

CHAPTER 14



St. Paul tells the Corinthian Christians to both pursue love and desire spiritual gifts, but especially the gift of being able to prophesy (14:1). To better explain this point, the apostle uses the example of a person who is gifted to speak in different kinds of tongues (see 12:10). A person speaking in a tongue that is incomprehensible to the people around him or her is empowered by the Holy Spirit to speak mysteries, but no one can understand them (14:2); the person therefore edifies only himself or herself (14:4). In contrast, the person who prophesies “speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men” (14:3), and therefore benefits everyone in the congregation (14:4). The Christian who speaks in a tongue should therefore pray for the the gift of interpretation (14:13), because praying in a tongue without interpretation is unfruitful for the understanding (14:14).

To emphasize the importance of understanding in the Christian life, the apostle encourages them to be mature in their understanding of Christian teaching and the spiritual life (14:20). Unlike prophecy - which is intended to edify and enhance belief - tongues in the Corinthian church are a sign for unbelievers that confirms them in their unbelief (14:22).

St. Paul also encourages the Corinthian Christians to sing, teach, speak and interpret in an orderly fashion that promotes edification (14:26). Those who speak in different tongues must do so in turn and wait for the interpretation (14:27); moreover, if no one is present who has been given the gift of interpretation, then those who have the gift of speaking in different tongues, then those persons should refrain from exercising this gift in the worship service (14:28). Prophecy should similarly be orderly, with each person with the gift speaking in turn while the others discern the full meaning of the message being given

(14:29-31). The point of all this, St. Paul emphasizes, is that Christians should not place the blame on God when they become out-of-control during their worship, because God is the author of peace (14:33).

In verses 34-35 St. Paul returns to the subject of women in the church (which he previously addressed in 11:3-16). In this case, women are commanded to refrain from judging the prophecies given by prophets, but instead, if they have questions, to speak with their husbands about these things outside of the church.

St. Paul concludes with a quick summary of the chapter: Christians should desire to prophesy, and they should not be forbidden to speak with tongues, but all things should be done decently and orderly (14:39-40).



TODAY'S SPECIAL: TEACH OTHERS

One of the clearest statements in Scripture about teaching the Faith can be found in 2 Timothy 2:2: “The things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.” St. John Chrysostom explains this statement:

‘Commit,’ as a treasure committed is deposited in safety. Again he alarms his disciple, both from things above and things below. But he says not only ‘commit to faithful men’; for of what advantage is it that one is faithful, if he is not able to convey his doctrine to others? when he does not indeed betray the faith; but does not render others faithful? The teacher therefore ought to have two qualities, to be both faithful, and apt to teach; wherefore he says, ‘who shall be able to teach others also.’

Faithful teaching is so important to the Church that St. Paul describes it as one of the greater gifts that should be desired by all (1 Corinthians 12:28, 31). If Christians are to worship “in Spirit and truth” (John 4:24), and are to pray and sing with the mind as well as the heart (1 Corinthians 14:15), then we will need gifted teachers to instruct us in the Faith.

