

Notes on the Greek New Testament
Day 233 – August 21st – 1 Corinthians 14:1-19

Works frequently referenced in these notes on 1 Corinthians

John Drane	<i>Paul</i> , Lion Publishing, Berkhamstead, 1976
Leon Morris	<i>The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians</i> , Tyndale New Testament Commentary, 2 nd Ed., IVP, Leicester, 1985
Anthony C Thistleton	<i>The First Epistle to the Corinthians</i> , The New International Greek Testament Commentary, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2000

Chapter 14

"It appears in this chapter that Paul sees the highest expression of spiritual gifts in the free, helpful discussion of Christians together and in their contribution in thoughtful speech to each other. (It is, in fact, our impression that expressions such as "thoughtful speech", "testimony", or even "counsel" better translate the word rendered now somewhat archaically "prophecy".)" F.D. Bruner
"Contrary to widespread popular uses of this chapter to assume an intimate connection between being inspired by the Holy Spirit and 'spontaneity,' the chapter as a whole places the issue of concern for the other and communicative intelligibility at the centre of the discussion." Thistleton

"The reason for the inferiority of tongues is its unintelligibility." Morris

Verse 3

ὁ δὲ προφητεύων ἀνθρώποις λαλεῖ οἰκοδομῆν καὶ παράκλησιν καὶ παραμυθίαν.

οἰκοδομη, ης f upbuilding, edification
παρακλησις, εως f encouragement,
counsel
παραμυθια, ας f comfort

"Prophecy, then, is a means of building up Christian character, of strengthening men, of giving them comfort in their distress." Morris.

Verse 1

Διώκετε τὴν ἀγάπην, ζηλοῦτε δὲ τὰ πνευματικά, μᾶλλον δὲ ἵνα προφητεύητε.

διωκω seek after, pursue
ζηλωω be jealous of, be very concerned about
πνευματικος, η, ον spiritual, pertaining to the spirit

In this context may mean 'spiritual utterances.'

μαλλον adv more, rather

Verse 2

ὁ γὰρ λαλῶν γλώσση οὐκ ἀνθρώποις λαλεῖ ἀλλὰ θεῷ, οὐδεὶς γὰρ ἀκούει, πνεύματι δὲ λαλεῖ μυστήρια:

λαλεω see 13:11
οὐδεὶς no one

οὐδεὶς γὰρ ἀκούει "The issue in these verses clearly turns on intelligible communication or effective communicative action between speakers and listeners." Thistleton. Hence 'no one understands' or even 'no one learns.'

μυστηριον, ου n secret, mystery

Here 'what is unintelligible, baffling or enigmatic.'

It is practical and pastoral in nature. "Such a pastoral concern brings together the OT tradition of prophetic contextual application to particular circumstances and claims by Hill and others that 'prophesying' has pastoral *preaching* at its centre." Thistleton concludes, "In summary, *prophesying* in Paul's theology and in his argument in this chapter is the performing of intelligible, articulate, communicative speech-acts, the operative currency of which depends on the active agency of the Holy Spirit mediated through human minds and lives to build up, to encourage, to judge, to exhort, and to comfort others in the context of interpersonal relations. Such a definition is not comprehensive. It allows for short utterances or, in accordance with Paul's own wishes, of longer stretches of speech to which the nearest modern parallel is probably that of an informed pastoral sermon which proclaims grace and judgment, or requires change of life, but which also remains open to question and correction by others. We may note that Zwingli (1484-1531) and Bullinger (1507-75) used the term 'prophesyings' loosely in this way, although with a greater emphasis on the place of 'Bible readings' as generating the 'prophesyings.' However, just as many unduly restrict prophecy to the 'spontaneous,' we should avoid the converse mistake of insisting that prophecy should not in any circumstance take the more 'oracular' form often identified as such today. In the end our view will be determined by a dialogue between careful exegesis and a theology of the nature of God and of God's ways of action in the world."

Verse 4

ὁ λαλῶν γλώσση ἑαυτὸν οἰκοδομεῖ· ὁ δὲ προφητεύων ἐκκλησίαν οἰκοδομεῖ.

ἑαυτος reflexive pronoun, himself
οικοδομεω build, edify

Thistleton argues that the first occurrence of 'builds up' should be in quotation marks "first to indicate that Paul takes it up as a catchword for the dialogue, and second because whether this first use is positive (i.e., *edifies* the self) or negative (i.e., ministers to *self-esteem* or *self-affirmation*) remains acutely controversial." Having considered arguments for positive and negative understandings of the first οἰκοδομεῖ Thistleton concludes, "The best explanation is that while the positive evaluation adopted by Fee may apply to tongues *specifically used in private*, the *public* use of tongues becomes so bound up with perceived status and self-affirmation that *in public* (but not in private) the negative effects come to outweigh the otherwise positive."

ἐκκλησια, ας f congregation, church

Verse 5

θέλω δὲ πάντα ὑμᾶς λαλεῖν γλώσσαις, μᾶλλον δὲ ἵνα προφητεύητε· μείζων δὲ ὁ προφητεύων ἢ ὁ λαλῶν γλώσσαις, ἐκτὸς εἰ μὴ διερμηνεύη, ἵνα ἡ ἐκκλησία οἰκοδομηῖν λάβῃ.

θελω wish, will

Thistleton prefers the REB 'I am happy for ... but happier still for ...', θελω here being conciliatory or concessive. Cf. Numb 11:29. "Paul does not, I conclude partly on the basis of 12:29-30, *wish* that every member of the church at Corinth may speak with tongues; it is the Holy Spirit alone who wills how his gifts are apportioned, and egalitarianism is as much an undifferentiated dullness as arbitrary hierarchy ministers to authoritarianism and elitism. Paul 'takes pleasure in' the sense of intimacy, liberation, and prayerful doxology and those who speak in tongues enjoy. However, their pleasure is very solemnly and seriously constrained by two things: first, that this gift is used only *privately*; second, that proclaiming the gospel of Christ, or 'prophesying' for the building up of *others*, holds priority and privilege as an 'apostolic' of Christlike, cruciform mode of ministry."

μαλλον see v.1

μείζων, greater, greatest

ἢ or, than

ἐκτος conj ἐκτος εἰ μη except, unless

διερμηνευω interpret, explain, translate

Thistleton argues that the meaning here is 'put into articulate speech.' The concern is not for *someone else* to interpret the 'tongue.' Thistleton presents detailed evidence concerning this use of *διερμηνεω*, even claiming that up to three quarters of the uses of *διερμηνεω* in Philo mean 'put into words.' He concludes, "There is no 'interpreter' standing by. Paul declares that 'the person who prophesies is of greater importance than the one who speaks in tongues unless' some specific condition is fulfilled: the tongue speaker who is overwhelmed with the presence and love of God to the extent that praise and prayer flow forth in inarticulate sounds uttered by the tongue (*γλωσσα*) finds that, after all, he or she can 'put into words' the ground of praise, prayer, joy, or longing, and thereby 'the church community' as a whole similarly 'receive' (*λαβη*) this public ministry of 'building up' (*ἵνα ἡ ἐκκλησία οικοδομηῆν λαβη*)." *ἐκκλησία, ας f congregation, church*

Verse 6

Νῦν δέ, ἀδελφοί, ἐὰν ἔλθω πρὸς ὑμᾶς γλώσσαις λαλῶν, τί ὑμᾶς ὠφελήσω, ἐὰν μὴ ὑμῖν λαλήσω ἢ ἐν ἀποκαλύψει ἢ ἐν γνώσει ἢ ἐν προφητείᾳ ἢ ἐν διδαχῇ;

νυν here means something like 'well now.' It introduces hypothetical illustrative scenarios. *ἐὰν* is used in the sense of 'suppose ...'

ἔλθω Verb, aor act subj, 1 s ἔρχομαι
ὠφελεω gain, profit, achieve, benefit

A keynote in these verses.

ἢ or, (ἢ ... ἢ either ... or)
ἀποκαλύπτω, εως f revelation

Cf. 1:7.

γνῶσις, εως f knowledge, understanding

Cf. 1:5; 8:1,7,10,11; 12:8; 13:2,8. "This term mattered greatly at Corinth. Hence Paul's insistence that inarticulate sounds could not convey *γνῶσις* would have been especially sharp and poignant to these addressees. In this context the term denotes *cognitive* 'knowledge,' so prized in 8:1-11 by 'the strong' at Corinth, and REB's looser *enlightenment* conveys the cultural flavour." Thistleton

προφητεία, ας f prophecy, preaching, the gift of prophecy

The precise distinction between these terms, particularly, 'revelation' and 'prophecy' is unclear – though cf. 14:3 and Thistleton on prophecy.

διδάχη, ης f teaching, what is taught

Verse 7

ὁμως τὰ ἄψυχα φωνὴν διδόντα, εἴτε αὐλὸς εἴτε κithάρα, ἐὰν διαστολὴν τοῖς φθόγγοις μὴ δῶ, πῶς γνωσθήσεται τὸ αὐλούμενον ἢ τὸ καθαριζόμενον;

ὁμως even, nevertheless

Paul seems to use this adverb (here and in Gal 3:15) as an equivalent to ὁμοίως. Here then, 'similarly with reference to ...'

ἀψυχος, ον inanimate

διδόντα Verb, pres act ptc, m nom s δίδωμι

τὰ ἄψυχα φωνὴν διδόντα 'inanimate musical instruments'

εἴτε if, whether

αὐλός, ου m flute

κithάρα, ας f harp, lyre

Here the sense may be general, 'in the case of wind or stringed instruments.'

διαστολή, ης f distinction, difference

Maybe here "a musical 'interval' ... the difference in pitch between two sounds." Edwards

φθογγος, ου m voice, sound, tone

"The point is not that notes are produced badly or inappropriately, but that untuned strings or overblown wind produces mere noise where there is no 'difference' in Saussure's sense of linguistic or semiotic 'difference' as the very basis of conveying *anything* articulate or communicative... φωνη ... is regularly used of the 'voice' of musical instruments ... but an instrumental 'voice' without *intervals* ... is mere *noise* or mere *sound* (unmodulated φωνη, which is not actual 'music' at all), and it cannot be 'recognised.'" Thistleton

δῶ Verb, aor act subj, 3 s δίδωμι

πῶς how? in what way?

αὐλεω play a flute; τὸ αὐλούμενον what is played on a flute

καθαρίζω play a harp

"Neither flute nor harp makes sense unless there is a meaningful variation in the sounds produced. A melody played finely speaks to a man's very soul. An aimless jangle means nothing." Morris

Verse 8

καὶ γὰρ ἐὰν ἄδηλον φωνὴν σάλπιγγος δῶ, τίς παρασκευάζεται εἰς πόλεμον;

ἀδηλος, ον unmarked, indistinct

δηλος (clear, evident) relates primarily or most often to *clear communication*.

σαλπιξ, ιγγος f trumpet; trumpet blast

δῶ see v.7

παρασκευάζω prepare; midd. prepare oneself, get oneself ready

πολεμος, ου m war, battle, strife, conflict

The blowing of a trumpet for military signalling fails utterly in its purpose if the distinct message is not conveyed by the sounds.

Verse 9

οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς διὰ τῆς γλώσσης ἐὰν μὴ εὐσημον λόγον δῶτε, πῶς γνωσθήσεται τὸ λαλούμενον; ἔσεσθε γὰρ εἰς ἀέρα λαλοῦντες.

The tongue has been designed and given precisely for the purpose of intelligible speech.

εὐσημος, ον intelligible, easily understood
πως see v.7

ἔσεσθε Verb, fut indic, 2 pl εἰμι

"Communicative acts of speech entail a transactive engagement between speaker, writer or 'sender,' and addressee, hearer, or 'receiver.' If the receiver cannot comprehend (γινωσκω) the content of what is being said (το λαλουμενον), communication does not occur." Thistleton

ἀηρ, ερος m air, space

Whenever the word of God is conveyed in a manner that is unintelligible to the hearers it is no better than speaking into the air. *This principle has application not only to 'tongue speaking' but also to unintelligible preachers.*

Verse 10

τοσαῦτα εἰ τύχοι γένη φωνῶν εἰσιν ἐν κόσμῳ, καὶ οὐδὲν ἄφωνον·

τοσουτος, αυτη, ουτον correlative adj so much, so great, so large; pl so many
τύχοι Verb, aor act opt, 3 s τυγχανω attain, experience; εἰ τυχοι if it should turn out that way, it may be, perhaps

γένη Noun, nom/acc pl γενος

"The meaning of the whole expression is, 'there are probably ever so many languages in the world' Goodspeed" Morris

οὐδεις, οὐδεμα, οὐδεν no one, nothing
ἄφωνος, ον without meaning

Verse 11

ἐὰν οὖν μὴ εἰδῶ τὴν δύναμιν τῆς φωνῆς, ἔσομαι τῷ λαλοῦντι βάρβαρος καὶ ὁ λαλῶν ἐν ἐμοὶ βάρβαρος.

εἰδῶ Verb, perf act subj, 1 s οἶδα know, understand

δυναμιν here has the sense of 'force'

ἔσομαι Verb, fut indic, 1 s εἰμι
λαλοῦντι Verb, pres act ptc, m dat s λαλω
βάρβαρος, ον non-Greek, uncivilized, foreigner

There is a derogatory flavour to the term βάρβαρος. "The ecstatic speech which seemed to the Corinthians a matter for such pride turned out to be the means of making them nothing more than *barbarians*. This would be worse for a Greek than for us." Morris

ἐμοὶ Pronoun, dat s ἐγώ

Verse 12

οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς, ἐπεὶ ζηλωταὶ ἐστε πνευμάτων, πρὸς τὴν οἰκοδομὴν τῆς ἐκκλησίας ζητεῖτε ἵνα περισσεύητε.

ἐπει since, because, for
ζηλωτης, ου m one who is zealous

πνευμάτων Thistleton suggests here means 'powers of the Spirit.'

οικοδομη see v.3

ζητεω see 13:5

περισσεω increase, abound, excel

"Where Paul diverges from the Corinthians is in his insistence that since the Spirit is also the Spirit of Christ, and since Christ gave himself *for others*, any claims about 'spirituality' or 'powers of the Spirit' become problematic if they have more to do with self-enhancement than with the welfare and benefit of others. Hence all this 'burning concern' about 'powers of the Spirit' must be redirected into a more Christlike 'eagerness' for the 'building up' (on οικοδομη see above, e.g., 8:1; 14:4) of the 'church community' as a corporate whole (cf. the body-of-Christ language in 12:12-30, esp. 12:27)." Thistleton

Verse 13

Διὸ ὁ λαλῶν γλώσση προσευχέσθω ἵνα διερμητεύῃ.

διο therefore, for this reason

προσευχομαι pray

διερμηνευω interpret, explain, translate

Cf. note on 14:5. "Paul neither criticises nor questions the authenticity of speaking in tongues (especially in the sense of v.5 above and in vv. 18-19). However, he requests *either* of two conditions: *either* (a) 'private' use (see exegesis of vv. 16-23), i.e., outside the context of public worship; *or* (b) effective prayer that the speaker will be able to express in articulate communicative speech the wondrous perception of God or the gospel which is otherwise 'too deep for words.' *No 'second' agent* is envisaged; *a second 'gift' is indeed needed, i.e., the gift of being able to put it into words.*" Thistleton

Verse 14

ἐὰν γὰρ προσεύχωμαι γλώσση, τὸ πνεῦμά μου προσεύχεται, ὁ δὲ νοῦς μου ἄκαρπός ἐστιν.

τὸ πνεῦμά μου 'my innermost [spiritual] being'
Thistleton

νοῦς, νοοῦς m mind, reason, understanding
ἄκαρπος, ον barren, unfruitful

"The Christian life is considerably more than mental exercise. But the man whose mind is *unfruitful* is not being true to his Christian calling." Morris

Verse 15

τί οὖν ἐστίν; προσεύξομαι τῷ πνεύματι, προσεύξομαι δὲ καὶ τῷ νοῷ· ψαλῶ τῷ πνεύματι, ψαλῶ δὲ καὶ τῷ νοῷ·

τῷ πνεύματι The sense here is not 'in the Spirit' since v.14 refers to τὸ πνεῦμά μου, but 'with my innermost being' – unless Paul's usage here reflects a catchphrase of the Corinthians by which *they claimed* to be praying *in the Spirit*.

νοῷ Noun, dat s νοῦς
ψαλῶ Verb, fut act indic, 1 s ψαλλῶ sing, sing a hymn of praise, sing praises

That which is spiritual and that which involves the use of the mind should not be opposed. Prayer and song in worship must involve the worshipper entering "into them wholeheartedly, with mind as well as with spirit. All too often prayers are offered in a kind of emotional jargon, and hymns are chosen on the basis of attractive tunes rather than sound theology." Morris
"Solos that people do not understand lose more than half their value in church worship." AT Robertson

Verse 16

ἐπεὶ ἐὰν εὐλογῆς πνεύματι, ὁ ἀναπληρῶν τὸν τόπον τοῦ ἰδιώτου πῶς ἔρεϊ τὸ Ἄμην ἐπὶ τῇ σῆ εὐχαριστία; ἐπειδὴ τί λέγεις οὐκ οἶδεν·

ἐπεὶ since, because, for
εὐλογεῶ speak well of, bless
ἀναπληροῶ fill up, occupy
τοπος, ου m place
ἰδιωτης, ου m untrained, unskilled man

The phrase ὁ ἀναπληρῶν τὸν τόπον τοῦ ἰδιώτου has been given a number of interpretations. Morris tends towards the view that ἰδιώτης is here a technical term for an 'inquirer', "people who had not committed themselves to Christianity but who were interested. These had ceased to be simply outsiders, but were not yet Christians." So also Hering who says these "have a definite place in the assembly... They are not pagans present by chance, but sympathisers who are yet unbaptised, or quite simply 'ordinary' Christians who do not possess any gifts of inspiration." Could Paul's phrase here reflect some elitist division *among the Corinthians*? The NIV seems to reflect an informal use of the term. Thistleton translates, 'the uninitiated person.' Those referenced are those who, when the words are spoken in tongues, find themselves unable to understand what is said.

πῶς how?

ἔρεϊ Verb, fut act indic, 3 s λεγῶ
σοῦ, σῆ, σου possessive adj. your, yours
εὐχαριστία, ας f thanksgiving
ἐπειδὴ since, because, for

"Worship and prayer, Paul emphasises, should be *intelligible and corporate*." Thistleton

Verse 17

σὺ μὲν γὰρ καλῶς εὐχαριστεῖς, ἀλλ' ὁ ἕτερος οὐκ οἰκοδομεῖται.

εὐχαριστεῖς Verb, pres act indic, 2 s
εὐχαριστεῶ thank, give thanks
ἕτερος, α, ον other, another, different
οἰκοδομεῶ build, build up, edify

"The goal of corporate worship is not a personal thrill, but the building up of the body of Christ." Murphy O'Connor

Verse 18

εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ, πάντων ὑμῶν μᾶλλον γλώσσαις λαλῶ·

μᾶλλον adv more; rather, instead, more than that

Thistleton suggests 'more gifted in' rather than more in terms of "sheer frequency."

Verse 19

ἀλλὰ ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ θέλω πέντε λόγους τῷ νοῷ μου λαλῆσαι, ἵνα καὶ ἄλλους κατηχήσω, ἢ μυρίους λόγους ἐν γλώσσῃ.

ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ 'in the assembled congregation.'

θελῶ wish, will
πεντε (indeclinable) five
νοῷ see v.15
ἄλλος, η, ο another, other
κατηχεῶ inform, instruct

ἢ ὀρ, than

μυριοι, αι, α ten thousand

Having repeated his understanding of διερμηνεω (see 14:5), Thistleton says, "Paul does not approve of uttering unintelligible noises in public worship, whether or not someone purports subsequently to 'decode' them. Moreover, since the 'tongue' would normally be addressed *to God* (14:2, 15, 16), the notion of interpreting glossolalia as a 'message' of prophecy addressed *to the congregation* (14:3, 'prophecies ... to other people') owes more to pietist traditions than to exegesis of this epistle. Our arguments are set forth above, and are corroborated by Paul's allusion to Isaiah in vv. 20-25."