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## INTRODUCTION

Paul continues to teach the Corinthians about the proper use of spiritual gifts in 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. Chapter 14. He's already let them know that whatever gift God endows them with they must utilize it in love in order to glorify the one who provided it and to edify the body. Now he turns his attention to the gift that they should desire most and at the same time places less importance on a gift that gets the most attention.

### **1 Corinthians 14:1-6 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> Pursue love, and desire spiritual *gifts*, but especially that you may prophesy.

<sup>2</sup> For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands *him*; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.

<sup>3</sup> But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men.

<sup>4</sup> He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church.

<sup>5</sup> I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies *is* greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification.

<sup>6</sup> But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you unless I speak to you either by revelation, by knowledge, by prophesying, or by teaching?

### **<sup>1</sup> Pursue love, and desire spiritual *gifts*, but especially that you may prophesy.**

Paul expresses his desire that everyone not just love, but actually chase after it. Although it is the Holy Spirit that gives the gifts, Paul is urging us that we should still desire to be gifted. Praying for the Holy Spirit to bestow a gift on someone for the edification of the church is within His will.

**1 John 5:14 says:** *Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.* Then Paul goes on to say that the gift of prophesy is the gift we should desire most! In the following verses he gives us good reasons why this is so.

### **<sup>2</sup> For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands *him*; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.**

Paul is not saying that we should not speak in a tongue we do not understand. That ability is a God given gift. He is saying that there is a time and a place for it where it will do the most good. If the person speaks in a tongue not recognized by the hearers, the only one that the person is talking to is God, and there's nothing that God doesn't already know. It's also unfortunate that the body of Christ doesn't get to benefit from the *mystery* spoken if it's spoken in an unknown tongue.

### **<sup>3</sup> But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men.**

Paul is trying to let the Corinthians know that there is more benefit for the body of Christ if the person speaking is used to proclaim the oracles\* of God. (Remember, prophesy doesn't always mean that a person has the ability to expound on future events, though that may occur depending on what God wants us to know.) The result of the prophecy is always positive. The spoken word will build us up where we are torn down. The oracles of God invigorate us at our lowest point and will bring peace to us when we feel the sting of defeat or betrayal. While soothsayers, palm readers and tarot card readers are indiscriminant in their use of "I told you so" scoldings and "pie in the sky" false predictions.

**<sup>4</sup> He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church.**

This verse is pretty much self-explanatory. The only person that is built up where he is torn down is the person who speaks in the tongue who no one understands but God. (This is also in light of the fact that they did not have someone to interpret; which was probably more the norm than the exception.) On the other hand, the entire church is built up by the oracles of God.

**<sup>5</sup> I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies *is* greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification.**

**<sup>6</sup> But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you unless I speak to you either by revelation, by knowledge, by prophesying, or by teaching?**

Many sanctimonious Christians have chided younger Christians for using the word “wish”. The word “wish” has become a word denoting false hope or false enchantments of a fantasy world. This word is thrown into the same group with “luck” and “fortunate circumstances”. I’m so glad to “hear” Paul use the word “wish” to say in another way his strong desire for a thing to come to pass. (Now back to our regularly scheduled program) Paul desired that everyone in the body of Christ spoke with tongues, but he had a stronger desire for them to prophesy and he explains why. In the 5<sup>th</sup> verse, Paul uses the word “greater” to define the one who exhibits prophecy rather than the one who exhibits the gift of tongues. In this case the word “greater” is used to define the better benefit of the gift for the church rather than one’s position or prominence in the church. In other words, the person prophesying is greater because prophecy gives more benefit in total than the one who speaks in tongues without interpretation. To show that he doesn’t exclude himself in the matter, he explains that even if he spoke in an unknown tongue to the body, it would not be as effective as providing revelation by the gift of knowledge, or by providing oracles from God, or by teaching in a tongue known by all. The Holy Spirit knows that there are some who still won’t receive the full impact of this teaching unless further illustration is used. Next week we will dig into those illustrations.

\*In the Old Testament used in every case, except 2 Samuel 16:23, to denote the most holy place in the temple (1 Kings 6:5 1 Kings 6:19-23, 8:6). In 2 Samuel 16:23 it means the Word of God. A man inquired "at the oracle of God" by means of the Urim and Thummim in the breastplate on the high priest's ephod. In the New Testament it is used only in the plural, and always denotes the Word of God (Romans 3:2, Hebrews 5:12). The Scriptures are called "living oracles" (Compare Hebrews 4:12) because of their quickening power (Acts 7:38).