

Spiritual Gifts: Tongues or Prophecy - Part 1

1 Corinthians 14:1-20

Pastor John Miller

Just a reminder, we've been away a couple of weeks, that 1 Corinthians 12, 13, and 14 form one section of the book that deals with the subject of spiritual gifts. Paul started chapter 12 with, "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant." He's wanting to straighten out the church's ignorance when it comes to spiritual gifts. He first talked about the gifts of the Spirit, chapter 12; and then went into the graces of the Spirit, chapter 13, on love, the Spirit of God produces the love of God in the heart of the child of God; and then we see tonight, as we move into the third section, we see that the Spirit is talked about in its government. So, we have the gifts, the graces, and the government of the Spirit.

It's always important to remind yourself why Paul wrote what he wrote in order to interpret in context what Paul is saying. Paul is writing to the Corinthians in this section of chapters 12, 13, and 14 because they were very simply abusing and misusing and misunderstanding the gifts of the Spirit. Again, we have to try to, by what he says, figure out what the problem was; but it seems to be basically that they were putting an overemphasis, which is not hard to believe, on speaking in tongues or the gift of speaking in tongues. It happens quite commonly today.

I actually grew up in what's called a Pentecostal church, a mainline Pentecostal denomination, and I saw a lot of abuse and a lot of misuse of the gifts of the Spirit, especially the gift of speaking in tongues, which for some funny reason they don't really look at 1 Corinthians 14 and follow the instructions that God laid out in His Word. There are many churches today that have the same problem that the church at Corinth had. They, like little spiritual babies, were all enamored with the emotional and supernatural facets and aspect of tongue speaking, but they forgot to be there in love using the gift of exhortation or teaching or prophecy to build up others in the church, the body of Christ.

We've learned some very important foundational things that the Spirit of God gives the child of God by His sovereign will and grace and choice the gift or gifts that He wants us to have. We can't dictate to God what our gifts will be, but every Christian has a gift. They're grace endowments, that's why they're called *chárisma*. We have the word "charismatic" for some of the groups that emphasize the gifts. God's grace gives everyone a gift, but He said in 1 Corinthians 13 that we should function in those gifts in love. One of the primary ways that we use the gift in love is when we gather corporately to remember that I should use my gift for the good of others in the church. That's the number one thought there in this chapter is my gift that God has given me is to be used to edify, to build up, to encourage, and to educate and bless other believers in the fellowship of the body of Christ. I don't come to church to just get blessed, I come to be a blessing; and you don't come corporately to gather to have your own little "bless me club," you're here to be a blessing to God, to worship God. Amen? We're here to worship God, and then we're here to bless and serve one another.

Let me give you a little peek at something that will help us to understand what's going on in this

chapter. Turn to verse 19. We're going to come right back to verse 1, but I want you to see a phrase here. In verse 19, notice this phrase, "Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others"—that's where that love comes into play, that others are important—"I might teach others"—or edify, instruct others—"than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue." I'll save it for just a moment, but in the King James Bible the word "unknown" is italicized, so it's not in the original Greek manuscripts. It was added to give a flow of thought, so he's just saying, "If I speak in tongues." But notice the phrase, don't miss it, "Yet in the church . . ." Go back with me to 1 Corinthians 14.

Everything that we read in chapter 14 is in the context of the public assembly. This is not about praying in your private devotions. It's not sitting on a hill by yourself on a rock speaking in tongues or praying or whatever, it's about when we gather corporately in the church. You've got to keep that context in your mind.

What Paul does is first start in verses 1-5 by talking about his preference and what he believes to be that the gift of prophecy is better in the church than the gift of speaking in tongues, to be preferred, so he talks about the very nature of the gift of prophecy and the gift of tongues and contrasts the two. He takes three gifts that were mentioned in chapter 12, that being tongues, prophecy, and the interpretation of tongues, and they are dealt with in chapter 14.

Follow with me beginning in verse 1. Paul says, "Follow after charity"—that word 'charity' is love or the Greek word *agápē*—desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy;"—so it doesn't take Paul long to right off the bat say, 'Desire spiritual gifts, but rather prefer that you focus on prophecy, the gift of prophecy.' Verse 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"—and there's three things he's doing when you prophesy—"to edification, and exhortation, and comfort. 4 He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church,"—that's why I had you turn to verse 19 because the context is the church.

Verse 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." It's all about the church receiving edifying. He's not saying that you shouldn't speak in tongues, he's basically saying that it's more important that you speak prophecy, which they could understand and be instructed and built up and edified.

Go back with me to verse 1, "Follow after charity"—love. That's right after chapter 13 that we studied two weeks ago. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul says, ". . . and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way." The gifts are to be used in love for the good of others and the glory of God. He says, "and desire spiritual gifts . . ." Here's a thought: If we really are walking in love, verse 1, it's going to actually increase our desire for spiritual gifts in order that we can bless, encourage, strengthen, and help other brothers and sisters in Christ. The two go together. Paul's not saying either or—either you have love or you use gifts—actually, because you are walking in love, you desire spiritual gifts in order to be a blessing to others so that your life will be used by

God to build up others, not just so that you can be blessed but that you can be a blessing.

I think every Christian should pray and say, “God, make my life a blessing. Make me a blessing.” We used to sing an old...songs are always popping in my little brain. We used to sing, “Make me a blessing / Make me a blessing / Out of my life may Jesus shine,” I love that chorus, and that’s what happens when we walk in love or desire love. We still desire spiritual gifts, but we don’t desire them selfishly for ourselves or our own benefit, we want to use them to be able to build up others. So, the gift of prophecy is to be preferred, verse 1, this is Paul’s preference. Remember, that’s in the context of verse 19, “Yet in the church,” so it’s the context of the church.

Here’s where this chapter’s a challenge. It’s actually a challenge in a lot of areas, but Paul again does not define prophecy and he doesn’t say a lot about tongues; he doesn’t really explain prophecy, but let me tell you some basics that I’m convinced are true. Admittedly, I’m not sure I know all I should about what he means by prophecy, but from the chapter here, when you hear the word “prophecy” in this text, don’t think of a guy with a big gray beard and a white robe with a placard that says, “Repent! The end is near,” walking down Main Street or that he is just predicting a future event. Sometimes when we think of prophecy we think only of speaking of something that is going to happen in the future—that we prophesy an earthquake or we prophesy a world war or we prophesy something’s going to happen to somebody. That’s prophecy, but that’s not all prophecy’s about.

The word “prophesy” or “prophecy,” in its basic root meaning means to speak before. It means to speak before, and it had more than one meaning. Listen to me carefully. It can mean to speak before an event happens, that’s the prophecy where “Thus saith the Lord, there’s going to be an earthquake in San Diego. It’s going to be leveled,” whatever it might be. You predicted it, and it happened. You prophesied. That’s what we think about prophecy. But the word also in the New Testament was used for just speaking forth or before people. Prophecy is also used with the idea that when you speak the Word of God to individuals inspired by the Holy Spirit, that you are speaking before them, you’re talking to them, and that you’re speaking forth the Word of God. I do believe, and I don’t think it’s exclusively this, that this gift of prophecy that Paul is so animate is a priority over tongues in the church has to do with speaking forth God’s Word, that God’s Word is preached or taught or spoken.

When we finish church tonight, you can gather in the foyer and you can prophesy by quoting Scripture to people or sharing what God lays on your heart. Have you ever been just talking to a friend and need to get just a little word of encouragement into them, and you quote a psalm or you quote a verse or quote Romans 8:28. Who hasn’t quoted Romans 8:28, “ . . . all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose,” and their hearts are comforted or strengthened or encouraged. You’re speaking forth, you’re speaking before, you’re speaking out the Word of God. But I do believe that when the Bible is preached and taught that also could be looked at as a form of prophecy, that also there could be a word of wisdom, there could be a word of knowledge, and there could be prophecy coming forth from the pulpit, if the Bible’s opened and God’s Word is read and expounded in the

power of the Holy Spirit. Again, keep in context here.

Now, Paul's going to break it down for us and explain the two and contrast the two. Notice in verse 2 he says, "For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue" Notice the first word in verse 2, "for," so I take a little pencil and write a little line there and put the word "reason." It's indicating the reason for what he said in verse 1, "Follow after charity"—love—"and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy,"—why, Paul? The answer is, verse 2, "For"—here's the reason—"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." This point in verse 2 is so important and so foundational that you can take it to the bank; that is, when a person speaks in a tongue that they are speaking " . . . not unto men, but unto God"

Why do I emphasize that? Because I've been in many church services where someone will speak in tongues in the assembly, someone will supposedly interpret the tongues, it could be the tongue speaker that interprets it, which is fine, or it could be someone else, and when they interpret it, it's nine times out of ten, "Yay, My children, I love you. My children, trust in Me. Don't be afraid. I am your God. Be strong." It's God speaking to us. That cannot be the interpretation of the tongue. Tongues is not speaking to men, it's speaking to God. God doesn't need that to speak to us. He speaks by prophecy and by the preaching of the Word and by quoting Scripture to other people.

In the book of Acts, chapter 2, where we have the well-known chapter of the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was given, we talked about this Sunday morning, you need to remember the church was born on the day of Pentecost, and they all spoke in what? Tongues, right? The Greek word is *diálektos*. They had an actual language. It was a literal language that they spoke, and there were people gathered because of Pentecost there in Jerusalem, " . . . because that every man heard them speak in his own language"—*diálektos*. So, it wasn't an unknown tongue, and some feel that there are two kinds of tongues—tongues that are a real language and some that are just a tongue of angels. It's unfortunate that we have the word "unknown" in some of our Bibles because again I said it's not in the text. It's just a tongue. The tongues of Acts 2 were heard by those who were unbelievers gathered there, and it says in Acts 2 that they heard them say " . . . the wonderful works of God." So, you can take that to the bank. Whenever someone in the Spirit, genuinely, authentically speaks in tongues, they are speaking to God, not to man. It's a form of praying or praising or worshiping and we'll see singing sometimes to God in the Spirit.

Paul says, verse 2, " . . . for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries." Nor did Peter preach in a tongue, he preached in the Aramaic language to the gathered people, and there was repentance and faith and many came to the Lord. I don't believe tongues is to be used primarily by missionaries going to foreign lands where God gives them the ability to speak a language they never learned, which God can do that, God's a God of miracles, and it wouldn't surprise me if He did that, but that's not what's being taught here about the gift of tongues. So, " . . . for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries. 3 But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men"—there's the contrast. This is why

Paul thinks it's more important to prophesy in church in the corporate assembly than to speak in tongues because if you speak in tongues, you speak to God, no man understands you; you, as a tongue speaker, don't even understand what you're saying.

Verse 3, "But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men,"—and notice the three things that happen when you prophesy—"edification, and exhortation, and comfort"—or encouragement. Edification means to build up. It's a key word in this section. Six times this word is used, to be built up. When you come to church and you gather together, worship, and hear the Word, you should be built up. This is why it's important to come to church, it builds you up. Again, the imagery there is that the church is a building, and God builds us up through prophecy.

Secondly, there's going to be exhortation. This is what's called stirring up. So, the church is to be built up by prophecy and stirred up by prophecy, and then comforted, which means to be bound up or encouraged through the word of comfort. I believe as the Word of God is taught or prophesied, spoken, as in when the Scriptures are shared, you feel built up, you feel stirred up, you feel bound up, you're blessed because the Spirit of God has taken the Word of God and encouraged your heart.

Verse 4, "He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church"—again, it's very simple. If you speak in tongues, you might be built up, you might be edified, but the person sitting next to you is kind of like, "Uhhh, I don't know what's going on."

When I was younger, I would invite some of my friends to church in my Pentecostal church, and they would all start speaking in tongues. My friends would just look at me, their eyes would get big, and they would literally run for their lives. Then, I had to go to school on Monday and they said, "Whoa! What was that? That's a trip, man. I can't believe John Miller's church. What were they doing? What was that lady jabbering?" It just freaks them out. We're going to see later, next week, Paul says, ". . . will they not say that ye are mad?" I said, "Yeah, they sure do!" If you all speak in tongues and no one interprets, they're going to say, "They're just out of their mind."

How about on the day of Pentecost when they all spoke in tongues and the cloven fire...which, by the way, it never happened again, even in Acts. Listen to me very carefully. Not everything that happened in the book of Acts is normative for the church today. What God did then is not necessarily normative for the church today. I know I make a statement like that and people say, "Get behind me, Satan, you're quenching the Spirit." Again, it's true. The focus is that when we gather corporately in the church, verse 19, that there's mutual edification and exhortation and comfort. This is my prayer for our church.

Verse 4, "He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church." I wrote down Ephesians 4:11-12 next to that because God's given to the church pastor-teachers for the building up of the saints.

Verse 5, “I would that ye all spake with tongues,”—Paul’s not against 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.” If you’re in a public assembly, and you want to speak in tongues, you need to make sure that you have the gift of interpreting the words you’re saying so others can be blessed and built up or someone there has the gift of interpreting; or if not, then you’re supposed to keep silent and pray to yourself and to God and not be speaking in tongues. We’re going to see that it says even the number and the limits of how often that could happen when they get together and congregate with each other.

In verse 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.”

Beginning in verses 6-20, we see now Paul talking about the importance of not when you gather together having edification but having understanding that we’re using our brains. So many times Christians want to turn off their minds and only respond emotionally. There is nothing wrong with emotion, but emotions also should be controlled by Scripture and our minds. We should engage our minds. You can have both—emotions and use your brain.

Verse 6, “Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation,”—which I believe again primarily comes from Scripture—“or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?” I’m so blessed that Paul added that. When he says, “When I come to your church, what profit is there,” now I recommend you take that phrase, “What shall I profit you,” and use that as a question for yourself: In what way does my gift profit others? In what way does my gift being used for to bless and profit others? Ask yourself that question. He says, “. . . except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine,”—it’s not really going to do you any good. He’s using his own ministry of teaching the Word, and I love the fact that, as I said, that he talks about doctrine.

The word “doctrine,” by the way, which freaks some people out, they think doctrine’s a bad thing, simply means teaching, period. Doctrine is teaching. This is why in the Bible you’ll find the word “sound doctrine,” or “good doctrine.” It means sound teaching, good teaching, or right teaching. Doctrine just means teaching, so we want to be taught the truth of God that’s found in His Word.

Paul uses an illustration in verse 7, he actually uses several here in these verses, about the importance of intelligent communication. He says, “And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp”—a flute or a stringed instrument, the Greek word translated “harp” is where we get our word for the word ‘guitar’—“except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped?” I love Paul’s creative illustration here. I’ve always thought it’s so good.

I’m not a musician. You don’t want me to grab the guitar and start to play because if you do,

you'll go like this, "Oh, please take that away from Pastor Miller." If I tried to play the "keys" or the piano, you'd go, "Oh, please, take that away from Pastor Miller." Did you ever have young people or one of your children learning an instrument and you're like, "Oh, Lord, please help them learn quickly because we cannot endure the noise," or whatever.

When you're playing a flute or you're playing a harp with strings, it must be played properly to communicate or you can't really benefit from the sound. How do you know what it is that's piped or harped? Even in a musical instrument, it must be played properly to communicate so that there is building up.

Then Paul uses the illustration in the military realm of a trumpeter, or one who would blow the trumpet to rally the troops or to get them to charge in the battle. Verse 8, "For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" So, you have the trumpet blown for getting up in the morning, the trumpet blown for coming to eat, the trumpet blown for when it's time to go to battle, but if you just grabbed that trumpet—some dude grabs it and starts blowing it, TEEEEEE! The soldiers would go, "Uhhhhh, do we get up? Do we go to bed? Do we eat? Do we charge? Do we march? What do we do?" It wasn't given a distinct sound. They wouldn't know how to respond properly to that.

Then Paul uses the illustration of just normal, everyday conversation, that we have to speak in words that people can understand. He says, here's the application, "So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood,"—which is always a good idea. Whenever you're talking to somebody, it's always a good idea to use simple words that can be understood. " . . . how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air."

Sometimes we discover a new word and we throw it into our conversation. We don't know what it means or we just learned what it means, and you've got to remember, if you had to look up what it meant, probably everyone that hears you has got to look up what it means. That happens to me sometimes when I'm preaching, I'll discover a new word and I'll go, "Oh, I can use that word and people will be impressed and really think I'm smart, but I guess I should make sure I know what it means," and then I realize, if I have to look it up, don't use it because I don't know what it means, a lot of others may not know what it means; so we're to speak so we get understanding. All these illustrations are basically just saying, when we gather in the church—the worship, the prayers, the preaching—everything should be understood. Everything should be something we can comprehend so that we can be built up by it.

Verse 10, Paul says, "There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices"—which is a reference to languages in the world—"and none of them is without signification"—or significance, or a better translation would be meaning. There's all these different languages. Here's the application, "Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice"—or the language—"I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me. 12 Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church."

What's this "barbarian" stuff? Paul's talking about just using words that can be understood, and he brings up the idea of different languages. Now, I only know English, and I don't know it very well, but I've traveled around the world and I remember so many times when I was in a foreign country and they were speaking a foreign language, I was in Peru a couple different times and went on a one-week trip after my ministry time, yes, I took a surfboard, and went with a group of other Peruvian surfers, believers, and I was the only "gringo," and I couldn't speak a lick of Spanish, and a whole week with these guys and they're talking, "I don't know anything you're saying," and they'd be laughing, and they thought it was funny. I don't know what they're saying, then I found out they were laughing at the "gringo." They were laughing at me.

I was in China several times, and I remember hearing all the Chinese and the Mandarin, and I couldn't comprehend it, I could not understand it. It made no sense to me. So, when we gather in the church, that's why I think it's so strange that years ago, not so much today, but in the Roman Catholic Church the Mass used to be in Latin, and people couldn't even understand it. What purpose is there to come to church if you can't understand anything that's being said?

I have a son that actually is a linguist, and he actually is fluent in Spanish and he speaks Mandarin Chinese fluently and he understands it. I've had him speak to me in Mandarin and thought, That just sounds like noise to me. It makes no sense.

When we gather in the church, the focus needs to be instruction that we understand, that we can be built up. That's not going to happen if we speak in tongues and there's no one to interpret the tongue. "Therefore If I know not the meaning of the voice"—or the language—"I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian" As far as the Greeks were concerned, the beautiful language of Greek, they considered anyone who didn't know Greek to be a barbarian. They felt like that if you didn't know Greek, you were a barbarian. It's one of those words that kind of means like what it sounds—you're just speaking bar-bar, barbarian, gibberish. It just sounds like, "Bar-bar." It makes no sense. He's basically saying, if you come to church and you all speak in tongues, nobody interprets, you're all a bunch of barbarians. You sound like, "Bar-bars."

Verse 12, Paul says to those who do speak in tongues that they should pray to be able to interpret it. "Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts"—they in Corinth were zealous of spiritual gifts, he exhorts them—"seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church." Why? Because that's the loving thing. If you are seeking after love, you're going to want to build up, to edify, there's that key word, verse 12, the church.

Verse 13, "Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret." If you do speak in tongues, you better pray that you can interpret it. If you don't, then you shouldn't speak.

Verse 14, "For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth but my understanding is unfruitful. 15 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."

I want to point out the three times Paul says, “I will.” “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.” The fact that he uses that phrase, “I will,” indicates that whether you are speaking in tongues or you’re speaking in a known language, you have control over that language. I say that because I’ve seen people that said, “Well, I got the gift of tongues, and I can’t control it. I just have to start speaking. I just want to speak out.” One guy said, “I got the gift of tongues and I was going through a drive-thru at Jack in the Box, and I went up to the speaker and I was going to order a hamburger and instead I started speaking in tongues.” I don’t think so. Like all the gifts of the Spirit, you can choose to yield to them or not. You have control. The Holy Spirit does not take away self-control, He brings self-control, so you have the ability to speak or not to speak.

Verse 16, “Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned”—I’m not sure of this “unlearned” here. Some say it’s an unbeliever, but he makes reference to them—“say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?” The “unlearned” is probably a reference to a new Christian or a baby Christian or an untaught Christian. If you speak in a language they don’t know or understand, how can they say, “Amen,” at your giving of thanks? You might be giving thanks well, but they can’t agree with you. They can’t say, “Amen,” in the giving of thanks. They “ . . . understandeth not what thou sayest? 17 For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified.”

When we gather together at church, there is to be intelligent language understood so that we could say, “Amen.” By the way, evidently it was okay to say, “Amen,” in church, so that’s cool. I agree, “Amen,” so be it. Now, he says, you’re “ . . . givest thanks well,”—remember when you speak in tongues, you’re speaking to God? So, you’re giving thanks well—“but the other is not edified.” If the other is not edified, why are you doing it? You’re not walking in love. Don’t forget 1 Corinthians 13. We’re supposed to be thinking about and loving other people in the Lord.

Verse 18, “I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all”—Paul was from Texas, you all. Notice that Paul says, “I speak with tongues more than ye all: 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.” The Corinthians were doing the opposite. Remember when they gathered for the Lord’s Supper and the rich people brought their food and wouldn’t share it with the poor people? They were gluttoning themselves; they were getting stuffed with their food. They were drinking and getting drunk before they took Communion, and they were not caring about anyone else. Now Paul’s saying, “When you gather and you start speaking in tongues, no one can understand you. You’re the only one being built up. It defeats the very purpose for which we gather corporately.

Again, it could be inferred, I can’t be dogmatic about it, but when Paul says in verse 18, “I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all”—and then says,—“Yet in the church” In light of what Paul said there, you would guess most likely that Paul then is speaking in tongues in his private devotions. Again, it doesn’t clearly say that, but it implies that. If you said, “I speak in tongues more than you all, yet in the church,” where does he speak in tongues? It

must be in his private devotion. It must be alone with God as he worships God. I love Romans 8 where it says that the Spirit Himself groans within us and prays for us. I believe that could also kind of convey the idea of what speaking in tongues can be—it's groaning and talking to God, a language I don't know or understand, but God does, and God interprets that language. "Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding . . . than ten thousand . . ." That phrase in the Greek, "ten thousand" just means a bunch of words, tons of words. I'd rather speak just five that you could understand and be built up.

Then Paul closes, verse 20, "Brethren, be not children in understanding"—in other words, grow up, mature. Don't be children in your understanding. Again, in Ephesians 4 God's given pastor-teachers, "For the perfecting of the saints . . . that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine"—so we want to mature and grow—"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God"—so—" . . . be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice"—which is a reference to evil or sin—"be ye children."

You don't have to know all about sin. Sometimes we want to have a testimony where we're real sinful, and I've heard testimonies that were embarrassing where you talk so much about your sin that you glorify your sinful past. Sometimes they turn into what I call "brag-imonies," not testimonies, brag-imonies, "I used to do this, and I used to do," and you go, "Wow! That's radical." I don't have a testimony. There's been people that have falsely lied about their sinful past so that they can have a wonderful testimony in the church. You don't need that. If you grew up in church, accepted Christ at a young age and lived for Christ all your life and never went into the world of sin, that's a powerful testimony. Amen? You don't have to wallow in your sinful past or get into detail where you're glorifying your sin. "I was lost, and now I'm found. I was blind, now I see. God saved me from my sins." So, " . . . be ye children,"—in understanding evil. You don't need to be educated in all the sinful things of this world—"but in understanding be men."

We'll go into the rest of the chapter next week, and, man, does it get specific—the guidant lines for tongues in the church and how the church should follow those guidelines. Let's pray.