

# Tongues and Prophecy

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[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning. For those of you who are visiting, my name is Sean.

I'm one of the pastors of Trinity Cambridge Church, and I have the privilege of preaching God's word on most weeks, and we want to welcome you here. The passage, of course, today is from 1 Corinthians 14.

We didn't choose this separately for this Sunday. We've been going through this whole book as a series, so this is really just the next passage in line, and so we're speaking from 1 Corinthians 14 today.

Many churches and denominations throughout the world actually are experiencing what they call charismatic renewal, with more manifestations of the Holy Spirit becoming apparent in their midst.

And the manifestations of the Holy Spirit always seems to divide people into two camps, to two sides, so to speak. On the one hand, some people deny that the spiritual gifts are real manifestations of the Holy Spirit.

[ 1 : 08 ] They point to the excesses that they see, manipulative tactics, and disorderly practices, and they accuse the charismatics of zeal without knowledge. On the other hand, people who accept the spiritual gifts point to the rigid formality and the lifelessness of their spirituality, of the people who deny the spiritual gifts, and then they accuse them of quenching the spirit, of despising prophecies.

And within this debate, the gift of tongues is usually the litmus test, the test by which they determine which camp you belong to. People who reject the gift of tongues see those who use it as raving charismatics, and people who accept the gift of tongues see those who reject it as unspiritual legalists.

In order to understand how rightly to use the spiritual gifts and to understand them, including the gift of tongues specifically, it's imperative that we turn to Scripture, the Word of God itself, to govern our understanding, so that we can have a faithful, balanced approach.

And in this passage, Paul gives us that. He teaches us that we should use the spiritual gifts of utterance in understandable ways for the upbuilding of the church.

That's the main point of this sermon, that we should use the spiritual gifts of utterance in understandable ways for the upbuilding of the church. The first point will be that it should be, spiritual gifts of utterance should be upbuilding, from verses 1 to 5.

[ 2 : 34 ] And the second point will be that they should be understandable, from verses 6 to 25. And so first, Paul teaches us that gifts of utterance should be upbuilding for the church. So he begins with his thesis statement, really for the last three chapters, chapters 12, 13, and 14, in verse 1.

He says, Pursue love and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy. Just so you know, we don't put our main passages up on the screen because we want you to follow in your books, in your Bibles, because that helps you practice using Scripture.

But also it shows you that we're not making stuff up, putting whatever we want up there. You're actually seeing it from God's Word, and you see the full context of what's there. So please use your Bibles to follow along. So that verse 1 in chapter 13 is really the thesis statement for chapters 12, 13, and 14.

When he says, Pursue love, he's referencing chapter 13, where he taught us that all the spiritual gifts are supposed to function in the context of love for one another. And when he says, Earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, he's referring back to chapter 12, where he gave us a list of spiritual gifts that functions, a representative list.

And then when he says, especially that you may prophesy, that he's talking about the higher gifts that he mentioned at the end of chapter 12.

[ 3 : 54 ] The higher gifts are the gifts that have the greatest potential for building up the body of Christ. So really this verse is a good summary of those three chapters. So as believers, we are to pursue love above all things.

That's the first thing. It's a good recap of last week's sermon. Having all the spiritual gifts in their fullest measures would amount to nothing without love. And that should be an encouragement to all of us, and especially those of you who might feel like you don't have very many spiritual gifts to bring to the table.

Because the gifts are temporary, but love is eternal. Even if you don't possess many gifts of the Spirit, every Christian possesses the fruit of the Spirit.

And the chief and sum of that fruit of the Spirit is love. And so you might be unable to prophesy. You might not be able to teach, but you can love. So don't be downcast.

Pursue love above all things. Yet it would be a big mistake for us if we conclude from this that since love is supreme, the gifts are unnecessary. Which some people do.

[ 4 : 56 ] After his soaring teaching on love in chapter 13, we might expect Apostle Paul to begin chapter 14 this way, saying, Pursue love and don't worry so much about the spiritual gifts. We might expect them to begin that way, but that's not what he says.

Look at what he says. Verse 1, chapter 14. Pursue love and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy. Theological error always seems to swing like a pendulum throughout history.

Going from one side of the extreme to the other. But we need to avoid that. Avoid overreacting, overcompensating, and be faithful. And yes, don't be overzealous and misuse the gifts, but use the gifts in appropriate ways.

And Paul's not telling us here to pursue love instead of the spiritual gifts. He's telling us that we should use the spiritual gifts in the context of love. He's not saying that the gifts are unimportant, but that they are not as important as love.

And spiritual gifts, that means, are not some extraneous things, extra things that you could take or leave. They are needful for the church.

[ 6 : 03 ] And scripture commands us not only to desire it, but to earnestly desire it. So are you obeying this commandment? If you think that we can be a fine church without the spiritual gifts, then I'd like to know why you think that we can be just as healthy, disobeying God's commandment, as obeying God's commandment.

God tells us, earnestly desire the spiritual gifts. Yes, pursue love above all things, but don't neglect the gifts. Pray for the gifts. Earnestly desire the gifts.

Learn about the gifts. Ask our generous Heavenly Father for the gifts. And among all the spiritual gifts, Paul adds that we should desire especially that we may prophesy.

And why this preference for prophecy among the other gifts? Paul explains it in verses 2 to 3. He says, For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men, but to God.

For no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the spirit. On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.

[ 7 : 09 ] The Corinthian believers were especially enamored with the gift of tongues. And they boasted that they spoke in the tongues of angels. And they were using the gift in a disruptive and disorderly way in the context of their corporate worship.

So Paul singles out the gift of tongues and kind of demotes it and elevates prophecy as a gift, as a higher gift that they should pursue. And in order to understand his preference for prophecy over tongues, we need to define tongues and prophecy.

So let's do that first. Gift of tongues. Paul tells us three things about gift of tongues in verse 2. First, a tongue is addressed to God and not to men. Sometimes in charismatic circles, people say things like, Hey, I received a message from God for you in tongues.

And then they'll say something in tongues, right? But that cannot be true because biblically speaking, tongues is addressed to God and not to men. So in that case, they probably have received prophecy.

And then now they're misusing that and thinking that and speaking in tongues, that really has nothing to do with the word that they received for that person. Paul in verse 14 says, Tongues is like praying with his spirit and singing with his spirit, right?

[ 8 : 20 ] When we speak in tongues, we are uttering prayers on the one hand or praises directed to God. Unlike prophecy, which is directed to other people, tongues is addressed to God.

And this is a fundamental difference between those two gifts. So that's the first thing it tells us about the gift of tongues. Second, a tongue is not an intelligible language. He calls it the utterance of mysteries, right?

What Paul means by mysteries is explained by the context. He says, For no one understands him, right? Not even the speaker himself, right? There's a lot of confusion about the gift of tongues.

And main reason for that is because in the Greek, the word tongue and the word language are identical. So sometimes people think maybe it just means another language, another human language, right? And people get confused about that.

And usually the verse that comes up in talking about this is Acts 2-4. I'll read the 4-8.

[ 9 : 17 ] It says, And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. This is at Pentecost when this happened. Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven.

And they were amazed and astonished, saying, Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear each of us in his own native language?

So in Acts 2-4, I think this is most likely a reference to actual human languages, other human languages. And the reason why I think that is because it says other tongues or other languages, meaning it's a language that's other than the ones that they already spoke, which is they spoke a human language.

This is another human language. And then it says that they were able to understand. So these Jews from all over the world who had gathered for Pentecost were able to understand what they were saying without interpretation, right?

Which gift of tongues requires. So they were able to understand without interpretation. And they understood it in their own native language. So I think they're speaking various foreign tongues in this context.

[ 10 : 25 ] And what's happening at Pentecost is this. This is a once, kind of a once in, really history, kind of a phenomenon, where it's a reversal of what happened at Genesis 11 at Babel.

You guys remember that story? In Genesis, we went over that series. So in Genesis 11, God, people are in their hubris constructing a tower to reach the heavens, saying that they don't need God.

And God comes down and confuses their languages and scatters them so that they're unable to rebel against God, right? So that's what God does in Babel. What happens in Acts 2 is the exact reversal of that.

Now that Christ has died and he's risen, and the salvation is not for all people, not just the Jews. So instead of people being scattered, they are gathered again to one place, and they are able to understand each other in their foreign tongues.

So it's a reversal of Babel. So it's what God's showing us is that now salvation, which had come to the Jews, and now that salvation has come to all the Gentiles, and that's what's happening in Acts 2. So that's why it's other human languages.

[ 11 : 29 ] But that's different. That's not what's going on here in 1 Corinthians 14. That's a once in history kind of phenomenon that's actually shown. It's a sign of that reversal of Babel. What's going on in 1 Corinthians 14 is a gift that is given for the ongoing edification of the church.

And that's why I think here, if you look at what the Corinthians refer to it in 1 Corinthians 13 as tongue of angels, and if the tongue is addressed to God primarily, it's not addressed to other people, it would make sense for it to be not in an earthly language or a human language, and they call it the tongue of angels.

And that's why also when in verse 10 Paul uses the analogy of human language to prove the importance of intelligibility when you speak in tongues in the context of corporate worship, he intentionally used a different word for language.

He doesn't use the same word as tongues. And I think he's trying to distinguish the fact that it's not the same thing as another human language. So first, to summarize up to this point, a tongue is addressed to God, and it is an unintelligible non-human language.

Okay, so that's, again, if it were just another human language, they'll tell us to go get a translator, right? It doesn't do that. It tells you to pray so that you can interpret, because the gift of spiritual interpretation itself is a spiritual gift, the gift of interpreting tongues.

[ 12 : 53 ] So first, it's addressed to God. Second, it's an intangible non-human language. Third, it's uttered in the Spirit. It's uttered, it's an utterance enabled by the Holy Spirit.

It is a gift of the Spirit. Therefore, people are in error when they try to teach people how to speak in tongues. I don't know if you guys have been in churches where this happened. I have been in churches that did that.

It's, they will say, you know, for example, it's like some Christian teachers will say, hey, come, everybody gather here now. You want to speak in tongues? I can teach you how to speak in tongues. All you need to do is say, hallelujah, really, really, really fast, all over and over and over and over again.

And open your heart to the Spirit, and then He will start speaking in tongues. Well, of course, I mean, it's possible that God can still, in His sovereignty, give some people the actual gift of tongues during that time, but it's not because they were babbling.

That's just babbling. That's not the gift of tongues. It's a gift that God gives. It's not a skill that can be learned. It's not just from twisting your tongues over and over again, so that you say something that you don't know what you're saying.

[ 13 : 56 ] That's not the gift of tongues. It's something that God gives as a gift. And that's why it says He utters mysteries in the Spirit. And verse 14, Paul elaborates, If I pray in a tongue, my spirit, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful.

This shows us that while we're speaking in tongues, it's our spirit that prays, not our mind. So whatever you're thinking about while praying in tongues is not necessarily what you're saying.

It's a mystery that's unknown even to the speaker apart from the gift of interpretation. But nevertheless, it brings benefit to the speaker. It edifies their spirit. So there is a way this tells us that you can be built up in the spirit even when our mental faculties are bypassed.

And that warns us against overly rationalistic understanding of spirituality. We can be built up spiritually even when our mind is not engaged. Though usually the way God works is that we are transformed by the renewal of our minds, as Romans 12.2 says.

So what about the gift of prophecy? What is that? In verse 3, he says, On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.

[ 15 : 08 ] Those who have the gift of prophecy receive God's revelation, interpret it, and apply it for the sake of building up the church. God is the God of truth, and he is infallible in his words.

So his revelation itself is infallible, but our interpretation and application of it is fallible. In the same way, the word of God can be misinterpreted, misapplied by people, right?

So that's why prophecy needs to be tested. And it frequently involves spontaneous knowledge into people's circumstances and conditions, and God gives it for people's upbuilding, encouragement, and consolation.

Throughout this passage, Paul mentions the importance of building up one another six times, and that's really his overarching concern. We need to help the church grow with this. And that's what he means by upbuilding.

And the other two words, encouragement and consolation, are related words. They are sometimes used interchangeably, but the word encouragement has a specific nuance of exhorting someone towards something, and consolation has a specific nuance of comforting someone.

[ 16 : 13 ] So really, with those two words, Paul probably has in mind a full range of verbal exhortation and encouragement. So we can translate that as both conviction and consolation.

It both convicts prophecy and consoles and converts. That's comforts. That's what a prophecy does. Sometime last year, and toward the end of the year, one of our members had a prophetic word based in Psalm 68, 5 to 6.

It read, Father of the fatherless and a protector of widows is God in his holy habitation. God settles the solitary in a home. He leads out the prisoners to prosperity. And the prophecy was that God wants to comfort those who have felt lonely and solitary and have for a long time a desire to be placed in a home and a family.

That was the prophecy that was shared in that context called the worship. And it turned out that unbeknownst to us at the time that was shared, we had two guests who were visiting our services for the first time that Sunday who were both really past marriageable age, single woman who had for a long time wanted to be placed in a home, in a family.

And God was speaking to them, comforting them, saying, I see you. You're part of my family. I'm your father. So that's an example of how God uses that, uses prophecy in the context of our corporate worship.

[ 17 : 31 ] And there's a popular misconception that prophecy is about foretelling the future. And in actuality, less than 10% of prophecies contained in scripture actually predict the future.

Yes, it can predict the future, but it certainly includes foretelling. But even more importantly, it includes foretelling. It's about telling the truth, the spiritual truth, the reality as it is presently.

That's why it's given for the consolation of building and consolation and encouragement of the people now. It's given for our edification presently. So it has to have significance for the present, even if it foretells the future.

And these differences between tongues and prophecy, I explained Paul's preference for prophecy in verses four to five. He says, the one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies builds up the church.

Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets so that the church may be built up.

[ 18 : 40 ] Note that Paul is not discouraging speaking in tongues in general, but only in the context of corporate worship. The gift of tongues is highly useful.

It is of great personal spiritual benefit to the speaker, and as such, it is a gift that should be eagerly desired. But Paul says, now I want you, that's why he says, I want you all to speak in tongues.

But some people actually argue from this, this is a slight aside, that all people should and can speak in tongues, since Paul says, now I want you all to speak in tongues.

But I will note that saying that you want someone, you want everyone to speak in tongues is not the same thing as saying that everyone can speak in tongues. And I think Paul made it very clear in chapter 12, well actually, if you look at chapter 7, verse 7, he says, I wish it all were as I myself am, he's talking about his gift of celibacy, but each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another.

So he's clearly saying, he wants everyone to have the gift of celibacy, but not everyone has it, right? I think that's the same thing with the gift of tongues. He says in chapter 12, 29 to 30, are all apostles, are all prophets, are all teachers, do all work miracles, do all possess gifts of healing, do all speak with tongues, do all interpret?

[ 19 : 57 ] And from that context of the passage, the obvious answer is no. No, not everyone's an apostle. Not everyone speaks in tongues. Not everyone interprets. And that's why we need the church, the body of Christ, so we all do our own part to build up the body, because we're interdependent, not interchangeable, because we are given different gifts that are supposed to function in the context of the church.

That's the whole point of the imagery of the body of Christ. And so he's not saying that everyone can and should speak in tongues. He wants everyone, because he knows it's edifying in that way.

And so that's the difference, really, between prophecy and tongues. And he wants especially that we should prophesy. The problem is not tongues in and of itself, but tongues without interpretation, because it doesn't edify anyone.

And so with that, he says, saying that having told us that the spiritual gifts of utterance should be up-building, he turns to the way in which it should be understandable, because without it being understandable, it will not be up-building.

So look at verses, look at verse 6 with me. He says, Now, brothers, if I come to you speak in tongues, how will I benefit you unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching?

[ 21 : 17 ] So he's listing all the gifts of utterance, right? Revelation is communicated through prophecy. Knowledge is communicated through teaching. He's saying these are gifts that are given for the benefit of the church, and the tongues is singled out here, because it's the only gift out of all the gifts of utterance that does not bring any edification without interpretation.

And that's why he says, don't use tongues in the context of corporate worship unless you have interpretation. And then he deliberately explains why he deliberately abstained from using tongues himself in a series of analogies in verses 7 to 8.

He says, If even lifeless instruments, such as the flute or the harp, do not give distinct notes, how will anyone know what is played? And if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle?

If a guitar is out of tune, right? So that a G string sounds like an A string and an E string sounds like a D string, it really doesn't matter how skilled you are, and it really doesn't matter what kind of masterpiece you're playing on the guitar.

No one's going to know what you're playing, because it's indistinct. The notes don't make any sense. In the same way, if you don't know how to play brass instruments like a trumpet, I don't know how to blow one, or like, I don't know if you've ever tried it.

[ 22 : 40 ] It's kind of fun to try to blow a trumpet when you don't know how to blow a trumpet. All you do is you don't produce any sound. You just produce a lot of spit and noise, right? Just trying to blow on something that you can't blow.

And so if you blow a trumpet with an indistinct sound like that, will the army come, march into battle? Will the army gather for the battle?

No, it'll just cause confusion. They'll be like, wait, is that supposed to be the signal or what? I mean, you don't know. That's what Paul is trying to say. So, so with yourselves, Paul says in verse 9, If with your tongue you utter speech that is not intelligible, how will anyone know what is said?

For you will be speaking into the air. Tongues without interpretation is unintelligible, and therefore people won't know what to make of it.

It'd be no different from speaking into the air. Paul continues with another analogy that's even closer to the point. In verse 10 to 12, There are doubtless many different languages in the world, and none is without meaning.

[ 23 : 43 ] But if I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be a foreigner to the speaker, and the speaker a foreigner to me. So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church.

You won't do someone any good by speaking to them in a language that you don't understand. Right? It'll just become gibberish. Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

Right? And likewise, you won't do any good for the church by speaking in tongues without interpretation. And the fact that Paul uses speaking in a foreign language, it's foreign human language, as an analogy to further prove that the gift of tongues is not a human language.

Right? Because when you use an analogy, an analogy is something that is similar, not identical to what you're trying to prove. Right? So here he's trying to prove with the analogy of the human language that the gift of tongues should be also used with interpretation.

Therefore, Paul continues in verse 13, One who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret. It's not saying don't speak in tongues at all. Pray. Seek the gift of interpretation so that you can use your gift of tongues.

[ 24 : 54 ] I do know of churches within our denomination that have people that have the ability to give interpret tongues, and they use it. We don't use it in our church because so far I'm not aware of anyone who can interpret tongues.

And I pray that we get it. I've been praying for our church for that. I've been praying for our church for prophecy as well. We have people who speak in tongues. We just don't have people who interpret.

And otherwise, Paul says in verse 16 to 17, If you give thanks with your spirit, how can anyone in the position of an outsider say amen to your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying?

For you may be giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not being built up. The word outsider is a word that ordinarily means non-expert. And Paul's referring to Christians who do not understand tongues because they don't have the gift of interpretation here.

These people are unable to say amen in response to the thanksgiving uttered in tongues. And during corporate worship, Christians have historically expressed their endorsement and affirmation of what is being said or sung by saying amen, which is a Hebrew word that means surely, truly.

[ 26 : 06 ] And that, by the way, is a practice that I would love to reclaim in our church so that when you hear something that is true, that is resonating with your soul, you say amen, and you affirm and you endorse and I think but if you don't understand what is being said, of course, you can't affirm what someone is saying so you can't say amen.

That's what he's saying. Sure, the person who is speaking in tongues may very well be giving thanks and it may be some wonderful thanksgiving that he's doing in the gift of tongues, but regardless, the other person is not being built up.

And you could be edifying yourself, all right, but you're not edifying anyone else. And that's really the crux of the issue. Corporate worship, and this is important, it's not about your personal time of worship.

And this is what's wrong with the widespread consumeristic attitude that Christians have toward church and toward worship. Corporate worship is neither about you nor for you as an individual.

It's not about whether you get a lot out of the sermon or not. It's not about whether you like the songs that they sang or not. If corporate worship exists for your personal gratification and edification, then you could just stay home and listen to a podcast of a celebrity preacher who preaches much better than I do.

[ 27 : 35 ] And you could stay home and listen to music, Christian worship songs that are done professionally, if that's what this is all about. And in fact, that's exactly what thousands of Christians in the country do because they don't understand the purpose of corporate worship.

Corporate worship is corporate for the reason that it serves not to build up an individual Christian, but to build up the whole church together. We gather as the church.

The church means a gathering of people, not as a group of individual Christians. We come not for me, but for us, for each other so that we can remind one another of God's truths, so that we can stir up one another to love and good deeds, so that we can build up one another with our gifts.

We have a part to play when we gather as a corporate church. That's why Paul so vigorously opposes speaking in tongues without interpretation during corporate worship.

Unless they think that Paul's discouraging the use of tongues merely because he himself doesn't have the gift, he adds this in verses 18 to 19.

[ 28 : 49 ] What a shocker. I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. Nevertheless, in church, I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others to have 10,000 words in a tongue.

That's a singer, right? Far from being unable to speak in tongues, Paul insists that he speaks in tongues more than all of them. This shows us again that tongues is a good gift that we should use.

And that's probably a statement to make to the Corinthians in particular because they're boasting in this. They're like, oh, we speak the tongues of angels and they're speaking even out of turn in all kinds of disorderly ways in the context of corporate worship.

And Paul tells these people who are really raving about this gift, I speak in tongues more than all of you. I think there's some hyperbole there, right?

But he's making a point. He's saying, I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others than 10,000 words in a tongue. Just as some people say a picture is worth a thousand words.

[ 29 : 55 ] In the context of corporate worship, five intelligible words are better than 10,000 unintelligible words in the tongue. So we should use the spiritual gifts of utterance in understandable ways for the upbuilding of the church.

And this is not only for the sake of believers, which Paul's talked about up to this point. In verses 20 to 25, he tells the Corinthian church why it's essential that the spiritual gifts are understandable, not only for the sake of believers, but also for the sake of unbelievers in their midst.

He says, Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature. Paul's bringing the prideful Corinthians down a notch.

He's telling them that even though they boasted in their spiritual maturity, Paul compares them to an immature child. And this is Theodoret of Cyrus.

He's a 5th century Christian pastor. He summarizes really helpfully. Do not emulate children's ignorance, but their innocence. Do not possess grown-ups' wickedness, but their shrewdness.

[ 31 : 00 ] When it comes to their thinking about prophecy and tongues, they should be mature, not children. And Paul's about to quote Isaiah 28, 11 to 12, as his final argument for why the Corinthians should not speak in tongues without interpretation in the context of corporate worship.

And in that same passage, just before those verses that he quotes. In Isaiah 28, 9, the Jewish leaders mock prophet Isaiah by saying that his message to them is infantile.

He says to them that his audience must be, quote, those who are weaned from the milk, those taken from the breast. So by comparing the Corinthians to children, I think he already has Isaiah 28 in mind, he's warning them that they are treating him like the Jews treated prophet Isaiah, in thinking that he's immature because he doesn't teach them about tongues and things like that with the Corinthian church.

And then he quotes the actual verse. He says, By people of strange tongues, by the lips of foreigners will I speak to this people, and even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord.

In this original context, God was declaring to his people that since they refused to listen to him when he spoke to them in a language that they understand, that they will hear the voice of God's judgment in the barbarian languages of the Assyrian invaders.

[ 32 : 22 ] Israel will be conquered by Assyria, and the foreign language that they hear in their own land will be a sign for them of judgment, alienation, and exclusion. Do you follow the original context?

In Isaiah, because this foreign nation has occupied them, and they're speaking a language that they don't understand, that will be a sign to the Israelites that God has rejected them, that they're alienated.

It's the language that they're excluded because they don't understand. And using that illustration, historical illustration, Paul argues in verse 22, thus tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is a sign not for unbelievers but for believers.

By speaking in unintelligible tongues without interpreting it during corporate worship, the Corinthian church is unwittingly projecting a sign of judgment, of exclusion, and of alienation to the unbelievers in their midst.

Far from being a positive sign of their spiritual maturity, oh, we're speaking in tongues, look, come look at me. No, it's not a sign for believers, it's a sign for unbelievers. You're excluding them and projecting to them a sign of God's judgment.

[ 33 : 37 ] So he says, don't do that. In contrast, prophecy is a sign not for unbelievers but for believers. When there is prophecy, when God's speaking to us in our midst, it's a sign that God is with us, that he's speaking through us.

Therefore, it serves as a positive sign of God's presence and involvement with his people so that unbelievers who are in our midst say, look at that and say, God is with you. Surely God is in this place.

It's a sign of God's presence for the believers. That's why it's a sign for believers. Then in verses 23 to 24, Paul contrasts the respective effects of uninterpreted tongues on the one hand in prophecy and on the other hand for unbelievers.

Read with me. It says, if, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your mind? That's pretty self-explanatory, right?

If all people break out all of a sudden in tongues simultaneously, outsiders and unbelievers visiting our service would think that we're all crazy. And I think this verse effectively prohibits many people simultaneously praying in tongues as happens in some churches.

[ 34 : 49 ] But if all prophesy and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, the secret of his heart are disclosed and so falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you.

Since prophecy is assigned for believers of God's presence among them, even unbelievers in our midst would be convinced, convicted, and acknowledged that God is really among us.

Tongues without interpretation will drive unbelievers away, but prophecy will draw them in. Tongues without interpretation will convince believers that we're all crazy, but prophecy will convince them that God is real and with us.

A couple weeks ago, I used an illustration from Charles Spurgeon's autobiography and there's many instances of this and here's another one that I can tell you about.

I like to quote from Spurgeon because he's a very sober-minded guy, not someone that you would expect to be using these gifts and he, I think it seems, appears to have used these gifts without even knowing that that's what he was doing.

[ 35 : 57 ] But this is an account. He says, While preaching in the hall on one occasion, I deliberately pointed to a man in the midst of the crowd and said, There is a man sitting there who is a shoemaker.

He keeps his shop open on Sundays. It was open last Sabbath morning. He took nine pence and there was four pence profit out of it. His soul is sold to Satan for four pence.

A city missionary, when going his rounds, met with this man and seeing that he was reading one of my sermons, he asked the question, Do you know Mr. Spurgeon? Yes, replied the man. I have every reason to know him.

I have been to hear him and under his preaching by God's grace I have become a new creature in Christ Jesus. Shall I tell you how it happened? I went to the music hall and took my seat in the middle of the place. Mr. Spurgeon looked at me as if he knew me and in his sermon he pointed to me and told the congregation that I was a shoemaker and that I kept my shop open on Sundays.

And I did, sir. I should not have minded that, but he also said that I took nine pence that Sunday before and that there was four pence profit out of it. I did take nine pence that day and four pence was just the profit.

[ 37 : 08 ] But how he should know that I could not tell. Then it struck me that it was God who had spoken to my soul through him. So I shut up my shop the next Sunday. At first, I was afraid to go again to hear him lest he should tell the people more about me.

But afterwards, I went and the Lord met with me and saved my soul. The secrets of his heart were disclosed and so that shoemaker repented of his sins and submitted himself to God.

Don't you long for that to happen in our Sunday gatherings? I pray for this gift for myself and for our church regularly because I imagine, I can imagine so many ways in which this gift could build up our church.

So pursue love. Earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy. In fact, I already know that several of you have and probably more of you have the gift of prophecy.

And just like we have the music ministry for people who are gifted in music and hospitality ministry for people who are gifted in hospitality and creative ministry, people who are gifted creatively and so on, we hope to create a prophetic ministry team with people who have the gift with the goal of utilizing this gift to greater effect in our church.

[ 38 : 29 ] So if you think you might have the gift of prophecy, maybe you have very vivid dreams that you think might be from God or you have these spontaneous words or phrases or images that pop up in your mind and you think that might be from God, please meet with me over by the piano after the service for a few minutes.

I have a few books that I want to give you guys and also want to get together again to practice and to pray and for the gifts, for strengthening of the gift and have a more systematic way of actually using the gift so that it just doesn't become a haphazard thing.

So we should use the spiritual gifts of utterance in understandable ways for the upbuilding of the church and that's great but of course that's easier said than done, right? When we receive a good gift, especially something that seems spectacular, right?

Like the gift of tongues for example because it's so strange, right? And that's why I think it's fascinated people for so long. Our natural sinful tendency is to be selfish and to be self-centered and for that reason we could and to show it off to others even when it doesn't edify or build up anyone.

And that's why we can only follow this teaching and use the gifts as they ought to be used when we follow the pattern of Jesus who, it says in Mark 10 45, came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

[ 39 : 56 ] Right? Jesus deserved all the credit and glory and honor he could receive the work the world could give him but instead he chose to die for our sins.

He took our shame. He took our dishonor. He died on the cross and Jesus lived every second of his life not for himself for his own glory but for the glory of his father so that he could give his life as a ransom for us and we are saved from our sins not because we earned the right to be saved but because we freely receive the gift of salvation that Christ procured for us.

And every spiritual gift received tongues prophecy they all flow from that first initial gift of salvation. So if you're an unbeliever who is hearing this message for the first time you chose quite the service to be with us for learning about these gifts that you probably never heard of but before you can receive any of these gifts you must first receive the giver have a relationship with the God who is the giver of all these gifts and who is the source it's his generosity his love that is the fountainhead of all these gifts and the greatest gift of all is not these gifts but the gift of his son Jesus Christ who died for our sins to save us.

And for those of you who are already followers of Christ I want to give you some hope  
Romans 8.32 says He who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all how will  
he not also with him graciously give us all things these are good gifts that God tells us to  
earnestly desire when my child comes to me and asks for something that's good for her  
she knows and expects that I would give it to her because I never withhold anything that's  
bad for her that's good for her I mean it's so funny so she knows and she would be really  
quite sad if I refused her something that is good for her so we're God's children and he  
tells us these gifts are good for us he wants us to give them for us and if he did not  
withhold his only son for our salvation would he not generously liberally give his good gifts  
to us so seek it pursue love earnestly desire the spiritual gifts especially that you may  
prophesy let's take a moment of silence to reflect on this to pray for this and respond by  
with the time of prayers of the people■■■■ i i of