*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

March 9 - 14

*First Corinthians Chapter Fourteen*

**Monday, March 9 1 Corinthians 14:1-12**

*“Prophecy and Tongues”*

 In chapter 14 Paul concludes his discussion of spiritual gifts by encouraging the Corinthians to prefer prophecy to tongues. But he acknowledges a place for both, and for the other gifts, if they are made intelligible and exercised in an orderly fashion. Verse 1 picks up two themes from the end of chapter 12: love and desiring the more helpful gifts, one of which is prophecy.

 Verse 2 makes it clear that the misuse of tongues was one of the Corinthians’ problems in the exercise of their spiritual gifts. Apparently, some were speaking in tongues without interpretation. Therefore, others could not understand what was being said, and this is not helpful. However, when tongues are interpreted they, like prophecy, enhance the worship of God’s people.

 Unlike uninterpreted tongues, prophecy helps the whole congregation, not just the individual speaker. New Testament scholar David Hill defines prophecy as “grasping the meaning of Scripture, perceiving its powerful relevance to the life of the individual, Church and society, and declaring that message fearlessly.”

*Your gifts are given, Lord, to strengthen the whole church. Amen.*

**Tuesday, March 10 1 Corinthians 14:13-19**

*“What shall I do?”*

 So what must a person do if God has given him or her the gift of tongues? First, the tongues speaker should pray for the ability to interpret his or her own speaking in tongues. This benefits oneself first of all for without it the tongues-speaker has no way of personally knowing the meaning of the words he or she has just uttered. Second, when tongues are interpreted by the tongues-speaker or by another who has the gift of interpretation, those who are present and hear what is spoken (or, sung) are able to join in praise of God. Third, the person who has the gift of tongues should use the gift in personal prayer and in worship (again, as long as they are interpreted), but he or she should also practice personal and corporate prayer in the locally known language.

 Some of Paul’s readers may have been surprised to learn that Paul himself had the gift of speaking in tongues, given his criticisms. But, he limits the use of his gift in the meetings of the congregation, emphasizing natural intelligibility over supernatural utterances.

*May we be humble, Lord, in the use of the gifts you have given. Amen.*

**Wednesday, March 11 1 Corinthians 14:20-25**

*“Be mature in your understanding”*

 A preoccupation with tongues without concern for their effect on oneself and others is childish. There are ways Christians should be childlike (e.g., being innocent of evil) but not in their use of spiritual gifts. As Paul proceeds further to justify his appeal to prefer prophesy to tongues, he cites Isaiah 28:11-12 from a passage in which God uses the foreign empire of Assyria to discipline rebellious Israel. Just as Israel did not comprehend the “strange language” of the Assyrians, even though it was God speaking through their enemy, so those who do not understand the words of tongues-speakers will not know what God is saying.

 Unbelievers who visit a service of worship where people are speaking in tongues with no interpretation will go away shaking their heads at those crazy Christians. But, unbelievers who visit a service of worship where people are prophesying will hear the word of God spoken, and have the opportunity to confess their sin and accept Christ as their Lord and Savior.

*When we wisely use your gifts, Lord, others will be drawn to you. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

March 9 - 14

*First Corinthians Chapter Fourteen*

**Thursday, March 12 1 Corinthians 14:26-33**

*“For the strengthening of the church”*

 Paul’s desire for Corinthian worship is that it be highly participatory, giving the opportunity for all whom the Spirit leads on any given occasion to contribute with a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. These are sample contributions; other standard elements of early Christian worship are given in Acts 2:42-47: apostolic instruction, fellowship, the Lord’s Supper, prayer, miracles, sharing of finances, praising God, and evangelism.

 In narrowing once again the focus to the two gifts of tongues and prophecy and their use in worship, Paul tempers the spontaneity described in verse 26 by regulating the exercise of these two particular gifts. The gifts of prophecy and speaking in tongues are not “ecstatic,” meaning that believers in the process of exercising their spiritual gifts are never so “out of control” as to be unable to stop or regulate their behavior. Paul concludes this section by given his rationale for the regulation of these two gifts: orderliness and peace.

*May what we do in worship, Lord, strengthen our life in you. Amen.*

**Friday, March 13 1 Corinthians 14:34-35**

*“Women should be silent”*

 Why does Paul seemingly interrupt his discussion of the spiritual gifts of prophecy and speaking in tongues in order to silence women? Many explanations have been put forth by scholars over the years of these words which, on the surface, seem to contradict what he clearly stated earlier in the letter when he spoke favorably of women praying and prophesying in worship (11:5). At one extreme is the view that this is the “real” Paul showing his highly chauvinistic side. At the other extreme is the idea that Paul didn’t write the words at all.

 When we examine these two verses within the context of Paul’s letter, we see that the sequence of topics in verses 27-33 has been: tongues, their interpretation, prophecy, and its evaluation, in that order. Continuing in verses 34-35 with the issue of evaluation, it could be that Paul is saying that women should not speak when the church leadership is evaluating prophecy for, at least in the early church, the leaders were all men. The obvious drawback of this approach is that it must infer a meaning for “speak” which Paul never spells out.

*When unclear about Scripture’s meaning, Lord, we admit our uncertainty. Amen.*

**Saturday, March 14 1 Corinthians 14:36-40**

*“Did the word of God originate with you?”*

 Verses 36-38 challenge the Corinthians not to reject Paul’s counsel lightly. If every other Christian church practiced what Paul preached on this matter, who are they to be the sole exception? Those who contested Paul’s teaching undoubtedly justified their rebellion by claiming the Spirit’s direction. So Paul adds that if they are truly Spirit-led they will come to acknowledge his views as from the Lord. If they continue to go their own way, they demonstrate that they are out of touch with the Spirit, and the Lord will continue to ignore them and to accomplish his work without them.

 For Paul, unity and mutual edification always remains the overriding goals. Everything must be done decently and in order, but this does not mean that Paul endorses a dead formalism. The thrust of chapter 14 still highlights spontaneity and freedom. Church should be a place that exudes joy and life, but never to such a degree that outsiders are repelled or insiders alienated from each other.

*We find our congregational unity, joy and life in you, Lord. Amen.*