

“Prophets Are Up” (1 Corinthians 14:1-25)

You may have noticed that e-mail is today’s mode of communication. Yet, e-mail is not always the best form of communication. It is easy to be misunderstood even by people we know quite well. While the sender understands the intent of his or her words, the recipient may not have the same degree of perception. Furthermore, the recipient can read into the e-mail ideas that were never intended. This should cause all of us to carefully read our e-mails and pause before we respond and hit the send button.

Likewise, reading a letter to a church that was written 2,000 years ago can be a challenging endeavor. It is easy to misunderstand the author’s intent and what was taking place in the life of the church. Often, God’s people jump to conclusions before carefully studying a biblical passage. This should give us cause to pause. Have we been guilty of this? Naturally, we all have. Therefore, our aim must be to understand the words of Scripture in the way God intended. We must try not to read our own traditions, preferences, or experiences into God’s Word. This is especially important when it comes to the controversial areas of worship and spiritual gifts.

Perhaps you have wondered what the Bible teaches about what a church worship service should look like. In the next two weeks, we will be examining 1 Corinthians 14 and we will learn that a church worship service is to be both intelligible and orderly. Today, we will be looking at 1 Cor 14:1-25 where Paul will confidently state *put your ministry where your mouth is*. In this passage, he provides two principles to guide us in our corporate worship.

1. Clear communication in the church is critical (14:1-19). Paul will tell us that prophecy and tongues are important spiritual gifts; however, he will insist that the gift of prophecy is particularly significant. In 14:1, Paul discloses his thesis: **“Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.”** First and foremost, Paul commands the church¹ to pursue, strive for, and seek after love.² This command “pursue” (*dioko*) means “to pursue or persecute.” It is a strong word that serves to remind us that love can be an elusive thing. In other words, we do not find love by wishful thinking or by halfhearted effort. We have to pursue it eagerly every day if we are going to find it operating in our lives as it should. As a church, if we make love our top pursuit we will discover that our capacity to minister to those around us grows with every passing year.³

After commanding the church to pursue love, Paul then commands the church to “desire earnestly”⁴ spiritual gifts,⁵ particularly prophecy. To prophesy is “to proclaim divine revelation”⁶ or “to speak on behalf of God.”⁷ Prophecy is not preaching or teaching, but it has elements of both. It can be both spontaneous and prepared. Throughout the entirety of chapter 14, Paul suggests that all God’s people can exercise prophecy.⁸ When we gather for worship, we ought to pray that the Lord will give us a word for someone in the church (cf. 14:26). Hence, we all come to church to minister. *Put your ministry where your mouth is*.

Apparently, the Corinthian church had exalted the gift of tongues above the prophetic gift of the proclamation of truth, and what Paul wants to do in this chapter is restore a healthy balance to the public worship life of that congregation. Hence, in 14:2-5 he compares and contrasts these two gifts of speaking in tongues and prophesying. In doing so, he explains why he prefers prophecy over tongues. **“For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit⁹ he speaks mysteries. But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation. One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church. Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying.”** There are four observations that are worth noting in these four verses.

- First, Paul has a high view of speaking in tongues¹⁰ and considers it a viable spiritual gift.¹¹ Some are critical of tongues because of its divisive nature; however, the only problem with tongues is when Christians abuse this gift and behave in an immature and prideful way.¹² Tongues is a good gift that God has given His church for its edification. The problem is never one of any spiritual gift, but rather of those who misunderstand and misuse what God has graciously provided.¹³
- Second, the gift of tongues that Paul is referring to in this context is a private prayer language.¹⁴ Paul writes that he would like to see all the Corinthians inspired by the Spirit to speak in tongues, but presumably only in the privacy of their own homes.¹⁵ Moreover, Paul knows that not everyone will be given this gift (see 12:28-30).
- Third, the gift of prophecy is for today (see 1 Thess 5:19-22). Not in the sense of authoritative, inerrant revelation from God, but as a word of “edification, exhortation, and consolation” (14:3). The words prophet, prophecies, prophesy, and prophesying are used over 200 times in the New Testament. The whole notion of prophecy and prophesying is a big part of the New Testament. It’s not a minor doctrine. It’s a major teaching of the New Testament.¹⁶
- Fourth, Paul’s primary concern in this passage is the edification of the body. Four times in these verses a form of the word “edify” is used. This is the foremost reason why spiritual gifts were given to us (see 12:7). It is important to note that Paul is not being critical of tongue speakers edifying themselves. He is not opposed to edifying oneself.¹⁷ This is one reason we come to church on Sunday. When we exercise our spiritual gifts, we edify ourselves as well. Nevertheless, there is a double meaning to the word “edify” in this context.¹⁸ Since arrogance was such a problem in the church at Corinth, it seems that some were getting puffed up over their use of tongues. However, Paul’s wish¹⁹ that everyone would speak in tongues is still a genuine desire.²⁰ Nevertheless, in public worship, we should only have what builds up the church. Edification is the benchmark by which we measure what goes on in public worship.²¹

In 14:6-12, Paul explains the problem with uninterrupted tongues: no one benefits from something that he or she cannot understand.²² Paul shares the main idea of this section in 14:6 when he writes, **“But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking in tongues, what will I profit you unless I speak to you either by way of revelation²³ or of knowledge or of prophecy or of teaching?”** Paul wants to be sure that what occurs in the worship service is profitable for all who are in attendance. Thus, he emphasizes gifts of clear communication. Paul wants everything to be done for edification. *Put your ministry where your mouth is.*

In 14:7-11, Paul gives three analogies that expound on the necessity of intelligibility in the church. First, Paul uses the metaphor of musical instruments. In order to be understood or appreciated musical instruments must play a discernible melody. In 14:7, Paul writes, **“Yet even lifeless things, either flute or harp, in producing a sound, if they do not produce a distinction in the tones, how will it be known what is played on the flute or on the harp?”** Paul cites the flute and harp, two of the common musical instruments of his day. The point he makes is: if the musician does not give a clear distinction between the notes on whatever instrument is being played, the people will not understand the tune.

The second metaphor comes from the field of battle. Bugle calls to battle must be clear enough for soldiers to distinguish “Advance!” from “Retreat!” In 14:8, Paul writes, **“For if the bugle produces an indistinct sound, who will prepare himself for battle?”** Trumpets or bugles were often used to summon people to battle or to give a signal for when to charge the enemy²⁴ or when to stop fighting because the battle was over.²⁵ Presumably there were different note patterns for each command. But if the trumpeter sounded either an unclear note pattern or a muffled sound so that the soldiers could not clearly distinguish what was being played, they would become confused and not know what they were supposed to do.

The third and final metaphor explains that foreign languages remain unintelligible to those who have not learned them. In 14:9-11, Paul writes, **“So also you, unless you utter by the tongue speech that is clear, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air. There are, perhaps, a great many kinds of languages in the world, and no kind is without meaning. If then I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be to the one who speaks a barbarian [i.e., foreigner], and the one who speaks will be a barbarian to me.”** The one who speaks in tongues without interpreting is speaking into the air. In basketball, a player that misses a shot hears the chant “air ball...air ball!” Similarly, the person who blurts out a tongue in worship without an interpreter could hear the chant “air talk...air talk!” It is important to understand that these verses merely serve as an illustration. Paul is not saying here that the gift of tongues in this context is a foreign language. He is simply trying to say that tongues must be interpreted or they are of no value to those who can’t interpret.²⁶ Applying all three of these illustrations, Paul says that it is not the mere sound of speaking that is important, but whether the sounds can be understood by the hearers.²⁷

This paragraph concludes in 14:12 with a summary statement: **“So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church.”**²⁸ Paul again commands the church to seek those gifts that will build up the body, particularly prophecy.²⁹

In 14:13-19, Paul provides the solution to the problem of uninterrupted tongues. The question is: what must a person do if God has given him or her the gift of tongues? Paul puts it like this: **“Therefore let one who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. What is the outcome then? I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also. Otherwise if you bless in the spirit only, how will the one who fills the place of the ungifted say the ‘Amen’³⁰ at your giving of thanks, since he does not know what you are saying? For you are giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not edified. I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all; however, in the church I desire to speak five words with my mind so that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue.”** Paul exhorts those who speak in tongues to pray that they will be able to interpret their own tongues and those of others. He then explains that he prays and sings in his native language and his prayer language. He seeks to experience the best of both worlds—the spirit and the mind.³¹ Yet, he is still sensitive to ensure that during the worship event, people understand what is happening. So even though Paul is an avid tongue speaker, out of consideration for others he leaves his prayer language at home.

[Paul has spent a great deal of ink telling us that clear communication in the church is critical. Now he shares a second principle...]

2. Mature thinking in the church is critical (14:20-25). In these final six verses, Paul informs the church that he seeks maturity in public worship.³² Paul begins in 14:20 by saying, **“Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be infants, but in your thinking be mature.”**³³ Paul wants the Corinthians to stop thinking like selfish and prideful children with regards to the gifts. He does state though that they should be naïve infants with regards to evil. Paul urges the church to think like a mature believer in the worship context.

In 14:21-25, Paul explains why spiritual maturity and self-control is so important in a corporate worship service. First, Paul cites a prophecy from Isa 28:11-12 (cf. Deut 28:49) and writes, **“In the Law³⁴ it is written, ‘BY MEN OF STRANGE TONGUES AND BY THE LIPS OF STRANGERS I WILL SPEAK TO THIS PEOPLE, AND EVEN SO THEY WILL NOT LISTEN TO ME,’ says the Lord.”** The point of this Old Testament quotation is that if Israel would not hear the Lord through the prophets, they would not hear even when He spoke in foreign languages to them through foreign people. So, Paul is saying, why put so much stress on tongues?

Paul then writes, **“So then tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophecy is for a sign, not to unbelievers but to those who believe.”** This is a very confusing verse because it says the very opposite of what we would expect Paul to say. I believe this verse is best put as a rhetorical question rather than as a statement (cf. 7:1): “So, then, are tongues a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, and prophecy a sign not for unbelievers but for believers?” To this question Paul would answer a resounding “No!”³⁵ In his mind, tongues is a sign for believers and prophecy is a sign for unbelievers.

Paul then concludes in 14:23-25 with these words: **“Therefore if the whole church assembles together and all speak in tongues, and ungifted men or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are mad?”³⁶ But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an ungifted man enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all; the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you.”³⁷** The effect of Christian prophecy on the unbeliever is threefold: He will be convicted of sin (cf. John 16:8); he will be called to take account of his sins and examine his sinful condition; and he will have his sinful heart and past laid open to inspection (cf. John 4:16-19). The triple use of “all” in 14:24 emphasizes that all the church through its prophetic message has, in God’s providence, a part in bringing the unbeliever to this place of conviction. For the unbeliever in the church service will recognize that God really is present and dealing with him.³⁸

[Hold up a Coke can and Pepsi can.] Do you prefer Coke or Pepsi? This has become one of the premier questions of our day. In fact, when I first candidated at EBF, our two staff pastors at that time took me out to lunch and said, “We need to ask you two very important questions. If you answer these questions correctly we will encourage the search committee to hire you. First, which do you like better, Coke or Pepsi? Second, who do you like better, the Huskies or the Cougars?” Fortunately, I answered both of these questions correctly and I was hired.

Regardless of what cola you prefer, I think you can acknowledge (possibly under duress) that these colas are more similar than dissimilar. It really comes down to issues of flavor. Unfortunately, people seem to care a great deal about flavor. Earlier this month, Coke and Pepsi came to blows. At a Wal-Mart in Pennsylvania, a Coke deliveryman and Pepsi deliveryman were apparently bickering back and forth while unloading their wares and Mr. Pepsi punched Mr. Coke in the face three times, breaking his nose, and giving him a black eye.³⁹ All of this over cola flavor!

Similarly, the church of Jesus Christ has been divided over flavor. There are two competing groups: evangelicals and charismatics. Both groups are similar, but they do have a different flavor. Nevertheless, God wants us to move beyond flavor. He is calling us beyond tolerance, beyond even acceptance, into total reconciliation and oneness. He is calling the two halves of the churches back together again, not just to endure one another, but to delight in one another’s uniqueness and profit from it. God is calling us to a higher level of unity than ever before. He is asking us to embrace the full diversity of the body of Christ.⁴⁰

In the eternal state, there will not be any evangelicals or charismatics, there will only be Christians consumed with Jesus. May we bring a taste of heaven down here to earth and experience all that the Lord has for us.

Copyright © 2007 Keith R. Krell. All rights reserved. All Scripture quotations, unless indicated, are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*, © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1975, 1977, and 1995 by The Lockman Foundation, and are used by permission.

Permissions: Feel free to reproduce and distribute any articles written by Keith Krell, in part or in whole, in any format, provided that you do not alter the wording in any way or charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction. It is our desire to spread this information, not protect or restrict it. Please include the following statement on any distributed copy: by Keith Krell, Timeless Word Ministries, 2508 State Ave NE Olympia, WA 98506, 360-352-9044, www.timelessword.com

Scripture Reference

1 Corinthians 14:1-25
1 Corinthians 14:26-40
1 Corinthians 8:1; 10:23
1 Thessalonians 5:11
Ephesians 1:11
Ephesians 4:29
Colossians 1:28

Study Questions

1. How has my church family intentionally obeyed Paul's command to "pursue love" (14:1)? In what specific ways do we desire spiritual gifts? As a member of my church, do I "pursue love" with my fellow members? Do I desire spiritual gifts and/or the further development of my own gifts?
2. Has my view of tongues changed as a result of this series through 1 Corinthians? Why or why not? Will I choose to respect my charismatic brothers and sisters?
3. How am I presently seeking to edify the body of Christ? How have I experienced edification within the body of Christ?
4. How important are our minds for our growth as Christians? Can our minds hinder our growing closer to God? What is the balance between intellect and emotion? Why do many Christians seem to go to one extreme or the other?
5. Churches today sometimes find strange behavior taking place. Some think the Holy Spirit is at work, others that madness has taken hold of God's people. How can we distinguish between God's work and madness?

Notes

¹ The verbs in 1 Cor 14:1 are second person plural (“you all”) meaning that Paul intends these commands to be carried out by the church as a whole.

² See BDAG s.v. *dioko* 4b.

³ This general idea was adopted and revised from Ralph Earle, *Word Meanings in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 239. However, Earle’s statements focused upon the individual while my remarks are focused on the corporate church.

⁴ Paul commands the Corinthians three times to “eagerly desire” the spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:31; 14:1, 39). It should be noted that there is no inconsistency between spiritual gifts being distributed according to the sovereign will of the Spirit (1 Cor 12:11) and the responsibility of believers to seek after and pray for such gifts. God accomplishes all things according to His sovereign will (Eph 1:11), but that does not eliminate the need for humans to pray and pursue in accordance with biblical commands.

⁵ Here Paul uses the word *pneumatika* (“spiritual gifts”), as he did in 12:1, rather than *charismata* (see 12:4, 9, 28, 30, 31), but these two words are synonyms—the former stressing the Spirit as the source, the latter stressing the gift as an outpouring of grace. Verlyn D. Verbrugge, “1 Corinthians” in the *Revised Expositors Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, forthcoming).

⁶ David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 632.

⁷ Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians: Sacra Pagina* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999), 491. Prophecy has also been described as “healthy preaching” and “pastoral preaching.” See Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1084 and David Hill, *New Testament Prophecy* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1979), 123.

⁸ See Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 632.

⁹ The phrase “in his spirit” (*pneumati*) can also be translated as “by the [Holy] Spirit.” Grammatically, this is to be preferred since there is no word in Greek corresponding to “his.”

¹⁰ Some have argued that since tongues is only mentioned in Acts and 1 Corinthians that it is not an important gift. Yet, the Lord’s Supper is also only mentioned Acts and 1 Corinthians and most Christians acknowledge its incredible value.

¹¹ I have found help from Sam Storms, “A Response to Jimmy Draper on ‘The Bible and Tongues,’” *Enjoying God Newsletter*, Apr 18, 2007.

¹² Fee writes, “Although trying to cool their ardor for congregational tongue speaking, Paul does not disparage the gift itself; rather he seeks to put it in its rightful place.” Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 656-57.

¹³ This principle is expressed in a broad manner in 1 Tim 4:3-5.

¹⁴ Research indicates that 63% of Protestant senior pastors believe in the gift of a private prayer language. Gary D. Foster, “Church Leaders Intelligence Report,” 7/18/2007.

¹⁵ In 1 Cor 12:27-28, Paul does discuss its place in worship.

¹⁶ Deere notes that “prophecy is found in the church at Rome (Rom. 12:6), in the church at Corinth (1 Cor. 12:10), in the church at Ephesus (Eph. 4:11), in the church at Thessalonica (1 Thess. 5:20), and in the church at Antioch (Acts 13:1). The New Testament also names a number of individuals who were not apostles, but who either were called prophets or exercised revelatory gifts. There were the prophet Agabus (Acts 11:28; 21:10-11), the prophets Judas and Silas (Acts 15:32), Phillip’s four virgin daughters who were prophetesses (Acts 21:9), and Ananias (Acts 9:10-19). Jack Deere, *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 135.

¹⁷ Fee writes, “The edifying of oneself is not self-centeredness, but the personal edifying of the believer that comes through private prayer and praise.” Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 657.

¹⁸ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 634.

¹⁹ Kistemaker ties this “wish” to Moses’ response to Joshua, who has implored him to muzzle the prophesying of Eldad and Medad before they became serious rivals. Moses responds that he wishes for all the Lord’s people to become prophets and experience the Spirit (Num 11:29). He argues that Paul follows Moses’ example in wishing that “the Holy Spirit might come upon God’s people in full measure.” Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the First Epistles to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), Electronic Ed.

²⁰ Paul’s use of “wish” (*thelo*) in 1 Cor 7:7, 32; 10:20 is to be taken as a sincere expression.

²¹ See Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 633.

²² The problem was not speaking in tongues, but speaking in tongues without interpretation. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 635.

²³ The only “new” gift not mentioned before in chapters 12-14 is that of “revelation” (*apokalupsis*); this gift refers to (1) insights the apostles received into the divine will, which they then wrote down as Scripture (e.g., Rom 16:25; Gal 1:12; Eph 3:3; Rev 1:1) or (2) insights into the revealed will of God given by the Spirit to any spiritually led person (e.g., 1 Cor 14:6; Eph 1:17).

²⁴ E.g., Josh 6:16, 20; Jdg 6:34; 7:19-22.

²⁵ E.g., 1 Sam 3:3; 2 Sam 2:28; 18:16.

²⁶ 1 Cor 14:10 does not imply that Paul recognized tongues as actual foreign languages spoken by people somewhere on earth, or even that they have a comparable linguistic structure, any more than 14:7-8 imply that tongues actually sounded like or employed flutes, harps, or trumpets. Rather, in both instances, he is using an analogy to make one central point of comparison which may not be pressed to include subordinate details. Like musical instruments and human languages, tongues must be understandable to be effective.

²⁷ Harold W. Mare, *1 Corinthians*. The Expositor’s Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976 [2001]): Electronic Ed.

²⁸ The NIV misleads us here; “Excel in gifts that build up the church” reads as if some gifts do not build up the church! But the Greek merely says, “Seek that you abound towards the edification of the church.” Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 269. Mare, *1 Corinthians*.

²⁹ It could be argued...that to open the possibility of God speaking through other means than the clear teaching of Scripture is to let in all sorts of confusion. After all, a window lets in pollen along with the breeze, flies along with the sunshine, the cackle of crows along with the cooing of doves. If that were your argument, I would have to agree. But if we want fresh air, we have to be willing to live with a few flies. Of course, we can shut out the flies and the pollen and the cackle of crows. And if a clean and quiet house is what’s most important to us, perhaps that is what we should do. But if we do, we also shut out so much of the warmth, so much of the fragrance, so much of the sweet songs that may be calling us. Ken Gire, *Windows of the Soul* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 216.

³⁰ “The ‘Amen,’ meaning ‘it is true,’ comes out of OT worship as in 1 Chronicles 16:36 and Nehemiah 5:13; 8:6, where it is connected with praise to the Lord. It was also used in the synagogue and then in the early church; cf. Galatians 1:5; Ephesians 3:21.” Mare, *1 Corinthians*.

³¹ Carson writes, “There is no stronger defense of the private use of tongues and attempts to avoid this conclusion turn out on inspection to be remarkably flimsy. If Paul speaks in tongues more than all the Corinthians, yet in the church prefers to speak five intelligible words rather than ten thousand words in a tongue...then where does he speak them?...The only possible conclusion is that Paul exercised his remarkable tongue gift in private.” See D.A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 105.

³² Eaton, *1 Corinthians 10-16*, 82.

³³ Elsewhere Paul uses the term “mature” (*teleios*) to describe the person who fully understands the gospel and lives it (1 Cor 2:6; 13:10; Eph 4:13; Phil 3:15; Col 1:28).

³⁴ Paul calls this quotation as “in the Law” (*nomos*). *Nomos* has a wide variety of nuances in Paul’s letters (cf. esp. Rom 7; see comments at 1 Cor 9:19-23) as well as in Jewish circles. Among other things, it can mean the legal parts of the OT, the first five books of the Bible (the Torah), or even the entire Hebrew Scriptures. Since Paul follows up this notation with a quotation from Isaiah, *nomos* must have this last meaning here. Verbrugge, 1 “Corinthians.”

³⁵ My friend and mentor, Verlyn Verbrugge, provides much insight into understanding 1 Cor 11:22 as a rhetorical question. He writes, “There are three additional clues, besides the sense of the verse, that point in the direction of this being a question. This verse begins with the word *homste* (GK 6063), which can be used to introduce a rhetorical question. For example, in Galatians 4:12 Paul starts becoming more intense in his letter, issuing an emotional plea for the Galatians to accept his view of freedom from slavery to the law. He reminds them of how deeply they loved him when he first presented the gospel to them; they would even have torn out their eyes and given them to him if they could (4:13-15). What has happened to this eagerness, he wonders? Verse 16, then, begins with the word *homste*, which most versions translate as a question: “So, then, have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?” (my translation). In 1 Corinthians 14:23, Paul likewise has started to become emotional in his plea. He cannot believe that the Corinthians would actually think unintelligible tongues could serve as a sign to bring unbelievers to the Lord. Surely they should know that tongues are essentially an “in-house” thing—something that believers understand. So he asks them that question.

The second clue is the word *oun* in the next verse (v.23, “so”). Normally, this word indicates a logical consequence (“therefore,” “so”), but as BDAG, 737, observes, on some occasions it can have a mild adversative connotation. Paul uses *oun* this way in Romans 10:14 (which, like 1Co 14:22–23, is in a “missionary” context). In Romans 10:13 Paul quotes Joel 3:5, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” In the next verse he asks, “But [*oun*] how can they call on someone in whom they have not believed?” (my translation). His answer is

that someone needs to tell them the message of the gospel. A similar use of *oun* as a mild adversative occurs in John 9:18; Acts 23:21; 25:4; 28:5; Revelation 3:3. I suggest that the *oun* in 1 Corinthians 14:23 has this nuance. In other words (beginning with v.22), “So, then, are tongues a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, and prophecy a sign not for unbelievers but for believers? But [you should know that] if the entire church comes together and everyone is speaking in tongues and some new believers or unbelievers join you in worship, will they not think they are in a madhouse?” Paul is citing the consequence of their mistaken thinking, using *oun* as a mild adversative to what seems obvious to him.

The third clue is the fact that v.22 *is* beyond any doubt a rhetorical question. Note how many times in this letter Paul has strung together a series of rhetorical questions (e.g., 1:13, 20; 3:3; 4:7; 5:12; 6:1-3, 7, 15; 7:16; 9:1, 7-8; 10:16; 11:22; 12:29-30), especially as he gets a bit agitated. He uses this method of getting his point across in virtually every controversial topic he deals with in this letter, so it should not be surprising that he does so in connection with the intense controversy over speaking in tongues. In fact, we should by this time expect to see at least one example of multiple rhetorical questions used in this passage.”

³⁶ The term “mad” (*mainomai*) is used in John 10:29 to describe demonization. The term does not imply insanity but possession of a spirit.

³⁷ Paul’s description of their response came from Isa 45:14 (cf. Zech 8:23) and contrasts with the unresponsiveness of the Israelites to messages God sent them in foreign languages. Thomas L. Constable: *Notes on 1 Corinthians*: 2007 edition: <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/1corinthians.pdf>, 156.

³⁸ Mare, *1 Corinthians*.

³⁹ According to an 10/12/2007 AP story. See Preaching Now Vol. 6, No. 36 10/16/2007.

⁴⁰ Doug Banister, *The Word & Power Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 119.