

I CORINTHIANS: HANDLING BELIEVERS' PRACTICAL PROBLEMS

XVI. God's Guidance On Spiritual Gifts, 1 Corinthians 12:1-14:40

D. Communicating To Minds With Our Speaking Gifts

(1 Corinthians 14:1-19)

I. Introduction

- A. The people Paul disciplined in Corinth lived in a city that was known for its immorality, alcoholism and worldly pursuits (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, "Introduction to the First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians: The City of Corinth," p. 1619), so the formidable influence of the city's culture on the Corinthian believers left Paul addressing "(a)berrant beliefs and practices of an astonishing variety" in his letters to them, *Ibid*.
- B. However, in a vision Paul received from God as he ministered at Corinth in Acts 18:10b NIV, God told him, "I have many people in this city," so Paul was to keep on ministering regardless of the trials he faced there.
- C. In 1 Corinthians 14:1-19, Paul addressed the need for believers with speaking gifts to communicate to the minds of others for their gifts to be edifying. We view the passage for our insight, application, and edification:

II. Communicating To Minds With Our Speaking Gifts, 1 Corinthians 14:1-19.

- A. Many Charismatics claim that when they "speak in tongues" by making utterances that are not mentally understood by their hearers to be in human languages, they are practicing 1 Corinthians 14:2 KJV where Paul taught that those who speak "in an *unknown* tongue" speak not to men, but to God in the spirit in mysteries.
- B. However, this belief and interpretation of this verse errs on various levels, and we explain (as follows):
 - 1. First, Paul referred to use of an actual, recognized, human language in 1 Corinthians 14:2 (as follows):
 - a. The word "*unknown*" in the KJV is italicized, meaning it is supplied by the translators, not the Greek text, and the italicized word "*unknown*" occurs throughout 1 Corinthians 14:1-40 KJV, *Ibid.*, fn. to 1 Cor. 14:2.
 - b. The word "tongue" renders the Greek noun *glossa*, which here means either a human language, or ecstatic speech in paganism, Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 161; B. K. C., N. T., p. 537.
 - c. Paul would not condone ecstatic speech in paganism, and his failure to mention it in this chapter shows that the Corinthian believers did not practice it. In addition, wherever else Paul used the noun *glossa* to refer to utterances, he always dealt with clearly intelligible statements or confessions, *Ibid*.
 - d. Some Charismatics claim that their languages are not human, but angelic, as mentioned in 1 Corinthians 13:1a, so they assert that if they can get a translator to convey to the minds of their hearers what they are saying in angelic languages, they are obeying Paul's 1 Corinthians 14:27 order. However, this claim errs:
 - i. Paul's 1 Corinthians 13:1a statement was a "hyperbole," being "meant to include every imaginable mode of speech" in "exalted eloquence," not a claim that he used angelic languages, *Ibid.*, p. 535.
 - ii. Also, the gift of tongues was that of speaking in human languages to fulfill Deuteronomy 28:49 to show Israel her need to repent of sin. Tongues was specifically a sign for the people of Israel!
 - e. Other Charismatics claim that the miracle of tongues speaking is not in the *speaking*, but in the *hearing* what is spoken so that the *hearer miraculously understands* what is *not* in an *actual language*! However, in Acts 2:1-11, the hearers **named** the **actual Gentile languages** being spoken as the **languages** they used!
 - f. Thus, in the Early Church, one only translated a message that was spoken in a recognized human language, and Paul wrote of the spiritual gift of speaking in a recognized human language as recorded in Acts 2:1-11.
 - 2. Second, Paul did **not condone** the practice that he mentioned in 1 Corinthians 14:2, **but he simply noted what was occurring in the Church at Corinth so that he might critique this practice** (as follows):
 - a. Back in 1 Corinthians 12:7, Paul had stated that the purpose of spiritual gifts was to profit the whole church, not to edify just the person who had the spiritual gift as occurred in the 1 Corinthians 14:2b case!
 - b. Besides, in 1 Corinthians 14:1-4, Paul showed the superiority of the gift of prophecy over tongues in that the prophet communicated in a human language that conveyed facts to the mind to edify others where speaking in a human language no one else understood failed to convey edifying facts to the hearers!
 - c. Indeed, in 1 Corinthians 14:19, Paul stated that he would prefer to speak five words with his understanding to edify others than ten thousand words in a human language that no other believer present understood!
 - C. So, throughout 1 Corinthians 14:1-19, Paul repeatedly and extensively clarified that his readers should communicate facts to the minds of others with their speaking gifts so that they might edify other believers!

Lesson: *Believers with speaking gifts must convey facts in human languages to other believers to edify them.*

Application: *With our speaking gifts, may we convey facts to our hearers' minds in human language to edify them.*