

The Contrast between Prophecy and Tongues 1 Corinthians 14

1. The person who speaks in tongues will speak not unto men but unto God. *1 Corinthians 14:2 For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.*
 - The person who prophesies will speak unto men. *1 Corinthians 14:3 But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.*

2. The person who receives tongues may not be understood.
 - The person who receives the gift of prophecy speaks clearly for the purpose of edification exhortation, and comfort. *1 Corinthians 14:4 He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.*

3. The person who speaks in tongues will edify himself, although how is not clear.
 - The person who will prophecy will edify the church. *1 Corinthians 14:4 He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.*

4. The person who speaks in a tongue is not better or more spiritual than others.
 - Paul wishes all would prophecy. *1 Corinthians 14:5 I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.*

5. To speak in tongues without some form of explanation is to speak in the air. It is meaningless.
 - *To prophesy with a distinct message is of greater value to the corporate life of the church 1 Corinthians 14:6 Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?*

6. To speak in tongues without interpretation is to appear as a barbarian. *1 Corinthians 14:11 Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me.*
 - To prophesy is to appear as an intelligent person. There is harm in a mindless utterance in the name of being Spirit led. There is no shame in proper preparation to minister to God's people.

7. Those who speak in tongues must have an interpreter. Those who speak in tongues must be held accountable for what they are saying. *1 Corinthians 14:13 Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret.*
 - Those who prophecy need no interpreter. People know what they are saying and can give thanks for their message. *1 Corinthians 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?*
8. While tongues might be an exciting and emotional experience it cannot edify the church apart from an interpreter. Paul knows for he is no stranger to ecstatic experiences of this kind. *1 Corinthians 14:18 I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all:*
 - Prophecy is the method to convey the message that Paul wished to use to minister to church. *1 Corinthians 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.*
9. Tongues are not a sign to believers in the church. Tongues are for a sign to the unbelieving community. *1 Corinthians 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.* The church at Corinth was in danger of despising a clear revelation (prophecy) in favor of an unintelligible utterance (tongues).
 - Prophecy will edify the congregation and it will also serve to convert outsiders. *1 Corinthians 14:24-25 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: 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.*
10. According to the Isaiah 28:7ff the drunken Israelites were mocking in their cups the teaching of God through his prophet, as though it were only fit for an infant school; in anger God threatened to give His lessons through the lips of foreign conquerors (Isa. 28:11), in whose speech the plain teaching of his servants (14:12) would painfully spell out their ruin. And so it happened. God spoke to Israel through the strange Assyrian tongue in retribution, not to confirm their faith but to consummate their unbelief. The *glosslalia* may serve a similar melancholy purpose in the church.
11. The clear meaning of the whole passage is that Paul desires to quench rather than stimulate the Corinthian ardor for tongues. Paul does not want visitors to the church to hear the babble, the ecstatic experience, and to decide that Christianity is for madmen (14:33). There must be intelligent communication of the gospel message and sharing of the faith.