

BUILD UP YOUR NEIGHBOR / Sunday, July 27, 2014

Unifying Topic: SEEK THE GOOD OF OTHERS

Lesson Text

I. **Worship Everyone Can Understand** (1 Corinthians 14:13-17)

II. **Worship As Mature Believers** (1 Corinthians 14:18-21)

III. **Worship That Edifies Everyone** (1 Corinthians 14:22-26)

The Main Thought: How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying (1 Corinthians 14:26, KJV).

Unifying Principle: Communities function best when the members can articulate a shared system of values. How do community members communicate their beliefs to one another? Paul exhorted the Corinthians to speak plainly so that both believers and unbelievers could benefit from the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Lesson Aim: To encourage believers to exercise their gifts for the edifying and salvation of others so that everyone can join and understand the activities within the public worship.

Life aim: To consistently use spiritual gifts that build up the person and spiritual welfare of all people.

14:13 Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret.

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

14:15 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.

14:16 Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?

14:17 For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified.

14:18 I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all:

14:19 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.

14:20 Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.

14:21 In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.

14:22 Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.

14:23 If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?

14:24 But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all:

14:25 And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.

14:26 How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.

HISTORY:

Chapters 12-14 deals with the spiritual gifts which God gives to His followers for the work of the ministry. At the beginning of **Chapter 14**, Paul teaches about the gifts of prophecy and tongues. But he says pursue; follow after love; let love be your greatest aim. It is when we love a person we meet the needs of a person. But still cultivate spiritual gifts, especially that of prophesy (v.1). Prophecy, the spiritual gift was to serve in a way that tongues could not, namely by edifying the entire church by speaking God's Word. However, when one spoke in tongues, no one understood them (v.2-3). Three things to remember:

1. Tongues are not understood by men, that is, grasps the meaning of what is being said (v.2).
2. The believer who prophesies edifies, exhorts, and comforts men (v.3).
3. Tongues are directed toward God, whereas prophecy is addressed to men (v.4).

The primary message upon our lips must be the gospel, and it must be understandable to all men, while focusing on the edification of others, not self-edification. Even though you may have the gift of tongues, it's still important in the ministry so much that Paul wished that all would speak in tongues, because their spirit is praying, praising and talking to God who builds and strengthens us up for the task; but if tongues is interpreted, it builds the church (v.5). Tongues edify self, whereas prophecy edifies the church.

Now Paul uses a variety of illustrations to teach that speaking in tongues without an interpretation does not edify others.

1. Paul himself, if visiting the church would not speak with tongues because his speaking in a tongue would not

- profit them (v.6).
2. Each musical instruments must have a distinctive sound or else their sound is meaningless, confused, and fails to inspire the listeners. When a soldier blows the trumpet, he must communicate the sound for the army to get ready for battle or they would be confused (v.7-8).
 3. A person's own speech must speak words that are understood or else the listeners do not know what he is saying, or he would be doing nothing more than just speaking into the air (v.9).
 4. Different foreign languages coming to you and you don't understand the language; then what is he saying? It's like a foreign language to the hearer. It does not edify you, strengthen, or comfort you (v.10-11).

If you must be zealous of spiritual gifts then seek after one that may excel to benefit the church (v.12).

LESSON:

1 Corinthians 14:13-17 Worship Everyone Can Understand

14:13 Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret. Tongues is a spiritual language unknown to man but known to God. There were many different languages, but this was unknown to man. If one is to speak in tongues out loud to the church (*to edify them*), others need to understand what is being said. The tongues need to be interpreted, meaning, what is being said, is to edify, strengthen, and comfort the church. Therefore, Paul is saying when one speaks in an unknown tongue to the church, he is to pray that he or someone else can interpret what God is saying through him. Ask the Spirit for the other gift: *The Interpretation of Tongues*. Only God can give revelation. But, when one prays, or praise in an unknown tongue (*within himself*), it communicates to God, not to other people.

14:14 For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. When praying in an unknown tongue, your spirit is praying, connecting with God's Spirit. This is not the mind praying with understanding. This is the spirit praying in an unknown tongue that is only known by the Spirit of God. Therefore the mind would be unfruitful. The Holy Spirit knows what you're saying because He is the One leading and guiding the speech, and your inward man is being strengthened. Paul is not saying not to pray with the mind, but in the case of tongues, the mind is unfruitful and as the spirit prays, He, the Holy Spirit, pin-points on just what you need to say to God.

14:15 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. Paul gives himself as an example, saying, "*no matter if I pray with the spirit, I will also pray with understanding; if I will sing with the spirit, I will also sing with understanding.*" Again, it is important to use the mind as well as the spirit. God allows you to pray with the mind as well as the spirit. We can say some astounding words with our mind, but if our heart is not right, it will not be heard nor answered. But praying with our spirit is astounding in itself because you don't have anything to do with it. Now, if you really want to know what you're saying, God is able to give interpretation to you. I have been in meetings where they were praying or singing in tongues and I didn't understand them, but that didn't keep me from praying and blessing God in the only way I knew how at the time—praying with my mind (*regular language*) with my heart centered on Him; with the understanding I have of God; being sincere with God. To convey this to the Corinthians, Paul is insisting that both can be used. He's not excluding any, only its proper use of using the gift.

14:16 Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?— Paul is saying, "*For if you praise and thank God with the spirit alone, speaking in another language, how can those who don't understand you, be praising God alone with you?*" (TLB). Because they did not understand the praise and thanks, then they could not say Amen at the appointed time. "*Amen*" means "*so be it*" and "*you agree with the prayer.*" Paul wanted others to understand and confirm what was prayed or sung.

14:17 For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified. It could have been a great blessing and giving of thanks in the room, from the person delivering in tongues, but others weren't edified. Why? Because they didn't understand what was being said. Paul wants all to be edified when the gift is given; that is, all to properly work well.

1 Corinthians 14:18-21 Worship As Mature Believers

14:18 I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all:— Paul is not denying or forbidding the exercise of the gift of tongues. He also spoke with tongues even more than all of them.

14:19 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. But, in the church, to proclaim the Gospel with understanding, he said I rather speak five words with his understanding, that his voice might be able to teach others, than ten thousand words in an unknown

language. This is about all receiving what they need from God when they come to church. He probably spoke in tongues in his private worship but in and among others in the church, he spoke words with understanding that reached to edify them. Communication is the goal!

14:20 Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men. The earlier verses provided its intended use and procedure of the gift of tongues; now we are provided the guidelines for not judging tongues. No doubt speaking in unknown tongues fostered cliques—those who could and those who could not. They were stricken with the different emotional and spectacular experiences. Some had the idea that speaking in tongues was an evidence of spiritual maturity, but Paul taught that it was possible to exercise the gift without being childish in their thinking. One thing that was important: that there be no divisions over their gifts. They were not to operate in malice. They needed to grow up and be as mature men in their thinking.

14:21 In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord. ¹Well, the quotation from Isaiah 28:11 makes it clear: Isaiah was speaking to the whole nation of Israel at a time when the Assyrians were knocking at the doors of Jerusalem, threatening to capture it. Through the prophet, God is warning the nation that, if they do not repent and turn from their evil and idolatrous ways, they are going to hear foreigners talking in the Holy City; they are going to hear Gentile tongues filling the streets of that city. It is a warning to Israel to face up to their relationship with God lest He turn from them to the Gentile world.

1 Corinthians 14:22-26 Worship That Edifies Everyone

14:22 Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe. Tongues are for a sign. The sign was threefold:

1. *A sign of Cursing*

The northern kingdom of Israel had been conquered and taken captive by the Assyrians because of unbelief and apostasy. The southern kingdom of Judah had been warned of that same judgment by the hands of the Babylonians. ²Now that was the scene and the setting of Isaiah's words. One hundred years later they were completely fulfilled when the Babylonians came in and did take over the city and the streets of Jerusalem were filled with foreigners speaking strange tongues. (*Also read Deut.58:49*).

If you read the Day of Pentecost in that light you will see how fully that accords with this prediction, for, on that day, when the streets of Jerusalem were filled with thousands and thousands of people, largely Jews, who had come from all the nations around, they heard the disciples speaking these strange Gentile languages they had never learned. It was a sign to unbelieving Jews that God was about to turn from Israel's favored position and go to the Gentile world. On that day, remember, Peter stood up and warned them that they were facing the judgment of God, being convicted in their hearts, that was why they said, "Men and brethren, what must we do?" (Acts 2:37), and three thousand of them turned to God because of that, while the rest of the city, the mass of the population, remained in unbelief.

2. *A sign of Blessing*

The sign of tongues was repeated when the Gentiles were included in the church as recorded in Acts 10:44-46. The gift of tongues would no longer work through one nation, and favor one people. The church of Jesus Christ was for all peoples of all nations, a church in which there are many languages but no barriers. Paul wrote in Galatians 3:28, "*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*"

3. *A sign of Authority*

Those who preached the judgment and promised the blessing were the apostles and prophets whose authority was validated by signs and wonders and miracles. And signs and miracles are still happening today!

- Tongues are a sign, **not** for the believer, **but for the unbeliever**. It warns unbelievers (at that time for unbelieving Israel). Tongues give personal and private edification. The believer who speaks in tongues has an exciting and exhilarating experience while in his prayer closet. This exciting experience enables him to become the kind of witness he ought to be for the Lord Jesus Christ. His gift of tongues edifies him personally, and he is quickened with a new fervor to warn the unbeliever of pending judgment.

But it says that Prophecy serves **for the believer, not** for the unbeliever. It edifies believers, therefore, giving public and open edification when gathered together. Because of their new nature of the indwelling Holy Spirit, they are able to understand spiritual truth.

¹ <http://www.raystedman.org/new-testament/1-corinthians/speaking-of-tongues>

² <http://www.raystedman.org/new-testament/1-corinthians/speaking-of-tongues>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

14:23 If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?— Paul gives the example of everyone in the whole church assembled together speaking in tongues, and a stranger or unbeliever came in, they would think the whole church was insane or mad. This would really seem strange to the person coming into their midst. The point is that although tongues were to be a sign for unbelievers, they would need an Interpreter to understand the depth of the warning or they would be confused and become harden against those speaking in tongues or even the gospel.

14:24 But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all:— Paul contrasts tongues and prophecy; showing what will build up your neighbor. He says, on the other hand, if all had the gift of prophecy, meaning all are inspired to preach or proclaim God's Word (not all at once), and an unbeliever or unlearned person came in, it would be a difference. Why? Because the unbeliever would be able to understand everything going on in the church meeting, and be converted and judged on the basis of his response to the message.

14:25 And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth. The convicted person comes to see himself as he really is, because the secrets of his heart are made manifest (disclosed; made known). His sinful intentions and acts are revealed to him. Consequently, he will fall on his face and worship the Almighty God, declaring that God is certainly among them. The church's most powerful testimony is not in its speaking in tongues, but in its clear proclamation of the powerful Word of God. Hallelujah!

14:26 How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying. Whether they had a psalm, a teaching, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation, they all wanted to participate at the same time. It had become disorderly and confusion prevailed in the Corinthian church. They were not interested in serving, or learning, or edifying, but only in self-expression and self-glory. Each person was struggling for the right to share his latest inspiration and spiritual insight. Everyone vied for attention and preeminence instead of love, respect, humility, unity, and edification.

- A **psalm** (*hymn*) may it be reading, a singing of one of the Old Testament psalms should be to the praise of God for giving Christ; giving His wisdom and power to us in our daily lives
- A **doctrine** (*lesson; teaching*) should be presented and expounded upon that gives understanding of God's Word about Christ our Savior.
- a **revelation** (*a word from God's heart and mind*) written or revealed from God.
- a **tongue** (*a unknown language*) that should exhort and build-up your life.
- an **interpretation** (*explanation*) translated after the gift of tongues were spoken.

The point is: because they have all these gifts in the church, they could not all be given at the same time. Could you imagine 100 or 1,000 people doing what they want at the same time? Everything that's done when they come together was for the edification (*the building up*) of someone else; it was not for the edification of self which was what they were doing.

SUMMARY:

Those who spoke with the gift of tongues were to pray that they would be able to interpret them (**v.13**); also be able to pray and sing with both the spirit and understanding. Why? - That all might be edified (**vv.14-19**). Paul contrasted tongues and prophesying (**vv.20-25**)

1. Tongues are a sign for unbelievers, while prophesying is for believers (**vv.20-22**)
2. Tongues in the assembly (without interpreters) will give people the wrong impression (**v.23**)
3. But prophesying in the assembly can bless even the unbeliever and uninformed person (**v.24-25**)

The spiritual gifts had to be regulated. Paul said let all things be done for edification (**v.26**)

APPLICATION:

To build-up one's neighbor is to seek their good. To seek their good is to be led by the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit is concerned about their spiritual welfare—that they understand the gospel through the edification of the church (*taught, instructed, enlightened, educated, and improved*)! The church does this through the work of the Spirit.