.

<sup>6</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1084.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, vol. 2 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 289.

<sup>8</sup> Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 7, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 184.

Understands – ἀκούω akouō *hear; listen to. To understand (language) – to make sense of a language.* Finite verb, present, active, indicative, third person, singular.

“Paul’s teaching on spiritual gifts, including tongues, generally emphasizes the importance of using gifts to build up the faith of others.”<sup>9</sup>

“That which cannot be understood cannot edify, and such confusion is to be avoided in the church.”<sup>10</sup>

“So in the New Testament, “tongues” are actual languages miraculously spoken by people who are not familiar with those languages.”<sup>11</sup>

Mysteries – μυστήριον *mystērion mystery. Divine secret – a secret whose concerned party is a deity alone and those to whom he chooses to share the information; especially concerning the method and history of God’s redemption or other supernatural information.* Direct object, noun, accusative, plural, neuter.

### V. 3

Edification – οἰκοδομή *oikodomē building; edification. Building up – the act of bringing something closer to fullness or completion; understood as if assisting in the construction of an incomplete building.* Direct object, noun, accusative, singular, feminine.

“The purpose of Paul’s argument here and in 13:1 is that any use of tongues is meaningless if it doesn’t serve to encourage or build up others.”<sup>12</sup>

Exhortation – παράκλησις *paraklēsis comfort; encouragement. Exhortation – the act of earnestly supporting or encouraging (a response or action).* Direct object, noun, accusative, singular, feminine.

“The believer who speaks in a tongue speaks to God in praise and worship; but the believer who prophesies shares the Word with the church and helps those who listen.”<sup>13</sup>

Comfort – παραμυθία *paramythia consolation. Consolation (act) – the act of giving relief in affliction.* Direct object, noun, accusative, singular, feminine.

“One with the gift of prophecy (cf. 12:10), on the other hand, spoke in the tongue of his listeners, in this case Greek, and edified them by proclaiming God’s Word in such a way that it gave them **strengthening**, (*oikodomēn*, “edification”), **encouragement**, (*paraklēsin*), **and comfort** (*paramythian*, “consolation,” used only here in the NT).”<sup>14</sup>

““Edification,” “exhortation,” and “consolation” set forth the primary ways in which prophecy (preaching) builds up the church. Its main purpose as a gift was not to predict events in the future but to build up believers in the present.”<sup>15</sup>

“Paul offers three purposes for prophecy. It builds up believers in the assembly—it *speaks edification*. It encourages them—it *speaks exhortation*. It also *speaks comfort* to them.”<sup>16</sup>

### V. 4

Edifies – οἰκοδομέω (*oikodomeō*) *strengthen; build; build up. To build up ⇔ construct – to make nearer to fullness or completion (as of moral strength or someone’s conscience); conceived of as constructing something further.* Finite verb, present, active, indicative, third person, singular. Slightly different word than v. 3.

“Personal edification and exhilaration were often natural by-products of the legitimate exercise of one’s gift, but they were not the main reasons for its exercise.”<sup>17</sup>

Church – ἐκκλησία (*ekklēsia*) *assembly; church. Church – an orderly congregation specifically of those who trust in Jesus as the Messiah (or those who compose it).* Direct object, noun, accusative, singular, feminine.

<sup>9</sup> John D. Barry et al., *Faithlife Study Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016), 1 Co 14:2.

<sup>10</sup> Keith Brooks, *Summarized Bible: Complete Summary of the New Testament* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2009), 51.

<sup>11</sup> Stephen T. Um, *1 Corinthians: The Word of the Cross*, ed. R. Kent Hughes, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 241.

<sup>12</sup> John D. Barry et al., *Faithlife Study Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016), 1 Co 14:2.

<sup>13</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 612.

<sup>14</sup> David K. Lowery, “1 Corinthians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 538.

<sup>15</sup> Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), 1 Co 14:3.

<sup>16</sup> Dwight L. Hunt, “The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians,” in *The Grace New Testament Commentary*, ed. Robert N. Wilkin (Denton, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 2010), 753.

<sup>17</sup> David K. Lowery, “1 Corinthians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 538.

“Paul’s point was that edifying the church is more valuable than edifying oneself.”<sup>18</sup>

## V. 5

Wish – θέλω *thelō wish; want. To desire – to feel or have a desire for; want strongly.* Finite verb, present, active, indicative, first person, singular.

Greater – μείζων (*meizōn or megas*) *great; loud. Greater – greater in size or importance or degree.* Adjective of comparison, nominative, singular, masculine, comparative.

“...the gift of prophecy is greater than the gift of tongues because it can benefit the entire church community (see note on 12:31).”<sup>19</sup>

Interprets – διερμηνεύω *diermēneuō interpret; explain. To translate – to interpret (words or senses) from one language into another.* Finite verb, present, active, subjunctive, third person, singular.

“Tongues must therefore mean *languages*, not ecstatic, unintelligible rhapsodie (as NEANDER fancied): for Paul could never “wish” for the latter in their behalf.”<sup>20</sup>

“If ‘tongues’ are interpreted the hearers are *edified*, and there is no great difference from prophecy. Both are inspired speech, and both now convey a message to people.”<sup>21</sup>

“Paul did not have a problem with the gift of tongues; he simply disapproved of the Corinthians’ use of the gift without an interpreter.”<sup>22</sup>

“The real issue was not a conflict between tongues and prophecy but between unintelligible and intelligible utterance.”<sup>23</sup>

“The apostle wishes **even more that** the Corinthians prophesied because this gift **is greater than** an uninterpreted language. Only the interpreted tongue allows **the church to receive edification**. Prophecy is therefore greater than the gift of languages since it accomplishes in one step—speaking—what tongues accomplishes in two steps—speaking and interpretation.”<sup>24</sup>

Receive – λαμβάνω *lambanō receive; take. To receive – to get something or come into possession of; whether physical or abstract.* Finite verb, aorist, active, subjunctive, third person, singular.

“In a church gathering, however, the gift of prophecy and its exercise was greatly to be preferred to uninterpreted tongues simply because the former built up others.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), 1 Co 14:4.

<sup>19</sup> John D. Barry et al., *Faithlife Study Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016), 1 Co 14:5.

<sup>20</sup> Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, vol. 2 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 289.

<sup>21</sup> Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 7, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 184.

<sup>22</sup> John D. Barry et al., *Faithlife Study Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016), 1 Co 14:5.

<sup>23</sup> Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), 1 Co 14:5.

<sup>24</sup> Dwight L. Hunt, “The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians,” in *The Grace New Testament Commentary*, ed. Robert N. Wilkin (Denton, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 2010), 754.

<sup>25</sup> David K. Lowery, “1 Corinthians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 538.