

1 Corinthians: The Body of Christ vs. A Body in Crisis

New Pilgrim Baptist Church Bible Study

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Unity over the Gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor 12-14)

“Developing an Edifying Church Pt. 1” (1 Cor 14:1-25)

1. Believers should seek prophecy (vv. 1-11).

Paul begins this discussion by focusing on the importance of one of the key gifts of communication in the church, prophecy. Paul tried to encourage the church to no emphasize the gift of tongues as they had been. Rather, the better gift is prophecy. Prophecy involves foretelling and forthtelling. That is, prophecy requires that a person or a community be able to hear what God is currently telling them in an effort to express what God is going to do or what God is compelling them to do in the moment. Both are most certainly possible at the same time. But the gift of prophecy is essential for the church’s work.

2. Paul’s emphasis on prophecy is because edification is always better than mystification (vv. 12-19).

Paul charges the church to seek gifts that build other people up. He urged them to seek after gifts that demystified rather than those which mystified. It appears that many of the Corinthians were speaking in tongues in order to put on a show. They were able to prove their spiritual credibility by the kind of tongue that they spoke. But, as Paul was saying, no one could understand the tongues that people were speaking. Thus, what use did the tongues have? They were essentially worthless because the speaker was not understood by the listener. Paul said that he himself spoke in more tongues (spiritual languages and human tongues) than the rest of them. He would rather speak in words that could be understood than try to impress people with his spiritual prowess. The alternative is when speaking in tongues to strive to interpret those tongues so people can be edified, or the what God is saying can be made clear.

3. Prophecy at its best generates repentance (vv. 20-25).

Paul challenges the church to think differently about the gifts they have been given. Tongues were given as a sign for God’s bringing in of the nations. Prophecy is meant to work for the believer to preach and declare God’s presence to others. The problem, however, with tongues is that if everyone speaks them at the same time, it will bring confusion within the congregation. Those who do not understand them will consider the speakers insane, which happens all the time. But if the church commits to prophecy, those who are able to prophesy will help unbelievers recognize the reality of God, move them to repentance, and they may surrender to Christ. Paul urged the whole congregation to seek after prophetic gifts rather than everyone seeking to speak in tongues.