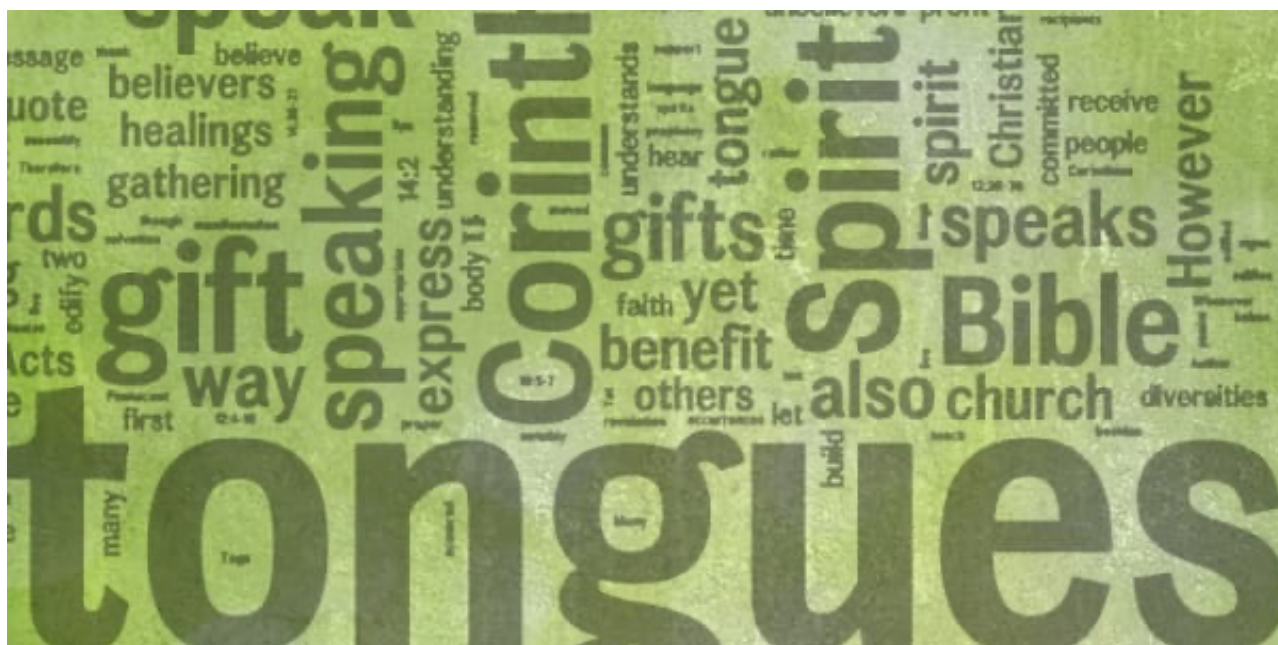




Concerning Tongues

Some Comments on 1 Corinthians 14

At Christ's Table ~ ACTpublications

"Explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words."

1 Corinthians 2:13

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W.D. Furioso, Writer ~ Frances Furioso, Editor

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Some Thoughts on 1 Corinthians 14

WD Furioso ~ ACTpublications (2019) ~ <https://www.AtChristsTable.org>

1 Corinthians 14

¹ Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. ² For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries.

One form of tongues is a spiritual gift for speaking to God, who is Spirit. (John 4:24)

³ But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation. ⁴ One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church.

Speaking to God in tongues edifies the one who speaks.

^{5a} Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy;

"Prophecy" simply means "speaking forth" – namely, through preaching & teaching. But I do believe prophets and the gift of prophecy is for today along with certain preaching and teaching which can be *prophetically motivated*. And by "prophetic" I mean

speaking what is on God's heart and mind – yet, as a present "reminder" of what He has written in Scripture.

^{5b} and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying.

Paul validates the spiritual gift of tongues. But he says the spiritual gift of prophecy is a "better" gift. And – he says that there is another form of tongues which edifies the church – *if* it is interpreted.

⁶ But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking in tongues, what will I profit you unless I speak to you either by way of revelation or of knowledge or of prophecy or of teaching?

Here Paul states four possible purposes for messages given through the gift of tongues (with interpretation) which can edify the church – revelation, knowledge, prophecy, teaching.

⁷ Yet even lifeless things, either flute or harp, in producing a sound, if they do not produce a distinction in the tones, how will it be known what is played on the flute or on the harp? ⁸ For if the bugle produces an indistinct sound, who will prepare himself for battle? ⁹ So also you, unless you utter by the

tongue speech that is clear, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air.

Again, tongues for the church must be interpreted. Someone must have the faith to interpret a tongue. If there is no interpretation, there are two possibilities: 1) It was a genuine prophecy in tongues, but no one had the faith to interpret. 2) If God didn't give faith for the interpretation, maybe it wasn't a genuine prophecy. Obviously, it may be difficult to know.

¹⁰ There are, perhaps, a great many kinds of languages in the world, and no kind is without meaning.

Tongues are *not* "groans too deep for words" (Romans 8:26-27) I would call that travail – but NOT tongues. Tongues is a language with words, albeit unknown to the speaker. "Praying in the Spirit" can be in an "unknown tongue". But I also believe that "praying in the Spirit" is primarily any Spirit-led prayer.

¹¹ If then I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be to the one who speaks a barbarian, and the one who speaks will be a barbarian to me. ¹² So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church. ¹³ Therefore let one who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret.

For the edification of the church.

¹⁴For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful.

For personal edification – speaking to God

¹⁵What is the outcome then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the mind also; I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the mind also.

Both with a known language with the mind – to the church, and with an unknown language with the spirit - to God.

¹⁶Otherwise if you bless in the spirit only, how will the one who fills the place of the ungifted say the “Amen” at your giving of thanks, since he does not know what you are saying? ¹⁷For you are giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not edified.

One gift of tongues is for public use to edify the church, and another gift of tongues is for personal prayer.

¹⁸I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all;

Paul spoke in tongues – and seems to say that it was primarily prayer between he and God.

¹⁹ however, in the church I desire to speak five words with my mind so that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue.

Paul did *not* say do not speak in tongues in the church gathering, but rather, that it must be interpreted. Paul definitely considered prophecy (preaching & teaching) a "better" spiritual gift.

²⁰ Brethren **do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be infants, but in your thinking be mature.** ²¹ In the Law it is written, “By men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers I will speak to this people, and even so they will not listen to Me,” says the Lord. ²² So then tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophecy is for a sign, not to unbelievers but to those who believe.

Primarily, tongues are for unbelievers – not so much for the church. And *primarily*, prophecy is for believers – not so much for unbelievers. It seems to me that the sign of tongues for the unbeliever would be most effective if the tongue was known to the unbeliever but not to the speaker – as on the Day of Pentecost.

But Paul also allows for tongues with interpretation. I don't believe speaking in tongues is "evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit". It *usually* accompanied the baptism in the Book of Acts – but not always.

²³ Therefore if the whole church assembles together and all speak in tongues, and ungifted men or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are mad? ²⁴ But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an ungifted man enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all; ²⁵ the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so, he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you.

Here Paul gives one of the purposes of prophecy (preaching & teaching) – through the body, not just through "the Pastor" – namely, the Holy Spirit's convincing and convicting power through the Word of God.

²⁶ What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.

Paul seems to indicate that tongues with interpretation *can be* as "standard" as singing and teaching during "Body ministry". I

believe there are two types of church meetings: 1) Body Ministry
2) Ephesians 4 Equipping Ministry. But I maintain that while
revelatory and miraculous spiritual gifts are certainly for today, the
genuine ones are more rare than we would think. I am suspicious
of prophecies and healings being expected to happen at every
meeting – it is too much like seeking the gifts rather than the
Giver. As I understand it, the ministry gift of a prophet is *not* one
who gives "personal prophecies" at every meeting. Primarily, I
see 1 Corinthians 14 type prophecies coming through Body
ministry in a church gathering (and maybe more so, outside a
church gathering), but prophetic messages and teachings coming
through a prophet for the wider body of Christ.

**²⁷ If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the
most three, and each in turn, and one must interpret;**

"Two or three" – again a Body Ministry setting.

**²⁸ but if there is no interpreter, he must keep silent in the
church; and let him speak to himself and to God.**

It seems to me Paul is saying, that if it is not a prophetic tongue
with interpretation, one should pray in tongues quietly in a church

gathering (or at home). If it isn't interpreted, it is a disruption, there is absolutely no reason for everyone else to have to hear it, if it is not interpreted.

²⁹ Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment. ³⁰ But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, the first one must keep silent. ³¹ For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted;

Again, a Body ministry setting.

³² and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets; ³³ for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

Tongues and prophecies are *not* involuntary – they can be held for an appropriate time. Discerning the "appropriate time" in a gathering is a sign of maturity – and a role of leadership.

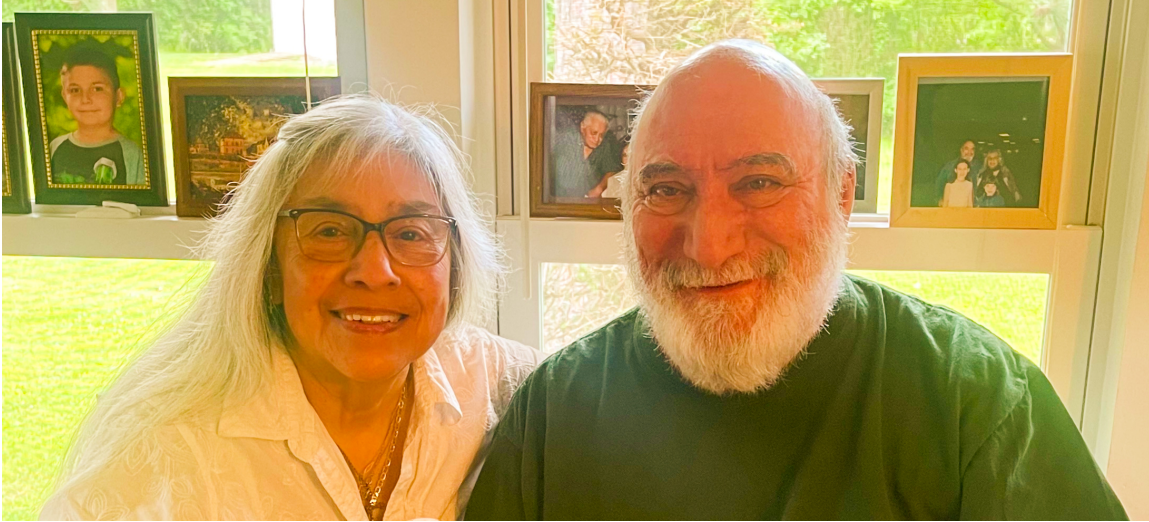
³⁴ The women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says. ³⁵ If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is ^[n]improper for a woman to speak in church.

Obviously, this is another problematic passage: I don't think it means that women cannot share in church. We need to take v. 34 with v. 35. I think this has more to do with women showing respect for the headship of their husbands when in a public gathering, and keeping order in the gathering. I have always suggested: If a woman has something to share in a public gathering, it will be much easier and much better received if the husband introduces it first. This is in no way "required" – but the headship of the husband both covers the wife and affirms what she has to share.

³⁶ Was it from you that the word of God first went forth? Or has it come to you only? ³⁷ If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment. ³⁸ But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized. ³⁹ Therefore, my brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak in tongues. ⁴⁰ But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner.

These last two verses summarize Paul's main points for writing this whole passage: 1) Prophecy (preaching & teaching) is "better" than tongues 2) Don't forbid speaking in tongues 3) Maintain order in a meeting.

Bill & Frances Furioso
~ At Christ's Table ~



Bill Furioso and his wife, Frances, have been married for more than 40 years, and have two children, four grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

Bill and Frances served as missionaries in South Africa for thirteen years making disciples, establishing churches, and training church leaders. Over a span of 40 years, they also traveled extensively in an itinerant Bible teaching ministry which took them to hundreds of gatherings on four continents ministering in churches, conferences, spiritual formation seminars, and home gatherings. They have shepherded several churches, discipled many to Christ, and mentored church leaders in the USA and abroad.

Being an avid student by nature, Bill has done both formal and informal study in various fields including Education, Music, Philosophy and Theology. As a writer, he has authored many publications which are distributed worldwide. Because of Bill's disabilities resulting from a spinal cord injury, he can no longer travel, so their ministries of writing, recording, distributing, mentoring, and correspondence are now shared primarily via the Internet... www.AtChristsTable.org

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