

the church at **Corinth** it was the **subject** of much **confusion**, and Paul writes nearly a **chapter** of **instruction** to help **correct** the Corinthians concerning their use of it in **chapter 14**. There Paul gives a lengthy **discussion** about tongues, its use both as a **revelatory gift** used in the **church assembly** (14:3-6, 12, 16-19, 26-28), and as a **private prayer language** (14:2, 4-5, 14-16, 18-19, 26), used when one is alone in **prayer**. The discussion is a **reproof** and **correction** to the **Corinthians** that when meeting in the **corporate assembly**, they should strive for **gifts** that **edify** the **whole church** like **prophecy**, and that **tongues** would only be **valid** in that setting if there were an **interpreter** to give the **meaning**, since when one speaks in tongues **“for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries”** (14:2). When **tongues** was used in the **assembly**, and the **interpretation** was **given**, by someone with the gift of **interpretation of tongues**, this was a **revelatory message** from the **Spirit of God** which could **edify** the **whole church**(14:26-27), such **use** of the **gift** was therefore **valid**. But, as Paul explains, **“but if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God”** (14:28), and such use of **tongues** in the **assembly** was therefore **invalid**. When Paul says **“but if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God”** in 14:28, he clearly asserts that there is another **valid private** use of the **gift** of **speaking in tongues** whereby one would **“speak to himself and to God.”** This is consistent with how Paul had described the **use** of the **gift** earlier.

1 Corinthians 14:2-4 - 2 For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men, but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries. **3 But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation. 4 One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church.”**

Paul had described it as a **gift** for **personal edification** (v-4), where one could **pray** or even **sing** (14-15), a gift he wanted **everyone** to **have** (v-5) for which he thanked God that He used more than anybody else.

1 Corinthians 14:18-19 - 18 I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all; 19 however, in the church I desire to speak five words with my mind, that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue. NASB

Nevertheless, **“in the church,”** that is in the **corporate assembly**, Paul explains that the **gift of tongues** is **not properly used** if no one provides **interpretation**, and that it were much better if one would **prophecy**, so that **all** may be **edified** (14:4-5,17).

1 Corinthians 14:26-28 - 26 What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let **all things be done for edification. 27 If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and let one interpret; 28 but if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in the church;** and let him speak to himself and to God. NASB

Although this is true, Paul still exclaims **“do not forbid speaking in tongues”** (14:39). He obviously **intends** for the gift to be used in its **valid form**.

Clearly, the **goal** of the **use of tongues** and **interpretation of tongues** in the **corporate assembly** is the **edification** of the **whole church**, with this **revelatory aspect** of **tongues** and **interpretation of tongues**. But since the **closing** of the **NT Canon of Scripture**, this gift **no longer** has a **valid** use in the **corporate assembly**, as God is **no longer** bringing **new revelation**, which was the **purpose** of these two gifts working **together**. The church should strive for the **use of gifts** in the **corporate assembly** that build up the church so that **everyone** may be edified (14:12).

As mentioned, the **gift of tongues** is the subject of much **controversy**. Although we will not be addressing these at this point, here are a few of the items concerning the gift which creates such controversy.

- Is it a known human language? Or something else, like the tongues of angels (1 Cor 13:1)? Unlearned real human language or not?
- Is what happened at Pentecost in Acts 2 the same thing that is happening in 1 Corinthians 14?
- Were the tongues in Corinth ecstatic (ecstasy, a state of being beyond control... advanced mental dissociation)? Is ecstasy involved? Is the mind engaged when speaking? Does the speaker have control?
- What is the gift for, what is its purpose?
- Did this gift cease after the apostolic age ended?
- Is the modern use of tongues counterfeit or demonic?

11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills - Paul **summarizes** verses **4-11** here by contrasting the many **diverse varieties** of **spiritual gifts**, but are all given by **“one and the same Spirit.”** Moreover, he describes the **Spirit’s work** here, specifically how the Spirit sovereignly distributes **“to each one individually just as He wills.”** He gives