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## I CORINTHIANS 14

Just in case you have not yet been convinced that the modern tongues movement is not one and the same as the tongues of the New Testament, then hang on for chapter 14! Paul is going to lay down the rules for tongues speaking in church. These five rules have been ignored by the Pentecostals and Charismatics. To adhere to them would put the tongue speakers out of business.

In chapter 14 Paul continues his discussion of Spiritual gifts by reminding them that love should be their main pursuit. Paul contrasts the gifts of tongues and prophecy and sharply points out that the one prophesying was greater than the tongues speaker. Spiritual gifts should be desired and the gift of prophecy, not tongues, should be their goal. Tongue speaking did not do the hearers any good unless they could understand the language. Of course God could understand, but in church they were not trying to help God to know His own Word.

A person who prophesied edified the church. A person who spoke in a language unknown to his hearers only edified himself.

It is obvious from the text that the church at Corinth was having a problem with some who had the gift of tongues. Remember that all did not have the gift of tongues. In the church some must have been speaking in unknown languages while the others sat and wondered what they were saying. Paul uses an illustration in which he compares

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improper tongues speakers to musicians who did not play a melody on their instruments but just random notes. No one could understand or enjoy the music.

The military has always used a trumpet to signal certain events. Even today soldiers are awakened by reveille and go to bed by taps. Through the years every soldier going into battle knew charge and retreat. Paul points out that if a man blew a trumpet, but without a certain melody, no one would have any idea whether to get up, go to bed, charge the enemy or retreat. It would be confusion. So is speaking a language unknown to the hearer.

On our first trip into Mexico with some friends, we became lost in Renosa and had no idea how to get back downtown. We saw a man working in his yard, and stopped to ask directions. Our friend, Harold, could speak no Spanish and the man in the yard could speak no English. Harold asked the man how to get downtown, using the appropriate gestures. The man's reply was absolutely useless because he had no idea what we wanted and we had no idea what he told us. Just as Paul pointed out, we were barbarians to him and he was a barbarian to us. After several minutes of talking and arm waving we left, no better off. We were still lost.

The goal of every member should be the edifying or building up of the church and not self. That was the intended purpose of the Spiritual gifts in the first place. For this reason, any person who spoke

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in a language unknown to his hearers was to pray that he would be able to interpret what he said, so that he could be understood.

Any word italicized in the Bible means that it was added for clarity or smoother reading and was not actually in the original. If you will notice the word “unknown” in “unknown tongue” you will see that it is in italics. In this case it just says “tongue” or a language. Of course any language I cannot understand is an “unknown” tongue to me.

I was at a meeting one day when a Spanish national was called on to pray. As he prayed, I had no idea what he was saying so I was unable to say “Amen” to his prayer. It may have been a great prayer, but because I couldn’t understand it I was not built up by it.

Paul spoke with more languages than anyone in Corinth. Yet, he says that he would rather speak only five words in a language his hearers could understand than to speak ten thousand words in a language they could not understand.

Paul’s point so far is this: It is useless to speak to a church in a language no one understands. The speaker is edified, but the rest are left wondering. This kind of speaking in tongues was not the design of God when He instituted the gift of tongues.

In verse 22 we are told that tongues were for a sign to unbelievers while prophesying was for those who believed. There is only one way that tongues could have served as a sign for unbelievers. On the day

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of Pentecost unbelievers heard the Word preached in their native language and knew it was a work of God. Today those who speak in tongues take tongues as a sign, not to unbelievers, but that a believer has received the Holy Ghost.

Verse 26 again instructs us, "Let all things be done unto edifying." Everything done in church, whether singing, preaching, testimonies, etc., should not be done to edify the individual but the whole congregation. If the congregation is not built up by an action, then it should not be done.

Verse 27 brings us to the rules Paul lays down for speaking in tongues in church.

**Rule 1:** Speaking in tongues was limited to two, or at the most three, people in a church service. (verse 27) It would seem that at Corinth there was an abundance of people who spoke in tongues and who wanted to speak in every service.

**Rule 2:** The two or three who spoke in tongues must speak one at a time. Obviously there had been people at Corinth speaking in tongues at the same time. The result of such is confusion and Paul states in verse 33 that such was not of God because God was not the author of confusion.

**Rule 3:** If no one is able to interpret what is said by those two or three who speak in tongues, then they should just keep silent. (verse 28) I was watching a Pentecostal preacher on television who suddenly spoke a dozen or so words in an "unknown tongue." He then said, "I don't know what I said but the Lord enjoyed it." Such tongue speak-

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ing is clearly against Paul's teaching on the subject.

It must be understood that tongues were not some uncontrollable utterance that just flowed out when the Holy Spirit came upon a person. This gift was controlled by the person who possessed it. He could speak or he could keep quiet. Not allowing a person to speak in tongues if there was no interpreter would have killed the tongues movement long ago.

**Rule 4:** Women were not allowed to speak in tongues or prophecy in a church service. (verse 34) Paul did not allow women to teach men nor in any way to exercise authority over them. (I Timothy 2:12) These two verses certainly do away with Scriptural authority for women preachers! Women did and still do occupy a very important place in churches. In most churches it would be impossible to exist without them. However, they are not to be in leadership positions. Not allowing women to speak in services would have killed the modern tongues movement early on.

I am sure that the question comes up about Philip's four daughters which did prophesy. (Acts 21:9) That they prophesied cannot be questioned, but that they did not prophesy in a public service such as Paul was speaking about, can neither be questioned. Else, Paul was not speaking under inspiration when he wrote I Corinthians 14.

**Rule 5:** A church service should be decent and orderly. (verse 40) The word "decently" is the Greek word *EUSCHEMONOS* and means: in a

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becoming manner; with propriety; gracefully. The word "order" is the Greek word *TAXIS* and means: well regulated conduct; arrangement; orderliness. A church service that is out of control and confused is an unscriptural service. Paul described such a service in verse 23 where he tells of a service in which all were speaking in tongues. An unbeliever in such a meeting would say that they were crazy.

In summary of this chapter, it might be well to contrast modern modern tongue speakers with tongues taught in the New Testament.

1. Tongues in the New Testament were languages. Tongues today are unintelligible utterances.
2. Tongues in the New Testament were for a sign to the unbelievers. Tongues today are a sign to believers that they have received the "Baptism in the Holy Ghost."
3. Tongues in the New Testament were to edify and build up the church. Tongues today edify the individual. It is an experience that makes the speaker personally enriched.
4. Tongues in the New Testament were limited to two or three in a public service. Tongues today are spoken by as many in a service as the "Spirit" moves.
5. Tongues in the New Testament were to be restrained unless an interpreter was present. Tongues today are spoken in services when no one knows what is being said.

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6. Tongues in the New Testament were to be spoken one at a time in a service. Tongues today are spoken by a many at one time as the "Spirit" moves.

7. Tongues in the New Testament were not spoken by women in the public services. Tongues today are spoken by women in public services.

It should be clear to all that the tongues of the New Testament and the tongues of today are not one and the same.