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Topic	Speaking in Tongues and Prophecy in the worship meeting
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Imagine a worship where a song leader is leading you in worship and then he will start to speak in tongues then there will be a time of spontaneous speaking in tongues and everybody speaks in tongues and looks like a good time and then after that it ends, or may be out of that there will be a prophecy, someone will stand up and say something. Then you come to a Baptist church and you see nothing like. Why is that none of this? This is exactly what happened in that particular church in Corinth. It didn't happen often because if you look in all the letters of Paul there is only one letter that this is mentioned and even in the second letter of Paul to Corinthians doesn't even mention this at all. So it is a very-very-very narrow area of particular things.

Nowadays in worship sessions some people fall down and then other people will start convulsing, laughing, animal noises and all that. So the worship meeting is now becoming very-very different. *If Paul were here today, would he approve of people falling down and then convulsing and laughing and making animal noises, etc. all that?*

Let's look at what he says in chapter 14. Let that be a guide to whether Paul would say that would be okay.

Tongue Speaking in a Worship Meeting.

1 Corinthians 14:1 (ESV) Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy.

Love is the motive behind the exercise of spiritual gifts. That is the most important thing. No matter what you do, the worship meeting, everything is actually fueled by love and he says, earnestly desire the spiritual gifts. So basically you all should desire spiritual gifts. If you wanted to speak in tongues, you should desire that too. If you wanted to prophesize you should desire that too, because Paul asked you to desire. There are some churches who will say there are no more spiritual gifts, don't ask, God won't give. There is no such thing. Paul says earnestly desire spiritual gifts but to bless others. If you couldn't care for others don't ask for gift.

Which one is better? Tongues or prophecy.

Paul is bringing it up, everybody was speaking in tongues as if it was a sign of spirituality and he says

1 Corinthians 14:2 (ESV) For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit.

The problem with speaking in tongues is that you speak to God and this you can do at home, why would you come to a worship meeting where worship meeting is an expression of the body.

V 4a The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself.

He builds himself up by speaking in tongues, but he didn't build other people. It is like coming to a picnic and all of you didn't bring food, I take up my drumstick and I eat in front of you. So that is what it is.

1. Prophecy Builds Up

1 Corinthians 14:3 (ESV) On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.

So this is very-very important. Prophecy acts to build people up in terms of the knowledge of God, their faith in God, their trust in God, encouragement when they are down, encourages them to be bold, consolation when they are sad it provides comfort. A prophecy does that. If a prophecy comes and causes the opposite effect, then I would actually question whether it is a proper prophecy.

V 4b but the one who prophesies builds up the church.

So if love is the basis of our actions and the gifts are to build up the church, obviously tongues cannot challenge prophecy; simply because it builds up the church. There is no speaking in tongues in Paul's idea in a church meeting because prophecy is better, it builds up the church.

1 Corinthians 14:5 (ESV) Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built up.

Paul is not saying that you don't speak in tongues or you don't have the gift of tongues. Yes, you can have the gift of tongues but in terms of a church meeting you should be the one who prophesize. The second reason is it gives you three illustrations. The first illustration is

1 Corinthians 14:6 (ESV) Now, brothers, if I come to you speaking in tongues, how will I benefit you unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching?

Paul isn't comparing one church to other. He is just saying whatever you do, you come to church, you must build the church up. Speaking in tongues is like playing the shofar when you don't really know how to play it. The third illustration is a foreign language.

1 Corinthians 14:11 but 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.

So basically speaking in tongues is like being a foreigner, it is like being playing a musical instrument without the notes and have no benefit to people. That's why we don't speak in public because it makes no sense to everybody else.

1 Corinthians 14:12-13 (ESV) So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church. 13 Therefore, one who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret.

So therefore you may have to pray, let's say if you have a tongue that you say in public but you must have interpretation. If you want to say something and there is no interpretation, then it is not right for you to bring it up.

2. Paul's Personal Practice

1 Corinthians 14:14-16 (ESV) For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful. 15 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. 16 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?

So he is saying that you want to pray in tongues, you can do that in the privacy of your own room, but you also pray with my mind because your mind is unfruitful. If you pray with your mind with your legible language someone else outside can say amen. They can agree and can understand and this is Paul's personal practice.

What is praying in the spirit?

Praying in spirit is praying with basically tongues. Scientists have found while looking at the MRI scan of people who are praying in tongues, the blood supply to the brain, the frontal part. The front part is accentuated when you are singing gospel songs. When speaking in tongues it is like switch off. It means you are not really trying. A famous commentator said,

If only the mind is active everything remains at a theoretical level; if only the heart is active the door lies open to self-deception and credulity. If both are open to the Holy Spirit the result can build up the community and bear the fruit of love for the other

So Paul is saying you don't want to be just praying in tongues and your mind is unfruitful. The best is you speak in both,

1 Corinthians 14:17-19 (ESV) For you may be giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not being built up. 18 I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. 19 Nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

So Paul speaks more than all of you, but in church he doesn't speak in tongues, because it doesn't build people up.

3. Speaking in tongues in public worship is sign of immaturity, why?

1 Corinthians 14:20 (ESV) Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature.

So speaking in tongues in order to show off how spiritual you are or how spiritual your church is, is a sign of immaturity.

Speaking or singing in tongues, is actually loving yourself versus edifying other people and loving others. So if you are speaking English you are building other people up, you are loving them, if you are speaking in tongues you are loving yourself.

4. Speaking in tongues is a sign of judgment

1 Corinthians 14:21-22 (ESV) In the Law it is written, "By people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners will I speak to this people, and even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord." 22 Thus tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is a sign not for unbelievers but for believers.

This verse is actually taken from Isaiah. This is the time where the Northern Kingdom were actually taken over by the Assyrians. They were rebellion against God, they were moving away from God, they were breaking his covenant and God have warned them on multiple occasions and then finally one day they woke up, all around them were people speaking in strange tongues and though people speaking in strange tongues is actually a sign of judgment, because Israel refused to believe God. Same thing happened some years ago to The Singapore Story. If you read this book by the late Lee Kuan Yew. He had a grandfather called Lee Hoon Leong. Lee Hoon Leong loved the British. He loved the British way of speaking, he dressed like a British fellow, his English is perfect and he thought the British army could never be broken. He would never lose. One day he woke up everybody around him was smelly, stinking and speaks Japanese according to him and his whole idea of faith in the British Empire was totally shattered. Kuan Yew's grandfather was never the same after that, but the fact that every time he hears Japanese it really gets to him. It is a sign of his misplaced faith in the British Empire. So every time you hear it is a sign of your unbelief, you put your place in the wrong place. That is an example. So speaking in tongues is actually a sign which God used in the past to punish Israel.

5. Adverse Effect on Non-believers

1 Corinthians 14:23-25 (ESV) If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your minds? 24 But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, 25 the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you.

So basically when a non-believer comes in and the prophecy is shared about God that he actually resonates with that he actually comes to faith because it is intelligible.

PROPHECY

1 Corinthians 14:26-33 (ESV) What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up. 27 If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret. 28 But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to

himself and to God. **29** Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. **30** If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent. **31** For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged, **32** and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets. **33** For God is not a God of confusion but of peace.

So here he is saying that in a meeting you can't say that the spirit entered you and suddenly you got to say something and you ask the other guy to shut up. That is not what happens. The spirit of the prophets are subject, which means it is controllable. So you go up one by one, at most two or three to come up and really share.

So when we are talking about prophesy in the New Testament, there are three basic approaches to it.

1. Some people regard prophetic preaching, preaching of the gospel. People like J. I. Packer for example, who wrote knowing God. So this is basically preaching the gospel is actually prophesy.
2. Another group says prophesy has ceased. These are a lot of reformed churches, say prophesy is ceased is because the prophets are Old Testament prophets and New Testament prophets are not exactly the same. When an Old Testament prophets spoke with authority like, Thus says the Lord. It is solid, it cannot be wrong, you are either false or you are true. So therefore if that's the case do you have prophets in the New Testament, we actually have apostles, their words are **inscripturated**. If today, there are prophets then we might be having an addition to the Bible every month. So due to this fact they say that prophecy is ceased.

If that's the case then 1-Cor 14, Paul is asking people to prophecy. So it is a bit odd you ask people to desire something and talk all about prophesy and yet you say on the other hand, I am the only one who can prophesy. So it doesn't make sense to me. So I don't accept the reformed view.

3. There is another view that has come out by Wayne Grudem. He says, the New Testament prophecy is once of less authority. It is the authority of general content, whilst the Old Testament prophecy is authority of actual words itself.

Wayne says that prophecy in the Old Testament is of the old covenant where you got authority of actual words. So it says, thus says the Lord it is actually the same. When you come to the New Covenant, the New Covenant apostles are actually apostles, they are the new prophets. Their words are **inscripturated** and they formed the foundation and then on the other side there are also New Testament prophets, authority of general content, they upbuild the church, they don't build foundation and it is spontaneous. A new category which he put forward

Spontaneous or critical reflection?

When you get a prophesy, do you get it on the spot or have you been thinking about it and reflecting about it. There are some groups that think it is spontaneous, some believe it is critical reflection. Max Turner writes

For Paul prophecy is the reception and subsequent communication of spontaneous, divinely given apokalupsis

Dun writes, (NIGTC) *For Paul prophecy is a word of revelation. It does not denote a previously prepared sermon. . . . It is a spontaneous utterance . . .*

So this is one group of people and their group goes back to this idea of ecstatic speech among the Auricles of Delphi, in Greek literature there were some prophets who actually go into a trance and they were spontaneously give out prophesies or predictions. It goes back to that culture but if we actually look into Greek culture at that time, not all prophets at that time even in Greek culture actually gave ecstatic speech. That is not happening all the time. The kind of prophesies in Greek literature is actually quite varied, so therefore that is not necessarily true.

If we say that prophecy is all spontaneous, everything is spontaneous then what about helping, administrating and being a teacher are these also spontaneous. Some of these gifts are not spontaneous and because of that we can't say or know for sure. When Max Turner writes

For Paul prophecy is the reception and subsequent communication of spontaneous, divinely given apokalupsis

He just wrote it but there is no proof to prove that is spontaneous other than somebody else who did a study some years ago and looked into Greek literature, but at this present moment in time, it is not fair to say it must be spontaneous and it is not fair to say it is just critical reflection. You cannot exclude either one, because God works in different ways.

Sustained utterance-control and reflection

3 On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation

29 Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. 30 If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent. 31 For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged

So basically you are sitting there and you are actually in control. It is not like trying to hold something in and you vomit it out. It is all under control, you can decide what to say. There is an idea of reflection and critical thinking.

All prophesy is revelation but not all revelation is prophesy, so prophesy comes within this embed of God revealing to us. Sometimes God can reveal to us in a dream. Some of these revelations you don't know you can interpret wrongly too.

David Hill gives a more broader definition,

Prophet is a Spirit-endowed person “whose preaching contains admonition and comfort, the call for repentance and promise” and who also counsels, as a pastor, and “blames and praises.

So the broader definition of prophesy that combines all these strands and I think would be more useful for us is that it basically takes God’s revelation of his word to people in need in communities in situations with ability to address. So it could be spontaneous revelation, you can get it spontaneously or you could also get it with sustained prayer, prayerful contemplation, meditation and rationale reflection. Then tell this prophesy to challenge, comfort, judge and console people to build up the church.

How is it different from teaching?

In teaching we teach doctrine. In these sort of prophesy or prophetic preaching you actually go into a person or the people’s situation and apply that particular bit of scripture to that situation. So there must be some intuition that this is what is happening.

As far as conservative church is concerned

1 Thessalonians 5:19-21 (ESV) Do not quench the Spirit. 20 Do not despise prophecies, 21 but test everything; hold fast what is good.

So basically if they give you 10 prophecies, 9 of them are not good, but you hold on to the 1 that is good. He is saying let them speak but you don’t have to agree, you actually have to have discernment.

New Testament Prophet

Acts 21:8-11 (ESV) Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. 9 He had four unmarried daughters, who prophesied. 10 While we were staying for many days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. 11 And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands and said, “Thus says the Holy Spirit, This is how the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.”

Paul went and this is what happened later on

Acts 21:30-36 (ESV) 30 Then all the city was stirred up, and the people ran together. They seized Paul and dragged him out of the temple, and at once the gates were shut. 31 And as they were seeking to kill him, word came to the tribune of the cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion. 32 He at once took soldiers and centurions and ran down to them. And when they saw the tribune and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. 33 Then the tribune came up and arrested him and ordered him to be bound with two chains. He inquired who he was and what he had done. 34 Some in the crowd were shouting one thing, some another. And as he could not learn the facts because of the uproar, he ordered him to be brought into the barracks. 35 And when he came to the steps, he was actually carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the crowd, 36 for the mob of the people followed, crying out, “Away with him!”

Was the prophecy accurate?

If we take the overall view, because of the Jews Paul got arrested then this prophesy is correct, but the little details are a little bit different. Wayne Grudem gives this example of sometimes there is general content is correct but the actual details are a little bit different and that happens with New Testament prophets. That's why when you get a prophesy you have to listen to it very carefully and you are going to be able to test which is right and which is wrong. So in the end The Bible is the final authority because Paul says

1 Corinthians 14:37-40 (ESV) If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. **38** If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized. **39** So, my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. **40** But all things should be done decently and in order.

So it didn't matter in this church whether you come up with a prophesy or you don't come up with a prophesy because in the end the leaders in the church will take your prophesy and measure it against scripture.

Acts 15:19-20 (ESV) Therefore **my judgment** is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God, **20** but should write to them to abstain from the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood.

So James doesn't say, thus says the Lord. He says in my judgment

Acts 15:25-26 (ESV) it has **seemed good** to us, having come to one accord, to choose men and send them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, **26** men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So we don't have such things in the world today, even the apostles themselves say, it seemed good to us and they choose Paul and Barnabas because these men risk their lives in the name of Christ. There is some criteria. So they also does critical reflection as well.

Acts 15:28 (ESV) For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements:

When you have a church leader who tells you that God told me to do this, never accept anybody who says this.

Women keeping Silent

As in all the churches of the saints, **34** the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. **35** If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.

It is the only place in the Bible that says that actually says that they shouldn't speak, but how Paul can contradict himself because in chapter 11 it says,

but every wife who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head,

So one hand he tells them to pray and prophesize and on the other hand he says them to shut up. So therefore it must be that he is not schizophrenic. It must be the context. We have to look at the context. The context of 1-Cor 14 is, prophets coming up to share. So when a prophets come up to share, who also is a husband, a bombastic prophecy that God is going to do and that and then the wife standup and blames him for things in public and that is a loss of faith, it is a loss of dignity, it destroys the church rather than build the church up, it could be true, but it does not matter. Because in those days if the wife does that it is an absolute break of the hierarchical structure of society. People will think that church is a crazy place. So therefore he stops this. There is a same reason why some women while praying wear a veil which is a sign of submission.

As in all the churches of the saints, 34 the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. 35 If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.

What should happen on Sundays?

There are some churches where the leaders lead and the rest are paralyzed. It is not the New Testament church. In the old days they had no sermons, everybody comes up and shares a teaching, a revelation, a sharing and all that, now we are like only sermon up there, leaders lead and we all paralyzed in the pews. That is not how church is supposed to be done. There is a difference between temple worship and Sunday worship. We are all temple of God, so we are all powered to participate. There is no passivity, each

What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up. Vv 26

Therefore, you should be able to take something. We must create an atmosphere in church where it allows sharing but in order to build people.

Understanding is everything.

19. Nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

In William Tyndale's time in England the catholic mass used to be held in Latin. It was very mystical, very dark, got candles and incense and then the priest will go up there and do all sorts of things, it created the bread who actually become the body of Jesus Christ and everything is in Latin.

So William Tyndale at the threat of his life translated the first English Bible and he lost his life because of that. He wanted even the farmer's child to be able to understand and that is very-very important. We do not worship with Latin or any other language, intelligibility is the most important thing.

Intelligibility vs culture.

The preaching and the singing were to be done so that they were accessible even to the unlearned.
John Calvin

Our level of communication in a church should be at lowest level. When our preachers come up here and preach they must speak in everyday language.

Gifts are to be used to edifying others in church

- It is only church where the gift of tongue speaking is mentioned
- It is not even a qualification for elder or deacon
- In list of gifts in 1 Cor 12 is deliberately mentioned last
- Condition of using gift is to have interpretation