

1Corinthians 18-09-30b

Let's pick up our study now in 1st Corinthians chapter 14. We see Paul saying here that the Corinthians who he told and sort of chided in my view at the end of chapter 12 about pursuing gifts and being zealous toward better gifts, now he says desire spiritual gifts, and it's the same word. Pursue love, deoko, love, go after it, and zelao, spiritual gifts.

This is why, by the way, the translation has been read back into the end of chapter 12. Because Paul says desire these gifts at 14, well he must mean the same thing at the end of chapter 12. Love, in my humble, considered, and educated opinion, no.

Paul issues a mild rebuke. He says, do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But you are desiring better gifts. Let me show you a more excellent way, and then he talks about love, and we've seen that in great detail.

Now he says, deoko, love, now pursue gifts. The conjunction here, the post-positive particle here, da, which is translated but or now, it's something of an adversative. It brings a stop to things.

This is why I mentioned the break in the chapter that isn't in the original text. Because Paul says, now abide faith, hope, and love, these three, but the greatest of these is love, deoko, love, now pursue gifts. Get your love thing in focus, make that your aim, your target, your goal, with the energy that a persecutor goes after his victims.

Do that. Now desire gifts. Now be zealous for gifts.

It's different. You can be zealous in love in ways that you can't be zealous without it. You've got a zeal without love.

What was the problem in Israel that I've quoted many times here recently? I bear them witness they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. Is there something wrong with a zeal for God? It depends. Is it according to knowledge? Is there anything wrong with having a zeal for a service gift? A gift that God granted for the building up of the church? Anything wrong with wanting one? If it is according to love.

Pursue love, now go after your gift. And let me tell you which gift you ought to be going after. So pursue love and desire spiritual gifts more that you may prophesy.

Malone is the comparative. Greater. So pursue love, desire a gift, especially more so that you may prophesy.

You want this tongues thing. You think it's the greatest gift. Fine to pursue a gift.

To be zealous for a gift if you are pursuing love in the way described. But the gift is prophecy. That you may prophesy.

Why? For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Verse 2. For no one understands. However in the spirit he speaks mysteries.

Now, a little bit of contextual clarification. There are those who believe that when you talk about tongues as a gift. Temporary or otherwise in the New Testament.

That it was always languages. For example in Acts chapter 2. Let's turn back to Acts chapter 2 right quick. There is the original archetypal.

Now on our stage presenting for the first time anywhere. Tongues. In Acts chapter 2. Day of Pentecost fully come.

All in one accord. One place. Notice the Holy Spirit came.

When they were all with one accord. If you are not in one accord. You are in the wrong place.

All in one accord. All one place. Suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind.

And it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Notice it didn't fill the whole. I'm just saying.

It didn't fill the whole church where they were sitting. Filled the whole house. Filled the house.

All with one accord in the house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues as of fire. One sat upon each of them.

If this was real fire. It would have been a Michael Jackson moment. They would have been rushing for fire.

Where is the water? My hair is on fire. No. As of fire.

These were supernatural illuminated bright things. This is fire as of the seraphim. This is fire as from the throne room of God.

Fire of a supernatural appearance. Now, how come it wasn't doves? What is this a symbol of? What are these tongues of fire descending? What do they symbolize? What do they represent? What do they signify? What is happening here? What is descending from heaven upon them? It's the Holy Spirit, right? What's the symbol of the Holy Spirit when Jesus gets baptized? It's a dove. You know how at a wedding or at a big event or something, doves all fly into the heavens? Well, why is this the reverse? Why don't a whole bunch of doves descend from heaven and alight on each person's head? Why couldn't it be doves? Why couldn't it have been doves with olive branches in their beak? Why couldn't it have been olive branches? Why couldn't it have been olives? Olives descended from heaven on each head.

Oil from olives. Olive oil pressed down in fine, fine oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit in the Old

Testament, right? Why isn't there oil dripping out of heaven onto their heads? Anointing them all. I've got the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Why isn't oil dripping down? Did God have a choice? Could God have dripped something like olive oil down on their heads? Could God have sent doves down to light on each one of their noggins? So why is it fire? I'm just going to let you think about that. I know what my answer is. What did John the Baptist say? There's one coming after me.

Can't touch his sandal. He will baptize you, not with water, but with what? The Holy Spirit and fire. What does the fire do? It discriminates.

It reveals that which is eternal from that which is perishable. That which lasts. Gold, silver, and precious stones from wood, hay, and stubble.

It consumes the chaff. John the Baptist. Burn with unquenchable fire.

Gather the wheat into his barn. What does this descent signify? This is not the ironic beneficial dove coming down in grace and favor and alighting upon the Son of God. What is this? This message is... Remember when Jesus said, I have not come to bring peace but a sword? What's a dove a symbol of? This could have been swords.

Might have been a little bit startling. And behold, swords fell down from heaven and landed on the top of each head. What does it mean? This is a time for judgment.

This is a time for discrimination, for separating. Who is going to have eternal life? Who is going into the fiery judgment of God's wrath? It's an important message. This is not a time for the beneficent message of God so loving the world.

This is the Holy Spirit convicting of sin and righteousness and judgment. And what happens? They were all, verse 4, filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. They began to speak with other tongues.

Now, what kind of tongues? There were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together and were confused because everyone heard them speak in his own dialect. When it uses language here, I like how the New King James does it because when it says tongues, it's glossize.

When it says language, it is dialectize, dialectos, dialect, language. Each man heard them in his own dialect, his own language. So they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? Notice how famous it had to be to be a Galilean that all of these foreigners know a Galilean when they see one or when they hear one.

These guys are Galileans. These guys are from Parthia and Phrygia and Pamphylia. And they say these guys, how do they know they're Galileans? They've got an accent.

They're like guys from Alabama or Georgia or New Jersey or New York in the old days. Have you

noticed how because of the media flood in recent decades, accents are fading? When I was a child, there was a Texas accent. It's almost entirely gone unless you talk to somebody that's really old.

There's a beautiful Georgia lilting southern accent, and it's largely gone. There was a Tennessee accent. There is an accent in the Carolinas.

But I noticed in this most recent news coverage of the tropical storm and such, a lot of people they talked to, that very distinctive accent has been suppressed or is gone. But the Galileans, everybody knew a Galilean when they talked. And it was thought to be uneducated.

Kind of like a southern accent in this country for a long time. I think Vernon McGee was one of the first ones to have an accent and convince people that even though he had an accent, he really knew what he was talking about. But when you heard Vernon McGee on the radio, you think, is he going to be very profound talking with that accent? And then you listen a little while and you find out, yes, he is.

Well, these people heard the Galileans. These guys are Galileans. How is it that we hear each in our own dialect, our own language in which we were born? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, Libya, Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs.

Galileans talking Arabic. Can you believe it? We hear them speaking in our own tongues, glossis. And what are they saying? Do they understand the content? They are not given recipes for food.

What are they saying? They say, not only do we hear it in our own language, but we understand the content. And what is the content? The wonderful works of God. They are speaking in my language the wonderful works of God.

So they are amazed and perplexed. What could this mean? Others mocked them. Now, back to Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 14, verse 2. He who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men, but to God, for no one understands. Now, they are talking tongues in Acts 2 and everybody understands. Paul says here, you all are talking in tongues and nobody understands.

So, here is my question. Are these fake tongues? Or is there more than one kind of tongues? A lot of people say the only legitimate tongues is talking another language. And if you are not speaking Swahili or Arabic or Chinese, you are not talking tongues, you are talking gibberish and you just made it all up.

Has that always been true? Is it ever true? What does the Bible say about how many different kinds of tongues there are? Acts chapter 2, it is glossize and they are dialects. They are languages and men understand them. Right? So that is definitely one kind of biblical tongues.

Paul says here, you in Corinth, when you talk in tongues, nobody understands. How did 1 Corinthians chapter 13 begin? Though I speak with the glosses of men and angels. The angels have a language.

If somebody comes down here and talks angel, are you going to understand them? No, you are not. Type 1 tongues is Acts chapter 2, dialectal tongues. Type 2 tongues is the tongues of angels.

And men don't understand it. With one exception. Instead of being given the gift of talking in a dialect that you don't know, like Arabic or Phrygian, people were given the gift of talking angel talk.

Now, why would this happen? If they are just talking and nobody can understand, I mean, maybe the angels. Are the angels watching? Are the angels looking on? Is God educating the angels by what is happening here? Could somebody in a church gathering, in someone's home, gathered with one accord, and the Holy Spirit is manifest and evident, could God the Holy Spirit give a message that is for the angels? I say yes. I think they can probably discern and deduce and interpolate and extrapolate from the circumstances that they watch here on this earth.

I think, just like there needed to be fresh revelation, the mysteries of the church that had heretofore not been revealed, if Satan had known what God was up to with the Lord Jesus, he would not have crucified the Lord of glory. There were things that were hidden. There were mysteries that were not revealed.

So suddenly, with the Apostle Paul, the steward of the mysteries, these things are now revealed unto the other apostles. Well, guess to whom it is also a revelation? Also to whom it was not known in Old Testament days? The angels. So, some of this is given as a sign, and the onlooking angels... This is my deduction.

This is my observation. If somebody is talking with the tongues of angels, when God gives somebody the ability to talk with the tongues of men, who is it for? The men who speak that language, right? If God gives somebody the ability to talk angel, who would that be for? The angels. Otherwise, why go through the loop? Why talk angel and then have somebody interpret and give the interpretation to the people? Now, can angels understand Greek and so on? Then, why not just have somebody talk Phrygian or whatever, and the angels understand that language, and they get the message that way? Anybody that has done interpretation knows that there is also filtering that is done.

There is also reduction of a sort. And I suspect that in the gift of speaking angel, there is a fulsome description given of certain things. The one who is given the gift of interpretation may be getting part of that to communicate to the humans.

The part that the humans can benefit from, they get the interpretation. But I suspect that this was a subset of everything the person... I think angelic language is probably very tight, very

concise. You look at Hebrew and how much can be packed into just a few words.

Can you imagine what angel language must be like? Nuance, context, freight that their words carry. Somebody can probably say ten words in angel that it would take 110 words in English or in Greek or whatever to describe. Well, all I'm saying is this.

Language is for a purpose. And why have somebody talk an unknown tongue unless there is somebody who understands that unknown tongue? And then have someone interpret for those who don't understand that language. You got two audiences.

It is first to the primary audience in the primary language. Secondly, part of it at least is interpreted for the rest. But maybe not all.

There are things that go on in heaven that we are not made privy to. Think about your seven thunders. Think the angels understood what happened with the seven thunders in Revelation? You got your seals, your trumpets and your bowls and the thunders.

Angel tells John, don't write down what the thunders said. Not revealed to man. But it was revealed in heaven, right? So, this is my suggestion to you.

Take it or leave it. If you want to be fed, if you want to understand it in a different way. But it appears to me that there are two kinds of tongues.

Acts chapter 2. It is those assembled all in one place from these diverse countries. Everybody hears it in his own language. And they understand the descriptions of the wonderful works of God.

They get the content at first hand. Paul here says, those who speak in a tongue do not speak to men but to God. They speak to God.

Talking to God. Another understanding of this is that this is praying in tongues. And that we know from other passages, Romans for example.

Paul says, we do not know how to pray as we ought. But the Holy Spirit interprets our prayers and takes them before the throne. And this could be a case where the Holy Spirit imparts the ability for a person to speak the Holy Spirit's tongue to God.

And sort of reveal the intermediary. I say, oh Lord, please give me wisdom as I face this challenge. The Holy Spirit says it in Holy Spirit language before God's throne.

At this time, as a sign, it could be that the Holy Spirit gave people the Holy Spirit's language. And they speak something that communicates directly to God. That's possible.

All I'm saying is, if it is a tongue, it is a language. And somebody understands it. Not just the interpreter.

The interpreter is re-saying what was said to the original recipient for the benefit of others. It makes no sense to speak something nobody understands and wait for somebody to then render it into a language you do understand. Because God is able to give that person the message at first hand.

They would have the gift of Acts 2 tongues and just speak it directly. You don't need two people to do the job one person can do. It just doesn't make any sense.

If this person is speaking a language, the first recipient, whether it is God or the angels, is getting the message first. And this other person is doing a courtesy to let other people know what was said. But the message isn't directed to those people.

The message is directed to the recipient who understands the language. That's my view. I wouldn't die for it.

That's my view. And it makes sense of this passage. Especially in the light of Acts 2. He who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God.

Or with a view toward God. It doesn't necessarily mean he is speaking in order to communicate with God. Everybody can do that anyway.

You don't need a special gift or a special language to communicate with God. The past, present, and future system works just fine. Is there some special new communication with God through tongues? Men have always been able to talk to God.

Us much more so in Christ. Ask anything in His name. So, this is with a view toward God.

With a view toward God. This is something God wants done. He wants this tongue spoken.

They speak with a view toward God. This is something God has in mind specifically that may not be evident among the group. For no one understands.

However, in the Spirit, He speaks mysteries. In the Spirit, this unknown language is revealing mysteries. Does God need mysteries revealed to Him? He's the author of the mysteries.

Who needs the mysteries revealed? The angels. How many kinds of tongues did Paul identify in 1 Corinthians 13.1? Tongues of men. Tongues of angels.

This makes the best sense to me. I offer it to you for your consideration. So, these who speak tongues men don't understand are speaking mysteries because God wants them to.

Unto God. But, verse 3, He who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men. Exhortation, edification, and comfort.

Any message that comes through tongues is designed by God for exhortation, for edification, and for comfort. Now, what part of exhortation, edification, or comfort is designed to split up a

group? Or segregate a group? Or cause some to feel superior to others? Exhortation, edification, and comfort to men. Plural.

Not to a man. Rhonda, I see a tall, dark stranger in your future. Hang on.

God is sending you. You're right, man. This is not going to be the subject of a tongues revelation.

These are truths that exhort, edify, and build up comfort men. He who speaks in a tongue, verse 4, builds up himself. But he who prophesies builds up the church.

Interesting. He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself. Builds up himself.

Now, how can you be built up if you are speaking in a tongue? What has to be the case if speaking is going to build you up? You have to know what you're saying. You can't speak a gibberish. You don't know what it means.

How does that build you up? It is impossible to be built up by saying something. If I give you a piece of Cicero or Kikero or Julius Caesar, all in Latin, and have you read it, is there any possible way that is going to build you up? Only if you know Latin. Only if you know what it means.

If I say, post hoc ergo propter hoc, do you know what that means? Some of you do. Post hoc ergo propter hoc. That's Latin.

And it is the description of a logical fallacy. You are arguing that because something comes after another thing, that something was caused by what came before. I said at four o'clock this morning, oh sun, come up.

Later, the sun came up. Therefore, my speaking made it happen. Post hoc, after, means propter hoc.

It prompted it. It caused it. Post hoc ergo propter hoc.

Now that you know what it means, when I say that, that can edify you. You can analyze arguments and decide, is somebody just saying, I heard one of these, in fact it's way beyond a propter hoc fallacy. Senator Flake, after he made his pronouncement that he would like this Supreme Court nominee investigated for no longer than a week before he makes his vote, but if the investigation doesn't turn anything up, he will vote in favor.

He doesn't know of anything against the man, and if the FBI can't turn something up against the man in seven days, he's voting yes to confirm. That's Senator Flake. He has made that statement.

He's leaving. He's getting in the elevator, and a woman in the crowd with all these microphones and cameras around says, if you vote for him, you're shaming my experience of having been abused. This is a woman who at some point in her past evidently was accosted or assaulted or

had some bad experience at the hands of a man, and so she is representing herself as part of the pound sign me too movement, hashtag me too, and she says, anybody who votes for this man's confirmation is dismissing the women who have suffered abuse.

Just because you have heard an accusation against a man, and yet you vote for him anyway, doesn't mean that you have no sensitivity whatsoever to abused women. Those things do not follow, and it's a species of Proctor-Hawk fallacy. You voted for this man despite hearing an allegation that he's done something bad, therefore you don't care anything about people who had something bad happen to them.

It does not follow, but it's an emotional argument, and in this day of post-modern thought where what makes me feel good is right, and it feels good to affirm people who have suffered some sort of injustice or abuse, and to affirm them, anything that affirms them is good. It doesn't have to make any sense. It doesn't have to even be fair to somebody else.

It just has to make me feel good when I say it. That makes it right. We have to really watch out and be careful with words and with concepts and the link between concepts.

Pursue love and be zealous for gifts, but especially that you prophesy. Why? Because tongues at best that do not communicate to the group, at best you get something out of it. You got a message, and when you expressed it, it was in angel tongue, or it was in Holy Spirit tongue, praying to God even.

But you are built up. You got something out of that, but everybody else did not. He who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but he who prophesies builds up the church.

I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more I wish that you prophesied. For he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets. He, the one speaking in tongues, interprets.

He speaks it, and then he comes back and says, You know what this message was? I just said it in an unknown language. Now let me say it in a known language. Unless he interprets.

It doesn't say unless he is interpreted. It says unless he interprets. He has to understand the message if he is going to interpret it himself.

He builds himself up because he gets the message. The message comes in him and through him by means of the Holy Spirit. He speaks it in, let's say, angel tongue, but he had to understand it or he could not interpret it.

So this is two pieces of evidence here that I offer you that even when speaking in an unknown tongue, the speaker gets the gist, gets the message. Because Paul says he's not going to build anybody up unless he also interprets, in order that the church may receive edification. You know what an edifice is, right? It's a building.

What a beautiful edifice. Jesus with his disciples, looking at the beautiful edifice of the temple, and he said not one stone will be left on another. Edify, to make an edifice, to build a thing up.

This is where some of you remember the concept of the edification complex of the soul, with its five floors. Edify, to build up, to build on, to construct out of materials, and make something bigger and better, so that the church may receive building up, may be substantially benefited. Verse 6, But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you unless I speak to you either by revelation, by knowledge, by prophesying, or by teaching? Revelation, knowledge, prophesying, teaching.

Four separate types of communication of divine truth. What shall I profit you? Verse 3, last chapter, Bestow all my goods to feed the poor, give my body to be burned, or whatever that may mean. Have not love, it profits me nothing.

Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, have not love, I am sounding brass, clanging cymbal. So, having said, all of this has to be in the context of fervent love. Somebody who is very energetically going after love and peace, and the building up of fellow believers.

If I come to you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you unless I speak to you? Implicit here is in love, lovingly. Remember my two passages in 2 Corinthians? I'm not using my authority to tear you down, but to build you up. 2 Corinthians 10.8 2 Corinthians 13.10 This same group, Paul says, I've been given this apostolic authority not to tear you down, but to build you up.

I love you, I want to be constructive. It has to be constructive. Right? Verse 7. Even things without life, flute, harp, if they make a sound, if there's not a melody, this is what distinction in the sounds means, there's got to be a melody.

Think of all the bugle calls in the army. This is a common illustration of this truth, or in the Marines for that matter. Think of the bosun's whistle on a ship.

Well, if you can. A lot of us have heard the different whistles. But it means something.

The sequence of notes communicates. The smoking lamp is lighted. It's reveille.

It's taps. The bugle calls for the cavalry. You can't hear somebody saying charge, but you can hear the bugler blow charge.

It's a sequence of notes. Even a flute or a harp, however gentle it is, however well-meaning. Notice he doesn't say a trumpet.

He says a flute or a harp. These are gentle, ironic, beneficial, soothing. Who's the pan pipe guy? You know, the pan pipes.

Yeah, pan fear, pan fire, whatever his name is. The pan pipes. Man, if you're having trouble going to sleep, put some of that on.

Harp music. It's gentle. And Paul says, look, even the gentlest of instruments, if they don't have some kind of a melody, how will it be known what they're doing it for? Is it just to put you to sleep? This is what New Age music is.

No melody. It's just kind of chords and ambiance and reverberations and such. Verse 8. If the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare for battle? Now we're getting down to it.

Battle. Intensity. Let's get something done.

You've got to make a certain sound. Everybody's got to know what the message is. Likewise, verse 9. You, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand.

What an exhortation and a standard for all of us who try to communicate the word of God. Needs to be words easy to understand. The message needs to be clear to all.

You, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? You will be speaking into the air. There are, it may be, so many kinds of languages in the world, none of them is without significance. Notice, no tongues, no languages are without significance.

Even speaking with the tongues of angels, you are saying something in the angelic language. Why would it be in that language? Somebody there, just like the Parthians, just like the Egyptians, just like the Arabs, somebody is in the crowd who speaks that language. And the message is for them.

Many kinds of languages in the world, none of them is without significance. Therefore, verse 11, if I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be a foreigner to him who speaks, and he who speaks will be a foreigner to me. This does not build up, it divides.

This does not unite, it separates. This does not draw together, it pushes apart. Even so you, verse 12, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, this is the third time now, end of chapter 12, beginning of this chapter, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel.

Push for love. Zealously, earnestly pursue love. Love builds up.

Love seeks peace. Love looks to the good for one another and for all. 1 Thessalonians 5.15 Hebrews 12.14 Peace with all men, and the holiness without which you are not going to see the Lord.

Push for it. What you do has to be done in love. Then your zeal is good.

You want to have zeal? Have it in love. Love builds up. Love lasts.

Well, that brings us to verse 13 where we're going to get into some practical considerations in the worship assembly in the house where they gather with one accord. And so we'll examine

that next time. But let's close here in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you for how powerfully it speaks to us, how wonderfully it illuminates our path and shines a light in the shadows of our soul and helps us to see where we can improve, where we can be of one mind both individually and collectively so that the light of our body will be shining inwardly and outwardly revealing the same truths, the same identity, the same position in the body of Christ, the same opportunity to represent him on this earth. We pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will minister these things to each heart.

We ask it in Jesus' name, amen.