

INTRODUCTION

1. We are continuing our study this morning on "The Truth About Tongues"
2. Please take your Bibles and turn with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 14
3. Today is our fourth look at this chapter
4. We've already looked at the first 19 verses
5. Today we are considering verses 20-25
6. Read 1 Corinthians 14:20-25
7. In our last few times together, we talked about the abuse of the gift of tongues in the Corinthian church
8. The Corinthians were counterfeiting the true gift
9. It's evident as you read this chapter
10. And it's amazing that many Christians want to build a theology of tongue speaking today from this chapter
11. This chapter is addressing the abuse of the true gift not encouraging this in your private devotions
12. When Paul talks about the true gift, which he had, it uses the plural of glossa
13. When he talks about the counterfeit, he uses the singular
14. That's why the KJV translators inserted the word "unknown"
15. They wanted the readers to see the distinction
16. As we said last time gibberish is not a language
17. And Paul's entire point is that speech is to be clear and understandable for anyone to benefit from what you are saying

18. Paul said in verse 19, "...in the church I desire to speak five words with my mind so that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand (or a myriad of) words in a tongue."
19. Why? Because you cannot understand gibberish
20. So Paul urges the Corinthians to pray that they have something to say that would benefit everyone in the church
21. Now as we come to verses 20-25, he refers to the original purpose of the gift of tongues
22. First, he wants them to

LESSON

I. STOP ACTING LIKE CHILDREN (v.20)

1. We see that in the phrase, "do not be children"
2. The words "do not" is ginomai in the Greek and is a present tense verb which indicates an action already going on
3. It's also a command
4. By their abuse of the true gift of tongues, they were constantly acting like children in what they were doing and sounding like
5. Let's face it, gibberish is child talk
6. He wanted it to stop
7. He already told them in chapter 3, verses 1-2, that he could not speak to them as "spiritual men but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. (2) I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able."
8. He stated again in chapter 13, verse 11, "When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things."

9. Obviously they didn't put away "childish things"
10. Albert Barnes says, "They [were] pleased with any thing that [would] amuse them, and at little things that [afforded] them play and pastime." (Barnes, Albert. [*Notes on the New Testament: I Corinthians*](#). Ed. Robert Frew. London: Blackie & Son, 1884–1885. Print.)
11. So Paul wanted them to put aside [the] "emotion and experience"
12. He wanted them to put aside "the desires of the flesh and pride, [and] think carefully about the purpose of tongues. (MacArthur, John, Jr., ed. [*The MacArthur Study Bible*](#). electronic ed. Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997. Print.)
13. Notice how he softens the command with the familiar word "Brethren" (adelphos)
14. He's identifying with them as mutual brothers in Christ
15. As brothers, he wants them to stop behaving like children "in [their] thinking" or "understanding" (BDAG) and act like "mature" men
16. To be children in mind is to act as though the mind is still in the undeveloped stage of childhood. (Lenski, R. C. H. [*The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistle to the Corinthians*](#). Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1963. Print.)
17. That means you prefer more to be amused rather than pursue those things that offer stability
18. Paul is saying, "Don't take a childish delight in these spectacular gifts which you use for self-display. There is one sense in which you should be childlike, and that is in the matter of malice or evil. But in other matters, you should think with the maturity of men." (MacDonald, William. [*Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*](#). Ed. Arthur Farstad. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995. Print.)
19. He says, "yet in evil be infants, but in your thinking be mature"
20. Paul told the Roman believers that he wanted them "to be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil" (Rom.16:19).
21. In evil the Corinthians were anything but babes
22. They were highly advanced in every sort of sin

23. They had virtually all the manifestations of the flesh and almost none of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:19–23)
24. They were “children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming” (Eph. 4:14)
25. By their selfish, ego-building abuse of the gift of tongues they were, among other things, ignoring the rest of the family of God
26. They could not be taught because they were not interested in learning
27. They were interested only in using spiritual means and fellow believers in whatever ways would serve their own ends
28. They were not interested in truth but in experience, not in right doctrine or right living but only in good feelings
29. They were not interested in pleasing the Lord or their fellow Christians but only themselves" (MacArthur, John F., Jr. [*1 Corinthians*](#). Chicago: Moody Press, 1984. Print. MacArthur New Testament Commentary.)
30. To be mature in their thinking they needed to...

II. REMEMBER THE PURPOSE OF TONGUES (v.21a)

Paul says, "In the Law it is written, “BY 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."

1. This is taken from Isaiah 28:11-12, which says, "(11) Indeed, He will speak to this people Through stammering lips and a foreign tongue, (12) He who said to them, “Here is rest, give rest to the weary,” And, “Here is repose,” but they would not listen."
2. This is not quoted from the LXX but is a direct translation from the Hebrew which omits a part of v. 12 and adds “says the Lord.” (Lenski, R. C. H. [*The Interpretation of St. Paul’s First and Second Epistle to the Corinthians*](#). Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1963. Print.)

3. When Paul quotes from this passage he is paraphrasing it by the use of the first person, "I will speak"
4. The Hebrew has the third person
5. What Paul is focusing on is the foreign language: "In strange (foreign) tongues and by lips of strangers (foreigners) will I speak to this people." (Lenski, R. C. H. [*The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistle to the Corinthians*](#). Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1963. Print.)
6. Hundreds of years before Christ, the Lord told Israel that one day He would speak to this people by strange tongues from the lips of strangers. Despite this miraculous sign, however, she would not listen to Me. (MacArthur, John F., Jr. [*I Corinthians*](#). Chicago: Moody Press, 1984. Print. MacArthur New Testament Commentary.)
7. The fulfillment of this took place when the Assyrian invaders came into the land of Israel, and the Israelites heard the Assyrian language being spoken in their midst. This was a sign to them of their rejection of God's word. (MacDonald, William. [*Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*](#). Ed. Arthur Farstad. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995. Print.)
8. The prophet Isaiah warned northern Israel that God would exile them to a place where he would use strange tongues and lips of foreigners to speak to this people. Even while suffering this punishment, however, they would not listen to the Lord. (Pratt, Richard L., Jr. [*I & II Corinthians*](#). Vol. 7. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000. Print. Holman New Testament Commentary.)
9. So the first purpose of tongues is it was judicial judgment to Israel for their rejection of God's Word
10. The second purpose is given in verse 22: Paul says, "So then tongues (plural) are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers"
11. Given what Paul stated in verse 21, this would be a sign to unbelieving Israel
12. It was a sign of judgment and a sign of cursing to Israel

John MacArthur gives us the history behind verses 21-22:

He says, "Some 15 years or so before Isaiah prophesied about the strange tongues from the lips of strangers, the northern kingdom of Israel had been conquered and taken captive by the Assyrians (in 722 b.c.) because of unbelief and apostasy. The prophet then warned the southern kingdom, Judah, that the

same judgment awaited her at the hands of the Babylonians. The proud religious leaders of Judah would not listen to Isaiah. His teaching was too simple. He talked to them, they claimed, as if they were babies, “Those just weaned from milk” and “just taken from the breast.” He taught them as if they were kindergartners: “Order on order, order on order, line on line, line on line, a little here, a little there” (Isa. 28:9–10). God had indeed spoken to them simply, in order that the least mature among them could understand and so that no Israelite would have an excuse for not knowing the Lord’s will and promise. The essence of His promise was, “Here is rest, give rest to the weary,” and “Here is repose”; yet Israel “would not listen” (v. 12).

About 800 years before Isaiah, God had warned Israel that “The Lord will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as the eagle swoops down, a nation whose language you shall not understand” (Deut. 28:49). The strange language of their conquerors would be a sign of God’s judgment. About 100 years after Isaiah, the Lord warned through Jeremiah, “Behold, I am bringing a nation against you from afar, O house of Israel, ... a nation whose language you do not know, nor can you understand what they say” (Jer. 5:15). The sign of judgment would be a language they could not understand.

When the apostles spoke at Pentecost and were heard in their own language by Jews from many countries (Acts 2:7–11), those Jews should have known that God’s judgment was imminent. His judgment had fallen on rebellious Israel and then on rebellious Judah. How much more would it fall on those of His people who now had crucified the Son of God? In a.d. 70 that great judgment fell, when Jerusalem was utterly destroyed by the Roman general Titus (later emperor). Over one million Jews were slaughtered; thousands more were taken captive; the Temple was plundered, desecrated, and then utterly destroyed; and the rest of the city was burned to the ground. One historian comments that Jerusalem had no history for 60 years. Just as Jesus had predicted when He wept over the city, “Your enemies will throw up a bank before you, and surround you, and hem you in on every side, and will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation” (Luke 19:44; cf. 21:20–24).

After the destruction of Jerusalem, and especially of the Temple, the reason for tongues ceased to exist. The judgment of which it was a sign had come. After the Pentecost manifestation of tongues, Peter, by implication, reminded his hearers of that judgment: “Therefore let all the house of Israel know for

certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified” (Acts 2:36; cf. vv. 22–23).

MacArthur, John F., Jr. [1 Corinthians](#). Chicago: Moody Press, 1984. Print. MacArthur New Testament Commentary.

Paul includes in verse 22 a comparison of tongues with prophecy and says...

III. PROPHECY IS FOR THE CHURCH (vv.21b-25)

He says in the last part of verse 21 that "prophecy is for a sign, not to unbelievers but to those who believe"

1. The phrase "is for a sign" is not in the Greek text as indicated by the italics
2. That meaning is possible but is not necessary because prophecy is given "to those who believe"
3. It's not given as a sign pointing to something else
4. It's given to believers for edification
5. Tongues cannot edify unless interpreted
6. But verse 3 says, "...the one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation"
7. The end of verse 4 says, "but one who prophesies edifies the church"
8. That's why Paul said it would benefit the church if he spoke "by way of revelation or of knowledge or of prophecy or of teaching" (v.6) not by "speaking in tongues"
9. Tongues was a sign to the Jewish people of judgment but prophecy was given to the church to disclose the secrets of men's hearts and as a result cause them to "fall of [their] face and worship God" in belief of the truth
10. Tongues cannot do that

11. Tongues are limited as seen in verse 23: "Therefore if the whole church assembles together and all speak in tongues, and ungifted (idiotes, unskilled, uneducated, unlearned [Vines]) men or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are mad?"
 1. "mad" (mainomai, pres.mid.ind.) "is said of one who so speaks that he appears to be out of his mind" (Vine, W. E., Merrill F. Unger, and William White Jr. [Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words](#) 1996 : 63. Print.)
 2. The NKJV says, "out of your mind"
 3. It means "an uncontrolled frenzy" (MacArthur)
 4. When the real gift was used in Acts 2, there was no madness, and everyone understood in his own language (v. 11)
 5. In Corinth, there was charismatic chaos. (MacArthur, John, Jr., ed. [The MacArthur Study Bible](#). electronic ed. Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997. Print.)
12. Verses 24-25 says, "(24) But if all (not all at once, in sequence) prophecy, (i.e., publicly proclaim the Word of God) and an unbeliever or an ungifted (same as v.23) man enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all; (25) the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you."
13. What the apostle is emphasizing here is that no real conviction of sin is produced unless the listeners understand what is being said. (MacDonald, William. [Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments](#). Ed. Arthur Farstad. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995. Print.)
14. He is saying that "Speaking in a calm, connected, didactic manner, in language intelligible to all under the influence of inspiration" will produce conviction of sin and true worship of God. (Barnes, Albert. [Notes on the New Testament: I Corinthians](#). Ed. Robert Frew. London: Blackie & Son, 1884–1885. Print.)
15. He is "convicted by all, he is called to account by all; the secrets of his heart are disclosed"
16. In other words, "The *effect* of what they say shall be, as it were, to pass a *judgment* on his former life; or to condemn him
17. What is said will be approved by his own conscience, and will have the effect to condemn him in his own view as a lost sinner

18. This is now the effect of faithful preaching, to produce deep self-condemnation in the minds of sinners." (Barnes, Albert. [*Notes on the New Testament: I Corinthians*](#). Ed. Robert Frew. London: Blackie & Son, 1884–1885. Print.)

Albert Barnes says, "And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest. Made manifest to himself in a surprising and remarkable manner. He shall be led to see the real designs and motives of his heart. His conscience would be awakened; he would recall his former course of life; he would see that it was evil; and the present state of his heart would be made known to himself.

*Barnes, Albert. [*Notes on the New Testament: I Corinthians*](#). Ed. Robert Frew. London: Blackie & Son, 1884–1885. Print.*

CONCLUSION

1. As noted, tongues cannot do this
2. This was not their intended purpose
3. Even on the day of Pentecost, when the apostles used the true gift, tongues itself drew the people together
4. It was the interpretation or the supernatural ability to speak a foreign language they didn't learn but everyone spoke that caused them to say they were hearing the "wonderful works of God" (Acts 2:8)
5. We can also glean from this passage that preaching brings about conviction of sin and reveals whether you believe or not in Christ
6. If you have been brought to the awareness of your sin and lack of confession of Christ this morning, come to Him now
7. Confess and turn from your sin and embrace the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ and He will save you
8. If you would like to talk further about this, I will be available after the service to answer any questions you have
9. Let's pray

