

## THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MAY 15TH, 2022 // BOOK OF 1 CORINTHIANS

### A GREATER GIFT (1 CORINTHIANS 14:1-5) PURSUE LOVE

After establishing in Ch.13 that the utilization of gifts through love is the superior way, Paul urges the Corinthians to pursue love.

- Paul says to “desire spiritual gifts.” The desire and pursuit of gifts were not wrong, but the Corinthians **made it a selfish pursuit, which lacked love for one another**, and the **desire to build up the church.**

### WHAT IS IT WE ARE BUILDING UP?

All gifts are of one Spirit and are given out as God pleases to each individual part of the body. We also know that all parts of the body are necessary to accomplish the job it was designed for.

- Paul is trying to get to the heart of the person seeking spiritual gifts. **Is the desire to edify self or the church?**

### PROPHECY AND TONGUES

To drive this point, Paul draws a distinction between the gift of prophecy and tongues. Paul is not opposed to speaking in tongues and is not elevating one gift over the other.

- Paul uses these two gifts as examples to show that **the pursuit of spiritual gifts must be joined with a pursuit of love for others.**

### SPEAKING TO GOD NOT PEOPLE

Paul says prophecy is superior to tongues because prophecy builds up the church. It provides strengthening, encouragement, and consolation.

- Speaking in tongues, where no one can interpret, does not edify the church. It only edifies self since **the one speaking does not speak to people but to God alone.**

### A GREATER DESIRE

Paul desired that the Corinthians were personally strengthened in their walk with Christ. He states this by saying, “I wish all of you spoke in tongues.”

- Paul wanted people to grow, “but even more” than speaking in tongues, he wanted people to prophesy **“so that the church may be built up.”**

### SPEAKING INTO THE AIR (1 CORINTHIANS 14:6-12)

#### “WHAT DOES IT BENEFIT?”

Paul appeals to reason when he asks, “what benefit is there to speaking things you do not understand?”

- If someone speaks in tongues without interpretation, there is **no revelation, knowledge is not communicated, prophecy is not given, and nothing is taught.**

#### “WHAT DOES IT BENEFIT?”

Paul is not saying that this gift is without value. He tells us that he has this gift (1 Corinthians 14:18) and even wishes that everyone would experience the closeness of communicating with God in this way.

- However, Paul is trying to communicate that without understanding, **this gift does not have value for the body.**

### UNTUNED INSTRUMENT

Paul makes the comparison of speaking in tongues without interpretation to that of an untuned instrument. Without a distinguished note, no one can recognize what is being played.

- Like a bugle played to send men to battle, if the meaning is not understood, then it is just noise with no benefit.

#### “SPEAKING INTO THE AIR.”

Paul says that in the same way that an untuned instrument is just noise if it does not play notes that are understood, a person who speaks in tongues, without the meaning of what they are saying being known, is also just noise.

- **If there is no understanding of what is being said, then the person speaking is like someone speaking into the air.**

### CONSIDERED FOREIGN

Paul acknowledges that there are all kinds of languages throughout the world, all of which have meaning and the ability to communicate with a particular people group.

- When someone communicates in a language that is not native, then the speaker and the one hearing consider one another foreigners.

### FOREIGN TO ALL

While a foreign language may not be understood by all, it is at least understood by the native people. Paul tells the Corinthians that by speaking a language that no one understands, **they have made themselves foreigners to all.**

- Instead of bridging the gap to reach those around them, **they allowed the gift of tongues to create a larger barrier between them.**

### REPETITIOUS FOR A REASON

Paul ends this section by repeating the same theme of previous sections.

- Though Paul approves of and even encourages the Church to pursue the spiritual gifts, he wants the people of Corinth to realize that **the purpose of the gifts is to build up the Church.**

### NOT BEING BUILT UP (1 CORINTHIANS 14:13-19) WHO CAN UNDERSTAND?

Paul draws the conclusion that if someone speaks in tongues they should also pray for the interpretation or understanding of those things which are spoken.

- When interpretation and understanding is lacking, then **what is being said is unintelligible to everyone, even the speaker.**

### JOINING OF SPIRIT AND MIND

In praying for interpretation, Paul wanted to join both spirit and mind together in worship.

- Since the one speaking in tongues, speaks things that are not understood, they speak of the spirit and not of their mind. Paul wants the Corinthians to join spirit and mind (understanding) **to enable a building up of the speaker and the church.**

### EDIFYING OTHERS

Paul believed that praying and singing in the spirit (unintelligibly) was appropriate and of benefit in private worship. However, it was of no benefit in public worship.

- How could the church benefit and agree with something that is unintelligible? **The need to edify others makes it necessary to pray and sing in ways that are understood.**

### BLESSED TO BE A BLESSING

People around us can be blessed as we give thanks, similarly to how we read Psalms. However, if those around us do not understand us when we give thanks, how they can agree and say, “Amen”?

**We cannot just do our own thing. We must have concern for others as well.**

### DEEPLY HELD CONVICTION

Paul shows how deeply he held this conviction in the final two sentences of this section.

- Paul says that he will use the gift of tongues, both in prayer and in song, yet he would rather speak five words that can be understood and edify the church, than ten thousand words that edify self.

### PROPER BALANCE

Paul understood and experienced the great blessing of speaking in tongues, however, he still had a balanced view of the gift.

- Paul knew that those five intelligible words could be used to strengthen, encourage, and console the body. **Our mission, like Paul, is to build up others and not inflate ourselves.**

### THERE IS A GREATER GIFT

- This text shows us that the church in Corinth had over-focused on the gift of tongues and under-focused on the gift of prophecy.
- **“A ministry that does not build up will tear down, no matter how spiritual it may seem.” “Our worship must be based on truth, or it may become superstitious emotionalism” (W. Weirsbe).**

### UNTUNED INSTRUMENTS

- **Has the church become a bunch of untuned instruments? Do we just “make a bunch of noise” that is of no benefit?**
- **Have we abandoned loving others?**
- **Do we spend so much energy and time saying what we are against that no one even knows what we stand for anymore?**

### BLESSED TO BE A BLESSING

- Paul reminds the Corinthians that it is better to be a blessing to the Church than it is to experience some kind of personal “spiritual excitement.”
- **No matter how sincere, energetic, and personally fulfilling that worship might be, public worship does not honor God if it does not edify the Church.**