

LACK OF UNDERSTANDING

I Corinthians 14:13-25

As we have learned the gift of tongues was a Divine enabling to speak a "language" that one had not naturally acquired or knew. Tongues in the Bible has always been a language, not some gibberish or ecstatic utterances.

In verses 13-25 Paul's focus seems to be on "understanding" (Cp. Vs. 14,15, 16, 19,20).

He describes a lack of understanding that was due to the Corinthian practice of speaking in tongues.

Ho 4:6 ¶ My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.

Because thou hast rejected knowledge]

So they might have become wise, had they not rejected the means of improvement.

I. A PERSONAL LACK OF UNDERSTANDING!

In verses 13-14 Paul describes a personal lack of understanding. This personal lack of understanding involved the individuals that were speaking in tongues. Notice:

A. THE INTERPRETATION THAT IS A REQUIRED

(Vs.13) Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret....

If you notice carefully Paul is speaking about the false gift of tongues (Unknown tongue). In our last study we saw that when the word "**unknown**" is used and the word "tongue" singular is used it is pointed out the fleshly imitation of the gift of tongues as practiced by the Corinthians. When the word "**tongues**" (plural) is used it is in reference to the real gift.

It is speaking of the gibberish the Corinthians were practicing. It is not dealing with the real gift that would have been a language.

The point is they could not interpret what they were saying. You cannot interpret what cannot be interpreted. What they were saying could not be interpreted. It was not a language; therefore what was being said could not be explained, interpreted, or understood.

Tongues are always a language known to man but not known to the speaker. It is never a gibberish as was being practiced by the Corinthians and in many circles today. Paul's point is clear. If it can't be interpreted it doesn't need to be said (or practiced.)

A. THE INTERPRETATION THAT IS A REQUIRED

B. THE ILLUMINATION THAT WAS REQUESTED.

(VS. 14) For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. ...

Furthermore there is no such example of a private gift of speaking in tongues in the Bible. If it can't be understood or interpreted it is not real.

PHILLIPS SAID No doubt, many in the Corinthian Church were speaking in tongues as a prayer language to God. This is probably what Paul was referring to in 14:2 when he spoke of speaking to God and not to men. But in all the Biblical examples of someone speaking in tongues they were always speaking to men. They were proclaiming the message of God. There is never an example of someone in the Bible speaking to God in tongues.

The point of verse 14 is that such a practice was an unfruitful practice. There was no understanding and if no understanding it was unfruitful. It did not bring any personal benefit. If one had no ideal what they were praying about what good did it bring to them.

God wants us to understand (**Cp.12:1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.**). He wants us to understand the great truths of His Word. Whether in public or private, if all we have is an emotional experience, and there is no benefit to the mind, it is an unfruitful practice.

(VS.15) ... The words "**What is it then**" mean, "In light of what I just said, what will ye do?" Paul says that as the spirit is engaged in prayer so should the mind be also. Just as a person will sing with his spirit, the mind should also be involved.

I. A PERSONAL LACK OF UNDERSTANDING!

II. A PUBLIC LACK OF UNDERSTANDING!

In verse 16 Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?

Paul moves from the private to the public; from the personal to the collective. The kind of tongues that were being practiced by the Corinthian's had neither benefit for the saint or the sinner.

A. THE SAINT'S LACK OF UNDERSTANDING.

(VS.16) ... The "unlearned" Paul speaks of is the unskilled and no doubt spoke of those who did not have the gift of tongues. Paul point is obvious. **How can one say "Amen" when they don't understand what is being said.**

If a person could not understand what was being said they could not say "Amen." They couldn't affirm that it was true if they had no ideal what was said.

(VS.17) ... For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified. Paul did not doubt their sincerity but plainly stated that no one is edified when one did not understand what was being said.

(VS.18) ... I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all: There are no examples of Paul speaking in tongues in the Bible he was talking about his ability to speak several languages.

(VS.19) ... Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue. Paul sums it all up by saying that he would rather speak but 5 words that people could understand rather than speak 10,000 words that people could not understand

The Church is to be a place where our understanding is to be increased. It ought to be place of "blessing" (Vs.16), a place for saying "Amen" (Vs.16), a place for giving thanks (Vs.17), but all is to be done in a way that people may understand and be edified.

(Vs.20 Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.).

They are pleased with anything that will amuse them,

A. THE SAINT'S LACK OF UNDERSTANDING.

B. THE SINNERS LACK OF UNDERSTANDING.

Beginning in **verse 21** Paul directs his attention to those who are not believers (Cp. **Vs.22**). Paul now states the purpose of tongues and following the procedure for tongues. What is the purpose?

In verse 21 Paul quotes an Old Testament passage from **Isaiah 28:11-12**. God has warned through the prophet Isaiah that God would one day speak to them by a language they did not understand by punishing them amidst a people of another language,

I. A PERSONAL LACK OF UNDERSTANDING!

II. A PUBLIC LACK OF UNDERSTANDING!

III. A PLAN FOR LACK OF UNDERSTANDING

(VS.22 Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.) ... After pointing to the prophecy of

Isaiah Paul says that speaking in tongues had a two-fold purpose.

A. THE AFFIRMATION

One purpose as we have already seen in previous studies was for the purpose of affirmation **(2 Cor.12:12 Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.)** It was a sign to those that did not believe that the message the Apostles preached was the message of God.

Now Paul tells us that speaking in tongues was a sign of judgment.

Understanding the Old Testament warnings such as we noticed, the Jews should have recognized on the day of Pentecost that judgment was coming. Tongues were a sign of judgment. It was a sign of judgment on those that did not believe, particularly, unbelieving Israel.

A. THE AFFIRMATION

B. THE ADMONISHMENT

(VS.23 If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?) ... Paul begins to show that what they were doing would have no impact on the sinner, but instead would be confusing to the unbeliever.

(VS.24-25 But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all:) 25 And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth. ... But on the other hand if there was prophesying, a proclaiming of God's Word in a way they could understand it would produce conviction and would result in a sinner turning to God.

