

Those who did speak in a foreign tongue were to pray that they might interpret. Does this mean they were speaking words they themselves didn't even understand? Scarey! How did they know what spirit was moving them? Much more, how did anyone else know? Was it the Holy Spirit, their own fleshly human spirit, or a demonic spirit influencing them? Not that we should limit the Holy Spirit. We might if we speak only from a prepared text, although He can and does use these too. (Otherwise there is no point in me writing what you are reading now.) But in assembly there can be such a self abandonment that we can speak (prophecy) beyond anything we could prepare in advance and rehearse to give as a lecture. Not that extemporaneous speaking is necessarily superior. But usually one prophesies from a reservoir of previous exercises in the word. The Spirit, if allowed the liberty to do so, collects and calls to mind and presents the message He desires be brought for that audience and occasion. But that we should **understand** what we are saying is paramount. The speaker is edified by what he is led to say, along with the hearers. Not by the fact that he was used to prophecy but by **what** he actually said as led by the Spirit. What a blessing this is! Any ordinary man, a simple brother in Christ, can be put on his feet and led by the Spirit to speak as the oracles of God to the edification of the Assembly, 1Peter 4:11. We can and should. And we should take precautions to assure we do not discourage the liberty of the Spirit by the way we announce meetings of the Assembly, arrange seating in our hall, etc. We need to beware of the temptation to preempt the Spirit by prearranging things where He is to have control. Be jealous for His rights, and His directing..

On the other hand we should also provide that individual gifts can minister to us as well. Brothers are free to request a meeting on their **own responsibility** to minister as the Lord has exercised them in advance. Here attention to preparation is appropriate. Taking simple precautions of being sure he can be heard, that he speaks in an known language (or with a translator), perhaps has an outline or notes, uses understandable terms in complete sentences, in some organized manner so that his message from the Lord is not garbled or unintelligible.

We must beware of the temptation to substitute an eloquent or gifted brother for the liberty of the Spirit in the meetings of the assembly. That would relieve others of having to be spiritually exercised and would grant prestige and power that is difficult if not impossible to most to resist. And it would preempt and effectively quench the Spirit whom God has given to preside over the assembly.

We all are to pray with the Spirit and with understanding also. The brother audibly prays on behalf of all those present, brother and sister. They all remain silent while he prays. They pray silently so the Spirit will

move him to say aloud the godly yearnings in their hearts. They add their **amen** to what he prays. This is united prayer or worship.

We also all join audibly in the psalms, hymns and spiritual songs given out. Singing together with the spirit (and the Spirit) and with our understanding. And we are all edified, not merely excited. Here again the flesh may find opportunity to insert itself into the proceedings. One may be tempted to give out a hymn because he "likes it," likes the tune, likes to sing, likes the poetry, etc. He sings in his spirit and enjoys it, but is he spiritually edified or merely entertained?. Yet we are not to judge his motives. We can sing with the Spirit whatever hymn is given out even if it seems inappropriate to us at the time. Grace prevails in our weakness.

Singing is not given us to excite worship in the heart. Our singing is to be enthusiastically **from the heart**. Of course there is no virtue in poor or listless singing. I suppose it could be a signal of the spiritual condition of the heart. If we sense we have dull hearts we should not simply try to drum up enthusiasm though vigorous singing. If that should fail will we need to organize a choir? And if we don't have enough local talent for a good choir will we hire professionals to conduct song services? (There are such professional groups of believers available now.) Somehow we will drift from edification to entertainment. Enthusiasm to enthrallment. True spiritual unity is characterized by the liberty of the Spirit toward responsible **involvement of all** in the assembly. Paul is trying to prevent a departure from this.

What does Paul mean "the other is not edified" if there is no understanding when we give thanks? We don't pray or preach for the approval and praise of others, do we? No. **We pray on behalf of all so we all are edified by our understanding and inclusion in the united prayer of the group.** We belong! We are one. Together our exercises are being presented to God by the spokesman for the group who is led to pray. The edification of others by prophesying (preaching) is obvious. But **one in the congregation is also considered to be prophesying when he or she is just sitting there silently listening to another speak.** How so? The speaker is speaking to all, but also on behalf of all, present. Their exercises (man or woman) are taken by the Spirit and given to the brother(s) He selects and moves to speak. So we are **all prophesying** in this manner when gathered together unto the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are the body of Christ after all. We all take part in this way, or should at least. (And that is why we all mind our head cover in assembly.)