

Chapter Fourteen

In Chapter Fourteen Paul brings the subjects of love and spiritual gifts to a very practical application for the believers in Corinth. Prophecy was the highest gift the Corinthians could seek because it had the greatest potential for maximum church edification (1st Cor. 14:1-5). Tongues was the most abusable gift as it had the potential to not edify anybody (1st Cor. 14:6-12). The Interpretation of Tongues provided for the needed edification (1st Cor. 14:13-19). Prophecy and tongues are contrasted a second time with reference to their purpose and the effects their use can have in the local church (1st Cor. 14:20-25). Paul closes the subject with an outline for order in the local assembly (1st Cor. 14:26-40).

Especially Prophecy

1. In making the abstract practical, Paul issues two imperatives (1st Cor. 14:1a). This is an expansion upon the statement he made prior to the hyperballistic way of love (cf. 1st Cor. 12:31).
 - a. Pursue. Pres.act.imper. διώκω #1377: *to pursue, persecute*. Also cf. διωγμός #1375: *persecution*.
Positive items to pursue/persecute:
 - 1) Uprightness (Rom. 9:30; 1st Tim. 6:11; 2nd Tim. 2:22).
 - 2) Hospitality (Rom. 12:13).
 - 3) Peace (Rom. 14:19; Heb. 12:14).
 - 4) Love (1st Cor. 14:1),
 - 5) The Good (1st Thess. 5:15).
 - b. Seek. Pres.act.imper. ζηλόω #2206: *to burn with zeal*. Also cf. ζήλος #2205 & ζηλωτής #2207 (Lk. 6:15; Jn. 2:17; Acts 1:13; 5:17; 7:9; 13:45; 17:5; 21:20; 22:3; Rom. 10:2; 13:13; 1st Cor. 3:3; 12:31; 13:4; 14:1,12,39; 2nd Cor. 7:7,11; 9:2; 11:2; 12:20; Gal. 1:14; 4:17,18; 5:20; Phil. 3:6 (w/ διώκω); Tit. 2:14; Heb. 10:27; Jas. 3:14,16; 4:2; 1st Pet. 3:13; Rev. 3:19). [EDNT](#) has a great summary. [LN](#) synonyms. [Trench](#).
2. In seeking spiritual gifts, the most to be sought is Prophecy (1st Cor. 14:1b,12). μᾶλλον δὲ ἵνα προφητεύητε.
 - a. μᾶλλον δὲ *but rather, or rather*, or simply *rather*, introduces an expression or thought that supplements and thereby corrects what has preceded (Rom. 8:34; Gal. 4:9; 1st Cor. 14:1,5). Μᾶλλον δέ is used as a corrective, to make a saying more precise (*or rather*) (cf. Lausberg §§784-86). “Preferably” (Grammatical Analysis of the Greek NT).
 - b. προφητεύητε 2pl.pres.act.subj. προφητεύω #4395: **■** *to proclaim an inspired revelation*; **■** *to tell about something that is hidden from view, tell, reveal*; **■** *to foretell something that lies in the future, foretell*.
 - 1) Prayer-prophecy has already been dealt with for both men and women in the assembly (1st Cor. 11:4-5).
 - 2) The spiritual gift of prophet has already been taught (1st Cor. 12:10), placed second after the Apostles (1st Cor. 12:28-29), and declared to be temporary (1st Cor. 13:8-9).
 - 3) The Apostles and the Prophets laid the foundation for the Church which would be built upon by the Evangelists and the Pastor-Teachers (Eph. 2:20; 3:5; 4:11-12).
 - 4) The link between praying and prophesying is found in many places (Gen. 20:7; 1st Sam. 12:23; Jer. 27:18; Lk. 2:27), and it is reasonable to view Church Prophets as functioning within a prayer context.
 - 5) Church Prophets played a significant role in the early Church (Acts 11:20-30; 13:1; 15:32-35; 19:6; 21:8-14; 1st Thess. 5:20; 1st Tim. 1:18; 4:14; 2nd Pet. 1:19-21).
 - 6) Prophecy was among the sign gifts (signs of a true Apostle) which established the divine sanction for apostolic ministries, churches, and Scriptures (2nd Cor. 12:12 cf. Acts 2:22).
 - 7) False prophets and their messages were angelic-conflict battle fronts for the apostolic Church (2nd Thess. 2:2; Tit. 1:12; 2nd Pet. 2:1-3; 1st Jn. 4:1; Rev. 2:20).

[Pastor Bob’s translation of 1 Cor. 14:1] Actively make love your continuous pursuit and employ your spiritual gifts with a burning zeal; most especially that you might proclaim inspired revelation (prophecy).

3. The Corinthian tongue speakers were speaking to God alone and “edifying” themselves (1st Cor. 14:2,4a).
 - a. This violates the purpose for tongues where others would hear the speaker in their own native language speaking of the mighty deeds of God (Acts 2:3-11).
 - b. Speaking to God alone violates the purpose for spiritual gifts (1st Pet. 4:10), especially communication gifts (1st Pet. 4:11).
 - c. No one understands (lit. hears) violates the purpose for having “ears to hear” (Rev. 2:7 & etc.).
 - d. Speaking mysteries violates the purpose for the Dispensation of the Church (Eph. 3:4-10).
4. The Corinthian prophets spoke to men for edification, exhortation and consolation (1st Cor. 14:3,4b).
 - a. Edification. οἰκοδομή #3619: process of building, *building, construction*. Cognate terms include οἰκοδομέω #3618, ἐπιοικοδομέω #2026 & συνοικοδομέω #4925. Edification was developed in earlier chapters (1st Cor. 3:9,10,12,14; 8:1,10; 10:23) and is extensively developed in this chapter (14:3,4,5,12,17,26).
 - b. Exhortation. παράκλησις #3874: act of emboldening another in belief or course of action, *encouragement, exhortation*. Cognate terms include παρακαλέω #3870 & παράκλητος #3875. Comfort will become a big theme to begin 2nd Corinthians (1:3,4,5,6,7).
 - c. Consolation. παραμυθία #3889: that which serves as encouragement to one who is depressed or in grief, *encouragement, comfort, consolation*. Cognate terms include παραμυθέομαι #3888 & παραμύθιον #3890. Only 6 NT uses (Jn. 11:19,31; 1st Cor. 14:3; Phil. 2:1; 1st Thess. 2:12; 5:14).
5. A mono-gifted church of tongues speakers without interpreters would not edify anybody. A mono-gifted church of prophets would be greater (but still not ideal) (1st Cor. 14:5).

What Profit?

1. What profit is there to communicating in any language if the communication is not understandable? (1st Cor. 14:6) The pentecost pilgrims profited because they understood the message in their own languages (Acts 2:6,8,11).
 - a. The “unless” from verse 5 explains the “unless” from verse 6.
 - b. The interpreter of tongues allowed for corporate edification when a foreign-language speaking visitor was among them.
 - c. Revelation, knowledge, prophecy or teaching demonstrates the wide variety of speaking ministries that Tongues or the Interpretation of Tongues could participate in.
 - d. Paul has already paralleled profit to edification (1st Cor. 10:23) and profitability was a large concern for Paul in every ministry he engaged in (Acts 20:20; 1st Cor. 6:12; 10:23,33; 13:3; 14:6; 15:32; 2nd Cor. 12:1; Phil. 4:17; 1st Tim. 4:8; 2nd Tim. 3:6; Tit. 3:8).
2. Man-made instruments are designed to make intelligible sounds (1st Cor. 14:7-8).
 - a. Musical instruments like the flute or harp have no souls and yet produce pleasant effects to the human soul (v.7). “Lifeless things” (τὰ ἄψυχα).
 - b. Musical instruments have been functional in battle from all antiquity (v.8).
3. The Corinthian tongue speakers were like improperly played instruments. They were not functioning according to their design and were utterly ineffective (1st Cor. 14:9 cf. 9:26).
4. Paul rightly observes the nature of language (1st Cor. 14:10). (φωνή #5450)
 - a. There are a great many in the world. The 15th edition of the Ethnologue lists 6,912 languages on earth today. 516 of them are nearly extinct and some linguists believe more than 3,000 of them will be extinct by the year 2100.
 - b. Every language contains vocabulary & grammar. Grammar is generally comprised of morphology and syntax. (Advanced grammar includes phonetics, phonology, semantics, and pragmatics).
 - c. Language communicates thought from the language speaker to the language hearer. That’s what language does, but that’s not what the Corinthian tongue speakers were doing. No voice is voiceless (ἄφωνος #880).

5. The “meaning” of a vocal language is its “power” (δύναμις #1411) (1st Cor. 14:11 cf. 4:19,20).
 - a. Linguistic barriers are reciprocally barbaric. βάρβαρος #915 (Acts 28:2,4; Rom. 1:14; 1st Cor. 14:11; Col. 3:11). Note: The Greeks viewed all non-Greeks to be barbarian. In this text each considers the other barbarian.
 - b. Paul was hardly a barbarian but to anyone unable to understand his naturally spoken languages he would have the edifying effectiveness of a barbarian.
6. Paul doesn’t tell the Corinthians to stop speaking in tongues, but to direct their charismatic zeal towards the building up of the church (1st Cor. 14:12).

Mindless Spiritual Activity 1 Cor. 14:14-19

1. Paul explores the possibility of being spiritually active but mentally unfruitful (1st Cor. 14:14).
 - a. “If” is a 3rd class condition. The subjunctive of προσεύχομαι #4336 combined with the dative of γλῶσσα #1100 completes the hypothetical conditions.
 - b. Praying in a tongue is a possible activity for the human spirit to engage in if so gifted, and yet the construction of 1st Cor. 14:14 is so like 1st Cor. 13:1-3 that the factuality of this question remains.
 - c. In such a case the human spirit functions apart from the mentality of the soul. ὁ δὲ νοῦς μου ἄκαρπός ἐστιν. ἄκαρπος #175: unfruitful, fruitless (7x: Mt. 13:22; Mk. 4:9; 1st Cor. 14:14; Eph. 5:11; Tit. 3:14; 2nd Pet. 1:8; Jude 12).
2. The thought of mindless spirituality brings Paul to a “what then is” “what’s that all about?” (1st Cor. 14:15a; cf. Rom. 3:9; 6:1,15; 7:7; 9:14,30; 11:7; 1st Cor. 10:19; 14:15,26; Phil. 1:18).
3. Paul answers his own “what then is” by saying that his prayers and singing will be spiritual, mindful, and fruitful (1st Cor. 14:15b).
 - a. Anything mindless violates the principle of volitional service (1st Cor. 9:17; 2nd Cor. 9:7; Phm. 14; 1st Pet. 5:2).
 - b. Anything mindless violates the principle of being God’s fellow-worker (1st Cor. 3:9; 1st Thess. 3:2; 3rd Jn. 8).
4. The concept of mindless spirituality takes Paul back to the issue of non-edification in the gathering of the local church (1st Cor. 14:16-17).
 - a. The One Who Fills the Place of the Idiot is expected to utter the “Amen” when the blessing of thanksgiving is offered in the local church.
 - 1) ὁ ἀναπληρῶν pres.act.ptc. ἀναπληρώω #378: *to make complete* (Mt. 13:14; 1st Cor. 14:16; 16:17; Gal. 6:2; Phil. 2:30; 1st Thess. 2:16).
 - 2) τὸν τόπον acc.sing. τόπος #5157: used 93x NT; *place (position)*. Possibly also “opportunity” (BDAG 4).
 - 3) τοῦ ἰδιώτου gen.sing. ἰδιώτης #2399: *amateur, layman, outsider* (Used 7x: Acts 4:13; 1st Cor. 14:16,23,24; 2nd Cor. 11:6).
 - a) [Trench](#) has a good article on the uneducated and untrained apostles.
 - b) The ἰδιώτης is always a contrast but the opposite of the ἰδιώτης can be any profession that requires specific training and expertise.
 - c) The Christian Way of Life is a “profession” that requires specific Biblical training and spiritual expertise. Baby believers who have not yet been trained in doctrine are ἰδιῶται. While they maintain that status they are functionally indistinguishable from unbelievers (1st Cor. 14:23-24; cf. 3:1-3).
 - b. The One Who Fills the Place of the Idiot is not the the only individual in the local church who is oblivious to the tongues-speaker’s thanksgiving prayer. The One With a Psalm, The One With a Teaching, and The One With a Revelation would be equally unaware (1st Cor. 14:26).
 - c. The Amen. It is not the idiot who is expected to Amen the thanksgiving blessing but the one who fills the gap when the worship service provides an opportunity to introduce the untrained (idiot) believer to the teachings and practices of the local church.

- 1) ἀμήν #281: strong affirmation of what is stated; as expression of faith *let it be so, truly, amen*.
- 2) Hebrew. אָמֵן #543: *verily, truly, amen*. The LXX typically uses γένοιτο (opt. from γίνομαι #1096).
- 3) The “Amen” can stand alone as a single word (Deut. 27:15-26) or it may be a longer discourse of praise (1st Kgs. 1:36-37; 1st Chr. 16:36) with a confirming and explanatory follow-up message (Neh. 8:6-8). [Jeremiah even utters a sarcastic “Amen” with a condemning and revelatory follow-up message (Jer. 28:5-8).]
- 4) The most significant use of “Amen” is the Lord Jesus Christ’s adverbial use for describing His faithful teachings (over 100x). This is most fitting for the God of Amen (Isa. 65:16_{x2}; Rev. 3:14).
- 5) The One Who Fills the Gap doesn’t say “Amen.” He says “the” Amen. It’s more than a single word utterance—it is a discourse. He delivers the confirming and explanatory follow-up message.

Pastor Bob’s translation of 1st Cor. 14:16 If you bless in the spirit otherwise (without the mind), how will the One Who Fills the Gap in the opportunity of the untrained believer be able to deliver the confirming and explanatory follow-up message (the Amen) considering that he does not know what your thanksgiving message communicated?

5. Paul testified to more tongues speaking than the Corinthians outside the local church, but admitted his preference to ministering to believers in the local church (1st Cor. 14:18-19).
 - a. Paul was thankful for every tongues-speaking ministry God had ever given him (1st Cor. 14:18). This activity is evidently evangelism-focused (cf. Rom. 1:8; 1st Cor. 1:4,14; Phil. 1:3; Phm. 4).
 - b. Paul contrasts his tongues-speaking with what he prefers to do “in the church” (1st Cor. 14:19a).
 - c. Speaking five words mindfully is preferable to a myriad of words mindlessly in a tongue (1st Cor. 14:19b).
 - d. The goal of mindful communication is “catechism” instruction (κατηχέω #2727). Throughout church history the catechumen was one who had received instruction in the basic doctrines of Christianity before being admitted to membership in a church.

Prophecy and Tongues Contrasted Again

1. The summary of what Paul has been presenting throughout this chapter (and really since chapters 2&3) is given in verse 20: grow up.
 - a. Do not be children in your thoughts. παιδίον #3813. Mindless spirituality places the believer at risk for infantile thinking.
 - b. The only venue for infantile thinking is in the realm of wickedness (κακία #2549). νηπιάζω #3515 imperative verb from νήπιος #3516.
 - c. Be an adult in your thoughts. By engaging the mind in every spiritual endeavor the believer becomes mature τέλειος #5046. This is the end-result of spiritual perception and application of God’s Word.
 - d. The contrast between νήπιοι and τέλειοι goes all the way back to 1st Cor. 2:6 & 3:1.
2. The Law prophesied the coming spiritual gift of tongues (1st Cor. 14:21 cf. Isa. 28:11-13).
 - a. “The Law” technically references the Pentateuch of Moses but in a wider sense it equals Holy Scriptures generally.
 - 1) The most authoritative part gives its name to the whole (Jn. 10:34 cf. Ps. 81:6; Jn. 12:34 cf. Ps. 109:4; Isa. 9:6; Dan. 7:14; Rom. 3:19 preceded by vv.10-18 quoting various psalms and prophets).
 - 2) Longer expressions include the law and the prophets (Mt. 5:17; 7:12; 22:40; Lk. 16:16; Jn. 1:45) or the law and the prophets and the psalms (Lk. 24:44).
 - b. The stammering lips and foreign tongue of Isaiah is the Lord’s faithfulness to speak to Israel who will not listen (Isa. 28:11; 1st Cor. 14:21).
 - 1) Order on order, order on order. צֵן לְצֵן צֵן לְצֵן.
 - 2) Line on line, line on line. קוֹ לְקוֹ קוֹ לְקוֹ.
 - 3) A little here, a little there. זְעִיר זְעִיר שָׁם זְעִיר שָׁם.
 - 4) The Hebrew Old Testament comprises the order on order and the line on line given “here” when rest and repose were offered to Israel.
 - 5) The Greek New Testament comprises the order on order and line on line given “there” when Israel suffers its greatest dispersion.

3. Paul's conclusion and application (1st Cor. 14:22-25).
 - a. Paul recognized that the ecclesiastical spiritual gift of Tongues was a divine warning to unbelieving Israel who had their stewardship suspended and were on the verge of national dispersion (1st Cor. 14:22a; Isa. 28:11-13).
 - b. Paul went on to recognize that the ecclesiastical spiritual gift of Prophecy was also a divine warning (1st Cor. 14:22b).
 - 1) The working of prophecy within a local assembly produced conviction (ἐλέγχω #1651) and accountability (ἀνακρίνω #350) (1st Cor. 14:24).
 - 2) The prophetic gift disclosed the secrets of the heart bringing to light what only God can look upon (1st Sam. 16:7; 1st Chr 28:9; 2nd Chr. 6:30 || 1st Kgs. 8:39; Jer. 17:10; Lk. 16:15; Heb. 4:13).
 - 3) The Holy Spirit's ministry through the ministry of the Church Prophets was the most vivid means by which the Church became aware of God's personal presence among them (1st Cor. 14:25).
 - 4) Just as Tongues should have warned unbelieving Jews that they were "on thin ice" Prophecy warned believing Christians that accountability is direct and imminent (cf. Acts 5:3; 1st Pet. 4:17).

An Outline for Order in the Local Assembly

1. Paul sums up the chapter and the entire discourse on spiritual gifts (chs.12-14) with another "what is then?" conclusion (1st Cor. 14:26 cf. v.15).
2. The venue for this conclusion is the assembly of the saints (1st Cor. 14:26). ὅταν συνέρχησθε temporal particle ὅταν #3752 + pres.act.subj. συνέρχομαι #4905 (1st Cor. 11:17,18,20,33,34; 14:23,26).
3. An assembly of called out ones (ἐκκλησία #1577) can be total chaos if the purpose for their gathering (συνέρχομαι #4905) is forgotten (Acts 19:32).
4. Various believers on any given Sunday will have a contribution for the overall edification (1st Cor. 14:26).
 - a. A variety of gifts, ministries, and effects (1st Cor. 12:4-6) are displayed in the gathering of gifted ones.
 - b. This variety was especially necessary during the in-part-this and in-part-that era of the Dispensation of the Church (1st Cor. 13:8-10).
 - c. A variety of gifts, ministries, and effects are not displayed in the gathering of gifted ones. These "invisible heroes" operate "in secret" but not unrecognized (Matt. 6:4,6,18).
 - d. Every believer is gifted but not every gifted believer is trained and not every trained believer functions by standing in front (1st Pet. 4:10-11).
5. Even when the gift is trained and the ministry is valid there are still limitations placed upon individual believers for the purpose of corporate orderliness.
 - a. Limitations placed on believers with the gift of Tongues (1st Cor. 14:27-28).
 - 1) Although these believers primarily minister outside of church (1st Cor. 14:18-19), there are still occasions where their gift can be edifying in church—provided there is an interpreter! (1st Cor. 14:5-6)
 - 2) "Two or three" is usually a minimum (Deut. 17:6; 19:15; Matt. 18:16,20; 2nd Cor. 13:1; 1st Tim. 5:19), but here it is a maximum (1st Cor. 14:27).
 - 3) "In turn" means that a cacophony is never right. One by one the content must be delivered and interpreted. One single διερμηνευτής #1328 is acceptable because his witness will be combined with the tongues-speaker.
 - 4) The absence of an interpreter demands the silence of all tongues speakers (1st Cor. 14:28).
 - b. Limitations placed on believers with the gift of Prophecy (1st Cor. 14:29-30).
 - 1) Prophecy was appropriate for men with heads uncovered and women with heads covered (1st Cor. 11:4-5). The visible token of the woman's submission was necessary in the context of the angelic conflict (1st Cor 11:10).
 - 2) "Two or three" is once again the maximum for any given service.
 - 3) "The others" (οἱ ἄλλοι) would include the other one or two as well as additional prophets beyond the ones scheduled for speaking.

- 4) “The others” were necessary to “pass judgment.” διακρίνω #1252 (1st Cor. 4:7; 6:5; 11:29,31; 14:29).
 - a) There is no spiritual gift for the interpretation of prophecy.
 - b) The spirits of prophets are subject to prophets (1st Cor. 14:32).
 - 5) The two or three scheduled speakers may be pre-empted according to God’s schedule (1st Cor. 14:30).
 - 6) The presence of God the Holy Spirit with a live revelation demands the silence of all prophets and their previously disclosed revelations.
- c. The limitations placed on believers with the gift of Prophecy are expanded in two primary areas.
- 1) The first prophecy expansion details conditions with multiple prophets present (1st Cor. 14:31-33).
 - a) The expansion of silence assures undivided attention to the one speaking.
 - b) The expansion of learning assures that the teachers themselves are also exhorted.
 - c) The expansion of subjection keeps discipline in place.
 - d) The expansion of churches makes clear that these practices are universal for every assembly.
 - 2) The second prophecy expansion specifies conditions with both prophets and prophetesses in mixed-company (1st Cor. 14:34-35).
 - a) The terms “silence,” “subject,” “learn,” and “churches” link this expansion to the preceding one.
 - b) In mixed company of Prophets and Prophetesses the Prophetesses were to subject themselves and not lead the men in the teaching.
6. The corporate rebuke (36-38).
- a. The Corinthians had created their own practices contrary to the practices of other churches and contrary to the revealed Word of God (1st Cor. 14:36).
 - b. The Corinthians functioning under Divine inspiration were to acknowledge receipt of Paul’s Scripture (1st Cor. 14:37).
 - c. Any allegedly inspired Corinthians who could not testify to the inspiration of First Corinthians were rightly exposed as the frauds they were (1st Cor. 14:38).
7. The bottom line (39-40).
- a. All spiritual gifts are to be utilized and the most edifying are to be most desired (1st Cor. 14:39).
 - b. All local church activity must be intrinsically proper and accomplished in the proper way (1st Cor. 14:40).