

Dec. 4, 2011

## Understanding Tongues Part 3

1 Corinthians 14:26-39

**BI: When it comes to the use of spiritual gifts in the church, all things must be done for the edification.**

If you have been watching evangelical Christianity at all over the past few decades than you know it has kind of become a free-for-all where every church does what is right in it's own eyes. Some of you have visited many, many churches over the years and you have witnessed all kinds of things going on in church that makes you wonder whether or not the leaders of such churches have lost their grip completely on the word of God and its revelation of the character of God. But regardless of what you may have seen in churches in our country, I can assure you it was not nearly as chaotic and dysfunctional as the church of Corinth.

As we continue working our way through chapter 14 of 1 Corinthians, we come to this final, long section where Paul seeks to correct their chaotic, free-for-all kind or worship philosophy with one that is more consistent with the character and revelation of God. If you have missed our study on the issue of tongues over the past two weeks, I invite you to download the messages from our website or request them from the sound-booth before you leave today. This morning, however, we pick up in verse 26 of this chapter where Paul gives us a description of chaotic worship.

### **Intro: The Description of Chaotic Worship:**

1. Read v. 26

2. Now the important phrase we need to begin with this morning is the final one in this verse, "*Let all things be done for edification.*" Once again, we need to understand the importance Paul places on the edification of the church. None of us are here for ourselves. None of us have been gifted to edify ourselves.

3. In fact, in 1 Cor. 8-10 Paul addresses the exercise of Christian liberties. You will remember that on the one hand Paul was affirm that we have liberty in Christ. On the other hand, however, those liberties must sometimes be reigned in for the sake of our brothers. Some were using their liberties simply to edify themselves. They were selfish and arrogant in their use of Christian liberty, and they didn't care how their actions affected the other members of the church.

4. We see this in verse 1 of Chapter 8. Paul says, "*Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies.*" Then in chapter 10 Paul concludes by writing in v. 23-34, "*All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify. Let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor.*"

5. In other words, self-edification is not what God is after. In fact, Paul rebukes these brothers for

their insistence on self-edification.

6. The word “edify” is *oikodomaē* from *oikos* which mean “house.” The word literally means “to build (or construct) a house.” In this case, the house is the church made up of many members. God’s priority is that believers weigh everything we do not only on whether it is allowable in Scripture, but also on whether it will edify (i.e. “build up”) the other members of the body of Christ.

6. Paul hammers this point 1 Cor. 14 when he says (v. 4) “One who speaks in a tongue *edifies himself*.” He’s not saying that’s good. He’s saying it’s bad. And that’s why the gift of prophesy was so much better for the church than the ecstatic gibberish they were engaged in. Why? Because (4) “one who prophesies *edifies the church*.” Then in verse 5 he forbids even the use of the real gift of tongues in the church unless there is an interpreter. Why? “So that the church may receive edifying.”

7. Again, Paul pound the point home in v. 12, where he says, “seek to abound for edification.” So even though as an Apostle of Jesus Christ Paul spoke in tongues more than any of the brother in Corinth, nevertheless, he writes (v. 19) “*In the church I would rather speak five words with my mind so that I may instruct others also.*” That’s edification.

8. Now Paul is saying it one more time (v. 26) “Let all things be done for edification.” Why does he keep repeating this? Because this was precisely what the Corinthians were **NOT** doing when they came together for worship. In fact, they were so committed to self-edification that their worship services had become chaotic.

9. Listen to the description of chaotic worship.

A. Everybody had a Psalm. In other words, everyone came prepared to sing a special solo. Then, in the middle of the worship service if they felt the Spirit was moving in their hearts, they would just break out in song. So if you to visit the church of Corinth on any given Sunday, you would walk into an assembly where people all over the building were singing out loud whatever praise and worship song edified them most.

B. Then notice, everybody had a teaching. “Teaching” means they all had a lesson. They had some message from the word of God to deliver. When these people came to worship, they just couldn’t wait for an opportunity to jump up from and tell everyone something from the word of God.

C. Then, everybody had a revelation. This means that periodically, in the midst of all the chaotic singing and competitive teaching, some people would get a revelation from the Lord and just start blurting it out.

D. Then, Everybody had a tongue. People all over the place were speaking in tongues.

Some of them were all wrapped up ecstatic gibberish and others were using the true gift in the wrong way.

E. Then, Everybody had an interpretation. One person would speak in a tongue and five or six people wanted to interpret.

10. To visit the church at Corinth was to enter into spiritual chaos. What was the cure? In a word, “edification.”

**Romans 15:2–3** “Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to his edification.<sup>3</sup> For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, “THE REPROACHES OF THOSE WHO REPROACHED YOU FELL ON ME.”

**Eph 4:11** God gave apostle and prophets, etc. for the purpose of edification.

**Romans 14:19** “So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.”

11. This is what the Corinthian church desperately needed to learn. So Paul teaches it here by giving them a very practical list of regulations.

## **I. Regulating the use of Tongues:**

1. Read v. 27-28

2. Remember, these were the days when the true gift of tongues was active in God’s economy. But even though its use was permissible, it was to be regulated.

A. First, Tongues needed to be expressed in a controlled manner. Paul would not have people breaking out into tongues randomly in the middle of the worship service. If the gift was going to be used for the edification of the body, it had to be practiced with self-control.

B. Next, there be no more than two or three tongues speakers in any given service. Again, this is clearly contrary to what happens in most charismatic churches today where just about every other person in the assembly is either speaking, praying, or singing in some un-known, ecstatic speech.

C. Third, speaking in tongues must be orderly. The phrase “each in turn” simply means that they must take turns. They can’t do it all that the same time.

D. Finally, speaking in tongues must be accompanied by an interpreter. Notice the phrase, “*one must interpret*” The idea here is that there was one person who had the gift of interpretation. If he wasn’t there, then there could be no speaking in tongues at all when

the church gathered. Why? Because without an interpreter there could be no edification. And consider this; that *there is never a case in the Bible where tongues is not understood by someone*. If the interpreter is not there, the tongues-speakers must restrain their gift and remain silent.

## II. Regulating the use of Prophecy

1. Read v. 29-32

2. Once again, Paul gives similar regulations for exercising the gift of prophesy.

A. There must never have more than two or three. In other words, the idea the days when everyone comes with a lesson or a teaching is over. Paul will not permit that in the church. Rather, there must be no more than two or three people who preach the word. These must be men who are known to have the gift of prophesy (preaching), and no more than 2-3.

Incidentally, if you ever go to the lands of Russia and attend a Baptist church you will witness a worship service where there are typically three sermons in one service. In fact, I think every service I have witnessed there has had three preachers. I always wondered why three, but now I realize they are probably looking to this text as their guide.

B. Second regulation is that the other prophets must pass judgment. Now, I don't think the other teachers do this publically and on the spot, but I do think Paul is clearly calling for accountability and discernment. No one should be allowed to preach who is not open to scrutiny.

This is a big problem in charismatic circles. In most charismatic churches no one ever questions whether what is being said is actually true. Everything that is preached is given equal credence. That's a dangerous thing. Beloved, you are called upon by God to receive the word with gladness, but to check and make sure that what you are listening to is true.

C. Third principle: A new revelation takes precedence over the current one. Again, these were extraordinary times when prophets were receiving new revelation. And if that ever happened in the worship service, then the one who received a new revelation was to be given precedence, and the other was to sit down.

D. Finally, all prophesying was to be kept under control. Notice the emphasis on edification again in v. 31. Then in v. 32 Paul says, "The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets." In other words, *If you are a true prophet you can control your prophesying*.

3. Someone may ask, "Why all this rigidness? Why all these regulations?" To this Paul answers in v. 33 "For God is not a God of confusion, but of peace." "Confusion" means *disorder*;

*rebellion, or rioting.* In contrast, “peace” means *harmony* and *order*. God is a God of order.

4. The reason church services need to be orderly rather than chaotic is because the church is to be a reflection of the character of God. Even our worship services should show the world what God is like. God is a God of harmony, order, and peace. Our worship service should reflect those attributes of God.

### **III. Regulating Women in the Church**

1. Read 34-36

2. Most scholars believe that the end of v. 33 is really the beginning of this thought. Paul says (33) “As in all the churches of the saints, the women are to keep silent.”

3. Now, I don’t believe this means that women are not allowed to talk when they enter the chapel. Nor do I believe women are not allowed to teach other women and children. One of the problems in Corinth was that women were allowed to function in the church the same way women functioned in the mystery cults. They to dominant positions over the men and were the chief players when it came to ecstatic speech and prophesying. This was causing all kinds of problems in the church. But this is not God’s way.

4. In the public service of the church, women are to keep silent. Once again, the charismatic movement has completely disregarded this teaching. (Gen 3:16 “He shall rule over you.” 1 Tim 2:11 “Let the women learn in silence. I do not permit a woman to teach.”) This is the “law of God.” This is the way God has ordered for his services of worship to function.

5. Verse 35, seems to indicate that one of the things certain women did in the worship service that was disruptive was they would blurt out questions in the middle of the preaching. So Paul says, “No more of that. If you have questions, ask your husbands when you get home.”

6. Now of course this verse also says something to the role of the husband in the home, doesn’t it? If the wives are going to ask questions, it is assumed that husbands will have answers. Some men will say, “Well I just don’t have time to learn a lot about the Bible.” On the other hand, they can tell you all kinds of details about the makeup of their favorite baseball or football team. You see me, “we do what we do because we want what we want.” Do we really want to have godly homes? Then we need to be serious about learning God’s word and feeding it to our wives and children.

7. Notice his sarcasm toward these women who were causing disruption. “Was it from you that the word of God first went forth?” In other words *“Did you write the Bible?”* *“Are you the only ones who understand it?”*

8. These are important verses to the role of women in the church. But all we need to see this

morning is that God was laying down clear regulations for how worship in the assembly of believers should be conducted.

#### **IV. Recognizing a true Prophet**

1. Read. 37-38
2. What Paul wrote to the Corinthians was the very word of God. After the service last week someone asked me if I thought Paul knew when he was writing under the inspiration of the H.S. I think this text indicates that he did. He is saying, these are the very words and instructions of God. Therefore, the true test of spirituality is not whether you are exceptionally gifted or whether you have managed to gather a following after yourself. No, the true test is whether or not you are willing to submit to God's word.
3. Paul is saying, "If anybody ignores these things, ignore him."

#### **Conclusion:**

1. Finally, v. 39-40 Paul wraps it all up with a summarizing conclusion.
  - A. Be zealous about prophesy, because that will lead to much edification.
  - B. Don't forbid the use of the true gift of tongues. Just make sure it is regulated as I have written
  - C. All things must be done *correctly* (properly) and in sequence (an orderly manner).  
Why? Because this is the best way to demonstrate the character of God when you assemble.
2. You see beloved, there are reasons why the church should do certain things and not do others when it meets. We are not free to re-invent church or use the spiritual gifts any way we please. Jesus is Lord of His church. And if we are His people then there is nothing that we should love to do more when we meet than to please Him.
3. May we be found faithfully so doing when He comes. Amen?