

Parson to Person

1 Corinthians 14

(Order in the Local Assembly) – Part 1

“Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries. But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men. He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification.

But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you unless I speak to you either by revelation, by knowledge, by prophesying, or by teaching? Even things without life, whether flute or harp, when they make a sound, unless they make a distinction in the sounds, how will it be known what is piped or played? For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare for battle? So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air. There are, it may be, so many kinds of languages in the world, and none of them is without significance. Therefore, if I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be a foreigner to him who speaks, and he who speaks will be a foreigner to me. Even so you, since you are

zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel.

Therefore, let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding. Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say 'Amen' at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say? For you indeed give thanks well, but the other is not edified.

I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all; yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue" (1 Corinthians 14:1–19).

Passion for Godly Living

Paul was passionate about the welfare of the churches— as every believer should be. However, as we all know, many believers are self-centered, concern themselves with self-gratification, and spend inordinate amounts of time seeking self-fulfillment. We see this in the culture, but should not see it in the Church.

The Corinthians

Within the study of 1 Corinthians we have read Paul's instructive rebuke of Corinthian carnality: sectarianism, sexual misconduct, legal fighting, divorce, participation with

idolatry, financial selfishness, egalitarianism, drunkenness, gluttony, and now (here in chapters 12 to 14) the abuse of spiritual gifts.

The Filter Test

In Chapter 13 Paul laid down the legal, ethical, moral test filter of all Christian behavior: love. Others-centered, self-sacrificial, generous (agape) love: the high water mark of the Christian's maturity.

Order and Service in the Local Church

As we begin an examination of chapter 14, we will see that Paul gave practical application to others-centered service related to the Spiritual gifts—in particular, by further explanation of tongues, the interpretation of tongues, and prophecy.

In this first section we will learn about who is being addressed when one is “speaking in tongues” — “*God*” (vs. 2); the academic/intellectual understanding of the person speaking, praying or singing in a tongue—“*unfruitful*” (vs. 14); the one edified when speaking in a tongue—the speaker (vs. 4); Paul's desire that all would or could speak with tongues (vs. 5) while knowing that not all do (1 Corinthians 12:30); Paul's personal testimony about speaking in tongues—“*more than you all*” (vs. 18); his refrain for the benefit of the church—“*in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also*” (vs. 19); his instruction to do the same (vs. 1, 5, 12); and finally, what

prophecy is, how it works, and with what purpose—*“edification, exhortation, and comfort”* (vs. 3).

Others—In The Church

Paul wanted the Corinthians, and all of us, to concern ourselves with service to others—even when gifted in, by, with, and through the Holy Spirit. He boldly proclaimed that the gifts were authentic, valuable, and to be sought after, but not for personal gain or notoriety. The gifts and services of the Holy Spirit were to be specifically employed for the benefit of the whole Church.

As we work our way through this text, we should prepare for at least three lessons. Together they should teach us, stretch us, inspire us, and allow for growth in the gifts of the Spirit. The proper focus and function will benefit the whole of the body of Christ.

I love you all,
Pastor Paul