

“...all things...unto edifying”

In this chapter Paul is warning about ‘tongues’, yet, incredibly, charismatics use this very text to support wrong use, quoting it extensively! This is an example of the spiritual blindness of people, when they cannot discern what a text is really saying. This must bring their salvation into question, for discernment is something every believer must have to ‘test the spirits’.

We cannot tell from this text if Paul is addressing a specific problem concerning tongues, or if he is giving general teaching on the subject, though the structure suggests the latter. Without doubt Paul is calling for *foreign languages* (‘tongues’) to be interpreted and for men to use their own language whenever possible... or the unsaved (and saved, too) will say we are mad. Obviously, if an Englishman speaks in Tibetan to another Englishman who cannot understand it, it would be rather ridiculous!

The emphasis throughout this chapter is on edifying the whole church, not on private meanings and private benefits. Also, other Christians must judge (assess) those who use tongues, and those who prophesy. This chapter also contains a command that women should remain silent in the churches when it comes to teaching, etc. Not a popular instruction today! Those who do not accept the teachings in this chapter are called ‘ignorant’. Let there be, then, no hesitation in calling charismatics ‘ignorant’ (or ‘wrong’ as the word, *agnoeo* tells us)!

When teaching others we must never stray beyond what God says in his word. The first step is to relate the exact words of scripture and the exact interpretations for those words, as defined by their context. The next step is to give proper theological meanings that are solely founded on those exact words and interpretations. Any theology that bases its meanings and ideas on anything else is false, and is not Biblical or Christian. Charismatic theology is of this type, so it follows that charismaticism is not Christian and its teachings are unworthy.

Certain concepts in scripture are uncertain. In these cases we do not have the freedom to claim independent knowledge or interpretation, if such are not founded on scripture. The best we can offer is an opinion, which must be identified as opinion and not as strict biblical interpretation. Unfortunately, charismatics claim to have some kind of divine interpretation of hitherto hidden mysteries, even though their interpretations fly in the face of theological and biblical study, and are not based on scripture. If they claimed only to hold an opinion, this might be acceptable though challenged. But, to claim perfect knowledge based on opinion is not acceptable, and can be legitimately rejected immediately as so much evil rubbish.

1 Corinthians 14

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Readers are reminded that where one or two texts have an indefinite interpretation (a rare occurrence), this does not give charismatics the right to claim definite interpretations, just to 'fill the gap'. If there is more than one possible interpretation, *no* man can claim to know the final answer. However, we can discount charismatic arguments on the grounds that charismaticism itself is a cult, and so its whole perspective on scripture is bound to be worthless. Charismatics call this arrogant and harsh – I call it being true to God's word.

Verses 1-5

1.

"Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.

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.

3.

But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and comfort.

4.

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

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."

There is no proof that Paul is speaking about an actual case of wrong use of tongues here. As in the previous chapter, Paul is using rhetoric. Even so, whether he is using rhetoric or he is referring to an actual situation, this is irrelevant to the interpretation.

1 Corinthians 14

Written by K B Napier
Monday, 17 October 2016 08:47

Paul calls us to run fast to catch up with basic human respect, love (*agape* – charity). We are to run with eagerness,

dioko

, until we reach and embrace it. Then, again using a term of passion, he says we must ‘desire spiritual gifts’. Or, to structure this in the original Greek: “desire eagerly the spiritual”. This is a far better translation because it does not use the word ‘gifts’, which, today, help to cloud the issue (only because charismatics torture scripture until it gives them their false interpretations!). What is ‘spiritual’ is also a ‘gift’ so the 1611 AV use of the word is quite accurate, even if it has been inserted to aid reading.

We are to ‘desire’, ***zeloo***, what is spiritual – zealously covet what comes from God. Above all, we should earnestly desire prophecy. Though prophecy can be of two kinds, the most common kind is preaching from God; the ordinary (but divine) teaching of men called by God to teach fellow believers.

This turns upside down the claims of charismatics who, without any scriptural warrant, say that tongues are proof of salvation and are the primary gifts to desire (see separate article on ‘Tongues’)! Paul now tells us why we should place tongues low on the list of desirable gifts... if a man speaks in a foreign language (‘unknown tongue’) to people who do not speak it, then only God can understand him (because God made all languages) - unless he is in the country where the language is spoken, nobody can understand a word he says! Simple logic really!

In his ***pneuma*** (spirit, here taken to mean thinking processes, soul), then, he is speaking secretly, ***musterion***; what he is saying is not obvious to the understanding and therefore of no use to anyone. Such an utterance avoids the first rule of a gift – that it must edify the whole church; no gift is given for private use, as so many charismatics claim for ‘tongues’ (especially in private prayer!).

So, a man who speaks a foreign language (not some kind of ‘heavenly language’ – a concept not found in scripture) in the midst of people who do not speak it, may as well talk into the fresh air, because it is of no use or consequence to anyone. Indeed, I doubt that what he is saying is a foreign language at all, because it has no immediate application. The gift of tongues is only given for a specific reason, not for indiscriminate use to speak with people God does not instruct us to speak to.

1 Corinthians 14

Written by K B Napier

Monday, 17 October 2016 08:47

Note that charismatics cannot conclude from this that we may use a foreign (or 'heavenly') language at any time, even if wrongly. They say that we can summon such a language at any time. This is false logic deduced from a general statement by Paul. He is merely saying that a foreign language is not understood in another country, so it is used only when it is needed – when someone who speaks that language is there to hear it.

On the other hand, the man who prophesies, whether in the usual sense of a preacher or teacher, or in the less usual sense of one who foretells future events concerning the kingdom or salvation, reaches the audience and ears it is intended for. It is to their edification, ***oikodome***, building them up in holiness, wisdom, and other Christian virtues. The hearers are also built up with exhortation,

paraklesis:

admonition, encouragement and comfort,

paramuthia:

to calm or to stimulate to action.

Charismatics take verse four as proof that they can use an 'unknown' tongue to 'edify' *themselves*. But, this is not what the verse is saying, especially when read in its context. Why should Paul tell us that we must only speak in a foreign language when there is someone there who can understand it, and then reverse and deny what he said?

No, he is giving a comparison: the man who speaks a foreign language to those who cannot understand it, does not cause others to grow, but, the man who teaches God's word faithfully, *does* cause others to grow. We may also add the lesser-known meaning of 'edifieth' – to embolden. Charismatics are certainly emboldened when they claim to use a 'heavenly language'; they are emboldened to continue in their falsity and to press others to join them. The true preacher, however, helps to build-up the church of God by genuine teaching from God and His word.

As an ex-Pentecostal pastor said to me: "I spoke in tongues for over thirty years. Then, I learned the truth and stopped, because I realized it was gobbledygook!"

To put it another way, Paul is saying that the true preacher talks to, and strengthens, the Church, whilst the man who talks in a foreign language to people who do not speak that language, talks only to himself! Again, there is no natural logical progression shown in this text –

1 Corinthians 14

Written by K B Napier

Monday, 17 October 2016 08:47

it only says that a foreign language is useless if there is no-one to understand it. It does *not* say that a man can use the gift of a foreign language when there is no reason to use it. This gift is only given for impromptu meetings with someone who needs to hear the Gospel – and cannot be used like a normally-acquired language.

Is it possible to have a gift of a foreign language when there is no-one to hear it? No, because it runs contrary to God's will and purposes. He never does anything that is useless or without reason, so why should He give the gift of a foreign language to a man when there is no real purpose and no man to hear it? Why give such a gift to a man to use personally for his own 'edification', when that man already has the language he normally uses? Why should God give the man what is a complication, when he already uses his own language? It does not make sense and bears no logic, not even of an holy kind! The charismatic claim, then, is nonsense, and far from saying that his 'tongue' is to his edification, Paul actually says the *exact opposite*, because he is using rhetoric!

Yes (verse 5), says Paul, he wished that *everyone* could speak in a foreign language (with the implied proviso that they all had hearers who understood the languages, and so would hear the Gospel and be saved, as in Acts chapter 2). But, if he had his own choice, he would prefer them to have instead the gift of prophecy. This is very clearly rhetorical, for Paul cannot 'prefer' that God should give His gifts to men as *he*, Paul, wishes! Rather, Paul is making a point, that some were vaunting the use of foreign languages to a position or status that the gift did not have. It is also possible that some thought such a gift was for their own use. Paul was disabusing them of the notion by giving them a rhetorical situation as an example.

The one who preaches or teaches is far 'greater', *meizon*, than those who use tongues *if* the tongues are not interpreted. As no Christian is better than another, this can only mean that the preacher's and teacher's task is more important to salvation and growth than that of a man who speaks a foreign language to himself... if such a thing were possible (which it is not). This is rather obvious.

Paul gives only one situation in which a man given the gift of a foreign language may use it – when he can also *interpret* that language (or, in another text, it seems that there may also be a separate interpreter). I see this in the following way: A gift is over and above our natural talents. The gift of a foreign language means that a man was unable to speak it previously. Therefore, if he spoke, say, French to a Frenchman, the Frenchman would understand it. But, the speaker could not. So, he should not speak that language unless God allows him to also interpret what he has said (which would be done if the gift is genuinely from God). This is essential, for

1 Corinthians 14

Written by K B Napier
Monday, 17 October 2016 08:47

otherwise the language could easily come from Satan, using words that defame or curse God, as has happened in charismatic meetings.

Thus, the interpreter is *not* there to pass on the message to those who do *not* understand the language, but to ensure that the language is genuine when spoken to someone who *does* understand it. This makes eminent sense and fits the general discourse given by Paul. I would ask – why should God make a man speak in a foreign language, then get him or another man to translate it, to others who do not speak that language? It simply makes no sense at all!

It is like children pretending to be something they are not. Why speak French to a group of English men, only to *then* translate it back to English? It is a pointless exercise and makes God out to be a mere magician, or One Who is wasting time on party-tricks!! What would you say if your children went to an English school with English-speaking teachers, who deliberately gave all their lessons in Chinese, then got a Chinese man to translate it back into English (no doubt losing something in the translation)?

Then, if there were questions from your child, the Chinese interpreter translated the question into Chinese and gave the teacher the question in Chinese? The teacher then replied in Chinese, which was then translated back into English, and so on, even though his first language was English. Would you not say this was stupid and detrimental rather than instructive? Why not just speak in English and be direct and less wasteful of time and resources, with everyone understanding what was going on? This illustration aptly proves my point and the point made by Paul in verse 9!

Verses 6-12

1.

“Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except that I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?”

2.

And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped?

3.

1 Corinthians 14

Written by K B Napier
Monday, 17 October 2016 08:47

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

4.

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.

5.

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

6.

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.

7.

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

Paul continues in his rhetorical approach to the question of foreign languages, for he begins with “*if I come unto you...*”. He says ‘Look, if I come to you speaking a foreign language, what use will it be to you, unless what I say is given new from God, or from an intense and true understanding of His word?’

The gifts he talks about are from God, and have a direct purpose – to build up the Church of God, Christ’s Body. Note that ‘doctrine’ is added to this list. Doctrine, ***didache***, is teaching, God’s instruction found in His word. It is teaching from, and about, God and His word. Therefore, it, too, has a definite purpose.

Doctrine is vital and is every word in scripture (see Article A-001), for no word of scripture can possibly be redundant or useless... even the ‘dry bits’ everyone tends to avoid! A man who

1 Corinthians 14

Written by K B Napier
Monday, 17 October 2016 08:47

brings doctrine to congregations is a teacher, given the gift of teaching by God. He must be listened to for this reason, but with discernment, for a man called by God can sometimes fail by applying his own reasoning.

The teacher from God must speak clearly and without ambiguity. His teaching must come direct from scripture. Otherwise his words are without meaning. Thus, Paul says that even inanimate objects used to make music must give a clear sound, or they will not be regarded as useful or melodic. It does not matter if the object is a wind-instrument (pipe: **aulos**) or string (harp in this case: **kithara**), the object must have a clear sound to be heard joyfully. An out-of-tune piano is hardly lovely to listen to!

Note that Paul is referring to instruments used to accompany praises to God in Heaven. Whenever a man gifted to speak and teach opens his mouth, his words must be to God's praise or they are useless and without significance. How many charismatic so-called 'prophecies' are meaningless because they are of no importance or without any real purpose? I would say all of them. And what of their music, which is brash or loud or just humanistic listening fodder?

Christian teaching and preaching must "give a distinction in the sounds"... there must be a distinction, **diastole**, a different sound, **phthoggos**, that sets it apart from other instruments. From this word comes a word that describes a sound we listen to when taking blood pressure readings, the 'diastolic'. Without hearing that sound, we cannot distinguish what the blood pressure is, possibly with disastrous results.

From **diastellomai**, it includes the idea of admonition or to give a commandment. In other words, it has a definite purpose. This is based on two root words, one of which refers to being fitted for a particular godly use (**stello**). Thus, a preacher of God must speak *from* God to be of use. Only God can give such clarity, a clarity that proves a message is from God.

Imagine, suggests Paul, you are on a battlefield ready for war, but the trumpeter does not give a recognized set of notes? What if the trumpet, **salpigx** (sound of quavering or reverberation) gives 'an uncertain sound', **adelos...**
phone – an 'ignorant' or unknown message or sound. It would send the troops into disarray. Instead of being ready,

1 Corinthians 14

Written by K B Napier
Monday, 17 October 2016 08:47

paraskeuazo

, to fight they will do nothing.

In the same way, says Paul, if we speak things no-one can understand, our words will be meaningless and will do nothing. We may as well speak into the air, wasting our words because no-one is listening. Rather, he says, we must speak words “easy to be understood”. Can this instruction be any clearer? Paul is telling us that a foreign language spoken out of context and without a clear purpose, is fruitless and without a godly use. Again, I must add that this text does not thereby prove the existence of an ‘heavenly’ language for our use on earth, or that a man may use a gift of a foreign language without it being spoken to a man who *understands* that language and given for a specific teaching purpose – usually his salvation (as in Acts 2).

There are many different languages in the world, says Paul, and each has its own sound; each one has its own ‘voice’ or meaning. So, if I went along to a foreign country and spoke a language the people did not understand, the foreigners I speak to will think I am a barbarian – ***barbaros***

, the speaker of a strange language, one who is ignorant of their language, whose presence is useless and whose words are meaningless. Likewise, when the foreigner speaks to me, I will be unable to understand him, either. I may as well not speak at all! Biblically, then, charismatics are barbarians – ignorant of what a true Biblical ‘tongue’ is, and what it is for.

So, says Paul, seek vigorously to help the Church to grow spiritually. Do not covet gifts for their own sake, or want what appear to be the spectacular gifts. Look instead for things that will help everyone, and excel, ***perisseuo***, at it – make your desire ‘great’, abundant, and ever-increasing. This is in direct contrast to the desire of charismatics who, like Simon the magician, wanted the gifts for his own sake and power. Once more, this is all rhetorical, for no man can demand a gift God has not already planned to give.

Verses 13&14

1.

“Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret.

2.

For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.

1 Corinthians 14

Written by K B Napier
Monday, 17 October 2016 08:47

So, says Paul, if you utter a foreign language, pray, *proseuchomai*, that you can also interpret. This makes it seem that a man can ask for a gift that may not, after all, have been allocated to him. But, we know that it cannot mean that. So, what does this mean?

We already know from studies in predestination and election that a prayer is useless if it is not firstly prompted by God. Then, when we pray, we show our obedience by praying and God gives us what we ask for, because it is His will that we have it in the first place. The prayer is merely His way of giving it to us. If we are told to pray for the gift of interpretation, it can only mean that the gift is ours, but we firstly have to ask for it, as an act of obedience. Therefore, though told to pray for the gift of interpretation, it does not mean we may ask for something we would not otherwise have had, whether or not we are 'sincere'.

Again, charismatics believe they can demand anything they wish, through prayer. That is, they think prayer itself is its own power, a power that God must obey. But, prayer is a tool used by God for His own purposes. It is not powerful in itself. Once we think we can 'order' something from God simply because of our self-generated prayer, we no longer believe in His supremacy.

Verse 14 is yet another grossly-misunderstood text. Charismatics take this text to support their claim that they can use a mysterious 'heavenly' language that is only known to their spirits. But, the verse is not saying this. The first thing to note is that it is (again) a *rhetorical* argument: "IF I do this...".

Secondly, IF Paul prayed in a foreign language, he is only speaking with his mind, but he cannot gain any benefit from it. As we have already shown, God will not give the gift of a foreign language unless the one it is intended for is right in front of us, ready to receive the message. (Or, in today's communications scene, by letter, fax, email or telephone). That is why Paul's argument here is rhetorical, not actual.

However, says Paul, IF I were to pray in a foreign language, without the gift of interpretation, my words would come from and through my spirit (and soul, because the ability to speak is one of the soul's functions), but I would not understand it. It would hold no treasure or use for me. Again, there is no logical argument to suggest that a man can have an heavenly language for his own use, or for *any* use, particularly to the spirit.

1 Corinthians 14

Written by K B Napier
Monday, 17 October 2016 08:47

Verses 15-19

1.

“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.

2.

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?

3.

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

4.

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

5.

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.”

What should happen then? Paul now specifies the right conditions: he (and we) must pray with the spirit, from God, but in a way that he can understand it in his own language. The same goes for singing. When giving any spiritual benefits or blessings from God to those in the local church, there will *be* no blessing if our hearers do not understand what we are saying!

Those who “occupieth the room of the unlearned” will not know what we are saying – they are ‘unlearned’ or idiots. The term is not derogatory in this text. It is the Greek ***idiotes***, meaning to be ignorant, illiterate and not skilled in the ways of those supposedly gifted. How can they utter ‘Amen’, so be it, if they have no idea what has been said? Indeed, it would be foolish to do so.

1 Corinthians 14

Written by K B Napier
Monday, 17 October 2016 08:47

No doubt, says Paul, you have praised God well, but no-one is edified or caused to grow spiritually. That is why Paul thanks God that he speaks many languages, but, in the churches, he would rather speak a few words in a language everyone can understand, than 10,000 words in a foreign language, if it means everyone will understand the message.

So, we can see that this text does NOT say that an heavenly language exists, or that if it did exist, we may use it for our own spiritual growth. As we have shown before, the verses say the exact opposite. The whole tenor of Paul's words argue against such an idea, so the charismatic case is null and void, displaying a barbarian-view of scripture.

Verses 20-25

1.

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

2.

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.

3.

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.

4.

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?

5.

But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all:

6.

1 Corinthians 14

Written by K B Napier
Monday, 17 October 2016 08:47

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.”

We must not be like children in spiritual understanding, but mature. Yet, we must be as simple as children when it comes to malice, **kakia**: evil or ill-will, breaking God’s laws and rejecting His word and will. That is, we must be innocent.

In the Old Testament (verse 21: ‘the law’) it is written that God would speak to men everywhere, using many languages (‘other tongues’) and people of other races. Even though God does this, He says that men will not listen to what He has to say.

For this reason, says God (verse 22), foreign languages are used in the churches NOT to edify the saved, but to convince the unsaved and those who know nothing of Christ. This is yet another teaching that flies against the teachings of charismatics. Tongues are a ‘sign’ or tool, used to reach the unsaved. But, prophesying is for Believers.

So, says Paul, if the local church met and everyone spoke in a foreign language, any unsaved person who entered would think they were mad (**mainomai** – raving, beside one’s self, not in his right mind)! This is indeed what they think, and it is what I think whenever I hear such vain utterances that have no basis in proper language, or genuine syntax, but are invented gibberish, pretending to be from Heaven! Again, Paul is not saying that it is possible, but only what would happen IF such an event took place. In this way he is making his point very clear as to the nature and use of foreign languages in the churches.

However, if an unbeliever enters a church and hears normal preaching or teaching in the ordinary language of the people present (and of himself) then he will understand what is said. He will be convicted, **elegcho**, by the words and have his sin brought to light, **anakrino**, leading to salvation, because his inner being will be made plain to him by the preaching (verse 25). When this happens he will fall down on his face (note – he will

not

fall

backwards

, as in charismatic meetings!) and praise God for His deliverance from sin. He will then tell others that God’s truth is in the preacher and that church.

1 Corinthians 14

Written by K B Napier
Monday, 17 October 2016 08:47

If ever you hear charismatic meetings, or other meetings that teach the Alpha course, listen carefully and you will come across a part toward the end that 'teaches' others how to 'speak in tongues'. By this is meant an unknown, silly, 'heavenly language'. You will hear everyone saying all kinds of things in orchestrated gobbledygook, copying what everyone else says, each one sounding like an automaton, uttering repetitive garbage. All at the same time, in one general hubbub, so *inviting* us to call them 'mad'!

Verses 26-28

1.

"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.

2.

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.

3.

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

So, what can we say, then, says Paul? He says that when we meet together each one will come with something different - a psalm, a doctrinal note, a tongue, a revelation, an interpretation. Each of these must have a purpose and must edify. Of course, if God gives these gifts and prompts us to use them at any particular time, it must mean that whatever is done is to His glory and for the building-up of those present. Paul is simply reminding the Corinthians (and us) of this fact.

A 'psalm', *psalmos*, is the repeating of the Psalms accompanied by music, something for some Christians today to note, when they insist on singing Psalms without musical accompaniment as a 'pure' form of worship! A 'doctrine' is a teaching. The tongue is a foreign language, used to speak directly to a foreigner in our midst (regarded as a 'lower' gift, not the prime gift).

1 Corinthians 14

Written by K B Napier
Monday, 17 October 2016 08:47

A 'revelation', **apokalupsis**, is the making plain of a truth hitherto not made known. This will be within scripture or supported by it, not external to it, as today's charismatics claim - many claiming we are now in an 'extra-biblical' era. Those who provide an 'interpretation', **hermeneia**, have a very similar function, in that they make plain what others may have said in a less straightforward way. Joseph did this with the dreams of others. However, in this text it probably refers to one who interprets a foreign language spoken by another person, as the root **hermeneuo** explains. Whatever is done in the churches, it must help to build-up the people spiritually.

Only two, three at the most, should speak in foreign languages at a time, so as not to take over the meeting or confuse people. Each of these must speak one at a time, **meros**, to maintain order and to make sense. But, if no-one can interpret the man must keep quiet. This is yet another form of obedience – having something given by God but then keeping silent. This is obedience, just as Abraham was told to sacrifice his son, yet, at the time, told not to do it.

We cannot assume from this verse that a Christian can have a gift of foreign languages and can use it to his own advantage or for his own benefit: verse 28 "let him speak to himself, and to God." This does not tell us that the man may speak to himself and to God in a foreign language; only that the man must not use a foreign language if no-one can interpret.

Let it be put another way... when he speaks to himself and to God, there is no point in using a foreign language, if he does not understand what he is saying. Indeed, we are told *not* to use it if there is no interpreter! Otherwise, not even the user will understand what he is saying. It is worth repeating that some people who utter 'tongues' believing them to be 'heavenly', have come to learn that they have been cursing Christ in an obscure African or other language, thus proving Satan can give 'gifts' that are evil. Hence the need for an interpreter (genuine – some pretend, to gain status).

Therefore, the man is *not* being told to use his new foreign language in private prayer – he is being told to pray normally *in his own language*. This is not my own theory, but is theological reasoning based on what scripture itself says.

Verses 29-33

1.

1 Corinthians 14

Written by K B Napier
Monday, 17 October 2016 08:47

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

2.

If anything be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace.

3.

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

4.

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

5.

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

Those who preach or teach, obviously here in short utterances, should also do so two or three at the most. Possibly, this is to give others the opportunity to speak. When they speak, others must listen and test what is said by scripture, to see if it is true. If someone is given something to say by God, then the person next to him should then stop speaking; obviously, God wishes the second message to come through in preference. The objective appears to be orderly meetings that are not taken-over by those with silver-tongues or with a high opinion of themselves.

The aim is for everyone to use their gifts as God permits and commands, and for everyone to learn, be admonished or comforted, as the need arises. Those who are gifted to preach or to teach must test others who claim the same gifts. This must be the case to maintain order, for God is not the ‘author of confusion’. As many charismatic meetings are chaotic, we may assume they are not of God, as this text testifies.

Verses 34&35

1.

1 Corinthians 14

Written by K B Napier
Monday, 17 October 2016 08:47

“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.

2.

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.”

Though appearing to be separate, this issue is linked because Paul is talking about order in the churches – God’s order. Here he addresses creational order, male first and then female. Because of the order of creation, women cannot speak in the churches but must remain silent. This means what it says. They must take no active part in teaching men, as other texts show us. They are ‘under obedience’ to men, so they must retain the order given by God.

If women wish to learn anything spiritual they must ask their husbands at home, so that they are not ‘shamed’ by speaking in church. Does this mean they should not join in discussions, etc. I do not think so – it appears to refer to in-depth questions. I have received a number of queries from women on this very subject, because, they say, their husbands know nothing and so cannot teach them. My answer is not that their husbands cannot teach, but that they are not treating their wives properly or obeying God wholly. As husbands, men *must* learn what God says and study His word sufficiently to answer their wives’ questions. Women can join with discussions, then, but husbands should provide in-depth answers. This text also shows us that women cannot be preachers, or teachers of adult males in the churches.

Verses 36-40

1.

“What? Came the word of God out from you? Or came it unto you only?

2.

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.

3.

1 Corinthians 14

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But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant.

4.

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

5.

Let all things be done decently and in order.”

Paul then asks the Corinthians if they thought they were unique. Obviously, some in Corinth thought they had a special relationship with God that transcended scripture! So, Paul is saying “Who do you think you are?”

He tells these arrogant men that if they were truly spiritual, and true preachers of God’s word, they would recognize what he said as being from God, and therefore for them. What Paul is saying is by way of commandment, not personal opinion to be ignored. However, if anyone prefers not to listen, then let him remain ignorant: mistaken, wrong.

The Corinthians thought tongues were the most important gifts. Paul went into detail to show that this was a fallacy. They must seek prophecy, yes, but they must not thereby prevent tongues (foreign languages) being used. And when they met together, let them hold their meetings in order and decency, and not degenerate into chaos and mayhem, as were the meetings of heathen (who often used invented tongues; many still do).

As far as we are able we must gently help those who inadvertently find themselves in the charismatic fold. Many are unsaved, but some are saved and have never known any other experience. These must be shown the truth, even though it will be hard for them to bear. It is essential, for otherwise they will spend their time on earth blaspheming the Lord by their heresies and wrong perceptions. In so doing, they will find only misery.

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1 Corinthians 14

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