

1 Corinthians Class 17 Transcript

Welcome back to FI Online.

We are ready to begin class 17. And class 16—we've asked for questions to come in, and no questions were turned in. A very nice comment—we appreciate that, but no questions were turned in. And therefore, all we need to do to begin this class is, once again, to ask God's blessing upon the class.

So, if you would please bow your heads and join me in asking a blessing.

[Prayer]

Last time, in class 16, we just barely got started on **1 Corinthians chapter 14**, so let's go back and reread **verse 1** as we begin class 17.

[**1 Corinthians 14:1**] *Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.*

Now, as we've covered in **chapter 12**, Paul makes the point that God gives a variety of spiritual gifts to His people for the purpose of benefiting the congregation, benefiting the body of Christ as a whole, not as something to aggrandize an individual or to show special approval for one over another.

As we went through **chapter 12**, we saw a variety of those gifts, and we briefly touched upon the subject of "speaking *in tongues*." Apparently that was a very, very big issue in the Church in Corinth. So, Paul told them at the end of **chapter 12** that with all of these gifts, it's wonderful. Desire the very best ones, the ones that will enable you to serve God's people most effectively. But, there's a better way.

[2:45]

And last time we looked through **chapter 13**, what's the famous "love chapter," to show that that's a gift that comes from God for all of us. And it also is for the benefit of the whole body. So he tells us, regardless of what other gift you may have, the gift of love, godly love for one another, is one of the most important ones of all.

Now, as he said there at the beginning of this chapter: "Go ahead and *pursue love*. That's fine; that's what you should chase after, and *desire the spiritual gifts*. But when you look at them," he said, "*especially that you may prophesy*."

Again, we said last time, *prophesy* means to "speak under inspiration," to have God speak through you to give the right message, the right words, at the right time. And we'll come back to that concept as we go further. But he automatically, very quickly, introduces the subject of *tongues*.

[**1 Corinthians 14:2**] *For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no*

one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.

Well, what are we saying here? Remember, as we talked about last time, we're not talking about some kind of ecstatic gift where the person just suddenly starts babbling in some other tongue. We're talking about God giving the ability to communicate in another language. We saw that very clearly in **Acts chapter 2**. We saw the beginning of it in **1 Corinthians 12**, but we'll also see, as we go forward today, it is clearly talking about a **known language** when we see the word *tongue*. It's important for us to have that in mind, because if what comes to our mind is what's called today "speaking in tongues" in the Pentecostal churches, then we have the wrong idea about what God is talking about here.

So what's he saying? He says: "The person *who speaks*—let's just use the word—in another language, *does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands it.*" In other words, if I were to suddenly start speaking German now, which I couldn't do very well, but if I were to start speaking German, most of you would not be able to understand what I was saying because you don't speak German. And that's a part of what Paul is talking about here. A person who *speaks* in another language, well, he may express something *to God*, but nobody *understands him*. And therefore there's not much value to it. It is *in the spirit*, and what he intends to say in his mind—he may be speaking some wonderful things, but it doesn't help anyone because they're not able to *understand*.

[5:26]

So, we move forward here, and, what we're talking about, especially in the world today, is a term that's known as *glossolalia*. Let's examine that just a moment. It's made of two words: *glōsse*, which means "language," and *laléō*, which means "to say or to speak or to talk." So *glossolalia* basically means "to speak in a language."

DEFINITION

Glossalalia =

- *glōsse* = language
- *laléō* = to say, speak, talk

Now I think to properly understand that, we have to rid our minds of this idea of Pentecostalism, that the person is suddenly just overwhelmed and starts babbling on in some other language. We've explained that "speaking in *tongues*" is really the ability to communicate in another language on a level that one has not learned or studied. In some cases it may refer to speaking in a language one has never learned. In other cases it may simply refer to an enhanced ability.

Now understand that speaking another language—or, again, keep in mind when we talk about "speaking in a *tongue*," speaking is not the only form this particular gift can take. The idea is to communicate in another language. In the first-century world, speaking was about the only way to do that. And being able to write in another language, well, in many cases, the person you are speaking to might not even have the ability to read his own language. So, we're talking here about the aspect of communication, being able to communicate in another language. That's not an easy thing to do.

Probably many of us have studied other languages at certain times. I had a couple years of French in high school, a couple of years of German in college, and I was not good at any of it.

And to this day I'm not good at it. It's not one of my strengths. It's not one of the gifts God's given **me**. But there are people who seem to have an extraordinary ability in that way.

Many of you know that, for example, Dr. Levy does much of our translation into Spanish, and he's very fluent in Spanish; he's quite comfortable in the language. He gets by quite well. But you know, even there, when he makes translations here for *In Accord* or one of the classes that we're doing, very often he and our studio manager, Manuel Itura, will discuss what's the proper way to say something in Spanish because we don't always express things in exactly the same way. We can't just plug words in. But there is a whole sense of being able to communicate effectively.

Perhaps some of you will remember many years ago, there was a Soviet premier named Khrushchev. And, he struck fear into many Americans when he thundered: "One day we will bury you." Well, that is the translation of what he said, but, it wasn't intended to be a threat. It was just a repeating of an old Russian proverb that basically said: "Well, we'll outlast you. We'll live longer than you will, and when you die, we'll be the ones standing around to bury you." It wasn't intended to be a threat. But when it was translated just directly without really understanding, it's a difference sense that's conveyed. That's true in any language. There are all kinds of idioms that come along.

[8:42]

I remember sitting in a German class one time, and we had one fellow who was really very good at plugging in words but not necessarily grasping the idioms so very well. I remember one day we were sitting in class, and he was translating a section, and it came to a spot where it said—well, in German he translated directly: "Then went they a light on." And everyone looked at him: "Then went they a light on? What does that mean?" Well, in German "to have a light go on" is an idiomatic expression that means "to have an idea." You've probably seen the cartoon figures where someone has an idea and a light bulb pops up above their head. That comes from the German concept of having a light go on.

But when you translate directly: "Then went they a light on," you didn't get the sense. It was saying: Then they had an idea. So, the ability to translate, to speak, to communicate, in another language is more than simply the ability to remember words and plug them in. If you've ever tried to use something like a Google Translate, you know that very often the translation is very awkward and difficult to understand. So, this is talking about the ability to communicate in another language.

Now, why was this important? Remember, as we said last time, Corinth was a trading center. There were people moving through from all over the known Roman Empire and beyond, coming through Corinth. And, some of those individuals might end up where the Christians are gathered together, perhaps in a synagogue, perhaps in their Church service. And there might be a special need to be able to communicate with them. So it appears that Paul [God] must've given the Corinthian congregation some special abilities in this way—more common.

Now, today, we don't have the same need. And, just as we explained last time, when we look

at the offices, the responsibilities that God places in the Church, and even the gifts that He gives to the Church, He doesn't give all the gifts all the time. He gives what gifts are needed at the right time.

Now again, as I said, one of the problems with understanding speaking *in tongues* is we tend to think of it as what might be called an "ecstatic gift," one that comes on a person at one time, not necessarily there at another time. But honestly, the giving of the gift of *tongues* or communication in another language is probably something that's not ecstatic at all. We don't see any indication of that. This is not something that's outside the control of the person, where suddenly they just start speaking in German or French or Spanish or whatever it may be. No, they know exactly what they're saying. But it's coming out, they're able to express it in a different language.

We should recognize that when we talk about this "ecstatic thing" that people seem to think speaking *in tongues* involves, it's talking about an experience that is so powerful to them, as they describe it, that they're focused almost entirely on the experience and virtually unaware of anything that's going on. When we pray, or when we meditate, or when we speak, the frontal lobes of our brain are very active. We're thinking very clearly what we're doing, what we're saying, what we mean to express.

[12:06]

When Pentecostals are speaking in *tongues*, research has been done, and the frontal lobes are not active at all. They're not thinking through; they're not in control of their thoughts, which of course makes us ask the question: "If they're not in control of their thoughts, who is?" Is there something else going on here? And we would say: "Yes, there certainly is."

But, just as with any other spiritual gift, the individual with that gift has the ability to choose to use the gift or not. It's not something they can't avoid; it's not something they have to do. God has told us He's given these gifts to benefit the body of Christ. And it makes it clear that, you know, if God gives you a gift, you have to choose to use that gift to benefit the body. It's not something that you can't avoid doing. It's a gift that God **gives**, and you **choose** to use it.

Likewise, when we talk about an individual who is guided by God's Spirit, led in that way, the individual is perfectly in control of themselves, but God's Spirit adds to their ability. If God gave a person this ability to communicate another language, that individual had to choose how and when he would use that particular gift, just like any other gift. Therefore, the instruction that we read in this chapter is about how to use the gift properly. You are in control. You make the choice. How do you use it in the right way?

If God gives a person the gift, for example, let's say, of speaking in German. Well, it doesn't mean that he or she is going to speak German all the time. It would simply mean that when there was a need, they could communicate in German. If people who received that gift wanted to display what God had given them, and they began to speak in German in a room full of people where there were no German speakers, then what Paul is saying is: "Only God has the capacity to understand what's said." Everyone else may marvel at their ability to speak in

German, but it really doesn't do any good because the content is not accessible to them. So, it's saying here that if you did that, well, God would understand what you were saying, but no one else would. And since God understands all languages, He doesn't need you to speak in some other language for Him to understand. Now that's going to apply as we go a little further here as well.

Some people claim that speaking in tongues enables the speaker to communicate with God in a special way. Okay, what would be God's purpose in giving one person an ability to communicate with God in a special way and not give that same gift to someone else? That would lead, undoubtedly, to a certain degree of personal pride: "Well, I can communicate with God in a special way. You can't." That's not something God's going to do. Since God understands all languages, there is no need for Him to give some of His servants some kind of a special ability to communicate with Him. He doesn't need another language to communicate. He is able fully to understand what we're saying or thinking at any point. He's able to communicate His truth to **us** in understandable languages. He doesn't have to reveal truth to us in some language that we don't understand, and then get someone else to tell us about it. God doesn't need to do that. He reveals His truth in a way that we can understand.

[15:54]

Now he goes on to say: [**1 Corinthians 14:3**] *But he who prophesies—*

Again, remember, were talking about "who speaks under inspiration," whose words are inspired by God.

—(he) speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men.

The individual who is inspired by God speaks in such a way that it builds up, it exhorts or encourages—it can mean to console; it can mean to prod—and, also it comforts. God's truth comforts people. So, the words that are communicated, in order for them to be edifying, exhorting and comforting, you have to be able to understand the words. If someone spoke to me in another language, and the words that they said were wonderfully uplifting and encouraging and comforting, but I didn't speak that language, it would be worthless. So Paul is saying it's important to be able to communicate God's truth to His people, to be inspired by God to convey what God wants them to have.

Verse 4 He says: *He who speaks in a tongue (or a language) edifies himself, —*

In other words, he knows what he's saying. It's not some thing that he doesn't have any comprehension of. They're not just mindless sounds coming out of his mouth. He knows what he's saying. He builds up *himself*; he *edifies himself*.

—but he who prophesies (who speaks under inspiration) builds up the church.

Again, what did we say the gifts are for? To benefit the Church.

Verse 5 Paul says: *I wish you all spoke with tongues, —*

That's a wonderful gift, to be able to communicate the truths of God in another language so people can understand it.

—but even more (Paul says) that you prophesied (I wish more that you spoke under God's inspiration.); for he who prophesies is greater —

It doesn't necessarily mean the **individual** is greater, but the individual who speaks under God's inspiration has more of an impact on more people because they're able to understand God's words.

—is greater than (those) who (speak) with (languages), unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification.

[18:02]

So in other words, it describes a situation where, let's say, a person is speaking in another language, and, then they interpret it for those who are there. That may be a necessary thing to do. We have congregations where we have other languages that are spoken. In some of our congregations—for example, let's say, in Ghana—we may have an English-speaking person who goes there, who gives a message. But, giving it in English for a number of people who don't speak English, it has limited value. So what do we do? We have an interpreter. We have someone who speaks, for example, in Ghana, who speaks Twi, and they're able to translate from English into Twi so everyone is benefited. If we didn't have that, no matter how much the English language speaker was inspired, our brethren in Ghana wouldn't understand. So it's important to have that interpreter. It would be confusing if we didn't have that.

Verse 6 *But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking with tongues (speaking in another language, communicating in another language), what shall I profit you unless I speak to you either by revelation, by knowledge, by prophesying, or by teaching?*

Again, Paul is reiterating that the gifts God gives to His people are given for the benefit of the whole body. Rather than putting any of them in a bad light—he's not doing that—he just uses himself as an example. After all, they learned the truth through him in the first place. If he were to come demonstrating the gift of speaking in other languages, they wouldn't be benefited. So the gift that God gave him would really be wasted. And that's totally contrary to God's reason for giving the gifts in the first place.

Paul says: "I have to give you God's revelation, the knowledge that He gives, the inspired speaking, or the teaching. Then you're benefited. But otherwise, you're not."

He goes on to say, **verse 7**, just to give us a physical example: *Even things without life, whether flute or harp, when they make a sound, unless they make a distinction in the sounds, how will it be known what is piped or played?*

Have you ever heard an orchestra warm up before a concert? The sound that they make is pretty chaotic. It doesn't sound like music. But once they're warmed up and everything is tuned and they begin, then all of it together creates beautiful music. We can enjoy it. Well, likewise, if

we had a group of people together all speaking in other languages, it would be chaotic. It would not be something that would help.

He goes on to say: **8** *For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, —*

And the term here used is one that was kind of like—we may say a bugle or a battle trumpet of some sort.

—if (it) makes an uncertain sound, who (prepares himself) for battle?

He doesn't know what to do. It's just noise.

[20:57]

9 *So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air.*

Yes, you're making noise like the trumpet or the flute, but unless there's coherence to it, nobody knows what to understand. Nobody knows—even if you're making sounds that are true, it doesn't help.

10 *There are, it may be, (Paul says) so many kinds of languages in the world, and none of them is without significance.*

All of them have a value; there's a purpose to those languages.

11 *Therefore, (he says) if I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be a foreigner —*

That's probably not the best term. "Barbarian" is actually the sense of it here. One who didn't speak and understand Greek was called a Barbarian.

—I shall be a foreigner (or a Barbarian) to him who speaks, and he who speaks will be (likewise) a foreigner to me.

We may be speaking to someone who is highly educated, but if it's a different language, it does no good.

My wife and I had a situation—I just thought of it as I was talking about this. A number of years ago we went to Israel. We arrived in the afternoon, and we were staying at a place very near a beach. And, another couple and my wife and I walked down—my wife loves the beach. So she and the other lady were walking down toward the beach. The gentleman and I were standing there talking. And up came an old Jewish—I don't know if he was a rabbi; he looked like he might be—all in black, and long side curls, and so on. And he started speaking to us in Hebrew. And, we didn't know what to say. We couldn't figure out what he was talking about. And he tried three or four times, and the other fellow and I both had had a little bit of German; we studied it together. And so we tried that. He didn't speak German. We tried French. He didn't speak that. He talked to us for a moment, and then he just kind of threw up his hands and walked away.

And as he walked away, we looked out, and basically, the two ladies who had walked down

toward the beach had stopped, and they were turning around and coming back toward us. And when they got there, they said they realized as they got down to the beach, there was no one there but men. This was a beach that the Jews had cordoned off for men so that the women didn't go down there. And that's what this old rabbi was trying to tell us. But it did no good because he was speaking in a language we didn't understand.

So, likewise, we were foreigners to each other. We didn't understand. He was doing his best. He was trying very hard to tell us: "The ladies shouldn't go down there. That's a separate men's beach." We didn't understand him, and it did create a little bit of an embarrassing situation for us.

He goes on to say: **verse 12** *Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel.*

Look at your motives. You want the spiritual gifts that God makes available. Okay, there's nothing wrong with that. God wants you to have those gifts. But make sure your motive is right, that you're doing it because you want to help the Church, not that you want credit for yourself.

[24:18]

Therefore (verse 13) let him who speaks (in a language) in a tongue pray that he may interpret.

Okay, if God has given me the ability to use this language, then "give me the ability to interpret it back for those who may not understand."

Now again, those who are excellent in language will tell you that in order to communicate properly, you really have to think in that language. You can't just mentally translate while you're going forward. You have to literally think in that language to be effective. So, he's saying here: If God gives me the ability to think in this other language, please give me the ability too to explain it for those who don't understand that.

He says: **14** *For if I pray in a tongue (in another language—perfectly legitimate thing to do), my spirit prays (my mind—I understand what I'm saying.), but my understanding is unfruitful.*

It's unfruitful for the others because they can't grasp that.

So he says, okay: **15** *What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit (I will use my mind. I will know what I'm saying. I will pray in that way.), and I will also pray with the understanding. (I can share that with others.) I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding.*

Prayer, singing—all of these things are intelligent exercises of the mind. They're not things that just **happen** to us and we can't control the words. Likewise, with speaking in tongues.

Otherwise, (he says, verse 16) if you bless (you say good things, you uplift) with the spirit, how will he (the person) who occupies the place of the uninformed say "Amen" at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say?

You can't say "*amen*" to a prayer when you don't understand what it is. And so he's using the very simplest example: You pray, and it's a legitimate prayer, and you're asking right things, but the person can't say "*amen*."

Now, the understanding that we have here is that the saying of *amen* means "so be it." It means: I add my agreement to what the person who led the prayer has said. That's what it means when we say it in services. When we have an opening prayer, a closing prayer, and we say "*amen*," we are agreeing with that prayer, and we're asking God, on behalf of all of us, to honor it. But if we didn't understand what it was, if the person spoke in another language, it would be difficult to say "*amen*."

Verse 17 *For you indeed give thanks well, —*

Your prayer was wonderful. It was a moving prayer. You give thanks.

—but the other (person) is not edified.

And that's what we're looking for—**what builds up**, what edifies. Being able to show your ability to communicate in another language really doesn't do that.

[27:17]

Now again, I use Dr. Levy as an example. We have Mr. Meeker who has extraordinary abilities in French, which is not his native language either. If you know Dr. Levy, he's also fairly comfortable in French and even gets by a little bit in Mandarin Chinese. There's a skill there. There's a gift that's given. I don't have that gift. I don't function in that same way. But some people do.

But if Dr. Levy got up, and, let's say, for one of these classes—as he finished up the coverage of the book of **Deuteronomy** recently—if he gave one of his classes in Spanish, what would it do for most of us? It would be wonderful. He's got a wonderful ability, and I believe God's given him a gift, but it wouldn't do us any good because we wouldn't understand.

So, he's telling us here: *Indeed, you may give thanks well, you may give a wonderful lesson, you may teach well, but the other person isn't edified.* That doesn't help.

He says: **verse 18** *I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all;*

Isn't it interesting that there are people who see tongues as a sign of God's special favor to them? In fact, there are some religions in the Pentecostal areas that basically say: "If you don't speak in tongues, well, you probably don't even have the Holy Spirit." That's not the way it works. But, that's the way they see it. It's a badge of honor: "I want to be known as somebody who speaks in tongues." Well, we never find Paul speaking in tongues. We don't find any evidence whatsoever, except **this**—that God had given him that gift of the ability to speak in another language.

You may remember in one particular case when Paul and I believe it was Silas [Barnabas] were coming through the Lycaonia area [**Acts 14:8-18**], and the people there began to worship

them as if they were gods. And initially, Paul and Silas didn't understand what was being said, and then finally they figured it out and realized: "Oh, wait, this is not right!" But it was because they didn't speak the Lycaonian tongue. It was a different language. So there are times when Paul had the ability to do that, but we don't find any record of it. In other words, Paul didn't use this as some sign of: "Look how God's using me. I can speak in tongues." No, but there evidently were many different situations where God gave him that ability as he traveled around the Roman world.

Verse 19 He says: *yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.*

10,000 words that you can't understand do no good. "I'd much rather be able to do this in the way that people understand." Probably speaking five words is not that impressive, but if they're God's words, they can do more good than all the rest.

Verse 20 *Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature.*

He's telling us: "Look, children are attracted to every shiny thing that comes along. Those of you who have very small children, you know that one of the things a parent learns to do very quickly when a child begins to fuss is distract them with something. Give them some keys to play with, or something like that, and very often the crying, the whining, the noisemaking, and so on, subsides because the child is so easily distracted by shiny things. Don't be that way. Don't be spiritually children where you place value on the wrong thing. If there's not a need to speak in another language, why would that be such an important thing? Why would you be looking for that? To be able to speak under inspiration is always something that's useful.

[31:10]

So, he says: "Don't *be children* in your spiritual *understanding*. Now when it comes to *malice*, yes, be innocent children." You don't have to know all the details of every ugly thing in order to know that it's wrong. When it comes to *malice*, be like a child. There's no *malice* there. But when it comes to your *understanding*, *don't be children*.

He says: **verse 21** *In the law it is written: —*

Now it's interesting, he says *in the law*. The actual quote comes from **Isaiah 28**. We don't normally think of that as *the law*, but it shows us that sometimes the entirety of what we call the Old Testament was referred to as *the law*; not always, but sometimes that term was used.

Anyway, he quotes this, and he says:

—*"With men of other tongues and other lips
I will speak to this people;
And yet, for all that, they will not hear Me,"
says the Lord.*

He's making a point, and frankly, when you look at that passage in **Isaiah**, the aspect of speaking in other tongues was not a blessing. Basically, what He was saying in that passage is that He had sent the prophets to speak to the people, and they didn't listen to the inspired words of the prophets. So He said: "I'm going to send you people who speak in another language, and they're going to pronounce My curses on you because you didn't listen when I brought you what you **could** understand." So he's using this example as: speaking in tongues is not necessarily always a good thing. Sometimes it shows God's displeasure.

Verse 22 *Therefore (he says) tongues are for a sign, —*

Okay. There's something that can be a real benefit. They can impress certain people. Who?

—not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe.

Okay. What do we mean there? Well, a person who is not yet a believer, but who may be in contact with someone who is a Christian and is kind of wanting to understand, for that individual to be able—for the Christian to be able to communicate with them in their own language would be very impressive. Now, what they say is more important than the fact that they can communicate with them. But, it's something that may attract their attention: "Well, here's a person who can speak my language." Just as we saw in **Acts chapter 2**, the people who came there said: "How is it that we hear these people all speaking in our own language, in our own dialect?" So they were impressed by that; they were attracted by it.

But, the message that was given in **Acts chapter 2**, it is—we'll see as we go further here—the message that's recorded is not something that just continues to be in other languages. But the message is inspired by God's Spirit.

[33:58]

So, he says, the speaking in another language may be impressive to people who are *unbelievers*. Prophesying, on the other hand—speaking under God's inspiration—is not something that an unbeliever is going to necessarily recognize or appreciate. To hear someone giving God's inspired words—if a person's not a believer, they don't understand those are God's words. But for the person who is a believer, you hear those things being said, and you say: "Wow! Yes, that's what God would want me to understand. I really appreciate that God has given me the ability to hear that, that God's inspired them to say that, because what they said is exactly what I needed to hear."

As a believer you can recognize God's inspiration. An unbeliever just sees a person. They don't recognize that.

So he says: **verse 23** *Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those who are uninformed (Uninformed, in this case, probably means those who don't speak those languages.) or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind?*

I mean, if they came into a meeting and everyone is speaking different languages—just imagine, let's put ourselves in that spot. You come to services one Sabbath, and the song leader speaks in Italian. The sermonette's given in German. The announcements are given in French. The sermon is in Spanish, and the opening prayers are in Tagalog [Filipino] and Khosa [southern African]. Okay. That would give you an impression of chaos. That wouldn't be something that would help at all. So, someone might have the ability to speak those different languages, but it doesn't do good if we all just kind of show that ability to speak in another language.

So he talks about the Church coming together, and he says: "That's not the way you do it. You come together. You don't show off your gifts in front of one another."

24 *But (he says) if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all.*

If all give an inspired message from God—it's not a sign from God—but, they begin to understand that God is leading, guiding these people and the things that are said.

Verse 22 suggests that tongues were perhaps an initial blessing for unbelievers, as a miraculous sign of God's presence. But **verses 23** and **24** show us that we don't put too much emphasis on that, even with unbelievers, for they too need to be given meaningful instruction from God's inspired words. So that's what we should focus upon.

[36:54]

Verse 25 *And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you.*

Again, we don't get the full picture of what's taking place. Thankfully, we don't have people falling down on their faces in services. That's not the way things are done. But, it indicates that here is an individual who hears the message, and they're not normally a part of the Church; they're not normally there. It's not the normal believer who comes in Sabbath after Sabbath, but someone who's there and that God's working with. So God enables them to understand, and they are deeply moved by what they hear.

Verse 26 *How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.*

Okay, what are we seeing here? It appears—at least at this point, it seems that the services in Corinth in the first century were probably more like a synagogue service of the first century than what we would consider a traditional Church service today. The book of **Acts** shows us that it was traditional in a Jewish synagogue for, when there was a visitor, you would invite them to get up and speak. Did that happen in the early New Testament Church? Possibly. We really don't know. There isn't anything that tells us exactly how services were held. For the culture of that time, that may have been the logical conclusion they came to—that it was okay to do that. And as a result of that, there may have been a little more disorder than what you

and I are used to today. We don't do it that way today.

Now understand, sometimes people look at that and say: "Well, if the first-century Church did it that way, we should too." Well, no. There's nothing in Scripture that says the synagogue service is the proper way to do it. Remember, the synagogue didn't exist, as far as we can tell, until after, or **during**, I should say, the captivity in Babylon. And that's where the synagogue probably came into existence, and continued on through the time of Christ up into the first century. But, it was something that was acceptable. It wasn't that God said: "This is **the** way to do it." But it was acceptable.

Jesus went to the synagogue on occasion at least. We are told it was His regular habit to go there on the Sabbath. He participated. At least on a couple of occasions, we find examples of that. But we don't find any place that says: "This is the way services are to be." We don't do it that way today. But apparently, in the first century it was a little bit more in that way, and therefore people would show up at services, and, feeling that God had given them a certain gift, a certain understanding, they wanted to share that.

[39:38]

The model we use today, I think, is more suited for our time and our culture. But it's not inspired either. Now again, understand, people would want to use the gifts God gave them. So, if they felt God had inspired them—and it talks about a psalm, a sacred song—is that a gift? Now we didn't find that listed anywhere among the gifts, but apparently, the ability to communicate musically is a gift that God could give to people, and it can be used to benefit the whole Church. Someone receives that, and they think: "Okay, I want to share this. God's given me this ability." Someone has come to a new understanding of something, a deeper understanding, and they want to share that through teaching. Someone is given an ability to speak or, again, a revelation, an interpretation.

Paul does not deny that these things are from God, but he says: "Okay, how do we deal with that? *Let all things be done* to build up, however we do it." So he's going to explain this a little more.

27 *If anyone speaks (in another language) in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret.*

And he'll explain as we go a little further. Well, let's see:

But if there's no interpreter, (verse 28) let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God.

Okay, God's given you the ability to speak another language, but we don't disrupt the Church services. We don't stand up and say things in another language when the people of the Church can't understand. If you need to speak in another language, have an interpreter. That's perfectly all right. We do that at the Feast sites. If you were to go to, for example, to some of the Latin American sites, at some of them we have English interpretation. And, in most cases the sermons during the Feast are given in Spanish, but there's an interpreter. You can

understand. That's perfectly all right. In some occasions it goes the other way, and an English speaker speaks in one of those locations, and we have a Spanish translation. Here in the Dallas area, we have a number of Hispanic brethren. We have a Spanish translation every week, but it isn't the sermon in front of the congregation given in Spanish, where most of us wouldn't understand. It's given in English, and it's translated, interpreted, for those who need that.

27 (So) *If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret.*

28 ... *if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent... (He can) speak to himself and to God (and that's fine.)*

Now he talks about speaking under inspiration.

He says: Where the prophets are concerned, those who are inspired—speaking God's truth:

29 *Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge.*

Now this doesn't mean: sit in services, and be critical of one another. But it does tell us: okay, if God is going to inspire a message, let's limit that to no more than two or three people. We don't have 15 people jumping up in Sabbath services and saying, "Oh, I think God inspired me to say this..." The individuals who do speak, I can tell you, they asked God's inspiration. They want that. They ask God to inspire what they say.

[43:00]

And it says here: "Okay, everyone else has to consider that." Now again, I think in part what it says is that sometimes we can convince ourselves that what we're saying is right, and we may even attribute to ourselves that: "Well, I think God inspired me to say this." Okay, but maybe not. Sometimes were a little too generous with ourselves. So I think he's telling us here: "All right, when you hear the message given on the Sabbath day by two or three individuals who may be speaking, okay, it's perfectly proper for you to stop and consider that message. 'Is this consistent with the rest of what God says? If so, I need to pay close attention to that.' "

But if somebody makes a mistake, or they say something that doesn't square with what we believe, okay, it doesn't mean they're a bad person, but, you *judge*. You don't just absorb everything that's said, but you consider: Does this square with the rest of what Scripture says?

Again, we're not saying: let's be critical. But we are saying that we need to have our minds active when we listen. We don't just swallow everything that everyone says. That, in fact, we can say: "You know, I think Mr. So-and-So may have kind of gone out on a limb on that one. That's a little more speculation. I'm not going to necessarily agree with that one." But, we have the ability to make those judgments.

Okay, he goes on to say: **30** *But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent.*

And again, I don't think this implies that somebody jumps up and interrupts the speaker. But if he feels that God has given him some kind of inspired insight, he has to wait his turn, until that speaker is given—until each speaker is given their opportunity to share that insight. He doesn't insist on his own words as inspired and deny anybody else the opportunity to be inspired by God. So, he waits until the opportunity comes. Again, there may be different ways we would apply that.

Verse 31 *For you can all prophesy (you can all be inspired by God) one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged.*

Now again, this is not saying that everybody in the Church gets up and starts speaking. As a matter of fact, as we go a little further here, we will see very clearly that he's not talking about everyone, but those who are given the responsibility, who asked God's inspiration upon their speaking. Then each one has their opportunity to do so.

Verse 32 *And the spirits of the prophets (those who speak under inspiration) are subject to the prophets.*

No one speaks without control. It isn't like God's Spirit comes along and forces them to just start babbling and speaking and running up and down the aisles. No, God's Spirit doesn't work that way.

[45:48]

And then he explains this: **33** *For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.*

Now I want to take just a moment to look at that word *confusion*, *akatastasias*. That's my best pronunciation: *akatastasias*. It is a state of disorder or tumult; anarchy; to rise up in open defiance of authority, with the presumed intention to overthrow it or to act in complete opposition to its demands; to rebel against, to revolt.

[James 3:16; Isaiah 14:13-14; Ezekiel 28:16]

DEFINITION

Confusion = *akatastasias* = a state of disorder or tumult; anarchy; to rise up in open defiance of authority, with the presumed intention to overthrow it or to act in complete opposition to its demands; to rebel against, to revolt.

Now I wanted to talk about that for just a moment because sometimes, well, in English, that's not the way we would define the word "confusion." We would think of confusion as something that I can't figure out, something that makes me kind of weigh thoughts against each other, and I can't make things fit properly. Well, that's certainly a correct English way to view the word "confusion." The word that's used here in Greek has not just the sense of being confused about something; it has the sense of anarchy, the sense of rebellion, of uproar. God is not the author of that.

Now I say that because I think it's important to understand. Sometimes people think: "Well, if something is confusing, then it must not be from God." Well, no, that's not what he's saying. If something is **rebellious**, that's not from God. But for something to confuse you, that doesn't mean that's not godly, or there's something wrong in that. In fact, that's a normal part of the education process. As instructors we often know that when a person raises her hand to ask a

question, many times what it tells us is, the person has heard what we said, and somehow they can't make it fit with what they thought they knew, so they're asking a question: "How do I make what you just said fit with what I thought was true?" So the question, again, is a very valuable thing. It helps us to understand—they have become confused because these things don't seem to fit. Now that's not a bad thing.

Many of you will think back on the days when you first learned the truth of God. Probably there was a bit of confusion. You may have heard—those of you who go way back—you may have heard Mr. Armstrong say something about all the churches being wrong about going to church on Sunday. And you may have thought: "Well, that's crazy. Why, all these churches can't be wrong. We've been going to church on Sunday all our lives. My dear grandmother—faithful, wonderful Christian—went to church every Sunday. How can you say that's not what we're supposed to do?" And you may have been confused about that. And as you began to study it, you may have thought: "I don't understand this. The Scriptures I'm reading do seem to say Saturday, but I always thought Sunday was right. I'm going to talk to my minister about it."

[48:43]

And you may have gone to him and asked questions because you were confused. But the confusion led you to understanding the truth. And, that's a proper way for it to be used. It's not a bad thing to recognize: "Well, I can't make these things fit. What's wrong? I need to come up with an answer."

So, when it says: "God's not the author of confusion," don't misunderstand. God sometimes uses our personal confusion to lead us to the truth. This is saying *God is not the author of anarchy and rebellion, but instead, of peace*. That automatically tells us what the opposite of *confusion* is: *peace, as in all the churches of the saints*. The Churches of God are not to be chaotic. There isn't this tumultuous thing going on with people wandering around and running up and down the aisles and all of those—no, that's not God's way at all.

Now Paul goes on to say, **verse 34**—we want to take a moment to look at this too.

34 *Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says.*

Now some of the commentators say that the final clause of **verse 33** really should be the beginning of **verse 34**. In other words, it would say: *As in all the churches of the saints, let your women keep silent.*

Okay, that may be true. It's hard to say. The Greek is just not clear enough for us to say it that way. But it is clear that within the Churches of God, the women do not get up and occupy a position of teaching.

Now some have taken this so far as to say that when a woman enters the hall in which Church services are conducted, she's not to make any sound at all. In fact, some have gone so far as to say she shouldn't even sing the hymns. That's not what God's talking about here. That hasn't been the instruction that we've been leading up to; that's **not** what we've been talking

about.

Now, he makes it very clear that the context here is *in the church, in the church* service. It is not the place for the women to get up and speak in a teaching capacity. That's the sense of it. They are submissive, as the law says.

Again, one of the commentaries says:

The command seems absolute. Women are not to do any public speaking in the Church. This restriction is not to be construed as demoting women, since the expressions "to be in submission" and "*their own husbands*" are to be interpreted as simply consistent with God's order of administration. So it's not a matter of superior or inferior, but the women are told it is not their role to stand up and speak in the Church service.

Now again—let me just read this point:

Some have explained the apostle's use of the word "speaking" as connoting only "general speaking" and not forbidding a public address. But this is incompatible with Paul's other uses of "speaking" in this chapter, which imply "public utterance" as in "prophesy."

Now again, as we'll go on to see, if she wants to know something, then she has a way of approaching it and asking that.

[52:03]

Let's look at **verse 35**: *And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful (not appropriate) for women to speak (Again, we're talking about standing in front of the congregation.) in church.*

The clear context here is *in Church*. Now she wants to learn something. In other words, she's listening to the message, she's listening to someone speak, and they say something that confuses her, that makes her say: "Well, wait a minute; I don't understand that. Why did he say that? That doesn't seem to square with what we said over here?" Okay. How does she address that? Well, she doesn't get up in Church services and accost the person. Well, we don't do it that way. She's supposed to ask her husband at home.

Now, he hopefully will be able to answer her question. If not, then he needs to find an answer because her question is legitimate. It doesn't say anywhere here that if she has a question and wants to learn something: "Well, she's just a woman. Don't worry about it." No! She has every right to ask that question and to come to a fuller understanding.

I found many times when my wife will ask me a question about something, I hadn't really thought about it. And oftentimes it's a very good question, and I **need** to think about. So, this is a way in which the family relationship is built and strengthened, as well as that relationship within the Church.

So, he goes on to say, **verse 36**: *Or did the word of God come originally from you? Or was it*

you only that it reached?

Now this seems to be a somewhat sarcastic comment that Paul is making. And I think we would have to read between the lines a little bit here. It appears that there were those in Corinth—and again, remember pride was one of the issues they had to deal with. It seems that there may have been those in Corinth who basically felt **their** interpretation was as good as Paul's. And remember, whenever someone says, "What I think is as good as yours," what they really mean is, "What I think is better than yours." And that's the way they were approaching this. Paul had taught the Church: "This is the way things should be," but others were kind of approaching it like: "Well, I think I understand this better."

So Paul says, "Now, let me ask you a question: Are you the only ones who have the word of God? Or did it come to you first, and the rest of us need to get it from you?"

[54:31]

He says: **verse 37** *If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet (inspired speaker) or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord.*

"This is the way Jesus Christ has instructed things to be in the Church, and if they are a prophet, let them acknowledge, as I do, that these are the things Jesus Christ teaches."

38 *But (he says) if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant.*

And the sense there is kind of "deliberately ignorant"—not someone who doesn't know and would like to know, but someone who chooses not to know. Then let it remain that way. We don't try to change people who are set in their ways. Someone believes a certain thing that's not true. Okay. We can try to reason. But if they choose to believe it, okay, that's their business. They go on.

39 *Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy (speak under inspiration), —*

Ask God to give you the wisdom to say the right thing at the right time. That may be in front of the Church. It may be in private, talking to someone. It may be sitting on a bed, talking to your child in the evening as they're getting ready to go to bed. Ask God to inspire your words.

—and do not forbid to speak with (other languages) tongues.

When the need is there, certainly we don't forbid that. But the overriding principle he gives in **verse 40**:

40 *Let all things be done decently and in order.*

This is the way things are to be done in the Church of God.

That finishes **chapter 14**, and we've just about used up our time for this class, so we hope that you will join us next time for class number 18. We're just about done with this series, and we really appreciate you staying with us throughout it.

Next time class number 18 in **1 Corinthians**.

[56:19]