

~Corinthian church's gift of languages (tongues)~

This is what the Apostle has to say to the church that "came behind in no gift" (1 Corinthians 1:7):

- He calls them carnal
- They were divided
- He addresses them as "babes in need of milk"
 - There is fornication among them
 - They were proud
 - They were taking each other to court
- They were ignorant of the proper use of the gifts
- They were going to harlots and joining their bodies with them
 - They were getting drunk at the Lord's table
 - They were guilty of gluttony
 - They were selfish

The Corinthian church showed that although one possessed the gifts of the Spirit, one did not have to be spiritual. Paul contrasts the **gifts** of the Spirit and the **love** of the Spirit, showing the latter's supremacy. Gifts do not denote spirituality--love does!

We must understand that the church at Corinth was not a model of propriety, but of what a church should NOT be! Having this proper understanding of this, now we can understand what Paul is addressing in 1Cor. chapter 14.

Observe:

1 Cor 14:1-22

1 Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.

2 For he that speaks in a tongue speaks not unto men, but unto God: for no man understands him; howbeit in the spirit he speaks mysteries.

What Paul is saying is that, without interpretation, no one understands him and that defeats the whole purpose of the gift of languages (tongues) which was to edify the "whole church"! Why is it that only God understands him? Because there is no interpreter! The speaker is therefore speaking "unto God," rather than unto the church-which is the purpose of the gifts! It is as non-profitable as speaking "into the air" (verse 9)!

No one could conclude that speaking in foreign languages to God is the purpose of tongues any more than speaking into the air is!

3 But he that prophesies speaks unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort. *Notice that Paul here shows the purpose of the gifts--to edify the church--not the individual.*

4 He that speaks in an tongue edifies himself; *(just the opposite reason for the gifts)* but he that prophesies edifies the church.

5 I would that you all spoke with languages, but rather that you prophesied: for greater is he that prophesies than he that speaks with languages, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.

Notice that language speaking is only good if there is interpretation. Again, for the edification of the church!

6 Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine? *Again, Paul says to them that speaking languages without anyone knowing is unprofitable. Only God understands and that is not the purpose of the gift of languages.*

7 And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped?

8 For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?

9 So likewise you, except you utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for you shall speak into the air. *Notice that Paul says in verse 1 that speaking with languages without interpretation is "speaking to God" (because only God understands him). Here in this verse, he reiterates by saying that speaking in tongues without interpretation is "speaking into the air"! Neither one was the intended use!*

10 There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification.

11 Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaks a barbarian, and he that speaks shall be a barbarian unto me.

12 Even so you, forasmuch as you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that you may excel to the edifying of the church.

13 Wherefore let him that speaks in an tongue pray that he may interpret.

14 For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful.

15 What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.

16 Else when thou shall bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupies the room of the unlearned say Amen at your giving of thanks, seeing he understands not what you say?

17 For you verily gives thanks well, but the other is not edified.

18 I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than you all: *How does Paul know he speaks in tongues more than them all? Paul spoke more than any one else because he was an Apostle and would encounter Jews everywhere at all times. Remember that Paul talks about going into synagogues every Sabbath and also remember that languages were for the Jews as a warning. Of course, he would speak them more than any one else!*

19 Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an tongue.

20 Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.

21 In the law (*Isaiah 28:11*) it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak **unto this people (Jews)**; and yet for all that will they not hear me, says the Lord.

22 Wherefore **tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not:** (*unbelieving Jews*) but prophesying serves not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.

The gift of languages (genuine, earthly languages-not ecstatic speech) was given as a sign to the Jewish nation that judgment was about to come upon them. That was the reason for Paul quoting from Isaiah 28:11 when referring to the reason for tongue speaking. Every Jew would recognize this sign. When Israel was destroyed in AD70 tongues ceased--forever! The reason for the sign gift was gone!

Historically, there is no continuing record of tongue speaking since!