

Chapter 14/NASB

Prophecy a Superior Gift

- 1 ^aPursue love, yet ^bdesire earnestly ^cspiritual *gifts*, but especially that you may ^dprophesy.

but especially that = **more yet so that** < μάλλον δὲ ἵνα. Spiritual *things/gifts* are not being contrasted with prophesy. Rather, spiritual *things* are needed to prophesy.

The idea is that we should desire spiritual *things* so that we may prophesy. But Paul does not mean revelatory prophesy in the predictive sense. We haven't had a prophet like that since the Apostle John. What he means is the retelling of prophesy already given, which is the exposition of the Scriptures. The ability to correctly interpret and exposit on the Scripture is both a gift and something learned.

- 2 For one who ^aspeaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one ¹understands, but ²in *his* spirit he speaks ^bmysteries.

tongue = **foreign language**. The usual sense. speak = **communicate**. (cf. BDAG); an interpretation based on the context here that Paul means the meaning of what is spoken. but = **so much as**; (cf. Thayer, BDAG); a rhetorical usage in Greek in which the conjunction qualifies what is said rather than denying it.

Paul's idea is that the speaker of a foreign language in a place where it is not understood may be speaking to God, but he or she is not communicating anything to people, because "no one understands", and "in his spirit he speaks mysteries"; This latter phrase means that the person communicates with himself in his inner self, understanding what is meant, but to those outside, it is all a mystery.

^a 1 Cor 16:14

^b 1 Cor 12:31; 14:39

^c 1 Cor 12:1

^d 1 Cor 13:2

^a Mark 16:17; 1 Cor 12:10, 28, 30; 13:1; 14:18ff

¹ Lit *hears*

² Or *by the Spirit*

^b 1 Cor 13:2

Many, due to the mistranslation of the conjunction, "but," suppose that the "tongue" is not a foreign language and that it is never meant to be understood by men. That is not what Paul means. He only means that it is not understood by men when it is used where the audience does not know it. Such a situation could arise where semi-private worship or prayers are being permitted during the worship time in the congregation.

And it is even possible that one could come into the congregation and pretend to worship God with a foreign tongue, when in reality, they are cursing God in secret, and making a mockery of the assembly.

- 3 But one who prophesies speaks to men for ^aedification and ^bexhortation and consolation.
4 One who ^aspeaks in a tongue ^bedifies himself; but one who ^cprophesies ^bedifies the church.

church = **congregation, assembly**.

- 5 Now I wish that you all ^aspoke in tongues, but ^b*even more* that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who ^aspeaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive ^cedifying.

tongues = **foreign languages**

but even more = **more yet so that** < μάλλον δὲ ἵνα.

he = **one**. There is no separate word for "he". The 3rd singular of a very may legitimately mean "one" or "someone" as the subject.

church = **congregation**.

The idea is that knowing foreign languages would increase opportunities to spread the good news of God's faithfulness. For one who prophesies,

^a Rom 14:19; 1 Cor 14:5, 12, 17, 26

^b Acts 4:36

^a Mark 16:17; 1 Cor 12:10, 28, 30; 13:1; 14:18ff, 26f

^b Rom 14:19; 1 Cor 14:5, 12, 17, 26

^c 1 Cor 13:2

^a Mark 16:17; 1 Cor 12:10, 28, 30; 13:1; 14:18ff, 26f

^b Num 11:29

^c Rom 14:19; 1 Cor 14:4, 12, 17, 26

would teach the Scriptures to others. Foreign languages are permitted in the assembly if someone interprets the language so that everyone may understand. But what is claimed to be an "unknown tongue" by Pentecostals is usually not a foreign language. The claimed gift of interpretation is usually some kind of deception by the tongue speaker themselves, and since it is a claimed spiritual manifestation, the spirits must be tested. The only valid way to do this is to have two witnesses independently translate the unknown tongue. If they give the same result, and are trusted witnesses, then the tongue is valid, but if they give differing accounts then both the tongue speaker and the witnesses are suspect. It goes without saying that Pentecostals almost universally refuse to subject their claimed manifestation of the "gift" of interpretation to verification by two witnesses as the Torah requires in cases where spiritual deception is possible and must be ruled out.

On the other hand, if the foreign language is actually valid, and the speaker simply learned it, then only one translator is needed who knows the language as the likely hood of either speaker or translator deceiving the congregation is unlikely.

- 6 But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking in tongues, what will I profit you unless I speak to you either by way of ^arevelation or of ^bknowledge or of ^cprophecy or of ^dteaching?

tongues = **foreign languages**

The truth about Paul's congregations is that divisions were already occurring due to opportunists joining the Messianic faithful. Rather than coming directly against the deceivers, Paul is advising the assemblies on common sense procedures with foreign languages or claimed spiritual revelations. If the "tongue" is legitimately translated, then the deceivers will not get very far. If the person just needs to worship, pray, or sermonize in a foreign language, and it can be translated, then they will not be shut out of the assembly. If Paul were to just come against the deceivers, he would endanger the innocent users of foreign languages.

^a 1 Cor 14:26; Eph 1:17

^b 1 Cor 12:8

^c 1 Cor 13:2

^d Acts 2:42; Rom 6:17; 1 Cor 14:26

It is probable that the speaking Charasmatics call "tongues" today, was in fact commonly practiced by many pagan religions in the Roman Empire, by oracles and priestesses to impress the Romans and Greeks.

Paul is also setting up an application via Torah here, i.e. by requiring a translator what is being said in the foreign language will be known so that the words of the speaker can be judged proper or not. If the language cannot be translated by an independent witness actually knowing the language, then it is a fake language. And then the speaker would have to keep silence. That is the result Paul wanted.

However, I think that Paul did not foresee the extreme attempt by modern Pentecostals to actually attempt to "interpret" that which is obviously not a human tongue, or the theology of trying to justify the use of "unknown tongues" however, I know how Paul would have dealt with it. He would have required two witnesses with every claimed tongue to translate independently to test or, or he would have disallowed the whole concept all together on the common sense principle that an unknown language that even the speaker does not know is unprofitable to the speaker himself. The point is that the more it is possible for deceivers to collude, the more we need to test them so that if they are deceivers then they will be exposed.

- 7 Yet *even* lifeless things, either flute or harp, in producing a sound, if they do not produce a distinction in the tones, how will it be known what is played on the flute or on the harp?

- 8 For if ^athe ¹bugle produces an indistinct sound, who will prepare himself for battle?

- 9 So also you, unless you utter by the tongue speech that is clear, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be ^aspeaking into the air.

- 10 There are, perhaps, a great many kinds of ¹languages in the world, and no *kind* is without meaning.

- 11 If then I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be to the one who speaks a

^a Num 10:9; Jer 4:19; Ezek 33:3-6; Joel 2:1

¹ Lit *trumpet*

^a 1 Cor 9:26

¹ Lit *voices*

^{1a}barbarian, and the one who speaks will be a ¹barbarian ²to me.

12 So also you, since you are zealous of ¹spiritual *gifts*, seek to abound for the ^aedification of the church.

church = **congregation**.

Paul comes very close to describing the nonsense that goes on in Pentecostal congregations in the above passage. They are just speaking into the air. Paul, perhaps, sarcastically, wonders if there are so many kinds of "languages", yet he suggests that all legitimate languages have meaning and can be translated. If so, then let them all be translated or not used.

13 Therefore let one who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret.

he = **one**. There is no separate word for "he". The 3rd singular of a very may legitimately mean "one" or "someone" as the subject.

The one who needs to pray in a foreign language must do it with a translator in such manner that the translator can get it all and translate it, perhaps pausing after a bit for the translator to catch up and be accurate.

14 For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful.

tongue = **foreign language**.

mind = **understanding**. BDAG 3rd, def. 1b.

My spirit prays, means that the inner person prays and understands the meaning. My understanding is unfruitful, means that the others present do not understand it or benefit if there is no translator.

Pentecostals come up with a novel view of man in order to reinterpret the text. They view man as three parts, "mind", "spirit" and "body", and that the "mind" and the "spirit" of a person are separate parts, and that the "spirit" part is not

¹ Or *foreigner*

^a Acts 28:2

² Or *in my estimation*

¹ Lit *spirits*

^a Rom 14:19; 1 Cor 14:4, 5, 17, 26

comprehended by the intellect. This is a Gnostic view of the real inner self. The Gnostics considered their real inner spirit to be part of the divine nature, which one come get in touch with by mystical practices.

Likewise, some Pentecostals consider unregenerate man to have no "spirit", but that which is in Christians is a "re-created" spirit. When they speak in tongues, they are speaking out of this "re-created" spirit. Other Pentecostals think "my spirit" means the Holy Spirit. This whole theology is far from obvious from the Greek text, and it looks like repackaged Greek Gnostic philosophy in Christian garb. The deeper into these mysteries one goes, the farther away from the real fruit of the Spirit they will go, which is defined by the commandments of God as mercy, justice, and righteousness.

15 ^aWhat is *the outcome* then? I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also; I will ^bsing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also.

with = **for**

mind = **understanding**

Again, Paul is talking about prayer "for the understanding", not some kind of dual personality trait of human nature.

16 Otherwise if you bless ¹in the spirit *only*, how will the one who fills the place of the ²ungifted say ^athe "Amen" at your ^bgiving of thanks, since he does not know what you are saying?

16 For you are giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not ^aedified.

ungifted = **unlearned**. As in the KJV, much better. The NASB translator clearly erred with "ungifted" and even the foot note is totally misleading. The word is the word for "idiot"

^a Acts 21:22; 1 Cor 14:26

^b Eph 5:19; Col 3:16

¹ Or *with the*

² I.e. unversed in spiritual gifts

^a Deut 27:15–26; 1 Chr 16:36; Neh 5:13; 8:6; Ps 106:48; Jer 11:5; 28:6; Rev 5:14; 7:12

^b Matt 15:36

^a Rom 14:19; 1 Cor 14:4, 5, 12, 26

(ιδιώτου), which in that day simply meant "unlearned" and has no bad connotation as it does in English. Again Paul is assuming that the speaker of a foreign language at least knows what he or she is saying, even if they don't translate it.

- 18 I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all;
19 however, in the church I desire to speak five words with my mind so that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue.

tongues = **foreign languages**
church = **assembly**
mind = **understanding**
tongue = **foreign language**

Paul knows more foreign languages than all of them. Hebrew, Aramaic, Latin, Greek, Nabatean, and who knows what else. But with all of this "understanding" he rather speak so that he will instruct than many words in a speech "foreign" to his listeners.

Instruction for the Church

- 20 ^aBrethren, ^bdo not be children in your thinking; yet in evil ^cbe infants, but in your thinking be mature.
20 In ^athe Law it is written, "^bBY MEN OF STRANGE TONGUES AND BY THE LIPS OF STRANGERS I WILL SPEAK TO THIS PEOPLE, AND EVEN SO THEY WILL NOT LISTEN TO ME," says the Lord.

After the Babylonian exile, Israel forgot Hebrew and spoke Aramaic. The Hebrew had to be interpreted for them in Aramaic.

- 21 So then tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but ^aprophecy *is for a sign*, not to unbelievers but to those who believe.

tongues = **languages**
believe = **commit** [to God, to Yeshua]

^a Rom 1:13

^b Eph 4:14; Heb 5:12f

^c Ps 131:2; Matt 18:3; Rom 16:19; 1 Pet 2:2

^a John 10:34; 1 Cor 14:34

^b Is 28:11f

^a 1 Cor 14:1

unbelievers = **the unfaithful**

Having to hear the word of God in a foreign language is a sign of past judgment. For the tower of Babel was a judgment. Why then do Pentecostals claim to speak languages they don't understand? And then they have to guts to claim that such speaking is a sign of the blessing of the Holy Spirit, when Paul says that having to deal with foreign languages is a sign of judgment. God judged the languages of the world to keep men from cooperating in evil, and to give his covenant a chance with Israel. As the good news of the covenant of Messiah goes to the nations, we all struggle to overcome the language barriers, which first came down with God's helping of missionaries learn them. And now that we have greater access to the written divine revelation of Torah we are going to have God speaking to us in a totally subjective gibberish again? Is this going back under judgment? Yes, it is. But in the kingdom, there will be one language for all of God's people. That will be Hebrew of course, but in the meantime we must communicate in English, Spanish, and other languages.