

1 Corinthians 14:1: “Follow after charity” or agape love and desire spiritual gifts:

Don't forget that 1 Corinthians 13 was Paul pausing from teaching them about spiritual gifts to rebuke them for what was missing in the church: Love!

1 Corinthians 13:1-2

Now, he continues with spiritual gifts in (C14), you'll note that he only dealt with (2) of them, tongues and prophesying.

I would like to preface 1 Corinthians 14 by reading the last (5) versus of 1 Corinthians 12: (12:27-31)

I said this once before, but it must be understood that in the time that Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, God was still giving “divine and infallible” ~ new foundational revelation” to the apostles for the church, the NT scriptures were still being written. The apostolic age was STILL a time of miracles, which were designed to authenticate the gospel message of the apostles, solidify the doctrinal foundation of the church, and point sinners to Christ!

There were still miraculous spiritual gifts, and they were to be desired, but spiritual gifts without “agape love” were of no profit to the church.

WHY? Without “agape love” these gifts did not edify/strengthen the church, but instead, weakened it, and caused strife and sin in it.

But as written in 1 Corinthians 12:31: “Covet earnestly the best gifts: (Christians), and yet, shew I unto you a more excellent way”

EVERY Christian should “desire” to be used of God “to edify and strengthen” the church! But know that God is “The Giver” of every spiritual gift, and every spiritual gift is to be used in love to Christ, to magnify His Name, and to expand (His following) and the borders of His Kingdom!

Spiritual gifts are not for display or for calling attention to ourselves, they are for the building up and edification of the body of Christ!

Paul deals with only (2) spiritual gifts, (C14), prophesying and tongues.

There is no doubt that speaking in tongues was the “spiritual gift” that was desired by most, but, no doubt, for the wrong reasons, which is one of the things that Paul deals with in this chapter.

Paul was not minimizing the importance of the gift of tongues; it was a gift from God! But (AGAIN) this was a time of “new revelation from God”, and a time when miraculous gifts were given to prove that Jesus was the Christ, and that His message and teaching was from God!

Acts 2:22-24, 3:12-15, 6:7-8, 8:5-6, 19:10-12

God's design of the gift of tongues was for the gospel to spread to EVERY kindred, tongue, people, and nation! Paul, in (C14) dealt with the “improper use” of the gift of tongues.

If you'll allow me to make an application here: ANY SPIRITUAL GIFT used outside of the boundaries of the revealed will of God, for self-exaltation and for show, rather than for Christ's exaltation and to advance His Kingdom is wrong and abhorrent to God!

There were people speaking in foreign tongues, languages which no one in the church understood, therefore, NO ONE was being edified, because no one understood them! Paul therefore exalted the gift of prophesying above tongues". Preach so that the people understand and are edified!

(V1): "Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy"

"Follow after" means "pursue or chase after" with full intent of reaching and overtaking that which you are pursuing. Every day in your Christian life, you should be in "hot pursuit" of charity/agape love in everything that you do. In the ministry or service that God has called you to for His Name, your motivation for doing it should be love to Christ!

Romans 14:17-19, 1 Timothy 6:11, Hebrews 12:14

"But rather (or especially) that ye may prophesy"

Was EVERY Corinthian to desire to be a preacher? Many believe "prophesying" here means to preach or be a preacher. While that may be one way to look at this passage, the question arises, would Paul actually be telling EVERY Corinthian believer to DESIRE to be a preacher?

Hold that thought, we'll come back to this question. Let's get to Paul's emphasis; he is placing prophesying above speaking in tongues. Yes, desire spiritual gifts, but rather (or especially) that ye may prophesy.

WHY? 1 Corinthians 14:2-12

Those that speak in an unknown tongue (or language) are speaking to God and not to the church. What does Paul mean by this?

Think about a church service in which someone came in and began to preach or read the Word of God in another language; would you be edified and helped? No, you don't know the language, therefore, if no one interprets for you (tells you what they preached or read), you have no idea what they said.

Paul wrote, those that speak in an "unknown tongue" are speaking to God and not to men". What I think Paul means here is, God is the only One that understands the speaker, but no one in the church understands, therefore NO ONE was EDIFIED and HELPED! (V2B)

THAT is what was happening in the Church @ Corinth was, you would come into their Lord's Day service, and hear a cacophony of unintelligible voices of those speaking in tongues or foreign languages that no one could understand. It was a mess! And the church was NOT being edified and helped by the preaching of God's Word!

1 Corinthians 14:7-8: Even in music; musical instruments give a distinct and certain sound, so that we understand the song being played.

You've heard some of the kids come up there between the service and bang on the piano keys....In the military, "certain" sounds from the trumpet mean "certain" things; they are in a sense, musical commands! The US Army terms them "bugle calls"

Reveille, Assemble, Charge, Retreat, Taps. These distinct and certain sounds from the trumpet mean something to the soldier!

Beloved, when we gather on the Lord's Day, we ought to hear things from God's Word that are distinct, intelligible, made understandable!

I think of Nehemiah 8:1-8 when Ezra stood up to read the Book of the Law before the people of Israel, and there were men stationed throughout the gathering to help the people to understand what was being read.

God's Word teaches us that the primary focus of our church gatherings ought to be the building up and edification of the saints, so that when you leave the Lord's Day worship, you UNDERSTAND MORE of God's Word!

And yes, the gospel is preached so that the lost in our gatherings might understand and turn from their sins to Christ. Paul therefore emphasized and exalted prophesying above speaking in unintelligible tongues!

1 Corinthians 14:12, 26, Ephesians 4:11-12, 29

What does it mean to prophesy?

"To Prophesy" in the time of OT Israel was to speak for God to the people of Israel. The OT Prophets told the people precisely what God commanded them to tell God's people; nothing more, nothing less: Thus, saith the LORD!

Exodus 7:1-2, Isaiah 6:5-9, Jeremiah 1:5-7

The Apostles preached/recorded God's message to the church after Pentecost, in the infancy of the NT Church. The apostles also spoke infallibly for God.

Ephesians 2:18-20, 1 John 1:1-4, 2 Peter 1:16-21

There are no more new revelations; we have the complete canon of the Holy Scriptures; we have God's revealed will!

The tongues @the Day of Pentecost clearly teaches us that the gospel would go into all the world; it wouldn't be restricted to one nation, people, and language. Acts 2:5-8

Allow me to make an application for us for the church of the Lord Jesus Christ in our day: Numbers 11:27-29

I don't believe Moses actually desired that EVERY MAN would be a prophet of God; every man was not called to be a prophet. Moses was simply not an envious man! He took no offence that others might prophesy as he did.

Hence, every man is not called to be a Pastor/Preacher, and yet, there is a sense in which every one of you as Christian's ought to "prophesy".

Remember, the design of prophesying from our text is to edify, exhort, and comfort!

When you witness the gospel of Christ to one that is lost, you are telling them what God commanded you to tell them. In this sense, you are prophesying! You are revealing God's will to them! When you tell them to "flee from the wrath to come", you are prophesying!

You are one of God's witnesses, hence you are to be able to tell the lost about things that will "shortly come to pass" in the future in the return of the Lord Jesus Christ and of judgment to come!

Romans 14:19, 15:1-2, 1 Thessalonians 4:18, 5:11