

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPTS

Series: 1 Corinthians

Untangling the Gift of Speaking in Tongues Pt. 2

1 Corinthians 14:1-40

Tim Armstrong, Senior Pastor

Weekend 09.24/25.11

You all can have a seat. On the way down why don't you grab a bible from the chair back in front of you or your own bible and let's turn to our study in 1 Corinthians. We're continuing our talk on *Untangling the Gift of Speaking in Tongues*. We're in chapter 14 of 1 Corinthians this morning. We're in a two part series. Last week was part one. This week is part two. Last week we looked at the last half of chapter 13. This week we're going to look at the entire fourteenth chapter. We're going to go through all forty verses at one time and to do that we're going to have to do this bible study style. What I mean by that is you need to have your bibles open, on your lap. We're going to work through it verse by verse; section by section and then we're going to seek to draw some implications – how we can apply this to our lives when we reach the end. So, all forty verses.

You might be saying well, why are we trying to do this all at once? Because it's actually a package. You need to. If we divide this up over weeks you're going to miss the flow. Remember what Paul is doing. Paul is righting the ship. He's correcting the misunderstandings of the Corinthian believers. Paul goes into great detail about this gift; about the gift of tongues because he had to. Remember, the Corinthians had come out of that Pagan background; came out of worshipping at the temple of Aphrodites where the greatest expression of their worship was to work themselves up into this frenzy and to reach a point where they loose themselves in ecstatic speeches and utterances in their worshipping their god.

Now, when they became believer they transferred some of that old thinking into the process of now worshipping God. The real gift of tongues hits the scene, hits the early church, which we have already determined was the gift of a language; was the ability to speak a known language without any prior training. They misunderstood that and thought that it was something like what they had experienced out of their past and they were bringing this into their church. They were bringing this into their worship and so what Paul does is he has to spend a considerable amount of time correcting their misunderstanding about this gift and he does that in chapter 12, chapter 13 and largely in chapter 14 which we're going to look at today.

Now remember, last week we looked at the end of chapter 13. We've already determined that the gift of tongues, the authentic gift – that gift of language had ceased. We determined that from looking at the Greek word *paúō* which means that they stopped on their own. It faded out of existence at the end of Apostolic era. Why? Well, it was primarily no longer needed. The cannon, the scriptures had been closed so there was no longer this need for additional revelation. Now you might be thinking, alright, if that's the case then why do we even need to study chapter 14? If the gift has gone out of existence then why do we need to even bother with these next forty verses? Because the Corinthian problem still exists today. That's why we need 1 Corinthians chapter 14. Today believers still misunderstand this concept of the gift of tongues and so chapter 14 clears that up for us. So, we're going to do it all in one sitting. We're going to look at three things about the gift of tongues. We're going to look at the place of tongues, the purpose of tongues and the procedure of tongues. You got that? The place, the purpose, the procedure. Say that with me. The place, the purpose and the procedure. You want to get that locked in your mind. We're going to move rapidly through all these forty verses. You're going to want to be able to understand where we're at in the process.

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Now, the number one, the first point is the first nineteen verses. This talks about the place of tongues and what we're going to learn in this section is that tongues is secondary to prophecy. The place of tongues is that it is secondary to prophecy. Now, look at me with the text, verse 1. Paul says, pursue love. Now, right away he connects chapter 13 with chapter 14, doesn't he? He continues the theme of love. Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy. Now stop there. Remember what we learned about the gift of prophecy? It's not that ability to look into the future and to know what is going to happen, rather, prophecy – Greek word *prophēteía* means to just speak forth. It means to teach. It means to teach the Word of God and so what is Paul saying? Right off the bat, chapter 14 Paul elevates this gift above the gift of tongues. He elevates the gift of prophecy – teaching of the Word above tongues. Now, why does he do that? Remember what we've learned? That the Corinthians valued the gift of tongues so much that they sought after it probably more so than any other. They made it that spotlight gift. And Paul was saying that you need to understand its place; that the prominent gift, the most important gift is the gift of that would say teach me or explain to me the Word of God. Now, keep that locked in your mind because we're going to find out why in the next couple of verses.

Keep reading verse 2 he says, For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit. Already we're starting to see it unfold. One of the issues with tongues, Paul says, is that no one understands what you're saying. On the other hand the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies builds up the church. Now, underline that last phrase because you're going to pick up this theme all throughout this chapter. What is Paul concerned about? Paul is primarily concerned about edification; that the church would be edified by its use of spiritual gifts. In other words, spiritual gifts are not for our own building up but spiritual gifts are for the building up of the body. Now, that's going to be a major theme throughout all of chapter 14. But to properly understand chapter 14 I need to give you some clues about a few things that we just read because you're going to see them repeated over and over again and if you misunderstand them now you're going to misunderstand them through the rest of the chapter. So for the next few moments don't tune me out. Don't fade out. Don't get up and go to the bathroom – just hold it in for the next few minutes and get this together because I'm telling you if you miss a few of these small clues now how we translate the rest of chapter 14 will be confusing to you.

Now, we have to start back in verse 2 and we need to first see the construction of this first sentence and I need to point out a few interesting facts. First, this is called an anarthrous construction. Find with me in verse 2 the word God. It's about halfway through the verse. For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God. Notice it's capital G. An anarthrous construction means that there is no article before the word God in the Greek language. An article is like the word the. It's not always translated but when it is used it points to the idea of *the* God, the Yahweh God, the capital G God. That article is actually missing in the original text at this point and I think it's missing on purpose. Which means it can possibly change the way we translate it. We don't necessarily have to translate it *the* God. We can translate it *a* god and really the context helps us determine that but already we could see there's a different style of reading in verse 2. He says, for one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to *a* god. I actually prefer the

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later translation of small g because it ties in with the next aspect that I'm going to teach you and that is Paul's use of the word tongue.

Paul uses both the singular and the plural use of the word tongue all throughout this chapter. Now, what's interesting is he doesn't have to. He could use all singular or he could use all plural but he changes back and forth. Now, what have you taught in the past? That when you see something like this going on in the text you ought to investigate it because something is going on. In fact, most conservative scholars will tell you that this is Paul's shorthand with the Corinthians for differentiating between the true gift of tongues which is a language and the false gift of tongues – the counterfeit gift which they have so enamored, so drawn themselves around – this gift of ecstatic speak. You say, well, which one is which? How do you tell the difference? Well, the singular use is thought to be the ecstatic, gibberish type of tongues that comes out of the Pagan background of the Corinthians; the non-sensical, non-language type of tongue. The plural, most scholars would say reference the true gift of tongues. For example, just look in verses 2 and 4.