

Speaking in Tongues: God's Commandments

Commentary on 1 Corinthians 14

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A. Desirability of the Gift of Tongues.

1. It is better to prophesy than to speak in tongues. 1 Corinthians 14:1-2 Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy. 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.

2. Seeking tongues shows evidence of selfishness. 1 Corinthians 14:3-4 But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort. He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.

3. Self edification is good but edifying the church is much better. 1 Corinthians 14:5-6 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. 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?

4. Tongues are as uncertain sounds of inanimate objects. 1 Corinthians 14:7-8 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? For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?

5. Tongues are as one in a multitude of voices not understood. 1 Corinthians 14:9-10 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. There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification.

6. Tongues make for no communication between two. 1 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.

7. Seek gifts to build the church not to build yourself. 1 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.

8. Pray for interpretation instead of for tongues, it is beneficial. 1 Corinthians 14:13 Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret.

9. Prayer in an unknown tongue is unfruitful even to oneself. 1 Corinthians 14:14 For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.

10. Understanding is the thing to be desired. 1 Corinthians 14:15-16 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. 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?

11. Edification of the others is the goal. 1 Corinthians 14:17-19 For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified. I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all: 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.

12. Understand as a man. Be mad as a child. 1 Corinthians 14:20 Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.

B. Commandments for Speaking in Tongues.

1. The tongues spoken are unknown or other tongues. 1 Corinthians 14:21 In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord. 1 Corinthians 14:19 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.

2. How the word tongue is used in the Bible:

a. Languages. The law of first mention. (The first time a word is used in the Scriptures define the word for you. The Bible is not given to private interpretation.) Genesis 10:5,20 By these were the isles of the Gentiles divided in their lands; every one after his tongue, after their families, in their nations. ... These are the sons of Ham, after their families, after their tongues, in their countries, and in their nations.

b. Physical tongue. Mark 7:33-35 And he [Jesus] took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue; And looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.

c. New tongues. (Languages not yet learned.) 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;

d. Cloven tongues like as of fire. (Not of fire, but like as of fire.) Acts 2:3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

e. Other tongues. (Other Languages.) Acts 2:4-11 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marveled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.

f. With tongues. (Other languages that were understood.) Acts 10:44-48 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received

the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days. Acts 19:1-6 And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.

g. Divers kinds of tongues. (Different types of languages.) 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: 1 Corinthians 12:28 And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. 1 Corinthians 12:30 Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?

h. Interpretation of tongues, give their language for what is being said. 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:

i. Tongues of Angels. Only mentioned once in the Bible, only other time in same chapter, it says tongues cease. 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. 1 Corinthians 13:8 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.

C. Tongues are for a sign. Signs are for the Jews.

1 Corinthians 14:22 Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.

1. Law of first mention: Sign given that the Jew Might believe. Exodus 4:1-8 And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The LORD hath not appeared unto thee. And the LORD said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod. And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it. And the LORD said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand: That they may believe that the LORD God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee. And the LORD said furthermore unto him, Put now thine hand into thy bosom. And he put his hand into his bosom: and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous as snow. And he said, Put thine hand into thy bosom again. And he put his hand into his bosom again; and plucked it out of his bosom, and, behold, it was turned again as his other flesh. And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe thee, neither hearken to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign.

2. A sign is the division between Jew and Gentile. Exodus 8:22-23 And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there; to the end thou mayest know that I am the LORD in the midst of the earth. And I will put a division between my people and thy people: to morrow shall this sign be.

3. Sign so the Jew can see and believe. Exodus 19:9 And the LORD said unto Moses, Lo, I come

unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever. And Moses told the words of the people unto the LORD. Isaiah 41:17-20 When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together: That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the LORD hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it.

4. The Miracles of Jesus were for a sign to the Jew, that he would believe. John 11:41-48 Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot, with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go. Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him. But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done. Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. John 13:19 Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he.

5. The Gentiles are not permitted a sign. 1 Corinthians 1:22-23 For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; 1 Corinthians 13:8 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.

6. Our Generation can receive no sign, save, the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Matthew 16:1-4 The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would show them a sign from heaven. He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times? A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed. Mark 8:11-13 And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him. And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation. And he left them, and entering into the ship again departed to the other side. Luke 11:29-30 And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet. For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation.

D. Other Commandments for speaking in tongues.

1. Sign to the UNSAVED Jew. 1 Corinthians 14:22 Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe. Acts 10:44-48 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he

commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

2. Unsaved Gentiles will say you are crazy with tongues, but in prophecy will be convinced. 1 Corinthians 14:23-25 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? 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: 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.

3. Everything done in a service should edify the whole body. 1 Corinthians 14:26 How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.

4. At least two speaking in tongues. 1 Corinthians 14:27 If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret.

5. No More than three speaking in tongues. 1 Corinthians 14:27 If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret.

6. Must speak in turn, not all at the same time. 1 Corinthians 14:27 If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret.

7. There must be one interpreter. 1 Corinthians 14:27 If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret.

8. Tongues are forbidden without an interpreter. 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.

Rules for Prophecy:

a. Judge each other.

b. All may.

c. Only one at a time.

d. Subject one to the other.

e. No Disorder. 1 Corinthians 14:29-33 Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

9. Women are expressly forbidden to speak in tongues publicly. 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 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. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.

(The context of this verse is for tongues and prophecy. A woman may teach, but not adult men, and serve in other areas of the church. A woman may not take an office, being pastor or deacon, because of the listed qualifications of the offices.)

10. You are to acknowledge these Commandments as from the Lord. 1 Corinthians 14:36-38 What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only? 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. But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant.

11. If seeking gifts, covet prophecy. 1 Corinthians 14:39 Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues.

12. You may not forbid to speak in tongues. (But note the commandments of God for doing so. If you are not obeying these you are not scriptural in your practice. But if you are obeying all of the commandments then you may not be forbidden to speak in tongues.) 1 Corinthians 14:39 Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues.

13. Do everything decently and in order. Do not allow that which brings forth confusion. 1 Corinthians 14:40 Let all things be done decently and in order.

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