



BELLVILLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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Prophecy, Tongues and Interpretation

1 Corinthians 14:1-25

~ Brent Russell ~

- In 1986 the great rock band **Queen** released the song It's a kind of magic
- And it is with this in mind that I want to start today's sermon
- I believe that our **Christian faith has a kind of magic** to it

- It is **not all rational, reasoned and academic**
- There have been great authors such as **Josh McDowell** who have made great arguments about why we should believe in Jesus
- And we as **preachers** will always try as best we can to **give you reason for the hope we have as - Peter writes**

- But there is something more to our faith that just reason
- There is a **little bit of magic**
- Something **inexplicable**
- Something **supernatural**
- Something on some level that **defies our rational mind**

- We continue to look at the spiritual gifts today
- I want you to remember at all times that they are **SPIRITUAL** gifts
- They are not something that we naturally have
- They are **supernaturally bestowed on the church by the Holy Spirit**
- Supernaturally - **a Kind of magic**

- If you had told me 6/7 years ago that I would be standing up here teaching a church I would have laughed my head off
- **I HATED public speaking** - but now God has gifted me with something amazing
- Something **supernatural**
- **A Kind of Magic**

- Now **some folk get very nervous** when people start talking like this
- When we start **talking about supernatural, spiritual things**
- About things that cannot always be explained by reason, by rationality

- But it is important that we do talk about these things
- **Something supernatural happens when we respond to Jesus**
- He gives us the **gift of faith**
- And he gives us the **spiritual gifts**

- So there is **something magical about our Christian faith**
- **It is not fully based on something we rationally understand**
- **I am not decrying intellectual knowledge** and understanding of Jesus
- But there is something **more to our faith than just head knowledge**

- When we look at some of the gifts listed in the Bible we see that some are called **Charisma**
- **The charismatic gifts - gifts having extraordinary powers**

- And it is perhaps for this reason that some of the spiritual gifts cause more **tension, division and uncertainty and fear** than any of the others
- **People are nervous, misinformed and fearful of them**
- **They don't like to talk or think about or to see things for which they have no rational explanation**

- We are going to look together at these gifts as Paul talks of them in 1 Corinthians 14

1 Corinthians 14:1-25

- The three gifts Paul speaks of here are Prophecy, tongues and interpretation
- Let us briefly look at what we are talking about here...
- Prophecy
 - ability to guide, bring God's message - preaching basically should always be prophetic
- Tongues
 - Tongues is the ability to speak in a particular language under the guidance of God's Holy Spirit
 - people are supernaturally given the ability to speak a language of which they had no understanding - Acts 2 example
- Interpretation
 - The ability to translate this message in tongues into ones own language
 - So someone speaks a message in this foreign language and someone else can explain it to the church
- **More books, time and energy have been spent in recent years on the gift of tongues than on any other of the spiritual gifts**
- When discussion is sparked between **conservative** churches and the **happy-clappies** - **tongues** is almost always the centre of attention
- I find this very interesting because in fact there are around **25 gifts** outlined in the scriptures
- Yet we spend so much energy worrying and arguing about this **single gift of tongues**
- **And we shall see that Paul gives it no special weight**
- **Paul does single this gift out in this passage because of the potential for division and damage caused by it**

- Remember that Paul writes to Corinth - a **troubled church**
- The reason for this danger with tongues is manifold
- But primarily it is because we **misunderstand** these gifts
- **Those that have the gift of tongues misuse and misinform other people about them**
- **Those that don't have them are scared and ignore them**
- There are sections of the church that believe that some of the spiritual gifts were **given to the church only for a period of time**
- They would believe that these gifts are not with us any more however there is no clear scriptural evidence to support this belief
- **These charismatic gifts have been given for some purpose so I believe we need to understand them and how to use them**
- Particularly with regards to tongues - Paul has something to say to us about the use of the gifts and in particular tongues, interpretation and prophecy

Tongues are not nearly as important as people think

- Some weeks ago I spoke about the **skeletal gifts, pastor-teacher, evangelist, prophet and apostle**
- Gifts given to the church to **support all the other gifts**
- To **sustain the various aspect of the life of the church**
- And so we see that some gifts - not the people who have them - but **some gifts are more important** than others
- Some gifts are of more wide vision, of more important use to the life of the church
- All gifts are needed but without some of these gifts the church would cease to be the church
- As we read this passage of scripture Paul makes it quite clear that **whilst tongues are nice to have they really serve little purpose**
- **They are not nearly as important for the strength and life of the church as is prophecy**
- Paul would have all the church in Corinth pray in tongues

- But he says prophecy is the one gift we should really desire
- **In vs 5 he says "I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy"**
- It is quite clear that Paul is saying here that you can prophecy but not have tongues
- **There is a misconception in many areas of the church that tongues are a proof of you having being born-again**
- Proof of having become a believer
- Surely if tongues where in fact proof they would be the most important gift of all
- As we read this passage there is no indication whatsoever that **tongues are anything more than a gift that builds up an individual**
- Do we all have to have gifts of **healing** to be believers? No
- **So neither do we need to have the gift of tongues**

Tongues need interpretation to be useful

- So Paul indicates that the **gift of tongues is nothing particularly special**
- They serve the purpose of **building up the person** who has them
- In some sense **one can pray twice** - one in the spirit and once with your mind
- They can be a great gift to really allow a **persons spirit to connect with God**
- **Have you as parents ever wondered after giving a gift to a child "what on earth was I thinking?"**
- I remember a **Christmas** when I was about 5 or six and in our stockings my parents had put some toys
- Now stupidly they had put in little toy **trumpets**
- And at 5 in the morning my sister and I decided that we would do our rendition of a major trumpet concerto
- Needless to say the trumpets where destroyed sometime in the next 10 seconds
- We thought we where really talented and where sounding just great

- Paul says that for others **tongues when un-interpreted are like a musical instruments being played poorly**
- Perhaps like **me playing piano** instead of our pianist
- Tongues without interpretation may be doing great things for the speaker
- **But unless the hearers can understand the message what good does it do?**

- **Tongues only serve a purpose for the church when they are accompanied by a second gift the gift of interpretation**
- It is only when someone can interpret what is said that the gift serves any purpose
- The **interpreter allows the hearers to understand** the message
- **Then the gift of tongues can become as powerful as the gift of prophecy**

- **In the modern church this is the normal method of tongues usage**
- **Everyone goes on** in these various languages
- **Little or no interpretation** takes place and most people are left more confused than built up

- Paul goes so far as to say that if we all babbled on in tongues and some unbelievers came into the church they would think we are mad!
- And this brings me to the final point and perhaps the most important guiding principal for ALL the gifts:

We need to be Church minded – not individual minded

- **Vs 12 Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church.**
- **Be eager to have gifts that build up the church**

- Paul urges us to **not think like children**
- **One characteristic that children have is that they have a very narrow view of the world**

- They see things from their **own perspective**
 - **Their motto is "I want I want I want"**
 - What has often happened with the charismatic gifts, and particularly with tongues is that people have become so **selfish** that they are more worried about their own experience
 - **They are not concerned about unbelievers, or those who are weak or young in the faith**
 - Some have degenerated into **childish thinking**
 - **They are so concerned about their own experience that they forget about others**
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- **We need to seek the good of the church - not our own good**
 - **We need to seek the blessing and building up of others**
 - The gifts have been given so that the **church may become strong and powerful**
 - That people may come in and as we read in the end of the passage be **cut to the heart - saying God is amongst you**
 - **That unbelievers might understand the truth about Jesus**
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- Sadly what has often happened has been that **tongues have been so abused that those on the outside see division**
 - They look at churches full of people babbling in strange languages and **they think "I want no part of this"**
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- **We need to become people who are gifted in every way possible**
 - **We need to desire the gifts**
 - But more than anything we need to **desire the gifts that build up the church**
 - **That the church may be bring glory honor and praise to God**