

# The Corinthian Chaos

Today, many people run to the 14<sup>th</sup> Chapter of 1st Corinthians in an attempt to dismiss the practice of speaking in tongues. They confidently snatch certain verses from this chapter to defend their argument that tongues are not for us today.

Upon closer observation, we can easily see that these ideas are supported by verses that are totally taken out of their proper context.

Remember, let's be careful not to read into the Scriptures what we want them to say, but rather always let the Scripture interpret Scripture.

## Let's take a closer look.

The Apostle Paul first visited Corinth around AD 50 and spent approximately eighteen months teaching and preaching the Gospel message of Jesus Christ to the Corinthians. This is recorded in **Acts Chapter 18:1-18**.

It was in Corinth that Paul first met Aquila and Priscilla. **Acts 18:3** tells us that Paul abode with Aquila and Priscilla because they were both tentmakers.

In **Acts 18:8**, we read about the first Corinthians who believed and obeyed the Gospel message that Paul had brought. Here, the Bible tells us that Crispus, a chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house and was baptized along with many Corinthians.

This marked the birth of the Church at Corinth. The Lord even spoke to Paul in a vision and said, “... ***I have much people in this city.***” (**Acts 18:10**)

It was to this Church in Corinth that Paul was writing the Epistle we call 1 Corinthians. (**1 Corinthians 1:2**) Paul states the subject of the 14<sup>th</sup> Chapter of 1 Corinthians in the first few verses. (**1 Corinthians 14:1-3**)

From the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> chapter, we can plainly see that Paul was instructing the Corinthian Church about the proper conduct of their Church services.

Much confusion and even chaos had crept in and was evidently on display during their services. This chaos was being caused by the misuse of speaking in tongues.

This point is evident when Paul begins by stating a foundational point about speaking in tongues. In the second verse in the 14<sup>th</sup> chapter Paul states that ***“he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto man, but unto God”***.

In **verse 4**, he states another foundational point, ***“He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself”***.

We can already see from these first few verses, that Paul is referring to the tongues that we receive when we receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

These tongues are for self-edification, not for public use in addressing the Church body. These tongues are to be spoken directly to God and not to man.

In **verse 14** and **15**, this point is brought out again. Paul says here that when we pray in an unknown tongue, it is our spirit which is praying. Our understanding is unfruitful.

He didn't say that our praying is unfruitful, but only our understanding. This is why we pray in the spirit and with our understanding also.

Now, let's back up again to the beginning of the chapter. We can plainly see how Paul has established the point that speaking in tongues is a personal edification directly to God.

In **verse 3**, Paul is admonishing the Church in Corinth, when they come together, to seek to **“prophecy”** which means to speak in a common language by which all can understand and be edified.

Notice in **1 Corinthians 14:23**, Paul uses **“common sense”** mentality when he says, ***“if the whole Church is all speaking in tongues and an unbeliever comes in, will he not think you are all crazy”?***

But if one stands up and teaches or preaches in a common language, then the unbeliever will be convinced or convicted and will repent and want to worship the one true God. **(1 Corinthians 14:24-25)**

Notice in **verse 27**, Paul puts some boundaries on speaking in tongues during a Church service.

Let it be by two or three at the most and let there be an interpretation so all may benefit. If there is no interpretation, then let that individual remain silent and speak silently to God. **(1 Corinthians 14:29)**

This type of speaking in tongues with an interpretation is listed as one of the nine gifts of the Spirit in **1 Corinthians 12:8-10**. These nine gifts were in operation in the first century for the perfecting of the Church in order to reach her maturity.

At the arrival of perfection, the gift of tongues and interpretation, along with the other nine gifts ceased. **(1 Corinthians 13:8)**

Paul made it very clear that Church service was for communicating the Gospel message of salvation in a language that could be understood by all.

He made this very clear in **verse 19** when he said that he would rather speak just 5 words in a language that all could understand than 10,000 words in tongues that no one could understand.

Just in those 5 words, someone would be able to benefit something where no one could benefit anything by 10,000 words spoken in an unknown language.

Yet Paul was **NOT** against speaking in tongues at all. In the **verse 18**, Paul says this: ***“I thank my God I speak in tongues more than ye all.”***

Paul was instructing them that there was a time and a place for speaking in tongues.

## Conclusion

We can clearly see that **1 Corinthians 14** was not an argument against the practice of speaking in tongues, but was an instruction about when, how, and where to exercise speaking in tongues.

Confusion and chaos had developed in the first-century Corinthian Church regarding the occurrence of speaking in tongues during their public church services.

Paul definitely believed that tongues was a sign or an evidence to the unbeliever that God was speaking and in control. It was for directly talking to God and for self- edification.

**Preaching or teaching in a known language was an avenue to edifying the Church body.**

Paul was putting order back into the first century Corinthian church service which had fallen into utter chaos. Paul was **NOT** against speaking in tongues as the evidence of receiving the Holy Spirit.

As a matter of fact, Paul said do **NOT** forbid speaking in tongues. (**1 Corinthians 14:39**) Paul was instructing the Corinthians that the tongues they had received with the baptism of the Holy Spirit was for their own edification and not to be “**blurting**” out nonstop during church service.

**These same instructions should be heeded today.**

Today, we must understand that the gift of speaking in tongues followed by an interpretation has passed away along with the other eight gifts.

The tongues that exist today is the same evidence of being filled with the baptism of the Holy Spirit which we read about on the Day of Pentecost.

These tongues are a part of the Everlasting Gospel and will never cease. This is our own prayer and worship language that brings rest and refreshing and builds us up in our most holy faith. **(Isaiah 28:11-12, Jude 1:20)** The Bible tells us that it is the Holy Spirit inside of us that makes intercession for us. **(Romans 8:26)**

Those who rush to the **1 Corinthians 14** to justify the eradication of tongues today are misguided in their understanding of the proper context of Paul's instruction.

Paul states his intention in the last verse of chapter **1 Corinthians 14:40**, ***“Let all things be done decently and in order.”*** Paul was restoring order to a confused, chaotic first-century Corinthian Church. This is the proper context of **1 Corinthians 14**.

**[BACK](#)**