

Sunday, February 18, 2018—I Corinthians 14:1-5 Follow After Charity

Introduction

- Last week we finished our study of Chapter 13 by looking at verses 9-13. In summation we observed the following points:
 - Prophecy, Tongues, and Knowledge while legitimate in Paul's day would fail, cease, and vanish away.
 - Prophecy, Tongues, and Knowledge were revelatory gifts they were part of the mouth piece of God. They were the mechanism through which God made known His word before the scriptures were complete.
 - The only thing that can complete partial knowledge is perfect or complete knowledge.
 - When God's word was complete these gifts ceased functioning.
 - Paul is calling the gifts childish. Now that the word of God is complete those who are still infatuated with the gifts (the very things Paul was warning against) are playing with their Thomas the Trains, Legos, and Lincoln Logs.
 - Anyone who believes that the gift of tongues is still functioning today must also believe that the word of God is not complete. If tongues are still being given, then someone needs to record all of these special revelations and new words from God people have been receiving and adding them to the Bible.
 - Charity is the more excellent way than the gifts because charity never fails.

I Corinthians 14:1

- *Follow after charity*—the verb “follow” is in the imperative mood. In other words, Paul is commanding the Corinthians to follow the way of charity expounded in Chapter 13. Charity is the “more excellent way” that Paul wanted the Corinthians to follow.
- *and desire spiritual gifts*—the verb “desire” is also in the imperative mood. Remember that at the time Paul was writing this epistle in the 1st century these spiritual gifts were legitimate. There was nothing wrong with the Corinthians desiring spiritual gifts so long as they were governed by charity and an understanding that they were temporary.
- *but rather that ye may prophesy*—in their desiring of spiritual gifts Paul is telling the Corinthians to place an emphasis on prophecy.

I Corinthians 14:2

- Acts 2:6-11—remember that tongues in the Bible were real discernible languages.
 - No of these people needed interpreters to understand what the apostles were saying.
- I Corinthians 14:27-26—one must rightly divide the issue of tongues. Tongues changed between Acts 2 when Joel was fulfilled and the time when Paul wrote I Corinthians. No interpreters were necessary in Acts 2 but now in I Corinthians 14 Paul says that an interpreter is essential and if one is not present no one should speak with tongues.
- I Corinthians 14:2—the person who speaks in an unknown tongue speaks to God and not men because no one can understand what he is saying. He might actually be manifesting the Spirit of God when doing so but his ministry is just to God the author of human language if no man can understand him.

I Corinthians 14:3

- *But*—note the contrast at the beginning of verse 3. Rather than speaking to God as in the case of tongues, he that prophesieth speaks to men unto edification. Why? Because people can understand what he is saying.
- There were three benefits to prophecy that Paul identifies in verse 3: 1) edification, 2) exhortation, and 3) comfort.
 - Edification—“a building up, in a moral and religious sense; instruction; improvement and progress of the mind, in knowledge, in morals, or in faith and holiness.” (*Webster’s 1828*)
 - Romans 15:2
 - Ephesians 4:29
 - I Timothy 1:4
 - Exhortation—“the act or practice of exhorting; the act of inciting [exciting to action; stirring up.] to laudable deeds; incitement to that which is good or commendable. 1) The form of words intended to incite and encourage. 2) Advice; counsel.” (*Webster’s 1828*)
 - Acts 14:22
 - I Thessalonians 2:3
 - I Timothy 4:13

- Comfort—"2) Relief from distress of mind; the ease and quiet which is experienced when pain, trouble, agitation or affliction ceases. It implies also some degree of positive animation of the spirits; or some pleasurable sensations derived from hope, and agreeable prospects; consolation. 3) Support; consolation under calamity, distress or danger. 4) That which gives strength or support in distress, difficulty, danger, or infirmity." (*Webster's 1828*)
- I Corinthians 14:3—prophecy has the capacity to accomplish these purposes because it is understood by the hearers whereas speaking in an unknown tongue is not.

I Corinthians 14:4

- What is more important? The edifying of oneself or the entire assembly?
- Share my concern regarding our assembly.

I Corinthians 14:5

- I Corinthians 8:1—recall from a previous study that the 9th thing charity IS/DOES is that it “edifyeth?” I stated that this was the practical principle to help you determine if you are functioning with charity. Are my thoughts, attitudes, and actions going to build someone else up?
- Here we see that application of the way of charity from Chapter 13. Charity DOES NOT vaunt itself, is not puffed up, and does not seek her own. Would speaking in tongues for the purposes of self-edification be consistent with charity? No. Therefore, Paul instructs the Corinthians that he would rather that they prophesied? Why? Because it edifies the entire church.
- Paul is okay with speaking in tongues if someone can interoperate, and the entire church thereby be edified.
- Prophecy is therefore greater than tongues because it stands alone in its ability to edify, exhort, and comfort.