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**APOSTOLIC VERSE BY VERSE BIBLE STUDY**

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**SEEK THAT YE MAY EXCEL TO**

**THE EDIFYING OF THE CHURCH**

**1 Corinthians 14:1-19**

***I Corinthians 14:1 "Follow after charity, and desire spiritual [gifts], but rather that ye may prophesy***."

Follow after charity (“pursue love”). If you love as God loves, then you will want all mankind to be saved. Since love is critical and eternal, Paul exhorts them to pursue love. Love is superior to spiritual gifts and enables one to understand and utilize spiritual gifts rightly. Though he wanted them to desire spiritual gifts, exercising them was not for the purpose of self-exaltation because that would be contrary to love. This encouragement to “pursue love” ties the preceding thought to what follows.

***1 Corinthians 12:31 “But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.”***

***1 Corinthians 13:13 “And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.”***

Chapter 14 deals with the inferiority of tongues, prized by the Corinthians, in comparison to prophecy. Apparently, the Corinthians were using the gift of other tongues to show off; thus, Paul confronts them. He says, “but rather that ye may prophesy.” In desiring spiritual gifts, it is only proper to seek gifts that will best fulfill the mandate of love. Since prophecy issues in the greatest benefit to the greatest number of people, it is only appropriate that one seek that gift above all others. Thus, Paul advocates the greater value of speaking God’s message in a known language. The gift of prophecy involved immediate divine inspiration of the spokesperson. "Prophesy" means to foretell future events, but it, also, means to speak under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. When the Lord sent the disciples out to minister, He told them, first of all, to preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15). All of the other gifts are important, but the one of most importance is preaching to the lost world. By the foolishness of preaching many are saved (1 Corinthians 1:21). The miracles, healings, raising from the dead, and casting out demons were important, but not as important as saving their souls. The Lord is interested in the infirmities of our body, but He is more interested in our spirit. He wants us saved, then all the extras can come. Jesus had said, if they did not believe Him for any other reason, then believe Him because of the miracles (John 14:11). They should have believed Him by the Word of power that He brought.

***I Corinthians 14:2***

***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."***

Tongues mean "Languages". Unknown tongues are the "tongues of Angels" (aka heavenly languages) and are tongues not naturally known to man on earth but is spoken by angels in heaven in communication to God. Men are supernaturally empowered by the Holy Spirit are able to speak “mysteries.” These mysteries that he is speaking, are mysteries to the speaker, as well as those listening. Paul explains this distinction and revelation in the previous chapter in relation to love.

***1 Corinthians 13:1 "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of******angels******and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."***

This “unknown” or “new” tongue, according to Jesus is the believers “sign” or “evidence” that one has been baptized with the Holy Ghost.

***Mark 16:17, "And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues".***

 Jesus said, "them that believe"; they shall speak with new tongues. Do you believe in Christ? If yes, then casting out demons and speaking in new tongues is for you. Also, Jesus said that speaking in tongues is a sign that follow believers; and Paul repeated this truth again in

***1 Corinthians 14:22 "Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not".***

Some people erroneously teach that the dispensation of tongues has past, and it is not relevant for today. They contend that when the bible was canonized by man God stopped man’s heavenly language. This is contrary to the biblical record. However, there will be a failure of prophesies, a cessation of tongues, and a disappearance of knowledge at the return of Jesus Christ to the earth.

***1 Corinthians 14:39 "Wherefore, brethren,******covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues."***

***Jude 20 “But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost,”***

***1 Corinthians 13:8-10***

***8 Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.***

***9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.***

***10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.***

Paul made it clear that when we speak in “unknown” or “new” tongues, it's for a sign, but it's also for our spiritual edification, (1 Corinthians 14:4, 14). On the day Pentecost we see the full manifestation of tongues in operation. Those filled with the Holy Ghost began to speak with “Unknown” or “new”, as well as “other” or “the gift” of tongues. They we speaking to God and man simultaneously.

***Acts 2:3-4***

***3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.***

***“And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”***

***Acts 2:6 “Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.”***

***Acts 2:16-18***

***16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;***

***17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:***

***18 And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:***

“Other” or “gift” of tongues is distinct from “unknown” or “new” tongues because it is spoken in languages known on earth, different from the speaker’s native language, used to communicate a message from God. The people with this gift are able to speak in any language or dialect on earth when under that anointing. Not all Christians are given this Gift (ability), but only those whom the Lord has chosen as his vessel.

***1 Corinthians 12:30, “Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?”***

***1 Corinthians 12:10 "To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues".***

Those blessed with this “gift” have the ability to supernaturally communicate to a person of another language. If a person who is of another language sits in the church, God could have you speak in the foreigner's language in order to minister to that person; whether Greek, Spanish, Hebrew etc.; it called “diversities of tongues”, (1 Corinthians 12:28).

***1 Corinthians 14:3-4***

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

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

"Prophesying" in this sense, would be preaching the good news of the gospel. "Edification" in the sense it is used here, means to build up. "Exhortation" in this particular instance, means comfort, or consolation. When a person speaks in tongues, it builds the person up who is speaking. Preaching builds up all the congregation. It continues to say unknown, because it is saying that the tongue is unknown to all in hearing distance. We see then that preaching should not just win people to the Lord but should build them up after they are saved. It should comfort and console them, as well. The gospel message is good news.

***I Corinthians 14:5 "I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater [is] he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying."***

This communication relationship through tongues is unto God and is a communion between God and the speaker only, therefore, interpretation is not needed except for the purpose of edifying the church.

***1 Corinthians 14:28, "But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God."***

Paul is not telling them not to speak in tongues. In fact, he says, I wish you all had the evidence that the Holy Spirit had filled you with spiritual gifts. Now he says, it is better to try to win people to Christ with the spoken Word of God than to try to impress them with your spirituality. The exception to all of this, is when the person speaking is moved upon by the Spirit of God and brings the message in tongues to the body of Christ. In this case, there would always be an interpreter to tell the congregation exactly what the message is from God. Then the church is built up, when it knows the message is from God to them. There is something really personal in knowing that God has spoken to you through the tongues and interpretation.

***I Corinthians 14:6 "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?"***

Paul emphasizes how important it is that all believers understand what is spoken when they gather together. Even if the apostle Paul himself came to a meeting speaking in other tongues, the church could not benefit if he communicated something that no one could understand. Paul is saying, here, that he will preach by revelation knowledge from God. He, also, speaks to them of the things he has learned. Preaching comes in several different forms, the most effective sermons are when the speaker is overwhelmed by the Spirit of God, and God speaks through the preacher’s personal testimony. Paul trying to establish churches not in error, would sometimes speak of doctrine, as well.

***I Corinthians 14:7-8***

***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?"***

***8 "For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?"***

Paul gave three analogies to illustrate the lack of value of uninterpreted tongues. If someone plays a flute or harp or bugle, without playing clear notes, the result will be incoherent noise and would be impossible to bless anyone with the sounds it produced. The trumpet was used to call the people to battle when it was played a certain way. You would not know what to do, if a recognizable sound did not come from the instrument. This same trumpet was used to call the people to worship. The trumpet was silver {redemption} that was used for the gathering of the people. This is the same trumpet {silver} that will be blown to redeem the Christians from the earth. We will know the sound well and go to meet the Lord in the air.

***1 Thessalonians 4:16-17***

***16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:***

***17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.***

***I Corinthians 14:9 "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."***

To speak in tongues and no one interpret would be of no use to the winning of souls at all. I, also, believe music played in the church so loudly that you cannot understand the words is of no advantage, as well. The message in the song is what softens up hearts to receive the Lord. Speaking in tongues in public should not be done without an interpreter.

***I Corinthians 14:10 "There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them [is] without signification."***

The only thing that seems explainable here, is the fact that there are many different languages in the world. "Signification", in this instance, means voiceless. This just means that the hundreds of languages in the world are all spoken languages. In World War 2, the Navaho language was used for sending messages by runners, because it had never been written down. It would have been very difficult to intercept the message, because of this.

***I Corinthians 14:11 "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."***

This is just saying that there can be no understanding between two people who speak different languages, unless there be an interpreter. They are barbarian to each other, because they cannot communicate their thoughts to each other. That is what language is, a way to communicate thoughts with words.

***I Corinthians 14:12 "Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual [gifts], seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church."***

We all want to be able to minister more effectively in the church. The various gifts of the Spirit are for that very purpose. Paul is saying here, seek the gifts that will do the most good to build the church up. If you must be zealous about spiritual gifts, seek one that will benefit the entire church. The context of the chapter emphasizes that the most beneficial gifts are those communicated in a known language.

***I Corinthians 14:13 "Wherefore let him that speaketh in an [unknown] tongue pray that he may interpret."***

In light of Paul’s concerns, he urges those who do have the gift of another tongue to pray for the gift to interpret. Many who speak in tongues, also have the gift of interpretation. That is one way that you would know for sure that the message in tongues would be understood by all in the church. Paul is saying pray for the gift of interpretation to go with your gift of tongues.

***I Corinthians 14:14 "For if I pray in an [unknown] tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful."***

This is very true. The Holy Spirit prays through you when you pray in tongues. Perhaps, it is not important to know what you are praying for. In the verse above, Paul had said to pray for the gift of interpretation, so that you will know what the prayer in tongues is saying.

***I Corinthians 14:15 "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."***

Paul has both gifts. He prays as the Spirit gives him utterance, and then he speaks in his native language to God, as well. This would be worshipping in the Spirit in both instances. This would not matter whether it was just for God's ears, or for the congregation, because he would interpret his own tongues.

***I Corinthians 14:16-17***

***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?"***

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

The interpretation would be so that the people around you would be able to praise God with you. Amen means so be it. How in the world could they agree, if they did not know what you were saying? We know the importance of agreeing in prayer, and this is saying that it is also proper to agree in praise. With your own private worship, it would not be so important to know the exact meaning of the tongues in praise or prayer, as it would be in public. The public would not be built up by praise they did not understand the meaning of.

***I Corinthians 14:18-19***

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

***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, in all of this, is not speaking against tongues. He is just explaining the proper use of tongues. Paul is not ashamed that he has the evidence of speaking in tongues and that he is filled with the Holy Spirit. He just wants to explain not to run people who do not understand off from the church. Paul is just explaining the importance of the church being built up by the things that are said. Understand that Paul is saying, think of other's understanding whenever you minister. Though Paul himself spoke in other tongues more than all the Corinthians, he didn’t consider it a badge of honor to be flaunted. He preferred to utter five comprehensible words that edified others, than ten thousand incoherent words that benefited no one. May God grant that our convictions be the same as Paul’s.

**QUESTIONS**

1. Follow after charity, and desire \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ gifts.
2. What does "prophesy" mean in verse 1?
3. What is the most important gift?
4. He that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaks to whom?
5. What is "prophesieth" in verse, 3 meaning?
6. The gospel message is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_.
7. He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
8. Why is it using the word unknown?
9. What is speaking in tongues evidence of?
10. Did Paul speak in tongues?
11. Why did Paul speak on doctrine?
12. What instrument was used to call them to battle?
13. What would be wrong in speaking in tongues with no interpreter?
14. People who can not speak the same language think of each other as a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
15. What spiritual gift should those seek who are zealous to receive spiritual gifts?
16. Paul said he would rather speak 5 words with his understanding than what?