

I CORINTHIANS: HANDLING BELIEVERS' PRACTICAL PROBLEMS

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

E. Aligning With The Prophesied Purpose Of The Tongues Gift

(1 Corinthians 14:20-25)

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 14:20-25, to correct the misuse of the spiritual gift of tongues in the church, Paul explained the purpose of this gift as prophesied in the Old Testament. We view this passage for insight and application:

II. Aligning With The Prophesied Purpose Of The Tongues Gift, 1 Corinthians 14:20-25.

- A. Having established the fact that the gift of speaking in tongues was profitable in the local church only if its utterances were translated so that the message could be understood unto edification, the question arises as to why God would even give such a gift that seemed to cloud edification in the church.
- B. Paul answered this concern in 1 Corinthians 14:20-25 (as follows):
 1. The apostle expressed his desire that his readers stop thinking like children and think like adults, with the exception that he wished them to be ignorant infants regarding the matter of evil, 1 Corinthians 14:20. The Corinthian believers were preoccupied with an ungodly showmanship by speaking in tongues, and Paul wanted them to mature by understanding the proper purpose and use of all of the spiritual gifts.
 2. Paul then explained that the gift of speaking in tongues was given as a means of conveying the warning to the unbelieving people of Israel that their nation was ripe for God's punishment for sin, 1 Cor. 14:21-22a:
 - a. In 1 Corinthians 14:21, Paul cited part of Isaiah 28:11-12 in a section of Isaiah's prophecy where Isaiah predicted God's judgment on Israel for complaining that he was "lecturing them as if they were little children, and they mocked his method" in Isaiah 29:10, Ibid., Ryrie, fn. to Isa. 28:9-10.
 - b. Isaiah had thus predicted God's judgment would be another message "delivered in a foreign tongue unintelligible to the Israelites" in national captivity, Isaiah 28:11; Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 539.
 - c. This prediction aligned with the Mosaic Covenant revelation in Deuteronomy 28:49 in its context that a "foreign tongue symbolized God's rejection" of Israel in punishment for her sin. (Ibid.)
 - d. Thus, tongues were for a sign not for the company of believers in Israel, but for unbelievers in the nation who had turned away from following the Lord, 1 Corinthians 14:22a.
 3. However, the gift of prophecy that provides clear truth to the mind was not for rebellious unbelievers like the gift of tongues was for Israel's unbelievers, but for believers, 1 Corinthians 14:22b.
 4. Therefore, if the whole local **church** were to meet together in one place, and all were to speak with the gift of tongues, speaking in Gentile languages that no one else understood, and visitors to the gathering who were untaught or unbelievers were to observe the massive tongues speaking spectacle in the **church**, instead of being edified, they would claim that that **church** had insane people in it, 1 Corinthians 14:23.
 5. Conversely, if all the believers in a local church prophesied, and an unbelieving Gentile or an untaught believer were to visit the meeting, he would be convicted of sin and be called into account by what he understood was being said, the secrets of his heart being disclosed, and falling down he would worship God and declare that God was really among this gathering of believers, 1 Corinthians 14:24-25 ESV.

Lesson: *The gifts of tongues was the supernatural ability to communicate God's truths in Gentile languages as a sign to the nation Israel that it was about to be punished by God for its sin. This fact explains the fearful reaction of the Hebrews in Acts 2:40-41 to Peter's sermon of the conviction of sin. Thus, the gift of tongues ceased when God ceased dealing with Israel at the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in A. D. 70, and use of this gift was to be translated in churches of believers in order to edify people in the churches as long as the gift continued to exist.*

Application: *(1) Since God intended for the gift of tongues to be a sign to the nation Israel to repent while He was still working with her, we should realize that God's cessation of His ministry to Israel also included the cessation of the tongues gift. (2) However, in the Church, all speaking gifts are meant to edify by use of known statements.*