

Prophecy and Tongues

I Corinthians 14

An Exposition

By Daniel Thompson

1. Follow after charity, and desire spiritual [gifts], but rather that ye may prophesy.

After all is said and done in the realm of gifts, abilities, and knowledge, it is the pursuit of christian love that Paul is inevitably concerned with in the Corinthian saints. The Corinthians may have been rich in utterance and knowledge (1 Cor 1:5), but Paul knew that love to our fellow saints is the hallmark of the work of the Spirit in the soul of a child of God, simply because the primary fruit of the Spirit is love (Gal 5:22 cf. Jn 13:35; 1Jn 2:10; 2Jn 5).

Paul continues by stating that those who are primarily seeking to be charitable have laid a foundation to be zealous for spiritual gifts - in particular the gift that strengthens fellow believers — prophecy. In Paul's use of the Greek *mallon* which might mean "rather" that you may prophesy, it is preferable in keeping with Paul's thought and in keeping with the context that we translate *mallon* "more" or "especially" that you may prophesy.' This emphasis will become clear as the subject of tongues enters the discussion.

2. 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.

Paul now expounds the need for the Corinthians to be zealous for prophetic utterance rather than utterance in tongues.

The way Paul unfolds his argument makes it clear that the tongues being spoken of here and practiced in the Corinthian assembly were not understandable to the hearers, for Paul uses the Greek *akouo* (English, "hear") when he says "for no man understands," i.e. when hearing (an example of this use of "hear" is found in comparing Acts 9:7 with Acts 22:9. With the subject being the Damascus road, Acts 9:7 says that Paul's companions heard the voice from heaven, whereas Acts 22:9 says they did not hear, obviously meaning they heard, but did not hear *with understanding*).

Further, Paul says that the tongue speaker, in the spirit, speaks mysteries, and in so doing does not speak to men but to God. At this point in Paul's thinking, some of his words and phrases must be clearly defined before we can

comprehend the full weight of the apostle's subsequent statements and exhortations regarding the comparison between prophecy and tongues, and thus avoiding error. Note the following:

A). "unknown tongue" — Some have speculated that Paul is telling us that tongue speaking is some type of heavenly prayer language and therefore unknown to man (a language only God knows). Indeed, in light of tongues and prayer being linked in 1 Corinthians 14:14,28, it seems proper that tongues and prayer do go together. Further, some have pointed to Paul's "speak with the tongues...of angels" in 1 Corinthians 13:1 as establishing tongues as a heavenly, if not angelic, language. But in light of the hyperbolic nature of the statements in 1 Corinthians 13 such as "I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all knowledge," and "though I have all faith.. .to remove mountains," it would seem that 1 Corinthians 13 is not the place to establish an accurate definition of what tongues was/is.

There is clear evidence both in 1 Corinthians 14 as well as other places in Scripture that establish the gift of tongues not as some strange prayer language but real earthly languages which were unknown (i.e. not heard with understanding. *akouo* — v2) with reference to the hearers at Corinth.

First, In the New Testament the Greek word *glossa*, tongue(s), means: **1)** the organ itself (cf. James 3:5), **2)** a real language (I.e. Hebrew etc.. Rev 17:15). or **3)** a general term for speech (1 Jn 3:18). There is no reason in 1 Corinthians might introduce the Idea of angelic languages or anything else contrary to normal usage.

Second, the Old Testament Greek (the Septuagint or "LXX") follows the New Testament in the usage of *glossa*.

Third, note that tongues and prophecy were on equal footing when tongues were interpreted (v5). which indicates to us that tongues were human languages in the same way that prophesying was a human language. The only difference between the gifts is that tongues required interpretation for the assembly because of the church member's lack of acquaintance with the tongue of the person praying/exhorting.

Fourth. tongues are equated with human languages in verses 9-11 (cf. "voices in the world" - v.10).

Fifth, the tongues of Acts chapter two were clearly human languages (2:7-11, where "tongues," Greek *glossa* — 2:4. is equated with "dialects," Greek *dialektos* — 2:6,8).

Sixth, the unknown tongue of 1 Cor 14:21 is clearly human (in the context of Paul's quote of Is 28:11. the "unknown tongue" is Assyrian).

Probably most important in the discussion of tongues at Corinth is to realize that Paul makes it clear that ***the speaker*** of the unknown tongue ***understood*** what he was praying/exhorting! Both in 1 Corinthians 14:5 and 14:13, the verb "interpret" is in the active voice, which clearly means the speaker *understood* the language he was using (i.e. *he* was interpreting). It was only an unknown tongue *to the hearer*, and the issue was: could the speaker make clear (interpret! make understandable) to the hearer his exhortation (more will be said in verse 13)?

B). "he that speaks in an unknown tongue...speaks to God" —The idea of tongues as prayer is perfectly consistent with everything in 1 Cor 14, but tongues being a "prayer language" (i.e. a "better" way to fellowship/communicate with the Lord) is an interpretation of the above phrase that has taken root in twentieth century church practice and relies heavily on two basic ideas:

First. That this is a doctrine Paul wants these saints to know (i.e. that tongue speaking is highly spiritual prayer or exhortation to God). But, as is seen by the context. Paul does not put tongue speaking in any type of positive light when he says one who speaks in a tongue "speaks to God. He actually contrasts all the blessings of prophecy (cf. v.v. 3,4 etc.) with many negatives regarding tongues, an attitude he would not have done if tongues was the highest and greatest of spiritual activities in communing with the Almighty.

But most telling of all is this: whereas Paul says to speak in an unknown tongue is "*to speak to God*" (v2), in 14:9 he says to speak in an unknown tongue is "*to speak to the air.*" This parallelism Paul would never have drawn if tongues was such a high and holy gift.

Second. That Paul had in mind interpreting our verse here in conjunction with Romans 8:26. This verse (supposedly) says that Christians sometimes don't know how to pray, so the Spirit prays for us in unutterable groanings (i.e. tongues). Yet a clearer translation (as well as one that meets both Greek grammar and the problem of our infirmities causing us to be silent in prayer as stated in Rom 8:26) is that the Spirit helps us to pray *in our unutterable groanings* (they are *our* groanings caused by *our* infirmities, not the Holy Spirit's groanings)!

There is no place in Scripture where we have the idea that through us God the Holy Spirit prays to God the Father (much less that tongue speaking is the subject of Romans 8:26). As a side note, 1 Corinthians 14:15 tells us that in both prayer and song *we use our minds in unison with our spirits.*

Paul confirms our understanding at the end of verse two by telling us that If someone speaks in a tongue unknown to the hearer (i.e. the words are a mystery to the hearer), then the prayer is only meaningful to the one who is praying and to God who hears all men, obviously regardless of language. In other words, it is speech/prayer to God, not by purpose but *by default*. because of the unknown nature of the language spoken *to the assembly*.

C). “spirit” —This word/concept has caused all sorts of difficulties and the difficulties seem to be needless. The word “spirit(s)” is used in 1 Corinthians 14:2,14,15,16, and 32. In each verse, the context points to *our human spirit* and not the Holy Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 14:14, Paul says “*my spirit prays.*” In verse 15, the word “spirit” is in contrast to “mind,” and it seems clear that if it is our mind, then it must as well be our spirit (verse 15 also gives us the guidance to understand that 14:2 in speaking of our spirit as well). In verse 16, we are blessing God with our spirit, particularly in light of the fact that when our blessing is understood, the one blessed will say Amen with his/her spirit. In verse 32, the Scriptures say “the spirit of the prophet” (this *could not* be the Holy Spirit, for He is certainly not subject to us)!

In support of what has been said, the KJV translators chose not to capitalize the “s” of “spirit,” believing that in all the uses of the word “spirit” In 1 Corinthians 14. the subject was the *human* spirit in chapter 14 and not God the Holy Spirit (compare the KJV capitalized “S” in 1 Cor 12:4,7,8 etc.).

3. But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men [to] edification, and exhortation, and comfort.

Whereas in verse two, tongues are described as mysterious, in verse three Paul calls our attention to the clarity of the gift of prophecy, a clarity which brings with it edification. Again, we must keep in mind Paul’s basic and essential line of thought in 1 Corinthians 14: one who speaks in an unknown tongue speaks to God — *and that by default* - because men cannot understand and therefore cannot be edified by that which is unknown (note Paul’s logical argumentation along this line in vv7-11,16). Since prophesying is always an understandable exhortation, the use of this gift by the saints at Corinth is encouraged by the apostle because of its blessing to the congregation, a blessing of general comfort and growth for all the people of God.

4. He that speaketh in an [unknown] tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.

A paraphrase of the emphasis given by Paul in this verse would be, “the one speaking in an unknown tongue *himself* edifies (i.e. builds up), but the one who prophesies *the church* edifies.” This is Paul’s summarized contrast of these two gifts. If the Corinthians took to heart the truths of the previous chapter on love

(chapter 13), then to not seek ones own (13:5) would be reflected in their use of gifts that edify others rather than themselves (cf. Phil 2:4). In the sphere of sin Paul was applying the principle the Lord taught with “he that is chief, [is] he that serves” (Lk 22:26), or, wrote in this same epistle, “I made myself servant of all (9:19). We serve others with the gifts God has bestowed on us.

5. I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather than prophesied: for greater [is] he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church receive edifying.

Paul’s “I would that you spoke with tongues” here (Greek *thelo*, English, wish/would) has a helpful parallel grammatical in 1 Corinthians 7:7 when Paul wrote regarding singleness, “I would that all men were even as myself. But every man has his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that.” We must not think that Paul was saying anything more in his “I would” of 1 Corinthians 14:5 than his “I would” in 1 Corinthians 7:7.

Paul thought there were good and even great advantages to both singleness and knowing/speaking in tongues, but it is clear that Paul’s “I would that you speak in tongues” is a comment that extends no further than his “I would” on singleness. In other words, he said to the Corinthians “Yes, multiple languages (such as Hebrew probably) have their blessing such that I would that all might taste of that blessing, but covet the abilities that strengthen, rather than impress your brethren.”

Now just as Paul recognized that God’s sovereign work in the creation of mankind caused most saints to need a marriage partner, he also recognized that God’s sovereign will in giving gifts to whom He would meant that all would not be speaking in tongues (1 Cor 12:11 cf. 12:29ff)! Thus, although Paul knew all at Corinth could seek to prophesy and/or speak in a tongue(s); **1)** God may not bestow the gift, and **2)** prophecy was that gift which was far greater because all could drink from its wells of refreshing Christian truth (again it may be stated that 1 Cor 12:29ff makes it clear that Paul did not expect all to speak in tongues any more than he expected all to administrate, be apostles, etc.).

Now notice Paul closes verse five by stating that when a tongue is interpreted so that all understand the meaning of the words, tongues becomes as blessed as prophesying, indeed its equal. These words of the apostle give us some insight into the problems of the saints at Corinth. They seemed to be desirous of standing and speaking mysteriously so as to be seen (and admired) of men like the Jewish hypocrites of that day (cf. Matt 6:5). And if, as is quite possible, one of those unknown tongues was Hebrew, they could further boast that each psalm they were singing was possibly even more special, coming as it did from

the Old Testament in its original tongue (cf. 1 Cor 14:26)! But Paul will always bring them back to edifying the church, not themselves.

At this point, because of Paul's final words in this verse, it seems right to deal with a subject which was touched upon in verse two: *Did the tongue speaker himself understand what he was saying; and if so, what is the meaning of the statement in our verse "except he interpret."* It is commonly understood today that in tongue speaking at Corinth, the speaker uttered words that *he* did not understand (because the words were "heavenly" or "of the Spirit"). To answer this question conclusively, we will look at the New Testament uses of the Greek word translated "Interpret" in 1 Corinthians 14 and its related words elsewhere.

The Greek word "Interpret" and its related Greek words (*mothermeeneuomai, diermeeneuo, hermeeneia, hermeeneuo, dusermeeneutos*), Strongs #'s 3177, 1329 and 1328, 2058, 2059, and 1421 resp., are found eighteen times, and are variously translated in the KJV as "being/is interpreted" or "by interpretation" (Matt 1:23; Mk 5:41; 15:22,34; Jn 1:38,41,42; 9:7; Acts 4:36; 9:36; 13:8; Heb 7:2): and "hard to be uttered" in Hebrews 5:11.

The common factor in *all* the uses of the Greek words translated "interpret" (outside of 1 Corinthians) is that *there is a translation/explanation by the writer from a language he understood into a language understood by the reader so that the reader could be blessed.* In every case of this word the same pattern holds true! Take the example of Matthew 1:23, where Matthew takes the Hebrew term "Emmanuel" and puts it into the Greek wording "God with us," no doubt because Matthew feared some of his readers might not understand this Hebrew term. Or note our Lord's words "*Talitha cumi,*" which Mark interprets for the readers in Greek as "Damsel, I say unto you, arise" (Mk 5:41).

If we may use the words of Hebrews 5:11, the interpretation of tongues mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:30:14:4,13,27,28 meant nothing more or less than taking one human language which was "hard to be understood" by those who did not know the language and interpreting it so that the uninformed could be edified (cf. 1 Cor 14:5). In all cases at Corinth, real human languages are involved. But the one who uttered the unknown tongue (that is, unknown to the hearer) must pray: 1) that he might make his utterance understandable and therefore edifying (1 Cor 14:13), 2) that some other saint could provide that understanding (1 Cor 14:28), or 3) Paul commanded silence to the speaker of the unknown tongue (1 Cor 14:28).

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?

As in verse four of this chapter, an English paraphrase of Paul's ideas will prove helpful. Paul says to those who might bring exhortations in an unknown tongue, "What does it profit the people of God if while bringing to them some revelation, doctrine, knowledge, or any general exhortation: that as you bring these truths, *they cannot be identified* as revelation, knowledge, etc. because the language of the exhortation is not understood by the people who are supposedly being ministered to?"

Paul is really telling the Corinthians — think! Would the people of God understand the words as revelation or doctrine? And if not, would the congregation profit? This is Paul's point and concern regarding exhortations in unknown tongues. In such situations, the saints will never profit.

A tragic but instructive parallel to the problems created by the interest of speaking in unknown tongues is the problem Paul discusses three chapters earlier concerning the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:17:ff). There, in verse seventeen, Paul states that although the saints should have been experiencing fellowship in the supper "for the better," because of their attitude they were actually coming together "for the worse." 1 Corinthians 14:6 is hinting the same. These saints, who were coming together to be "bettered" by exhortations, were being "worsened," since the revelations, singing, and the like were in tongues that were unknown to the hearers.

The apostle's plain and straightforward logic was meant to reverse this prideful situation, and remind the Corinthians that the very reason Christians have gifts of the Spirit was to profit *withal* (1 Cor 12:7).

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?

Now Paul, after stating this foundational truth that *understanding is essential to edification*, spends five verses (7-11) illustrating and logically arguing the sensibility of this assertion to these Corinthians.

He starts in verse seven and eight by illustrating this truth in the realm of sounds made by lifeless or soulless things (Greek *apsukee* English, soulless/lifeless). Paul says quite plainly and practically that if the sound given by a pipe or harp does not contain thoroughly sharp and distinct notes, how will anyone know what song is being played? The pipe and the harp have distinctive sounds when played, and the notes played cannot be recognized (much less enjoyed) unless the player of the instrument is careful to be sharp and clear in his playing. If the notes are clear, the result will be that the hearer will perceive/understand the series of notes and thereby recognize and enjoy the melody.

Therefore the clarity of what is heard, and the perception and enjoyment (might we even say edification?) of instruments is based on the clarity of the sounds made by the instrumental pieces as they relate to the hearer.

8. For If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?

Clear and distinct sound can be critical. Paul uses a well known instrument relating to war to drive home his point all the more forcibly. If there is not a clear, distinguishing trumpet sound, the soldiers will not ready themselves for the battle.

To this point, Paul has used only inanimate objects to press home his point. All his examples make clear sounds, and that clarity produces an understanding for the hearer so he knows what is being heard and what it might mean. In the case of the harp, soothing music such as Saul enjoyed; in the case of the trumpet, a call to attack or retreat (Paul might even be leading us to speculate as to what might happen if the playing of the harp was so uncertain a sound as to play like a trumpet and visa-versa)!?

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 draws out our thinking by beginning verse nine with the Greek *outos* which carries the idea of “in this same way” or “in this same manner.” This is Paul’s first word of verse nine, and it brings us back to consider his non-negotiable truth which runs throughout this chapter: *That which is not clearly understood cannot edify.* In the same manner that lifeless sounds, when unclear, cause the above listed problems, the same can be said for human sounds, words, and speech.

Paul uses a varied set of interesting Greek words to communicate this “non-negotiable” truth. He uses the Greek word *euseemon* which means to “signify something clearly” (the exact opposite of Paul’s “uncertain” sound in verse eight); and *logos*, or “word.” He now, through these two words, is bringing in the idea of sounds made by human language. sounds which have precision. Paul is stating. “and in like manner to lifeless sounds as you have seen in verses seven and eight; you. brethren, if you do not give definitive and intelligible words by your tongue, how shall it be known what is spoken? You will essentially be speaking, not to men, but to nobody (the air)!”

10. There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them [is] without signification.

There are many voices (Greek *phonee* “sounds”) in this world Paul says. Now since Paul had already used the Greek *phonee* in verses seven and eight (translated in both verses as “sounds”), it is clear Paul still wants to examine sounds, but sounds in the context of human speech and language rather than the “lifeless” sounds of harps or trumpets (as an aside, the Greek word *phonee* is used in Genesis chapter 11 — the chapter on Babel — to denote human language [Genesis 11:1 and 11:71]).

Paul calls upon the many different languages known to the Corinthians. In all this great list, there is not one which lacks meaning, understanding, or, as the KJV renders the Greek, “significance.”

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.

Now conclusions will be laid out for the Corinthians by Paul, conclusions which the truths of verses 7-10 have made inevitable. Again drawing on interesting Greek vocabulary, the apostle uses the Greek word for “power,” *dunamis* in the phrase “...if I don’t know the *meaning*.” The power of language is in the communication of the meaning of ideas. If one does not or cannot understand the force of what is being stated, we shall be as barbarians to one another, not knowing the content of the speech.

Now of course, both parties speaking in this example have very real languages and no doubt good things to say. But if neither speaker understands the force, power, or meaning of the other’s language (because of the unknown tongue/sound), they shall be as complete strangers even though they may have expressed great and eloquent thoughts. Without the hearer having the ability to grasp the eloquence/meaning/significance of whatever might have been spoken, all goes for nothing (they “speak to the air”).

Paul’s use of “barbarian” here may have hit quite close to home and may have been quite deliberate. The Corinthian heritage was Greek, a heritage of the “polis” or city/state, the epitome of an advanced society. The history of Greece was one of great educated men (the opposite of “barbarian”), with men in its history such as Pericles, Plato, Socrates, and Alexander the Great’s tutor, Aristotle).

12. Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual [gifts], seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.

1 Corinthians 14:9 began with “In this manner/in this way,” and our verse here does the same. Through this method, Paul is drawing the readers back to previous truths which had been established that he might now bring them to an inevitable conclusion from his writings of verses 1-11. Just as Paul had begun with zeal and spiritual gifts in verse one, he will summarize on that same note, concluding that those gifts which edify others are the gifts the Corinthians should seek with zeal to both have and employ.

13. Wherefore let him that speaketh in an [unknown] tongue pray that he may interpret.

The Greek word *dioper* in the New Testament is used to bring us a strong, practical application from an established truth(s), which is what occurs in verse thirteen (the only other uses of *dioper* in the New Testament are in 1 Corinthians 8:13 and 10:14, both translated “therefore”). The mind of the Spirit with respect to gifts has been expounded (vv1-5), and the proof of the exposition adduced (vv6-12). Now comes the way Christ will *order* His church and the way Christ’s Spirit will *lead* in the use of gifts in light of these truths in 1 Corinthians 14:1-12 (this because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth, Jn 14:17; 15:26; 16:13).

Those who speak in a tongue unknown to the hearers must pray that they might interpret (see note on “interpret,” verse five). This “interpretation,” from both its use and what is called in Greek its “voice,” implies two ideas which must be carefully accounted for so that our grasp of this statement might be accurate.

First, the terminology and Greek “voice” of “interpret” assume that the speaker could understand the content of his/her own exhortation. The idea that the “unknown tongue” was unknown to the person who spoke is inconsistent with Paul’s statements in 1 Corinthians 14.

Second, as is clear by the notes on “interpret” in verse five, the concept was not one of the *tongue speaker not knowing* what he/she prayed, but that *the hearer was ignorant of the meaning of the utterance* (that is, he/she did not understand the language of the speaker). Thus the speaker would ask God for assistance to make clear (and therefore edifying) to the hearer what was spoken so that the hearer also may receive a blessing (this writer has experience similar difficulty in putting New Testament Greek into English).

At this point, some general thoughts might be in order. We are at a great disadvantage in America, not having the type of church mix which existed in a

city like Corinth. People from all over the world, if they had been converted by God's grace and they were by some means visiting the city of Corinth, would have attended this church at Corinth, for it was *the* christian church. There seems to have been no practice of splitting up congregations by language, culture, etc. Saints from all cultures and walks of life congregated to worship and edify one another, and there was, no doubt, great diversity. Corinth was located near the sea, east of Rome and the center of the Roman Empire and west of Mesopotamia and the Mideast.

The problem of so many diverse saints wanting to praise the Lord in prayer and song must have been a real issue. It would seem natural that the Corinthian assembly spoke Greek. But what of those sincere Christians who had worshipped and served God in their native country (say, Ethiopia) and now had come to Corinth on business and desired to enter into the fellowship and praise at Corinth? How could they partake of the fellowship? How could they be a part of the congregational praise, seeing it was in Greek? Could they participate? Our verses speak to this very type of issue. *This may be the very reason this type of discussion is found only in the book of Corinthians - because of the diverse type of city it was.*

14. For if I pray in an [unknown] tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding Is unfruitful.

Here we encounter one of Paul's many unique ways to express problems associated with speech in a tongue unknown to those who listened to such exhortations. On the surface, it seems that what Paul *might* be telling the Corinthians here is that praying in an unknown tongue may bless one's spirit but not one's mind ("my mind is unfruitful"). This might be the case, particularly in light of the next verse, but now we run into problems that negate this way of looking at the ideas behind Paul's words. If the apostle were saying that speaking in an unknown tongue, as it were, bypasses the mind and therefore is mentally unfruitful, there is no doubt Paul would have stopped tongue speaking altogether because in everything Paul knew God's grace renewed the mind to do His will (Rom 12:2), and he will tell us next that he has determined for himself and his brethren to pray with both spirit and mind (v15).

No, the proper way, as well as the only possible way, to understand Paul's "my mind is unfruitful" is to see the unfruitfulness as relating *not* to *his mind* but the mind and thereby the growth of *individuals in the congregation*. The truths expounded by a speaker in an unknown tongue bare no fruit in the hearer because the language, and the doctrine, is a mystery. This interpretation is born out by: **1)** the fact that Paul, in the context of gifts and 1 Corinthians 12-14, is surely interested in using gifts to be fruitful in other's lives and not his

own (which is what is stated in 1 Cor 14:4), **2)** Verse sixteen reinforces the interpretation that Paul is speaking of fruit in others, and their response to the exercising of our personal gifts, and **3)** in verse nineteen, Paul says he would speak five words with his mind that he might edify others.

These ideas together confirm Paul's meaning in this verse — that the unfruitful mind is Paul's mind/speech being unfruitful *in other saints* because of the unknown language used to convey truths. Our verse is teaching (on the heels of verse thirteen and an exhortation to interpret a tongue unknown to the assembly) that if there is no interpretation, I will be unfruitful (to the people of God). This is basically an echo of 1 Corinthians 14:2, where Paul said his spirit was blessed by that which is stated in an unknown tongue, but the same words were mysteries to others and therefore useless to them.

15. What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.

Here is Paul's resolve for the Corinthians: The prayer, singing, and general exhortations will be from the heart ("I will pray/sing with the heart) and shall touch the heart of those hearing; and the prayer, singing, and other exhorting activities will be from the mind ("I will pray/sing with the mind) and touch the mind of those hearing. Both beauty and truth will meet in every gift exercised that requires communication.

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?

Again we are challenged by the impeccable logic of the apostle. If the commandments Paul has delineated in verse fifteen are not followed, he asks these Corinthians how is it that they shall know what is being spoken such that they can proclaim a heartfelt "Amen"? Some dear saint might be praising God in a most eloquent and spiritual fashion, but if the words are not understood, who can utter a resounding "Amen" to what has just been said?

Paul is speaking directly to those who have enjoyed themselves and their own mysterious words, for twice in verses 16 and 17 he uses the most emphatic Greek form of the simple word "you" (it is in both the phrase "Amen to *your* giving of thanks," and "*You* give thanks well"). This is the strongest type of language Paul could use, and he never did such things lightly, and this is especially true in 1 Corinthians (see how important the subject is on another rare occasion Paul used the emphatic "you" — 1 Cor 8:11!).

Paul has now put the final nail in the coffin of the Corinthian over-interest in unknown tongues. All that is left is for Paul to give his own apostolic witness, which he does in verses eighteen and nineteen.

17. For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified.

See notes, verse sixteen

18. I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all:

To insure that the Corinthians did not take Paul's corrections and exhortations as words from someone ignorant of the truth and experience of tongues, Paul declares that he has this gift, and both can and has exercised this gift with, no doubt, great blessing. Indeed, from his schooling and travels one could have guessed that he spoke in tongues more than any saint, which is what he expresses.

There is one further interesting question: When Paul spoke of "... tongues more than you all," was he saying he knew more languages or that he spoke in tongues more frequently than any Corinthian saint. The general demeanor of the verse seems to lend itself to Paul speaking quantitatively more than any, but how he would know this is difficult to say. Yet the verse that follows seems to talk of Paul's tongue speaking in terms of quantity. Again, the major point is that the Corinthians see that Paul knew whereof he spoke.

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.

The same "I would/wish" is used here as in verse five ("I would that you all spoke in tongues"). Paul desires to bless the church so he would always speak such that the people of God would receive instruction (as an aside, this verse, along with verses such as 14:32, demonstrates that this tongue speaking was controlled by the speaker, unlike the tongues of Acts 2).

Paul claimed in verse fourteen that exhortations in unknown languages made his mind "unfruitful" to his fellow saints. Here in verse nineteen, with the words coming from an understandable language, Paul now "instructs" others with his mind. Paul notes at the beginning of the verse that *in the church* all these practical truths should take root. This seems to imply that when it came to personal devotions, the saint at Corinth would use his/her most comfortable language — their native language, or tongue (cf. 14:28).

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

Now comes a call to thoughtful maturity (the word translated in the KJV as “men” is the Greek word for “mature”). Although the Corinthians are to be infants in the works of the flesh (evil), in understanding they were to be men, possibly by this time even teachers (cf. Heb 5:12). And Paul wants there full attention in understanding the Old Testament history of “unknown languages.”

21. In the law it is written, With [men of] other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.

Here Paul draws on the law (God’s revealed truth) to Israel in Isaiah 28:11 to express from inspired history some perspective for these Corinthians on unknown tongues and their use (other examples besides Is 28:11; **1**) tower of Babel, Gen 11:1ff; **2**) Deut 28:49, “the Lord.. .shall bring a nation whose tongue you will not understand;” **3**) Jer 5:15, I will’ bring a nation.. .whose language thou knowest not”). It will be seen immediately that, far from blessing when the theme is unknown tongues, in every case judgment related to unbelief and rebellion is the context of God’s word, Paul, drawing on Isaiah, says that for all God had done through Isaiah, Israel would not here His warnings and words. Now they would hear a new sound, one that would be “another tongue” which would not be recognizable. That is, speech which was unknown to Israel was God's word of silence, His word of judgment and doom (remember, our passage here says "with other tongues.. .*I will speak to this people*"). This is not unlike the times our Lord spoke in parables (language/truths that were hidden, and therefore a judgment upon the Jews, Matt 13:10-15; Lk 8:10 cf. Is 6:9-11). God was blessing the nation of Israel when He sent a prophet to declare his will. On the other hand, God was cursing Israel when He sent no word at all, or when the words were not in an understandable form (another language, parables, etc.).

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.

There have been many books and articles by great and godly men declaring that this verse is the key which opens the multitude of mysteries that surround the gift of tongues. It is said by some of the finest Biblical scholars that tongues are a sign and, as a natural sign (comp Mk 16:17), they existed to confirm the gospel to the unbeliever and have now ceased (cf. 1 Cor 13:8) But this line of argument is only consistent if the “unbelieving” are the Jews (cf. the Isaiah 28:11 reference), and tongues is a sign of impending judgment such as what occurred to that generation in A.D. 70. Even then, all that ceased was tongues

as a sign to the Jews, not the gift itself (that is, the words of 1 Cor 14:19,26,33, and the commandment of 1 Cor 14:39 still stand today).

What is most important for our studies is that scholars say the key to the subject of tongues in Scripture is 1 Corinthians 14:22, where we are told the reason God gave tongues to the church; and the reason tongues even existed — *it was a sign*.

But the “flow” of Paul’s argument regarding prophecy and tongues in this chapter gives no indication that we have reached a watershed mark at this point in his discourse. Indeed, after his statements concerning tongues (vv22,23) and prophecy (vv22,24-25), Paul will pick up his generic exhortation again in verse 26, the same type of words we have seen before in verses six and twelve.

Those who argue that Paul’s *main* point for the Corinthians was to say that *tongues were a sign* is no more true than to say that prophecy’s main use is that of convicting the unsaved that God is in the church (vv24,25). For our understanding (that tongues was primarily a sign) to be valid, we should expect prophecy’s main purpose for existence to be expounded here as well. Yet clearly this is not the case, for Paul gives us a scenario regarding prophecy and the unbeliever when he has already told us that prophecy is for the believer! Again I say the *main* reason for tongues is not given here.

Whether Paul’s argument is; **1)** unknown language was used in Jewish history to speak to Israel’s sins and not to bless her (cf. Is 28:11; Jer 5:15; Deut 28:49), and thus tongues spoke to the first century Jews the same way, or **2)** the removal of praise and song in worship to Jehovah was evident when a Jew heard such worship in a tongue other than Hebrew, *these issues are not Paul’s essential reason for bringing Isaiah 28 into his discussion!* What we need to see is that the bottom line is that Paul, via this method, is continuing his goal which began in the first verse exalting prophecy and diminishing the value of tongues. He is certainly not stopping in the midst of a forty verse discourse on spiritual gifts for the church to tell us that one of the gifts was not really for the assembled saints at all.

We must remember that from 1 Corinthians 12 thru 14, the theme is one of gifts, given by God the Holy Spirit, which bless the church (1 Cor 12:7). It is a list (1 Cor 12:8-11) for use in edifying the body (1 Cor 12:12ff). The gifts from God, and those who use them, are in the church (1 Cor 12:29), and the gifts are used to build up and strengthen the body.

Tongues is part of the list of operations/administrations/gifts of the Father/Son/Spirit (1 Cor 12:4-6), and every manifestation is for the body, which is the Lord’s (1 Cor 12:7 cf. Rom 12:5).

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 now calls the Corinthians to think in a mature fashion, and in particular think of the impression on the unlearned (possibly Greeks or just Gentiles) or unbelievers (possibly Jews). If the exhorting that is going on in the church is all in tongues, these visitors will not be able to understand, and indeed will end up confused. Will they not conclude this Christian religion is madness?

At this point we might ask: Where is the “sign” to these unbelievers in Paul’s verse here? It seems Paul is setting up a gathering in one place of saints (like the Corinthians) who have a special interest in tongues such that all desire to speak. In such a case, rather than the tongues pointing as a sign to the visitor’s sad religious condition (again similar to the speaking in parables, of Matt 13:10ff) and possibly turning them to the Lord (e.g. Jews, cf. Rom 11:1 if), tongues displays a confusion that gives nothing but a poor impression of the gospel and the Savior of Christianity.

24. But if all prophesy, and there come in one that beleveth not, or [one] unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all:

But now Paul concentrates on what would happen if these same type of visitors heard prophesying. The language is now known to the visitors and they learn something about the Christian truths of the depravity of man’s heart and his need for reconciliation to a holy and righteous God.

As in the previous verse, a question arises: If prophecy is said to be for believers (v22), then what is Paul doing in creating a scenario in the church with saints prophesying to unbelievers? It seems to confirm that Paul still has on his mind the theme that began in verse one, the comparison of tongues and prophecy. Paul is saying as it were, “even when the gift is not specifically for their benefit (i.e. unbelievers), if all prophesy, the results are still superior to tongues.”

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.

New Testament prophecy is simply the proclamation of what Christ has made known to us (cf. Jn 15:15) through the Spirit. Prophecy is *not infallible* utterance (e.g. without error), but *inspired* utterance (words given by the Spirit’s blessing and strength. More will be said later about infallible and inspired).

The activity of prophecy that reveals the secrets of the heart *are not* insights of saints similar to our Lord's (Matt 9:4, 'Why do you think evil in your hearts?'), as if these people could read the thoughts of men as our Lord could. These were general truths proclaimed about man, either received from Paul or read in the Old Testament (in this case probably something similar to Psalm 53:1-3; or Rom 3:10-18). It has always interested this writer that Corinth was wrong in so many areas, yet Paul expected them to see such power in their worship that men would fall before the living God, confessing their sin. When a church has Christ, they have all. Thus, another Pauline proof of prophecy over tongues re: church!

26. How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.

As with 1 Corinthians 14:6 and 14:12, Paul lists some gifts and goals in the use of those gifts. This verse also gives us the assurance that from verse one to verse forty in 1 Corinthians 14, Paul has one theme in mind and will follow through until in verse forty he will end with, "Let all things be done both with propriety and order."

A practical note here: The feeling one gets from reading both this verse and 14:12 is that apostolic first century worship has little in common with 20th century Christian church worship. Our verse here seems to express the idea that all the saints had gifts and were quite active in the worship service. And although there was a message (a reading, cf. Col 4:16; 1 Thess 5:27), the passive nature of today's church service does not seem to be what actually took place nineteen centuries ago. It is almost as if edifying the saints has dropped from the whole congregation to one man (as an aside, you will never find *elder in the singular* in the Greek New Testament (e.g. pastor) when the subject is church organization. It is *always plural* - elders). We should have more assembly "iron" to sharpen fellow saints "iron."

27. If any man speak in an [unknown] tongue, [let it be] by two, or at the most [by] three, and [that] by course; and let one interpret**

**The easiest contextual and linguistic interpretation is that "one interpret" means, not anyone with language gifts (if such "one" knows the language, but rather it is that *the tongue speaker* interprets if possible to the saints. "Let one interpret" has always thought to be "one" (i.e. another one beside the tongue speaker). But this is not the obvious understanding for the readers contextually or linguistically. Indeed, v5 and v13's "he interpret" most certainly carry the meaning that the "unknown tongue" speaker was the interpreter.

From verse 27 to verse 32, Paul will now set before the Corinthians inspired principals of order which will give the church the best possible chance at true, meaningful edification. He will then conclude in verses 33 through 40 with some final exhortations of a general nature regarding orderliness.

Tongue speaking is brought up first, not because it is the first or best gift, but it is first in gifts that need control and organization so as to edify. A paraphrase might be, "if anyone might speak in an unknown tongue, let it be two, or at most three (and that by turn), and make sure there is interpretation! (the word "interpret" is a command in the Greek).

There are many things that have been of concern to Paul and he has expressed those concerns throughout this chapter. First, Paul was disturbed about this undue interest in tongues and their use as the Corinthian saints met for worship. Therefore only a handful at any gathering could speak in tongues. The dangers of time and confusion, not to say pride, had so harmed the people in their growth that Paul restricts speech in other languages. Second, after any speaking was done, there must be somebody to interpret for the sake of those present. Gifts were for others, and the content of my tongue speaking must be fruitful in others lives. Third, there was an order to the speaking, each having a turn.

28. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God.

There was a real possibility that nobody could understand the language being used — that is, no interpreter. In such cases, the speaker was to be silent, and could only speak to himself (in this foreign tongue/language) and to God. It seems as though this speaking to oneself and God was silent prayer (Paul would not condone muttering to oneself!). Again, Paul is aiming to establish an order at Corinth that will lead to the most growth and blessing for the people.

It seems clear as well that one would know immediately if they could interpret (just as if an American were in a foreign location such as the Louvre and heard English. We would understand immediately. But could we then interpret into the French language ??). From the way 1 Corinthians 12:30 and 14:26 reads ("hath an interpretation"), it would seem some knew they were proficient in languages but could never tell what language or tongue might arise. In other words, the worship service seems to have had some unpredictable elements to it.

There is a last point — a very practical one — which I would like to bring up regarding this man/woman who may have stood to speak in a tongue only to

find neither he or any other church attendee could interpret for the gathered saints. *Question: Was it God's will for him/her to arise in the first place and speak in this unknown tongue, the result being an unedifying silence in light of the lack of interpretation?* I raise this question in light of the modern view on God's will that God has a perfect will — a perfect choice for every situation — and one of our goals in life is to find that perfect will (such as *His* perfect marriage partner, *His* perfect career, etc. This is even the way some interpret Rom 12:1,2!).

Now in the case of the speaker who, as it turns out, had no interpreter: *Was it the Lord's perfect will for him to get up at all?* The answer must be a resounding **YES!** It was God's revealed will that this speaker edify by his gifts and he would have been remiss acting any other way. The fact that God revealed a situation with no interpreter does not enter the matter unless he chooses to go on *after knowing* there is no interpretation. This is clearly sin. God has many perfect ways (not just one) for each saint (although this might come as a blow to some single women who believe in that *one* perfect choice. Not so, there are many).

29. Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.

(*a grammatical note: the Greek word translated "other" is in the plural *alloi*, i.e. "others"*)

The order of prophetic utterance is now set down. Again there is room for all to edify, and the phrase ("at the most") is not used as it was with tongues.

There is an issue of interpretation with the phrase "let the other(s) judge." Are "the others" the congregation or the other prophets? There are two words in the Greek language that mean "other," *allos* and *heteros*. The difference between the words is clearly seen in Galatians 1:6, where both words are found in the phrase "...removed... unto another (*heteros*) gospel... which is not another (*allos*) Paul was saying that the Galatians were buying into another gospel *of a different kind* (*heteros*) which was not another *of the same kind* (*allos* that is, the gospel Paul preached to them).

Now going strictly by words, Paul's use of *allos* implies others of the same kind (other prophets) did the judging. This seems to be supported as well by the fact that those who were gifted as prophets may well have been together, and if something were revealed to another (v30), he could speak. It seems they could even have been a distinct group.

30. If [any thing] be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace.

Humility and an understanding of one's own heart played an important role in congregational worship. If God granted someone else insight into the passage or truth being expounded, somehow the speaker was to be made aware of this and was to take his seat (the Greek *sigao*, a strong word for silence! cf. v34) while another would rise and give their light on the subject at hand. If we practiced this today, I believe there would be much fruit to the glory of God and Christ.

I want to note as well that if there was any corrections of what a prophet spoke (which is implied by the 'judging' of verse 29 and the revealing to the second party), nothing radical seems to have been done. The Old Testament had strict laws and severe penalties for false prophets, This is because of their position before God. In the New Testament, the prophetic place is taken by the apostles, not by prophets such as we find in 1 Corinthians 14.

This is proven by the fact that in 1 Corinthians 14:37 Paul overrides the prophets. and further claims that his words are the commandments of God. This is what a true prophet of Israel would have said. There were no radical steps that seem to have been taken if the prophets were found to be wrong, nor are there any warnings. In a sense, there are great parallels between the prophet in 1 Corinthians and the preacher of today. *There is inspiration, but not infallibility.*

31. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted.

There was instruction for learning, application, and comfort in the prophetic ministry. It seems there might have been many who had this gift. We must not take the "all" too far, for remember Paul is talking about order and edification. The "all" surely means all those who have this gift. The different saints speaking may have added to the depth of learning at Corinth. A problem of our century is the pastor and the single perspective that is obtained through a one man ministry. It has the advantage of lack of conflict, and the disadvantage of lack of diversity.

32. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets

Paul reminds us that the Holy Spirit has enabled us to practice discipline in our lives, and this means self control. There will not be many prophets or tongue speakers speaking or interjecting comments because by the regenerating work of God's Spirit, we have the grace of temperance (Gal 5:23).

This principal of self control reminds us as well that the experiences of tongues at Pentecost *are not* the experiences of tongue speaking in the church. At Pentecost, the Spirit was poured out by Christ as promised (Lk 24:49). The Lord was (by His Spirit) present. He filled the temple (His people), confirming His presence in the midst of His people as He had done centuries before with the tabernacle and temple (Ex 40:35ff; 2 Chron 7:1ff). At Corinth, the gifts of the Spirit were exercised: **1)** by the will of the saint, **2)** by the power of God's Spirit, **3)** following the Holy Spirit's commandments given through the apostle. These types of distinctions must ever be kept in mind or we will have expectations that the Lord has not given, and we will not be serving according to the Spirit's leading from the Word.

33. For God is not [the author] of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

If God's word is followed, there will be blessing. We will not be seeking to boast in our gifts, but our boast is in the Lord (1 Cor 1:31) and His work in others. The confusion had been caused by a desire to display tongues and the mysterious, which led to resentment. There was a desire in some to be preeminent, a preeminence which caused conflict among the people of God. But a church that follows the heart of God will find peace and unity in obedience.

34. Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but [they are commanded] to be under obedience, as also saith the law.

The final words from the previous verse, "as in all the churches of the saints," belong with verse 34.

The subject of women speaking (or should we translate "women" as "wives" because of the "husbands" in verse 35 ?), has been looked at by many great men. The greatest problem that arises is how to look at this verse in harmony with 1 Corinthians 11:5, *where women are speaking* (praying and prophesying!).

Now the fact that there are multiple examples of women speaking in the midst of God's people (Jud 4:5; 5:1ff; Ex 15:20ff; 2 Ki 22:14), as well as the New Testament prophetic promise that this would occur in a special way (Acts 2:16ff), leads us to believe there is some special silence Paul wants the Corinthian women to observe rather than an *absolute* silence. Added to this, Paul tells us that "the law" demands this silence: a reflection, Paul says, of her obedience.

Let us first deal with Paul basing His call of silence on the law. In 1 Timothy, the theme is church order (1 Tim 3:15), and specifically in 1 Timothy 2:9-15 the place of women in that order. Timothy is told to help other churches follow this order for edification. Women are to learn in silence with all subjection (1 Tim 2:11), and that Paul does not suffer a women to take positions of teaching/authority (1 Tim 2:12). In 1 Timothy, these commandments are based on the fact that: **1)** Adam was first formed, then Eve (1 Tim 2:13), and **2)** Eve was deceived and fell into transgression (1 Tim 2:14). Now since all the same themes of 1 Timothy 2:11ff are in 1 Corinthians 14:34f, it seems safe to say that “the law” in 1 Corinthians 14:34 is equal to 1 Timothy’s Genesis account of the creation order of man/woman from “the law.” Thus the apostle, who had already established the importance of creation order in 1 Corinthians 11:1-3, says that the speaking that is the subject of 1 Corinthians 14:34f is a contradiction of that ordained Genesis order.

Now as to the silence enjoined to women here; if the context is one of speech and edification (1 Cor 14:26-32), and the remedy in verse 35 is “asking” and “learning” at home, then the speaking must have been a disruptive questioning (because of their ignorance) which, like in interpreted tongues, impedes the blessing and growth of the church when they gather. We must not see the silence here for women as absolute, because that is not the best nor easiest way of understanding the subject. I believe the acute, disruptive speech of these women had its cure in the next verse.

35. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.

The women who were attempting to learn by “asking” in the church were putting forth an attitude of disruption and shame, both upon the church and/or their husbands. This was an attitude that contradicted the Genesis order, which was established to produce the very blessing the church sought. Instead, the women who needed to learn via inquiry should save that questioning for home and thereby reflect honor for their husbands and keep an edifying atmosphere in the church that would be the exact opposite of the confusion which was occurring not just with this disorderly questioning, but probably quite similar to the confusion that was caused by tongues (cf. verse 23).

36. What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only?

Paul challenges the Corinthian church regarding not just the order of verses 34 and 35 but probably the whole subject of order in the church with respect to tongues and prophecy as well.

37. If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.

Paul now puts his apostolic authority and understanding in front of the Corinthians to undergird his words (both “authority” and “understanding” were derived from the Lord himself: “he is a chosen vessel unto me,” Acts 9:15, and “I [received] and was [taught] by the revelation of Jesus Christ,” Gal 1:12).

Now it is most important to see from our verse here that a prophet did not have the authority to give the commandments from the Lord. *A prophet at Corinth (or anywhere else) did not speak the words of the Lord in some type of infallible utterance (i.e. “thus saith the Lord”).* The Word of the Lord was brought by the prophets of the Old Testament *and their successors, the apostles of the New Testament.* Prophets and tongue speakers were inspired (blessed by the Spirit in their insights), not infallible (giving the eternal Word of God).

38. But If any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant.

The apostle John makes a similar statement in Revelation (Rev 22:11). Those who do not listen to apostolic truth, the apostles were to shake the dust of their feet and move on (Matt 10:14), because to listen to an apostle was to hear the Words of the Lord (“he that receives you, receives me,” Matt 10:40). We too are, as the apostles of old, to leave the results to the Lord, whether we are a savor of life or death (Is 55:10,11; 2 Cor 2:15,16).

39. Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues.

Here is the ultimate test if we will obey the Lord. Do we, in our churches, desire and allow this gift of prophecy to operate today? Do we tell some of the people of God. “You are forbidden to speak in tongues?!” Since prophecy is a gift of insight into the Word *and not some type of infallible utterance*; and if tongues were and are real languages which when interpreted are edifying *and not some heavenly language or prayer babble*; then where is the practice in our churches in obedience to this verse? If one looks at the list of gifts in Romans 12:6-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:28-30, it is as unjustified to stop using the gifts of prophecy and tongues as it is to stop using the gifts of teaching, ruling, and mercies (Rom 12:7,8); or the gifts of helps or governments (1 Cor 12:28).

We must consider the possibility though that the rules for tongues apply only to areas of the world that are situated geographically like Corinth, because these are the places diverse tongues and such edifying processes arise (?).

40. *Let all things be done decently and in order.*

The summary of decency and order is a summary for one purpose; that the Corinthians might grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Pet 3:18). Each saint in the Corinthian assembly was to sharpen his brother with the gifts and abilities God had given him. The Corinthians, like their Lord, were here not to be served but to serve (Matt 20:28).