

Corinthians - Stop Thinking Like Children

by J. Glyn Owen

J. Glyn Owen's sermon emphasizes the importance of spiritual maturity and understanding in the exercise of gifts within the church, urging believers to prioritize love and clarity in their communication with God and each other.

Duration: 48:33

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:1

Topics: "Carnality"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of speaking in a way that people can understand and benefit from. He uses the example of speaking in tongues, stating that even though it may sound impressive, it does not feed the soul or touch the minds of the listeners. The speaker then appeals to the Corinthians to mature in their thinking and not to think like children. He warns against the excessive use of glossolalia, as it can hinder the intellectual side of one's Christian life and urges the Corinthians to use their minds in their faith.

Transcript

Shall we turn together to the first letter that Paul wrote to the Corinthians and to the passage that was read for us by Mr. Lowe? Our minds are going to be focused this evening for a while on verses 20 to 25 particularly. You will remember that we've already been dwelling on the previous part that Mr. Lowe read, but we come tonight to this little passage that begins with verse 20 and goes on to verse 25. May I explain to any who are visiting us and have not been here on recent Sunday evenings, we were constrained in the first place to try to elucidate the tremendous truth that the Apostle Paul has concerning the gifts that he has given to his church in chapter 12.

And Mr. Scharf and I began to preach a series on that. When we came to the end of chapter 12 we found that it was really not honest with scripture to stop there without going on to chapter 13. And frankly when we came to the end of chapter 13 we realized it came home to us that we should go on to chapter 14 to make the thing complete.

Because chapters 12 to 14 are an entity really on their own. They're a section of this very remarkable and very apposite, very appropriate, up-to-date epistle. Now we have come to this chapter and we've seen quite a number of things already.

The main thing that we have stressed is this. The misunderstanding that when Paul wrote chapter 13 he was writing off, virtually writing off, the importance of the gifts of the Spirit completely. Now you may have heard that, you may have read that.

I have heard it and I have read it. Those who believe that Paul wrote chapter 13 1 Corinthians 13 on love. And really what he had in mind was this.

Now look this is the important thing and the almost exclusively the important thing for people to be looking for. You should cultivate love. Now if you look of course you will see that Paul says something which is very near to saying that but which is to be distinguished from that.

What Paul does say is that this is the most excellent way, the more excellent way. It's the way of agape. And however many of the gifts of the Spirit you may have, if you do not have agape then they come to nothing.

In fact the more gifts you will have in a congregation, the more trouble you will have in the absence of agape. Because everyone will want to exercise his gift and probably be oblivious to the needs and to the gifts of other people. So that if you have these gifts in plenty without agape, you're really in trouble.

As Corinth was at this time. So the point of 1 Corinthians 13 was to say these things, these endowments of the Spirit, these charismatic gifts can only come to their own. Their multiplicity can only be expressed and the unity of the church maintained insofar as we give priority to agape to love.

But I want you to notice and this is the thing we've stressed already in starting with chapter 14. Paul comes back again to the gifts and he says now don't just forget all about the gifts. Seek earnestly certain things especially that you may prophesy.

And so he goes on to in this particular chapter to deal with the gifts of prophecy and of tongues particularly. Showing how the gift of prophecy supersedes the gift of tongue. Now the title for our meditation this evening then comes really out of the text.

I hope you didn't think that I was crazy enough to speak to a congregation and say stop thinking like children. That's a quote and I would like you to see it as a quote from chapter 14 and verse 20. Those are not my words.

I would not have the audacity to speak to people in these terms. But an apostle could he had authority so to do. And what he's telling the Corinthians at this stage is this.

Look look men and women Christian men and women stop thinking like babies. Now we shall come back to that in a moment. But that that's really his his his main thrust.

Stop thinking like babies like children. There are three main strands to this passage that I want to try and expound. And do pray with me that the Lord will help us to see clearly what the apostle is getting at.

Even though there are one or two rather difficult stages in this paragraph or difficult points to elucidate. The first thing I want you to notice is the appeal. Brothers he says here comes our title again.

Stop thinking like children. In regard to in regard to evil be infants. But in your thinking be adults.

The apostle has already stressed that in tongues speaking or to give it its classical designation glossolalia. A lovely word isn't it glossolalia. A person's mind is to quote Paul unfruitful.

Now this is not my saying this is the apostle Paul. That's in chapter 14 and in verse 14. When a man is engaged in the gift of tongues his mind is unfruitful.

He does not really reap spiritual profit on the intellectual basis on the intellectual level. Neither does he communicate spiritual profit on the level of the mind. This does not mean that there is no spiritual benefit through the use of glossolalia.

But it does mean that the mind is unfruitful. Because nobody understands what he's saying unless another gift comes into play namely the gift of interpretation. So what Paul has been stressing to this point is this.

In the use of glossolalia in the exercise of glossolalia a person's mind is unfruitful. And because of that he himself had elucidated a principle. The principle runs something like this.

Though I speak in tongues more than you all he says. In public, in church, in the fellowship of the Lord's people I would rather speak five words that people can understand and therefore profit from than five thousand that people can't understand. And even though they may be they may be enamored by the sound of my voice and be their imaginations be tickled by by the cadences and so forth that they don't understand anything.

It doesn't touch their minds. It doesn't feed the soul. So he says as far as I'm concerned this is the necessary principle for for acting.

The opening words of this passage takes Paul's thought appreciably further. He now positively appeals to the Corinthians not to allow themselves to become children in their thinking. But rather to learn to be mature.

And you see the implication is quite clear. You go on exercising glossolalia ad lib. Whether it be in private or in public.

And you are virtually strangling the intellectual side of your life. The mind is in abeyance. There may be your emotions may be may be really exercised and profitably exercised within certain limits.

Insofar as the emotions can be wholly distinguished from from the mind. But now says Paul I really I really plead with you. Don't allow this to happen to you.

Don't become children in your understanding. Don't allow anything to dwarf your mind and the use of the mind in your Christian life. It's so important your mind matters to quote the title of a book by John Stott which probably came from this from this passage.

Now the implication is clear and unavoidable. Their stress on unintelligible glossolalia speaking with tongues was such as to challenge the very possibility of their growing up to maturity. And this may sound very harsh to someone here tonight who has become involved perhaps with the gift of tongues.

And it may sound harsh. Well now what I want you to notice is that it's not I am saying this it's the Apostle Paul. And what he is saying make no mistake about it.

You can become so obsessed with it so absorbed with it so taken up with it that you are you are becoming engaged and you are indulging on a level on a plane which switches off the understanding. And whilst the understanding is switched off it's only a half of you it's only a part of you that that's profiting at all. Leon Morris who was in this pulpit last summer Dr. Leon Morris from Australia.

He says that the force of a particular tense the present imperative that is found here should be rendered. Stop being children in your understanding. The implication is that they are children at the moment they're acting like children because they're spending so much time involved in speaking in tongues.

And you remember Paul does not say that this is not the gift of the Spirit. He's accepting that but to become so obsessed with it is really making it difficult if not impossible to grow up toward Christian maturity. One of the older and most reliable of commenters commentators Godet says it is indeed he says a characteristic of the child to prefer the amusing to the useful the brilliant to the solid.

And this is what the Corinthians did by their marked test for glossolalia. But in order further to stress the importance of the mind and understanding here Paul adds that the only sphere in which Christians can afford to be immature is that of evil. Now this is this is a very subtle statement but it's a very challenging one when you see it.

Here Paul commands us not simply to be children but to be babies. He uses quite a different word the word is nepheos. He uses it in its verbal form and the meaning is to be infantile, to be childish, to be a baby.

Be babies in evil he says. You see the tragedy with so many others is that in shady things we're quite clever. How to avoid some of the income tax questions, get around them.

You know it's amazing how clever some people are. Or in doing this or in that we're quite clever. In evil we are clever.

But Paul says now that's the sphere and the only sphere in which you can afford to be as childish as the little babe in his mother's arm. And that's what the word means. The baby in the mother's arm who can't think for himself, can't act for himself, can't walk by himself, can do nothing but is dependent.

Now he says you can afford to be as childish as that in evil. But you see we've turned the whole world upside down. And we become so sophisticated in evil our modern world.

If not many professing Christians. Whereas in understanding the things of God and in living the life of God we have become babies. Well now that brings us to the next thing.

And really this is where there's some difficulty in expounding the passage before us. It's an analogy. Look at verse 21.

It reads like this in the new international version. In the law it is written through men of strange tongues and through the lips of foreigners I will speak to this people. But even then they will not listen to me says the Lord.

Now what on earth is that got to do with the passage? It's at this stage I would like really to know what you people are saying. And I think there ought to be some feedback in some of our public worship services. I wonder what you make of this.

Well since I have been thrust into this position I guess I have to try and expound it. Well now clearly the reference is to the law in a general sense. Not to the Decalogue not to the Ten Commandments.

Because actually Paul quotes from Isaiah chapter 28. And sometimes in the New Testament we have the word law in this general sense used of the whole of the. I mean in the New Testament the term law is used of the whole of the Old Testament in a general way.

You have it in John chapter 34. And was it not last Lord's day? No not last Lord's day. Two weeks ago I think in another context we had the same thing.

The whole of the Bible. The whole of the Old Testament to start off with is God's law. It's God's way of life.

It declares God's will for life. And in that sense it is God's law. The Ten Commandments represent the quintessence of all the teaching of the Old Testament.

The teachings of the prophets emerge out of the very quintessence we have in the Decalogue in the Ten Commandments. So that in one sense the whole of the Old Testament and then in a larger sense the whole of the Bible is God's law. By which he rules his people.

Now the reference here then is to a passage in Isaiah chapter 28. Now an understanding of this difficult passage is a challenge. But I think it will help at any rate if we see it in its context.

And I want to try and be as helpful as I can. So that we can get the thrust of it together. Now it may shock one or two of you.

Some of these passages of Scripture have a knack of doing that. And so get ready for it. You'll see that it's got something to say that you may not expect.

But here it is. Turning to this passage in Isaiah in chapter 28. We need to bear in mind that the Prophet has just been warning the Jews of the evil of their ways.

As he so often had to do. They apparently mocked God. And they mocked him of all things for using what professor FF Bruce refers to as God using baby talk with his people.

The Hebrew makes it very clear. If you could listen in to the Hebrew here. It's baby talk.

It's God speaking to the to the Jews in a babyish, in a childish sort of a way. And they as it were answer back to him and say look who do you think we are. Why do you talk to us like that.

Now you have this brought out in verses 9 and 10. And this is what they say. Who who I'm reading from the NIV.

Who is it he is trying to teach. To whom is he explaining his message. To children weaned from them from their milk.

To those just taken from the breast. For it is. And now here is the English translation of the of the very childish bit of Hebrew to which I referred.

Do and do. Rule on rule. A little here and a little there.

Cow like cow. Sow like sow. That's the Hebrew.

And it's really baby talk. And you see what the people of Israel are saying to God is this. Are you treating us like children.

Who do you think we are. Why are you speaking to us like that. Well the prophet retorts that since they would not listen to Jehovah's lessons when he spoke to them as adults.

And since they couldn't understand things as men and women who were mature. He's had to do this. Their sins has brought them down in terms of moral and spiritual stature.

They're on the level of babyhood. And he's got to talk to them like that. But now in the argument there is something which takes us even further.

Now look he says if you're going to quibble with me. Look says God if you're going to quibble with me about this. I'll tell you what.

I will speak to you through a nation. Whose language you will never be able to understand. And I will bring a nation into this land.

And it will speak a language that you've never heard before. And you'll never be able to make heads nor tails out of it. But by means of that people and of that language.

I will teach you the lesson of your life. Now what God is referring to of course. Is the bringing in of the Assyrian nation.

Is the invasion of the Assyrian power into the land, into the land of Israel. And what he's saying is this. I will bring these people in and you won't know what they're saying.

But even though you don't understand their speech. They'll teach you a lesson. A lesson you would not take from my lips.

And said that I was speaking childish to you. So when you go on to verses 11 to 13. The new international version reads like this.

Very well then. With foreign lips and strange tongues. God will speak to this people.

To whom he said. This is the resting place. Let the weary rest.

And this is the place of repose. But they would not listen. So then the word of the Lord to them will become.

And it's exactly as God said before. Do and do. Do and do.

Rule on rule. Rule on rule. A little here a little there.

So that they will go on fall backward. Be injured and snared and captured. Now how can I put this in our own words.

What God is saying is this. I've tried to speak to you in a language that you could understand. And you said I was being too childish.

I was treating you like children. Very well he says if you can't take my speech to you. It is so urgent.

I've got to speak to you. I'll speak to you in a language that you can understand. I'll bring the Assyrians in. And they will speak a foreign language. And they will deal with you in a way that you have not been dealt with by any other nation. And they will humble you.

And they will trample you underfoot. And they will take your sons and your daughters away. And through them I will say to you exactly the same thing as I've been trying to say in ordinary language.

Namely do and do. Do and do. Rule on rule.

Rule on rule. A little here a little there. I'll say exactly the same thing to you.

But you'll have to take it in this time. Because the Assyrians will force you into a cage and into a corner. And they will take you away.

And you'll have no say in the matter. He said what on earth has that got to do with our subject. Well now you will notice that really it comes down to this.

What the Apostle Paul is saying is that this speaking in a strange tongue is not here a token of divine favor. But of disfavor. Not a token of divine blessing.

But a token of the divine anger. Not a token of God coming near to a people in love and with his arms and folding them. But of God raising his right hand and coming down in chastisement upon them.

And allowing them to be lashed and hurt and wounded. You see when God speaks to men deliberately in a language they do not understand. It is not something to be happy and joyous about.

Because it can be exceedingly serious in its implication. Whereas he addresses the objects of his love in language that they can understand. Of course he does.

You do that too. Is there anybody you love? You lovers in the congregation tonight let me ask you a question. Don't you make it plain? Your loved one knows what you're saying.

You don't speak in a foreign language when you're in love. You open your heart and you make it plain. And when God gathers his people together in love and in compassion.

He makes it plain. My sheep hear my voice says Jesus and they follow me. They know what I'm saying. They know what I want to do. And they'll discover my will. They'll know the will and the word of my heavenly Father.

And it is always true. If any man will follow me he shall know the doctrine whether it be of God or not. So then we have a principle here.

When God does not speak to men in a plain language. A language they understand. That is not a token of God's favor.

It is a token of divine disfavor and displeasure. Now there is some similarity between the principle of sending the Assyrian to speak a language which the Jews would not understand. And the use of parables by our Lord in the New Testament.

The use of parables in the New Testament is generally misunderstood. It's amazing how many people will tell you that the use of parables was largely very much as a preacher would use an illustration to elucidate something. Now sometimes it did elucidate.

It did elucidate truth to certain people. Do you know what Jesus said? He used parables also in order to hide truth from others. Now don't you blame me for that.

I'll give you a chapter and verse for it. Matthew 13 10 to 15. If you'd like to read Mark 4 11 Luke 19 verses 42 following.

You have Jesus saying exactly that. He says I speak in parables so that you my people. You my loved ones.

You whom I love. You who are my followers. You who are my disciples.

You who are prepared to obey what I tell you. You may hear and understand. And it illustrates the truth to you.

It makes it simpler and clearer for you. But there are many who are listening to whom I do not want to cast the pearls of my Father's truth. And I speak in parables to hide the truth from them.

Because they have sold the privilege of being preached to. Now I say there is some similarity between that and what we have in our text tonight. Let me put it to you like this.

If God were to give the gift of tongues to people. To any community. To any church.

As he did as the Corinthians claimed. He had given it to them. So that the services were largely taken up with speaking in tongues.

That would be God's judgment upon the society around. Because it would mean this. If the society came in and if unbelievers came in.

They wouldn't know what on earth was going on. I'll come back to that a little later. And they would be confused and confounded.

And they would not have the word of salvation. But they would say these people are off their heads. And it would confirm them in their unbelief.

Rather than win them over to faith. And if God was responsible for that. It would be God acting in judgment.

Rather than in favor and in grace. Now let's come to the application. Which I think proves conclusively.

That that is how Paul would have us understand it. Now look at the passage. The application we have very clearly here.

Look at verse 22. Tongues are a sign and prophecy is a sign. The one is a sign to unbelievers.

The other is the sign to believers. Tongues then says Paul are a sign. Not for believers but for unbelievers.

A sign of judgment. Prophecy however is a sign for believers. Not for unbelievers.

And prophecy is a sign of God wanting to say something clearly. And therefore of his love and of his mercy. Let's put it like this.

The gift of tongues and the gift of prophecy are alike signs of something. Tongues are a signs of disfavor and of pending judgment. Prophecy that is God speaking clearly and with power.

If I may summarize prophecy in that way. God speaking directly. Speaking clearly.

Speaking with power in such a way. A man or a congregation knows God is speaking among us. This is not a man.

This is not just a person trained in a college. And he's speaking before us. And he's erudite and that kind of thing.

This is not human wisdom that is appearing before us. God is among us. Now when you have a word of prophecy like that.

That is a word to the believers which says God's among you. And he loves you. And because he loves you he's speaking clearly to you.

And he's convincing you. And and he's drawing you. And he's wooing you.

And he's coming so near he's making it impossible for you. Other than to know what he wants of you. Now let me go further.

Come on. Paul illustrates that principle again. Tongues and their effects on unbelievers.

Look at verse 23. I've already looked ahead at this in part. But let me underline it again.

So if the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues. And some who do not understand or some unbelievers come in. Will they not say that you're out of your mind.

Paul appears to envisage this kind of wholesale use of the gift of tongues. That apparently went on in Corinth. Everything was out of proportion.

This had priority over everything else. Paul's language here envisages a situation in which tongue speaking is clearly dominating the entire services in the Corinthian church. And like himself the Corinthians made lavish use of tongues in public.

So that it would apparently not be unlikely for a pagan to come in from the outside. And be none the wiser for what was going on. He wouldn't understand a word of it.

It was all foreign to him. And he could go out and say those folk in there are quite mad. They're beside themselves.

And they would be confirmed in their confusion. And in their unbelief. And they would say this is madness.

That's what Paul is saying. Far from bringing faith to birth. Or confirming a slowly emerging faith.

Hearing such confusing sounds only confounds men still further. It confirms them in unbelief. If therefore, and I'm repeating again.

And I'm doing so deliberately. Because I think it's so terribly important. If therefore God were to impart the gift of tongues to any church.

To a community in general. To members in general. In any church.

And they were exercised in the way they were exercised here in Corinth. And were given such priority. It would only mean that he was judicially excluding the society around.

From hearing the gospel. Clearly. And that all those who came in.

God wanted to confuse and confound. And keep out of the kingdom. It would not be a token of divine blessing and benediction.

It would be a token of God's judgment upon the community around. And they come in. And they're confirmed in their unbelief.

And you know there are people who come to church. And not hear tongues. But for other reasons.

Are just confirmed in their unbelief. That kind of thing happens. But it can happen through the overuse of one of the gifts of the Spirit.

But now if that relates to tongues. Prophecy and its effects on unbelievers. Is brought out in verses 24 and 25.

But if an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody's prophesying. He will be convinced by all that he is a sinner. And will be judged by all.

And the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God. Explaining or exclaiming God is really among you.

Now you notice now. This is the different gift. This is the gift of prophecy.

And we've summarized the gift of prophecy in this way. It's God speaking with a directness. And with a power and the clarity.

Which is evidently of God. So that you know it's not just the man in the pulpit. It's nothing human.

It's cannot be explained in a purely and a merely human way. But God himself is among his people. And the voice is the voice of authority.

What happens? A congregation prophesying would be a sign of his favor to believers. And to unbelievers alike. Though it's stressed here especially to believers.

You see God is speaking to them in a language they can understand. And he wants them to grow up to maturity. And he wants to feed them.

And he wants to bless them. And he wants to encourage them. And he wants in all things to bring them up in maturity.

So that they're profited. Faith comes from what is heard. And what is heard comes from the preaching of Jesus.

From the prophesying of which the Apostle Paul here speaks. Prophesying then involving the declaration of God's Word in the power of the Holy Spirit. Becomes the seed that produces the harvest of faith.

And it's manifold fruits which God requires of his people. The impact of prophesying upon unbelievers is very helpfully described by Paul in these words. What kind of an impact would it have if a crowd of unbelievers were to come into a place like Knox here tonight.

And hear this kind of genuine prophecy. What should we expect when God is really speaking. Well now Paul goes on to describe.

Look at verse 24. He will be convinced by all that he is a sinner. He will be convinced by all that he is a sinner.

If a man comes into a congregation in which God is present. And God is speaking. And so a word of prophecy.

The Word of God is communicated in the power of the Spirit. This is the first thing a man is convinced that he's a sinner. The word for convinced there is precisely the same one as Jesus used in the in the Gospels.

In John when he told the disciples when he the Holy Spirit comes. He will reprove the world of sin righteousness and judgment. Reprove or convince or convict.

And the point is this you see. When when an unbeliever comes into a the house of God. And the Word of God is being prophesied or proclaimed in this sense.

Then a man would be convinced. Reproved of his own sin. Oh my friends we've gone to the other extreme.

You see our policy today in churches generally is let's entertain people when they come in. And make them feel very much at home and very very comfortable. You know you're happy you shouldn't feel out of place here.

You know what we read in the New Testament of the rest of the people. They dare not join the community of believers. They dare not.

Why? They knew they didn't belong. And so they couldn't join. Apart from some extra hypocrites like Ananias and Sapphira.

They dare not join. A characteristic feature of the church in which God is still speaking through a prophet is this. That when men come in they feel they're sinners.

Do you feel yourself to be a sinner? Do you go from the services where you attend if it's not in Noxia wherever it is? Do you go away quite happy? Unscathed? Unwounded? As happy as when you came in? And as happy to sin? My friend God have mercy upon you and the congregation where you are. It just means that the prophetic word is not heard there. The word humbled is no longer in our evangelical vocabulary.

And it needs to be reintroduced. We're so proud you see. I was reading just incidentally this week and I thought that this is just a typical illustration of the man of the world.

George Bernard Shaw was once boasted that he he could make the best cup of coffee in in the UK. Well right nothing very bad about boasting. But you can make a decent cup of coffee.

Britishers are not as famed for their cups of coffee as North Americans are. Perhaps they can show some North Americans how to brew a cup of tea. Not so sure about that.

But anyway this was George Bernard Shaw's great statement. That he was second to none at making a cup of coffee. And one country person took him up on it.

And he wrote a letter to him and asked him for the explanation. And how do you do it? Shaw responded by giving him the secret. And then he added and I quote.

I hope this is a genuine request. He says I'm not just a trick to secure my autograph. The preacher could not let the implication of that mark go unanswered.

Country person though he was. He recognized the evil thing when he saw it. And so he sent a reply and it read.

Accept my sincere thanks for the directions for making coffee. I wrote in good faith. To convince you of that however.

Allow me to return what it is obvious you infinitely prize. But which is of no value whatsoever to me. Your autograph.

So he cut Bernard Shaw's autograph out. His lovely signature. And he put it in the envelope and he sealed it and he sent it back.

Yes we can laugh at it. But you know my friends there's something of Bernard Shaw in each one of us. But when we've heard the voice of God.

We begin to know ourselves as sinners. And we're humbled. And he will be judged of all says Paul.

But you say we don't want people to be judged when they come into the congregation. We want them to be happy and we want them to come back again. Says Paul they will be judged of all.

They'll feel that everybody is judging them. They'll be uncomfortable. They will be passing under review.

This is the normal thing when there is a prophet of God speaking in God's name and in the power of the Spirit in any pulpit. Men are going under review and they feel that God's got his eye on them and they're being made uncomfortable. Don't let us become agents of the devil in trying to perpetuate another tradition.

As the prophetic word brings to light of day the hidden things of the heart. The man concerned will be humbled. Self-knowledge resulting from such a ministry of the Spirit will bring into the ground to the earth in dust and ashes in humility.

And it is in that attitude that blessedness is born. Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness.

If God is among his people in truth then the preaching of the word in the power of the Spirit ought still to have this kind of humbling and exalting and saving ministry. I close with this. I'm reminded here of that

incident in the Old Testament.

When the ark of the Lord was captured by the Philistines you remember and taken to Ashdod where Dagon the Philistine God was kept. You remember the result was catastrophic for Dagon the idol the Philistine idol. He fell.

Poor Dagon the presence of the ark of Jehovah there. Poor Dagon fell on his face. And the folks saw next morning that Dagon had fell.

Dagon the great God of the Philistines and he must be put back again and they put him back upon his feet. Do you know what happened next day? Do you remember the story? Dagon fell again but this time he was broken to pieces and we're told in the lovely quaint King James way only the stump of him was left. Only the trunk, only the torso, his arms were gone, his head was off.

Poor poor Dagon. But you see it's a picture. When you come into the presence of God you're broken.

The God I in you in me is broken. And the reign and the rule of self comes to an end and a new man is born. Summing up then the teaching of the chapter to this point we may say that the gift of prophecy is unquestionably superior to the gift of tongues because of the blessing it brings to people.

Where there is prophecy it means that God wants to bless his people that hear him, speak in a language they can understand, and God wants those who come in among his people or those to whom his people go out. He wants all to hear and to hear clearly so that they can profit. And when God speaks clearly it means he wants us to be blessed.

Moreover whereas tongues are a Godward method of worship they do not edify the speaker himself nor his fellow Christians unless they're accompanied by a second gift of interpretation. They only confound unbelievers and confirm them in their doubts. Prophesying on the other hand is geared to benefit believers and unbelievers alike.

Saints are thereby edified and strangers and sinners are thereby transformed into worshippers who are born in humility. I don't know what you say to things like this. What should be our response to the Word of God coming from a passage such as this? Dare I phrase it like this? Oh Lord save us from looking for the second best or becoming so obsessed with the second best that we lose what is best in your eyes.

And oh Lord above all else as we pursue agape let the prophetic mantle again fall upon your servants that you may speak clearly to your people and through your people to the hungry, needy, bewildered, lost multitudes of a desperately sad world. Let us pray. Father in heaven hear what is silently spoken in our hearts and the emotions which we cannot always put into words anyway but you know exactly how we inwardly react to a kind of word like this from the scriptures and what we ask for is for grace to relate all this to ourselves as individuals and to our congregation or the congregation to which we belong and where we regularly worship and so to do that you may have glory in us and glory through us.

Make us a people who will be willing in the day of your power for Jesus sake. Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/26/SID26555.mp3>

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