

Tongues and Prophecy

I Corinthians 14: 20-40

10/14/01

Intro



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The church in Corinth was in trouble. There was division; there were factions, there were those who felt spiritually superior because they had more outward spiritual gifts.

These verses address a very important and for some a very difficult subject - the use of tongues and prophesy in the church.

Many feel that the use of tongues is a divisive issue. Paul's point is that it is not the use the tongues that is divisive, but rather the use of the tongue. Although there was certainly an abuse of tongues at the church of Corinth, there was also a lack of love.

Love is the overriding commandment. If love controls us, then we are also controlled by grace and then peace will reign as well.

These verses give us insight into the issue of tongues and prophesy and how Paul wanted then used in the church.

I. What are Paul's insights into the use of tongues?

A. First, a review of the previous verses.

- Prophecy is superior to tongues (unless interpreted),
- One who speaks in a tongue speaks to God.

- One who speaks in prophecy speaks to men.
- Tongues must be interpreted in the church; otherwise the church is not edified.
- If tongues are interpreted, the others can say "amen" at your giving of thanks.

Illus- Our black brothers have it right. Saying "amen" seems to be a good thing. In Revelation 5, the four living creatures keep saying amen and amen.

A Side Note: "In evil be babes." Some who are experienced in worldly things try to make those who are inexperienced in sin feel inferior, like they're children or something. In regards to evil, we should never feel inferior to be inexperienced.

B. Tongues are a sign for unbelievers.

- Paul quotes from Isaiah 28 where God says that He will speak to His people with foreign lips. God gave the land to others because Israel would not believe.

- It seems that here, Paul is saying that it will be evident that God is in the church when non-believers see the devotion and love for the Lord (the purpose of tongues).

- When someone is passionate for the Lord, it is a conviction to the non-believers.

Illus- When Jordi visited a church for the first time and saw people truly in love with the Lord, it was evidence to her that God was truly present.

Illus- Israel was to be jealous when they see the Lord is with the Gentiles.

Vs 23 C. Therefore don't allow everyone to speak in tongues at once.

- Otherwise, the non-believers will say you're mad, rather than passionate for the Lord.
- By the way, are tongues the only way to express your love for the Lord? No, but for many, it is a wonderful expression.

II. What are Paul's insights into prophecy?

A. Prophecy is both foretelling and forth telling.

Vs 31 - The emphasis in these verses seems to be forth telling. See verse 31 where Paul refers to learning and exhorting.

B. Paul emphasizes that he prefers prophecy in the church to tongues.

- Without question it edifies the church.

C. Prophecy also has an impact on the unbeliever.

- He is convicted and called to account by all.

Illus- Sometimes when someone brings a guest, they think maybe there's been a setup -that the pastor was called

and told about the friend's situation so the pastor will preach right to him.

III. Let there be order in the church.

A. Everyone comes with a church service planned?

Vs 26I - Each one comes with a psalm, has a teaching, a revelation, a tongue, etc.
- "That's too much, guys!!"

B. Let there be only two or three tongues.

I - and if there's no interpreter, let him be silent.

C. Let there be only two or three prophecies.

- Let the others pass judgment.
- Be like good Bereans.

Illus – If someone says, "Thus says the Lord," don't just take what is said without question.

Conclusion

Let all things be done properly and in good order.

Illus- USA Today poll said that 87% of Americans have running shoes, but don't run. Is that true spiritually?