

DESIRING THE BEST GIFT

TEXT:1 Corinthians 14:1-12

Having emphasized the worthlessness of spiritual gifts apart from love, Paul now goes on to give instruction concerning to the proper use of spiritual gifts.

I.THE PURSUIT

A. NOTICE THE DDOCTRINE

Follow after charity ... (1 Corinthians 14:1a)

Having described love as the most valuable of all the gifts given by the Holy Spirit, Paul does not leave the application of this truth up to the Corinthians but goes on to tell them how to apply what they had just learned. In the word of God, we find that **Duty always follows Doctrine and it is no different here.** The command is Follow after charity. The word follow means:

The picture is that of a hunter tracking and pursuing his game. Paul is saying, you need to put as much effort in learning to love people as you put into deer hunting. Since love is the greatest thing one could possess, it ought to be pursued with great intensity.

A. NOTICE THE DOCTRINE

B. NOTICE THE DUTY

Jesus said:

(John 13:35) By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

Men ought to be able to see that we are believers by the way we care about each other. The fighting and fussing that goes on between many professing believers is a disgrace and reproach upon Christ.

I. THE PURSUIT

II. THE PRIORITY

(1 Corinthians 14:1b–2) ... and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy. For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.

A. IT WAS NOT TO SHOW THE FLESH

The tongues at Corinth was the result of emotionalism rather than the work of the Holy Spirit. The fact of the matter is, the tongues of Corinth closely resembled the worship services of the pagans where they WERE uncontrolled and unintelligent chatter.

Paul said that such a **one speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him.**

Only God could even understand what they were saying, and He received no glory from it. And it certainly did not help the hearers in the congregation. God understands all languages: men don't. In reality, God doesn't need language, for He knows our thoughts.

A. IT WAS NOT TO SHOW THE FLESH

B. IT WAS TO SHARE THE FACTS

(1 Corinthians 14:2) ... howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.

A man speaking great mysteries in a language that others cannot understand, does the hearers no good. Paul explains a little later that everything said must either be in a language they knew, or it must be interpreted for them. Paul argues that the tongues they practiced in Corinth served only the speaker and had no benefits so far as the congregation was concerned.

I. THE PURSUIT

II. THE PRIORITY

III. THE PURPOSE

If the hearer doesn't understand what is being said, the speaker is wasting both his and their time. Paul contrasts the superiority of prophesying (preaching for today) to tongues.

A. FOR EDIFICATION

(1 Corinthians 14:3a) But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, The primary meaning of edification is to **“build up.”** Webster defines it as:

To instruct and improve the mind in knowledge generally, and particularly in moral and religious knowledge, in faith and holiness.

The Word of God abounds with challenges to edify **(Romans 14:19; Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. ROM.15:2; Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. 1 Corinthians 14:3, 5, 12, 26; 2 Corinthians 10:8; 12:19; 13:10; Ephesians 4:12, 16, 29).**

A. FOR EDIFICATION

B. FOR EXHORTATION

(1 Corinthians 14:3b) and exhortation, The speaking gifts given to admonish and encourage the hearers of his Word.

It carries the idea of admonishing and walking along side of. The worship service goes beyond simply speaking, what is said must show up in the daily walk and practice of all believers.

It is one thing to speak the truth and tell people what they ought to do, it is another thing to walk along side of them constantly encouraging them to do right. We need more true exhorters today.

A. FOR EDIFICATION

B. FOR EXHORTATION

C. FOR ENCOURAGEMENT

(1 Corinthians 14:3c) ... and comfort.

The word comfort means “to strengthen the mind when depressed or enfeebled; to console; to give new vigor to the spirits; to cheer, or relieve from depression, or trouble.” Comfort carries the idea of and involves encouragement. Encouragement is the act of “giving courage, or confidence of success; incitement to action or to practice; incentive.”

(1 Corinthians 14:4) He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church. Here Paul emphasizes the EMPTINESS of speaking in tongues without their being interpreted. When God gives a gift, it is for the purpose of accomplishing something spiritually practical and is always meant to be of benefit to others. The purpose of spiritual gifts is to edify.

A. FOR EDIFICATION

B. FOR EXHORTATION

C. FOR ENCOURAGEMENT

D. FOR ENRICHMENT

(1 Corinthians 14:5a) I would that ye all spake with tongues, We need to pay close attention to what Paul is saying here. People get all excited and take this one out of context. When Paul said, I would that ye all spake with tongues, he was talking about the genuine gift of tongues. He was not speaking of the fleshly gibber that the Corinthians were practicing. Paul has gone to great lengths to show the inferiority of tongues, he certainly is not saying that he desires all the saints to have the gift.

... but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying. (1 Corinthians 14:5b) Paul says that even if everyone in the Church had the real gift of tongues it would still be greater and more beneficial to the Church to prophesy. That is to teach the Word of God. The best gift for the Church is the gift of prophecy, the gift whereby the Word of God's is preached and explained to the people.

I. THE PURSUIT

II. THE PRIORITY

III. THE PURPOSE

IV. THE PRINCIPLE

Paul is working hard at getting these truths across. He now illustrates what he has said by giving three analogies.

A. THE APPLICATION

(1 Corinthians 14:6) 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? Paul use his own ministry as an example of speaking to be understood. If Paul were to come before his congregation gibbering in some unknown language, he says what shall I profit you. There is no profit in speaking a language that others can't understand. It is merely gibberish to them.

The modern tongues movement doesn't profit its listeners. Their tongues aren't understood by the people in the congregation. The point is that there is nothing benefitted from unintelligible speech. We must speak to be understood.

A. THE APPLICATION

B. THE ANALOGY

(1 Corinthians 14:7) 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?

The analogy of is that of musical instruments. Whether it is a piano or a guitar, the instrument must give a distinct tone of melody if the music is to be understood. If an instrument gives out sounds with no distinction it is worthless. Such music is of no value—it does not edify. It is simply noise.

A. THE APPLICATION

B. THE ANALOGY

C. THE ARMY

(1 Corinthians 14:8) For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?

Paul uses the analogy of the soldier's call to battle. The trumpet's call must be clear and understood if the soldier is going answer its call. The word **uncertain** carries the idea of lacking in clearness or indistinct. Hearing a bugle means nothing to a soldier if a distinct military call is not being played. Mere bugle notes are meaningless, even if played by the official bugler. The soldier gets no message from a bunch of random notes.

He only prepares for battle when the Call to Arms is played.

A. THE APPLICATION

B. THE ANALOGY

C. THE ARMY

D. THE AIR

(1 Corinthians 14:9) So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air. Now

Paul applies his teaching. If those who are listening do not understand what is being said, then nothing is accomplished. The speaker is wasting his time. He is simply speaking into the air. What's more, the listeners are also wasting their time.

(1 Corinthians 14:10) There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification.

The word **voices** comes from the Greek “phone” and means languages. There are many languages and dialects in the world, not one of which is unintelligible. Every language is understood by those who speak it. A language that can't be understood by its hearers is worthless.

(1 Corinthians 14:11) Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me.

In Paul's day anyone who could not speak Greek was considered a barbarian. A barbarian's language was unintelligible and incomprehensible because others couldn't understand what he was saying.

1Co 14:12 Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.