

*One Christmas – I'm not sure how old I was – I'm pretty sure I was still in Primary School,,,,, but it's when me & my brother stopped getting toys for presents, and we started getting tools. Anyway, before we even opened our presents, Dad said to me, "The present that you're getting, is more special than the one that Andrew's getting... His present will probably get used more often, but yours will be very handy when it's needed..."*

*Anyway, when we opened our presents, my brother got a ½" drive socket set. I knew what **that** was for, and I knew it'd be very useful... And then I opened my present, and this is what I got... For those who can't see, it's a small set of taps and dies...*

*And when I saw it, I thought "Wow. That is special... What do they do???" And dad explained it to me – "They're used for cutting threads." You drill a hole in a piece of steel, and you screw the tap into it (which cuts a thread). And so it turns a piece of steel, into something you screw a stud (or a bolt) into... And with a die, you can get a piece of steel rod, and screw the die down on it, and that cuts a thread onto the piece of rod, turning it into a bolt... So in essence, with my taps and dies, I could repair threads, and make new threads, and make nuts and bolts & stuff...*

*And so, Christmas day, we couldn't wait to get home from church, and my brother and I headed down to the shed. He very quickly found something to disassemble with his socket set, and I set about with a few scrap bits of steel, and a drill press, drilling holes and tapping them; cutting little pieces of rod and threading them, and then screwing them together...*

*After a couple of hours, I'd had enough...*

*Dad had given me this very special gift... And once I learned what it did, and reality set in, I found myself wondering, "What on earth am I gunna do with it?" When ever was I gunna use it??? My brother was **always** using his socket set, and I was always borrowing it.... But what use, is a set of taps and dies, to a 10-year old???*

*I think I can remember, a couple of times during the year, Dad purposely went out of his way to find a couple of jobs for me to do with it... I remember re-threading a couple of grease-nipple holes....*

*But I had this special gift... - Now, what am I going to do with it???*

*By the way, you can see I've still got that set of taps and dies, and about once a year, they're exactly the tool I need...*

Last week, we were learning about the gift of tongues (gift of languages)... And because there's so much controversy around this one particular gift, we spent some time clearing the decks – we got the elephant out of the room (if you like):

- Some say, "The gift of tongues is finished, so if anyone speaks in tongues, they're faking it, or they're demonic."
- Others say, "If you **don't** speak in tongues, you're not baptised in the Holy Spirit."
- And even others say, "If you don't speak in tongues, you're not saved."

But instead of choosing any of these positions, we went straight to the Scriptures – what does the Bible say??? And it's so simple: The gift of languages, is a Spiritual Gift, which is given to some, but we don't all have the same Spiritual gifts, and so:

- it's **not** the test as to whether you're filled with the Spirit or not
- It's **not** the test as to whether you're saved or not,, and
- nor is it a gift that's been hunted to the state of extinction...

And so we cleared the decks: The gift of languages, **is** a gift that continues today, but it is **not** the one gift that defines whether someone is filled with the Holy Spirit or not.

So, now the elephant's out of the room, today we're going to consider, (for those who have this gift), "What on earth, am I going to do with it??? How do I use it?"

And the principal, governing the use of the gift of languages, is the same principal as for using any other Spiritual gift:

- The gifts are to be used in love for our Brothers and Sisters in Christ;
- They are to be used for the building up of the church;  
And
- they are to be used, in a way that does not cut people out, or set up some kind of Spiritual elitism...

So, with that in mind, let's begin.

1. Firstly, as discovered last week, the gift of Languages, is primarily, a communication between the person with the gift, and God. And what do we call it when we communicate with God? "Prayer"... Usually (not always, but most commonly), the gift of Languages, is praying in another language, that the person's never been taught.

2. Secondly, as we already know, prayer can be of 2 different types of ... Sometimes, we pray to God in Private, and sometimes we pray together with other Christians...

And what Paul is telling us here, is when someone is praying in tongues (through the gift of languages), this prayer is usually to remain private. There is an exception, and that is when there is an interpreter present, to translate it into a language that everyone can understand.

But, why does it have to be private? Well, it's because God doesn't want any of us to be excluded...

*I love the fellowship between Brothers and Sisters in Christ. Sometimes I just like to stand back, and watch... I hope that doesn't sound creepy... - but just to see God's family, enjoying each other's company...*

*Anyway, sometimes our Afrikaans speakers find themselves in a group on their own... And so they (quite rightly) switch over and speak to one another in Afrikaans – because, being their first language, it's easiest way for them to communicate, and they understand one-another best...*

*But something I've noticed, is that every single time, as I've approached a group, who are speaking in Afrikaans, as they realise that I'm coming over to their group to join them, mid-sentence, they switch the conversation back over into English... Why do they do that? Because they don't want to exclude me.*

*And I want to thank all of our South Africans – you are so careful, not to exclude anyone...*

And that's what Paul is saying here about the gift of Languages: <sup>11</sup> ....if I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be a foreigner to the speaker and the speaker a foreigner to me.

If we don't know what's being said, it excludes people – it cuts them out from the time of prayer... And the person with a gift of languages, may be praying (or praising God) well enough... But prayer and praise in a group, is something that is to be shared...

When a person prays in another language, it doesn't build the whole body up – it's only edifying for themselves...

3. And so thirdly, unless there is someone to interpret what is said, when a church comes together, this is **not** a time for using the gift of languages... If you have the gift of Languages, use it to pray privately, so that you don't exclude anyone...

Having said that, if a group of us are praying, and there's a time of silence, I think it's quite alright for you to pray (in tongues) privately (very quietly), provide you don't talk over the top of somebody else who is praying... It is more important, for a church to pray together, and to understand each other, than it is for any of us, to not take-in what someone else is praying, because we're too distracted, having our own little private 'languages session'...

4. Paul, is giving us a very important lesson, about the value of shared prayer – And the value of agreed prayer.... It **builds** the body up, when we pray together in agreement...

He says: .

<sup>13</sup> Therefore, one who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret. <sup>14</sup> For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful. <sup>15</sup> What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also. <sup>16</sup> Otherwise, if you give thanks with your spirit, how can anyone in the position of an outsider say "Amen" to your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying? <sup>17</sup> For you may be giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not being built up. <sup>18</sup> I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. <sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five

words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

Different people, have different ways of showing agreement, hey??? In some traditions, there'll be constant interruptions to the preacher "Amen. Preach it brother." And some preachers, they like to form their own cheer-squad – "amen???" "amen???"... And in prayer, someone will shout "Amen to that!"...

But then there's the more stayed tradition – the encouragement of "the hummer"... "Hmm" "Hhmmm!!"

It's an agreement – Amen to that prayer... That's what "Amen" means – truly; surely; I agree with that – let it be so – it's a strong affirmation of what is declared...

And how can we say "Amen" – how can we affirm someone's prayer, if we don't even understand what's being said???

And even more to the point, how do I affirm my own prayer, if I pray with my spirit, and not with my mind...

5. Which brings us to the fifth point.

Worship is best, when it's a product of both the mind **and** the spirit...

Some people feel that worship should all be about, a free-flowing of the Spirit, and they see worship that engages the

mind, as being stayed; or stuck in the mud; or academic; and even unspiritual...

Others tend toward the opposite extreme, where worship is all about thinking and knowing... And “feelings”, and “emotions”, or “undefined spiritual stuff” is all a bit suspicious...

But worship is at its best, when it includes both the mind and the Spirit... That's the sort of worship that builds the church up.

6. The next thing we learn, is “Tongues are a sign for unbelievers”.... But they mightn't be a sign in the way that you might expect...

You might think, “Oh, the whole purpose of the gift of languages, is a sign, so that an unbeliever, will see this amazing gift of the Spirit, and believe in God, and turn to Jesus...” Not at all... In fact, it has quite the opposite effect...

Over the years, I've been to a whole bunch of training sessions on preaching and teaching, and a lot of them have a common thread running through them... – Use stories!... And they always make the point, that Jesus used parables – He told stories all the time... And they explain, “That's the best way to get the message across – tell stories, and then people will get it.”



But you know what? – do you know why Jesus used parables??? It's so unbelievers wouldn't get it!!! ... Jesus said to His disciples:

Luke 8:10 ..., **"The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that,  
" 'though seeing, they may not see;  
though hearing, they may not understand.'**

Alright, Jesus didn't talk in Parables so unbelievers would 'get it' and 'understand it'. He talked in Parables, so the Disciples would 'get it', but unbelievers wouldn't get it...

And it's a similar thing here, with the Gift of Tongues... If an unbeliever comes in to a church, and there's a whole bunch of people there, speaking in tongues, that doesn't convict them, and make them turn to God... It just makes them think "You're crazy – you're out of your mind"...

And so, generally, the gift of languages, is not much good as a tool of evangelism – it **is** a sign,,, for unbelievers... but usually it just helps them to stay "unbelievers".

7. No. 7. Worship should be "orderly" – not "chaotic". We're going to talk more about "order in worship" next week, but for now, how does the gift of Languages fit into that.

*Years ago, I visited a few Pentecostal churches, who would've assessed themselves as "being on fire with The Spirit" ... How did they worship??? Well, out of a church of about 30 people,*

*perhaps 20 of them might have been speaking in tongues at one time, talking over the top of one another, nobody listening to anybody else... To me, as an outsider coming in, it was a bit of a free-for-all, in a bad way... But here in V33, Paul says: <sup>33</sup> For God is not a God of confusion but of peace.* And that's the reason he gives, why worship should be orderly.

This is what he says: **Let all things be done for building up. <sup>27</sup> If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret. <sup>28</sup> But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God.**

That's pretty clear, isn't it??? The gift of Languages, isn't something that should usually be used in church at all... And certainly not everybody using it at once... The only time, the gift of languages should be used in a church, is if there is somebody there to interpret what is said.

8. And the final point I want to make today, is: "The gift of Languages, is not something to be ashamed of."

With all this teaching on order, and how it's a private gift, and how its misuse can tear the church apart,,, It can tend to dampen enthusiasm a bit, and sometimes, it dampens enthusiasm to the extent that people are ashamed of the gift that God has given them...

Back in Chapter 12, when Paul was talking about the church as a body, he was talking about how we all have different gifts, his point is this: “With the gifts that God gives us, we complement each other, and we need each other”..... And he talks about how some body parts are a bit less presentable than others,,, but they're still needed...

The gift of Languages, might be a gift that rarely gets ‘let out’ in public, but that doesn't make it any less valuable... It's not something to be ashamed of...

You know, Paul is really clear on this: He used to speak in tongues more than anybody,,, (but he did it in private)... And he makes a command, “Don't forbid it”.... It's not something to be ashamed of...

If God has been gracious, and has given the gift of Languages to you, use it in your private prayer... And pray that The Lord, will give to someone in this church, a gift of interpretation, so that when God wills, it can be shared.

Righto, I reckon we've gone far enough for today. Over the next couple of weeks, we're still going to be in Chapter 14, and we're going to focus on:

- Orderly worship; and
- The gift of Prophecy

I'm just not sure, in what order yet.

But I just want to finish up by saying the first two words of Chapter 14: “Pursue love”...

The way we use any of our spiritual gifts, should be in the pursuit of love...

With the gift of Languages:

- If I have that gift, my prayer should be, “Lord, how can I pursue love?- How can I use this gift that you've given me, in such a way, that I'm loving others?” ; and
- If I don't have the gift of Languages, my prayer should be, “Lord, how should I pursue love, for those who do have this gift?” How can I encourage them, to use the gift that you've given them, in love, and in an orderly way...

Every church needs the gifts that God has given it. And sometimes people feel they can't exercise their particular gifts, in the church God has put them, and so they move off to another church. And nowhere is this more true than with the gift of languages. It is **so** common for someone, when they receive this gift, to feel, “Well, this gift isn't welcome in this church”, so they leave, and find another one, where it's more 'the done thing' – Please don't do that. God gives us the gifts we have, to build up the church we're in...

And if you have the gift of languages, I'd like to know about it... Tell me that you have it, and then we can talk about how you can use the gift God's given you, for the building up of this church.

The prayer ministry of a church, is so valuable, and it's in prayer and praise, where the gift of Languages, is so important.

Questions???