

TOUNGES:
ECSTATIC UTTERANCES,
Or
FOREIGN LANGAGES?

**Prepared
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by

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INTRODUCTION: In the course of Church history many doctrinal problems have been faced by God's people. Various doctrines have been problematic and have been hammered out on the anvil of human minds grappling with God's Word. In early Church history such doctrines as the human and divine nature of Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity were hotly debated until the Christian position was established. In the nineteenth century the doctrine of eschatology (end time teaching) was on the anvil. In the late nineteenth and into the twentieth century the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and especially the baptism of the Holy Spirit came under scrutiny as never before.

The doctrine of spiritual gifts, particularly the gift of speaking in tongues, has caused much grief among believers and has split many churches. It is therefore well for any church to determine from the Word of God where they stand on this issue and then develop a statement that will help them to maintain unity.

1. THE PROBLEM OF SPEAKING IN TONGUES

The problem with regard to speaking in tongues simply stated is this: Does speaking in tongues refer to ecstatic utterances or to speaking in foreign languages?

Those who refer to speaking in tongues as ecstatic utterances mean that these tongues are not human languages. They are tongues which only God understands. Such Scriptures as 1 Corinthians 14:2, and 28 are cited to prove this position, "For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however in the spirit he speaks mysteries" (14:2).

Those who take the view that speaking in tongues are ecstatic utterances fall into a camp of Christendom we call *Charismatics*. It is not an accurate name but it has stuck and is in common use. The word *charismatic* comes from the Greek word *charisma* meaning a *gift of grace*. The gifts of the Spirit given to be exercised in the Church are charismata from which we get the name *Charismatics*. Truly it is a misnomer. All Christians believe in spiritual gifts. Our Pentecostal friends have exalted the gift of tongues especially (the Pentecost gift, Acts 2) along with healing and miracles, and from this they have been named Charismatics. There are many branches of Charismatics and there is not enough agreement among them to become united. One teaching all Charismatics have in common is the teaching on speaking in tongues. When a person believes in speaking in tongues as ecstatic utterances that person falls into the Charismatic camp.

The view that speaking in tongues means speaking in foreign languages is self explanatory.

Speaking in tongues simply refers to speaking in languages either foreign to the hearers or foreign to the speaker.

Speaking in tongues is not new with present day Charismatics. Various groups besides Christians have practiced speaking in tongues. Some early radicals of the Mennonite movement have also spoken in tongues according to Encyclopedia Britannica. Recently I was reading the doctrinal statement of the Mormon church. In their book, *Doctrines and Covenants/Pearl of Great Price* is found this seventh article of the Mormon faith, "We believe in the gift of tongues, prophecy, revelation, visions, healing, interpretation of tongues, etc." In studying Mormonism one finds that by the gift of tongues they mean ecstatic utterances.

Within Christendom then, the two major positions are that speaking in tongues means speaking in foreign (human) languages or ecstatic utterances. Although those are the two major positions an alternative view is taken by some. This third view accepts the position of speaking in tongues as being ecstatic utterances but they say, "It is not for me." These people are classed as non-charismatics but in doctrine one might call them charismatics. They are charismatic in belief but not in practice. Surprisingly we find men like Billy Graham in this camp. To my understanding the Alliance church is in this position. When speaking of this doctrine they hold to this line of teaching, "Seek not; forbid not."

I want to say without hesitation that I believe that speaking in tongues means speaking in foreign languages and I mean by that human languages. I want to say further that I believe that speaking in tongues as ecstatic utterances is not Biblical. God is not speaking through these people. Such speaking in tongues is either generated by the falsely trained human spirit or by evil spirits.

In this study I will explain what I believe to be the Biblical teaching of speaking in tongues.

2. THREE PROPOSITIONS FOR INTERPRETING "TONGUES"

Two schools of thought (basically) have developed from the teaching in Scripture on speaking in tongues. One is that speaking in tongues is ecstatic utterances given by the Holy Spirit which are not human languages. The second is that speaking in tongues is speaking in foreign languages. From a careful study of the Scriptures I believe the latter to be correct and present the following principles or propositions regarding interpreting speaking in tongues in the Bible.

In determining the meaning which can or cannot be conveyed by certain words in Scripture one must study all the occurrences of that particular word. Then one must find occurrences of the word which clearly indicate the meaning conveyed by that particular word. If certain passages are difficult to interpret then the unclear must give way to the clear. In other words, one should not teach dogmatically as the meaning of a certain word that which one cannot clearly show as a meaning that word conveys in the Bible.

Proposition # 1.

When the Greek word *laleo* (to speak) is used in its literal sense it ALWAYS refers to a spoken word or words in a language that is understood by the speaker. To speak (*laleo*) is to give a verbal communication or message. Below is a list of references that contain the word *laleo* in one of its various forms. There are several passages where the word to speak is used figuratively. These do not affect the issue of speaking in tongues. These passages are marked with an asterisk (*) in the references below.

Matthew 9:18, 33; 10:19 2x, 20 2x; 12:22, 34 2x, 36, 46 2x, 47; 13:3, 10, 13, 33, 34 2x; 14:27, 15:31; 17:5; 23:1; 26:13, 47, 28:18. **Mark** 1:34; 2:2, 7; 4:33, 34; 5:35, 36; 6:50; 7:35, 37; 8:32; 9:6; 13:11 2x; 14:9, 43; 16:17, 19. **Luke** 1:19, 20, 22, 45, 55, 64, 70; 2:17, 18, 20, 33, 38, 50; 4:41; 5:4, 21; 6:45; 7:15; 8:49; 9:11; 11:14, 37; 12:3; 22:47, 60; 24:6, 25, 32, 36, 44. **John** 1:37; 3:11, 31, 34; 4:26, 27 2x; 6:63; 7:13, 17, 18, 26, 46; 8:12, 20, 25, 26, 28, 30, 38, 40, 44; 9:21, 29, 37; 10:6; 12:29, 36, 41, 48, 49 2x, 50 2x; 14:10 2x, 25, 30; 15:3, 11, 22; 16:1, 4, 6, 13 2x, 18, 25 2x, 29, 33; 17:1, 13; 18:20 2x, 21, 23; 19:10. **Acts** 2:4, 6, 7, 11, 31; 3:21, 22, 24, 4:1, 17, 20, 29, 31, 5:20, 40; 6:10, 11, 13; 7:6, 38, 44; 8:25, 26; 9:6, 27, 29; 10:6, 7, 32, 44, 46; 11:14, 15, 19, 20; 13:42, 46, 14:1, 9, 25; 16:6, 13, 14, 32; 17:9; 18:9, 25; 19:6; 20:30; 21:39; 22:9, 10; 23:7, 9, 18; 26:14, 22, 26, 31; 27:25; 28:21, 25. **Romans** 3:19; 7:1; 15:18. **1 Corinthians** 2:6, 7, 13; 3:1, 9:8, 12:3, 30; 13:1, 11; 14:2 3x, 3, 4, 5 2x, 6 2x, 9 2x, 11 2x, 13, 18, 19, 21, 23, 27, 28, 29, 34, 35, 39. **2 Corin-thians** 2:17; 4:13 2x, 7:14; 11:17, 23, 12:4, 19; 13:3. **Ephesians** 4:25; 5:19, 6:20. **Philippians** 1:14. **Colossians** 4:3, 4. **1 Thessalonians** 1:8, 2:2, 4, 16. **1 Timothy** 5:13. **Titus** 2:1, 15. **Hebrews** 1:1, 2; 2:2, 3, 5; 3:5 2x; 4:8; 5:5; 6:9; 7:14; 9:19; **11:4***, 18; **12:24***, 25; 13:7. **James** 1:19; 2:12; 5:10. **1 Peter** 3:10; 4:11. **2 Peter** 1:21; 3:16. **1 John** 4:5. **2 John** 12. **3 John** 14. **Jude** 15, 16. **Revelation** 1:12; 4:1; 10:3, 4 2x, 8; 13:5, 11, 15; 17:1; 21:9, 15.

I believe this point is irrefutable in Scripture. It can be clearly shown in many, many Scriptures that the speaker understands the words which he speaks. It can never be shown conclusively that the speaker himself does not understand the words which he speaks.

Proposition # 2.

When the Greek word *glossa* (tongue) is used alone it always refers to:

- a. The tongue as the physical member of the body, or the organ of speech.

References: Mark 7:33, 35; Luke 1:64; 16:24; Acts 2:3 (In appearance like physical member); Romans 3:13; 14:11; 1 Corinthians 14:9; Philippians 2:11; James 1:26; 3:5, 6 2x, 8; 1 Peter 3:10; 1 John 3:18.

b. A language.

I define language as a system of verbal or symbolic communication by which persons communicate meaning to others. The universal experience of mankind is that such a system has grammatical laws and rules which govern its usage.

A verbal communication that cannot be analyzed and its meaning objectively tested is no communication at all. It is open to the imagination of the interpreter.

References: 1 Corinthians 12:10 2x, 28; 13:8; 14:26; Revelation 5:9; 7:9; 10:11; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6; 17:15.

Proposition # 3.

When *glossa* and *laleo* (speak + tongue/s) are used together in a clause the reference is always, without exception, to a foreign language or languages. The apparent exceptions to this point in 1 Corinthians 14:14, 19 and 22 are explained in the commentary.

References: Mark 16:17; Acts 2:4, 11; 10:46; 19:6; 1 Corinthians 12:30; 13:1; 14:2, 4, 5 2x, 6, 13, 14, 18, 19, 22, 23, 27, 39.

a. A foreign language which is foreign to the speaker (Acts 2, 10 and 19).

When we diagnose a clause in Acts 2 which contains *glossa* and *laleo* we can prove in no uncertain terms that the meaning intended by the usage of those two words used together is "foreign languages." In Acts 2:6 the foreigners marveled, not that they heard them speak in tongues but that they heard these Galileans speak in the languages of the foreigners. This is repeated in verse 11. The languages were foreign, not to the hearer but to the speaker. In this case God gave the miraculous ability to Galileans to speak in many various languages foreign to themselves. It is to be noted that in this case there was no need for an interpreter. The reason is clear. The communicator was given the miraculous ability to communicate in languages he had never learned before. So the language in this case was foreign to the speaker.

In Acts 2:4 the Greek word is *glossa*. In 2:6 and 8 this is explained as *dialektos*, language. In 2:11 these *dialektos* are explained as *glossais* (tongues). One simply cannot get around the fact that speaking in tongues in these references is speaking in foreign languages.

There is no reason to take Acts 10 and 19, two other passages where speaking in foreign languages occurs, to be something else than the miraculous ability to speak in languages they had never learned. It would seem that in both cases God gave this miraculous ability to speak in foreign languages to verify the experience of the new

believers. In neither case was there a need for an interpreter indicating that this was the miraculous ability to speak in languages the hearers understood.

b. A foreign language spoken which is foreign to the hearer (1 Corinthians 12-14).

In 1 Corinthians we have the words *glossa* and *laleo* used in the same clause in a number of references. However there is a significant difference between the tongues spoken here and in Acts. In every case here the speaking in tongues is in languages foreign to the hearer not the speaker as in Acts. The gift of speaking in tongues here could not have been the miraculous gift of speaking in other languages for if it had been there would have been no need for an interpreter.

We have here the gift of speaking in languages foreign to the hearers. This raises the need for interpretation. It is clear from such verses as 14:11, 14-17, and 27-28 that these are languages and that they are foreign to the hearer. It is also clear from verse 28 that the one speaking in tongues understands what he is saying for he "speaks to himself." According to our first point on speaking (*laleo*) he understands what he is saying. Also, it could not be said that he edifies himself (v.2) if he does not understand what he is saying, for then he would need an interpreter before he could be edified.

Furthermore, according to verse 28 there is to be no speaking in tongues if there is not an interpreter present. How can it be ascertained that there is an interpreter present if the tongues spoken are not languages?

There are several important words in 1 Corinthians 14 that need careful study by anyone seriously interested in this topic. The words, *understand* in its various forms, *interpretation*, and *edification* in their various forms.

If the propositions given above are accurate then speaking in tongues means foreign languages, not ecstatic utterances. This is clearly the case in the first recorded incident where speaking in tongues occurred. It is also clear from Paul's reference to Isaiah 28:11 that this is the meaning in 1 Corinthians. No one will question whether the tongues mentioned in that reference is a language or an ecstatic utterance for it has reference in its context to the Assyrians. Furthermore, this quote indicates that tongues are a sign of judgment not blessing. Taking the view that speaking in tongues is foreign languages the translation in this interpretation will always refer to glossalalia as foreign languages.

3. HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL SETTING

One important rule of Bible interpretation is a consideration of the original historical and cultural setting. No text of Scripture can now mean that which it did not mean to the original

hearers when it was given. We must remember that the letter to the Corinthians was not written to us directly. It was written and intended directly for the Corinthians and indirectly for us. In order to determine what this passage means to us we must first know what it meant to the original reader. To determine what this passage meant to the original readers we must seek to understand the historical setting.

a. The geographical setting of the church of Corinth

Corinth was a cosmopolitan city because of its importance to the shipping industry. It was situated near the great isthmus of Greece. Today a canal joins the Aegean Sea and the Ionian Sea. This canal shortens the journey from the Aegean Sea to Athens by some 200 miles. These were 200 treacherous miles which often resulted in the loss of the ship. The isthmus is only a few miles wide and in ancient times ships were either unloaded on one side and another ship took the goods from the other side or if the ship was small enough it was dragged across to the other side. So Corinth naturally was a cosmopolitan city.

What does this have to do with tongues? When you have a cosmopolitan city you have many different tongues spoken - various languages. Now let us say a Greek leads a German speaking man to the Lord. The German convert is an evangelist type person and he speaks both German and Russian and in no time he has led a man who is conversant in Russian only, to the Lord. Of course they will go to church together. This situation could be multiplied as the church grows. So you have people from various backgrounds and languages gathering together. They have a common faith but not a common language or culture. Being a relatively young church, and a carnal church, this will doubtless lead to problems.

b. The spiritual climate of the church of Corinth

We note from the first letter to Corinth that this group of people had many problems. This letter is mostly a letter of correction. Note that in this issue of tongues Paul is not commending the Corinthians as if they had some good thing going. He is correcting them. The Corinthian church was a carnal church (3:1-4). They were not a spiritual group. In this letter Paul deals with one problem after another.

So when one comes to 1 Corinthians 12-14 Paul is not dealing with some strong point in the Corinthian church, rather he is dealing with another problem, the problem of how to handle spiritual gifts. Nor does Paul exalt tongues speaking but he lowers their view of this gift they have so exalted.

c. The form of service in the church of Corinth

It is held by some that the Corinthians gathered in house churches. It seems more likely from the type of worship meeting described in this chapter that the system of worship

was that of the synagogue. If they met in house churches they seem to have continued some parts of the format of the synagogue service.

It is without doubt that the Jewish element in the Corinthian church was strong (Acts 18.) It is also highly likely that the Corinthians had heard of speaking in tongues that took place in Acts 2, 10 and 19. They may well have determined that speaking in tongues was very important to the Christian experience and exalted this gift to the head of the list. However, Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:7-10; 12:28 and 12:29-30 three times lists tongues speaking and their interpretation as last in the list.

The order of service in the synagogue was as follows:

-Shema - an adult male Jew puts on the prayer shawl and phylacteries and says the shema, "Shema yishrael adonai elohenu adonai echad."

-Singing - Psalm 140-150

-Prayers

-Scripture reading

-Benediction

-Sermon - (the message and the interpretation) the sermon could be given by anyone, but usually one who had already given some thought to a Scripture. Ordination was not required.

According to the NISBE "The interpreter was responsible for interpreting the Scripture and the sermon, which meant not only translating it into the common language (if necessary), but expounding or explaining it (Mish. Megillah ii.3; cf. 1 Cor. 14:27f.) [pg.681]. "In a sense the interpretation was a running commentary on the scriptural passage. The *meturgeman* (interpreter) was to interpret the passage, verse by verse into the language of the people (Aramaic in the East, Greek in Alexandria and the West). This interpretation consisted of *pesat*, 'translation, the plain sense' (T.B. Erbin 23b), and *deras*, "exegesis, expansion to situations other than the original.' As every translator knows, a strictly literal translation often becomes meaningless, whereas a loose paraphrase may become fanciful. In dealing with the Word of God, the Jewish translator sought to be faithful to the original meaning while at the same time making it applicable to current needs. The task is difficult. Rabbi Judah ben Llai said, 'He who translates a verse literally is a liar, and he who adds to it is a blasphemer'" (NISBE IV:683-684).

The interpretation in the synagogue was two-fold, from one language to another and from its original meaning to application to daily situations.

A number of the parts of the synagogue service seem to have been part of the Corinthian service. In 1 Corinthians 14 we see most of the aspects of the synagogue order of service practiced in the Corinthian church.

4. ORIGINAL PROBLEM ADDRESSED BY PAUL IN CORINTH

Out of the foregoing studies we can begin to reconstruct some of the problem Paul is addressing in 1 Corinthians 12-14. They had people from many languages present in their meetings. Many of these people probably spoke numerous languages. In verse 18 Paul says that he speaks in more languages than all or any of the Corinthians, indicating that many of them spoke in a number of languages. Put into this the fact that there was much carnality in the church (1 Cor. 3:1-4). When carnality exists in the church much self glory seeking also exists. On top of that a number of men might share from the Word of God in the service. Add to that that the Corinthians viewed the ability to speak and pray in various languages as a sign of spirituality and then one begins to get the picture of the problem Paul is addressing at Corinth.

How will Paul deal with this problem? In point 6, the interpretive outline of the structure and flow of 1 Corinthians 14, we find how Paul will deal with this problem (providing, of course, that the interpretation of the passage in the outline is correct). Paul will first show the Corinthians that prophesying (speaking to people to edification, exhortation and comfort, see 14:3) is a superior gift to speaking in foreign languages. Then in the second section Paul will lay down regulations regarding prophesying and speaking in tongues.

5. THE DILEMMA IF TONGUES MEANS ECSTATIC UTTERANCES

Before considering the interpretive outline and then the verse by verse commentary of 1 Corinthians 14, I want to briefly mention a major problem with the ecstatic utterances view. If speaking in tongues is ecstatic utterances and not human languages then that person cannot be understood except by God. God then must communicate the interpretation of that utterance to another who gives the message to man. If, in a certain meeting, a person wants to speak in tongues how does anyone in the audience objectively know whether he can, in fact, interpret what will be said? Furthermore, if someone interprets the utterance so all may understand then who is to say that the interpreter interpreted correctly? There is simply no objective way to know if an interpreter is present and there is no objective way to prove that what the interpreter indicated was said is what was actually said.

On the other hand, if the tongues are foreign languages one can objectively determine if there is an interpreter present and that interpretation can be objectively tested.

Several years ago a certain church had certain members who were swayed to the charismatic position. Since I had family in that church and that church was historically not a charismatic church I called the pastor. In our discussion I asked what he would do if someone in church

wanted to speak in tongues. He said he would ask if there was an interpreter present. So I asked how he would know there was an interpreter present if someone claimed he were an interpreter. Of course he did not know because you cannot know. You must take such a person's word for it without any proof whatsoever. Furthermore I asked that if that interpreter said the Lord said thus or such how he would know that the Lord had said thus or such. And again he did not know for you cannot know. You cannot even tape record a tongues message and prove anything by it for nobody can prove or disprove what the said interpretation.

I asked this pastor if he knew anywhere else in the Bible where God operated in such an uncertain manner. And again he did not know.

How open to the Spirit of God are we to be with regard to accepting what others claim? As open as the Word of God and not beyond. Just because somebody makes great claims and he calls himself a Christian, that is not ground to accept every thing put forth. If speaking in tongues is ecstatic utterances let it be shown from Scripture. If that cannot be done let us not be open to it.

6. INTERPRETIVE OUTLINE OF 1 CORINTHIANS 14

I. THE PREFERABILITY OF PROPHECY TO TONGUES RELATED (14:1-25)

A. Exhortation with relation to this preference (14:1-5)

1. Content of this exhortation (1)
2. Cause of this exhortation (2-4)
3. Conclusion of this exhortation (5)

B. Explanation with relation to this preference (14:6-19)

1. Explanation from lifeless things (6-9)
 - a. Question (6)
 - b. Illustration (7-8)
 - c. Conclusion (9)
2. Explanation from living beings (10-19)
 - a. Proposition (10-11)
 - b. Application (12-14)

c. Conclusion (15-19)

- 1) I will use both spirit and understanding
- 2) I will promote the importance of understanding

C. Exhortation with relation to their purpose (14:20-25)

1. Exhortation (20)

2. Example (21)

3. Conclusion (22-25)

a. Prophecy and tongues with respect to insiders

- 1) Tongues are a sign to doubters
- 2) Prophesying serves for the faithful

b. Prophecy and tongues with respect to outsiders

- 1) Tongues will confuse them
- 2) Prophesying will convict them

II. THE PRACTICE OF PROPHECY AND TONGUES REGULATED (14:26-40)

A. The potential for edification (26)

B. The regulations for gifts (27-33)

1. With regard to tongues (27-28)
2. With regard to prophesying (29-33)

C. The regulations for women (34-35)

1. With regard to speaking (34)
2. With regard to questioning (35)

D. Defence of these regulations (36-40)

It will be noticed that the interpretive outline gives two major points. The first shows that prophesying is to be preferred over tongues. The second point shows how tongues speaking is to be regulated in a church service. Both points seek to downplay what the Corinthians were exalting.

7. COMMENTARY ON 1 CORINTHIANS FOURTEEN

Note: The translation used in the commentary is that of the New King James Version with the exception of the references where *glossa* and *laleo* occur in the same clause. Here the translation is changed from *language/s* to *foreign language/s* on the basis of the three propositions given earlier.

14:1 Pursue love - Chapter 12 begins the discussion of spiritual gifts and introduces us to the problem of tongues speaking in Corinth. Chapter 13, which lies between the introduction to this problem and the more in depth treatment of it, shows that the most crucial aspect is that of love. So Paul begins this chapter with the exhortation to pursue love. - **and desire spiritual (Gk. spirituals) gifts** - Now Paul brings in the balance. We ought to eagerly pursue love but we must not do this to the exclusion of spiritual gifts. God gave gifts for a purpose and they are to be exercised. - **but especially that you may prophecy**. Paul has given a partial list of spiritual gifts in chapter 12 but now he encourages the Corinthians to desire the gift of prophesy above the others he has mentioned. We will take a closer look at the meaning of prophecy in verse three.

14:2 For he who speaks in a foreign languages - Paul now explains why he said what he did in verse one. We come to the first clause in chapter fourteen that contains the two words *laleo* and *glossa*. The translation as it stands literally (he who speaks in a tongue) leads to confusion. The KJV has translated a number of passages where *glossa* and *laleo* occur together as *unknown tongue/s*. This is because what was meant to the original reader with the word tongues and what is conveyed to our mind is two different things. If we translated literally this passage would read, "He that speaks in a language does not speak to men but to God." However, that is clearly not true and in this discrepancy some find ground that what is meant here is ecstatic utterances. The clearest answer, and the one intended (I think) is as follows: For he that speaks in a foreign language does not speak to men but to God... - **does not speak to men but to God** - How can it be said that someone who speaks in a foreign language does not speak to men but to God? Well it is quite clear. When it is an unknown tongue, or a language those present do not understand, then only the speaker and God understand, since God understands all languages and does not need an interpreter. This is clearly the answer as the following words indicate, - **for no one understands him;** - In our proposition on *laleo* we said that the speaker understands what he is saying. Verse 28 indicates that he does not speak to God alone but to himself as well. He understands, God understands, but if there is no interpreter no one else present understands. - **however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.** - The meaning of speaking in the spirit is later contrasted with speaking, (praying or singing) with the understanding. It is through the human spirit that man communes with God. The words are for our benefit. When a person speaks in a foreign language his spirit is expressing itself to God and his words express meaning to him but since

the hearers do not understand and they are not edified he is speaking mysteries in the spirit, that is mysteries to the hearer not the speaker.

14:3 But he who prophecies - Paul now shows the contrast between prophesying and speaking in foreign languages. To prophecy may carry one of two meanings. One, it is to foretell something in the future before it happens. This is how we usually understand it. However, the more common biblical use of the word is to *forthtell*, to expound or clarify the Word of God. It is this second meaning that is used throughout this chapter as the immediately following words indicate - **speaks edification** - The one who speaks in foreign languages speaks mysteries to the hearer but the one who prophecies speaks edification to the hearer. The word "edification" comes from the Greek word *oikodomeo*. This word comes from two words, *oikos* = house + *demo* = to build and thus means *to build up*. So the one who prophecies builds up the listener. - **and exhortation** - The Greek word is *parakleesis*, a calling to one's side. (This is the same word from which we get the name "Comforter" for the Holy Spirit.) It is a calling to one's side either for exhortation or consolation, the context determines which is meant and here likely means exhortation as the next word speaks more specifically to the idea of consolation. - **and comfort to men** - Comfort (*paramuthia*), to speak closely to someone. This is a tender comforting. These three great benefits come from prophesying, while foreign languages yield mysteries only, if there is no interpreter.

14:4 He who speaks in a foreign language edifies himself - Here is clear evidence that the one who speaks in foreign languages (tongues) understands what he is saying for how else could one say that he edifies himself? One cannot be edified without understanding as the rest of the chapter clearly indicates. We might add here as well that if the speaker does not understand himself and is edified how then should not the hearer be edified though he does not understand? But since speaking in tongues is speaking in a foreign language it is clear that the speaker understands what he is saying and therefore he edifies himself for he understands. But he does not edify the hearers for they do not understand. - **but he who prophecies edifies the church.** - Again we have the reason why prophesying is preferred above speaking in foreign languages. The purpose of a church gathering is to edify, build up believers, and foreign languages do not help to this end unless they are interpreted.

14:5 I wish you all spoke in foreign languages - Certainly in a cosmopolitan place like Corinth it would be of great benefit if all spoke with various foreign languages. - **but even more that you prophesied** - Though the ability to speak in various languages would be a great benefit outside the church, in the church the ability to prophecy would be greater. - **for he who prophecies is greater than he who speaks in foreign languages** - The reason the one who prophecies is greater is because he benefits the whole church as the preceding verses indicate. - **unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification.** - If the one who speaks in foreign languages is also able to interpret then he is just as great as the one who prophecies for to speak an explanation of the Word of God in a foreign language and interpreting it is the same as prophesying. However, if the speaker could interpret as well, he might as well speak in the common language right from the start unless there are others who understand the foreign language but do not understand the common language (or do not understand it well).

14:6 But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking in foreign languages, what shall I profit you unless I speak to you either by revelation, by knowledge, by prophesying, or by teaching? - We have a shift in Paul's argument at this point. In the first five verses he has established the fact that prophesying should receive the focus of attention in the church not speaking in foreign languages. Now Paul will give a lengthy explanation for his teaching in 1-5. His question is what profit they might receive of him if he came to them speaking in foreign languages? We know the answer to that. Unless he comes and speaks to them in a language they understand things that have been either revealed to him (illumination or possibly divine revelation), or knowledge he has gained, or clarifying Scripture, or teaching on a particular topic he will not profit them at all. The following verse indicates clearly that these would all be given in a language understood by the hearers.

14:7 Even things without life whether flute or harp, when they make a sound, unless they make a distinction in the sounds, how will it be known what is piped or harped? - Paul now illustrates what he has said in verse six. To speak in a foreign language is like a flute or harp giving sounds unfamiliar to the hearer. On the other hand speaking revelation, knowledge, prophecies or teachings in a language that is understood is beneficial.

14:8 For if the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle? - How crucial is understanding in the communications of the church? It is as crucial as blowing the right sound to begin a battle. A confusing sound could mean loss of the battle.

14:9 So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to be understood - (Lit. So also you, unless you give by means of the tongue [intelligible speech, BAG] - **how will it be known what is spoken?** In the same way, as a trumpet giving an uncertain sound, if you do not speak in intelligible speech (foreign languages) how can people know what you have spoken? - **for you will be speaking into the air.** - Speaking in foreign languages does as much good as speaking into the air. The hearer has not benefitted at all.

14:10 There are, it may be, so many different languages in the world - The word rendered languages here is *phōnōn*, sounds or better voices. The context of verse 11 indicates that the meaning of **phōnōn** is languages. - **and none of them is without signification.** - The word "without signification" is literally "dumb" (See its use in Acts 8:32; 1 Cor. 12:2; 2 Pet. 2:16). No language is dumb, or meaningless! It carries meaning. But for that meaning to be of value to the hearer, it must be understood.

14:11 Therefore, if I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be a foreigner to him who speaks, and he who speaks will be a foreigner to me. - Since it is true that lifeless things that make an uncertain sound are useless and since it is true that every language has meaning the result is that if I do not know the meaning of the language I will be a barbarian (foreigner) to the speaker and he to me. The reason being simply that I do not understand what he is saying. Though we are both Christians and both go to the same church if he speaks in a foreign language we will be like foreigners to each other.

14:12 Even so you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts - The words "spiritual gifts" are literally *spirits* in the original Greek. The meaning does seem to be that of spiritual gifts and is translated thus in the NKJV. - **let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel.** - The Corinthians had a desire for spiritual gifts but it seems that they particularly enjoyed the showy gifts. Paul again points to the importance, not of show, but of edification for the body, the whole church. The Corinthians are exhorted to seek for that which will help others not that which exalts self.

14:13 Therefore let him who speaks in a foreign language pray that he may interpret. - If there is someone present who either cannot express himself in the common language and speaks in a foreign language for the benefit of others of his language he is to pray that he can interpret for the benefit of the people of the common language.

14:14 For if I pray in a foreign language, my spirit prays - (It will be noted that the translation gives praying in tongues as praying in a foreign language. According to principle # 3 given earlier tongue/s mean foreign languages when *laleo* and *glossa* are used in the same clause. However, the word *laleo* does not occur in this clause. With the possible exception in Romans 8:26 prayer is speaking and thus foreign languages are meant here. We might mention also that Romans 8:26 does not refer to praying in tongues because the text says the groanings are unexpressable, that is cannot be spoken, *laleo*. The tongues in 1 Corinthians 14 however, are spoken.) Words communicated towards God are communicated through the man's spirit to God. To God it is a spiritual communication. The words spoken are for man's own benefit. So if I pray in a foreign language my spirit is communing with God, but my understanding is unfruitful to the hearers. So Paul says, - **but my understanding is unfruitful.** - The word for understanding is *nous*. The *nous* is the storage part of the mind. Things grasped and understood are stored here. (The *phreen*, the active part of the mind is not here spoken of.) Now if I have a prayer in my mind (*nous*) and I verbalize it in a foreign language my spirit communes with God but my understanding or mind is unfruitful in that the hearers do not understand what I am saying. Luther brings this out clearly in his translation when he says, "mein Sinn bringt Niemand Frucht." My mind does not bring fruit to anyone.

14:15 What is the result then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding, - If my mind does not profit anyone else if I pray in a foreign language then I will seek to pray with the spirit and the understanding as well. And how can this be done? Very simply by praying in a language the hearers can understand. Then my spirit will pray and my understanding will be fruitful. - **I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding.** - Same explanation as above.

14:16 Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit - that is, in a foreign tongue. - **how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed** - The uninformed literally is, *idiotees* from which we get the word *idiot*. Vine says it means, "primarily a private person in contrast to a State official..." Likely by indication here he would not be one who understood several languages. We might note here that if speaking in tongues be considered to be ecstatic utterances an educated man would be no better off to understand the foreign language than an

uneducated person. - **say "Amen" at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say.** - The meaning of amen is something like "so be it" or "I agree." How can one agree with a prayer if he does not understand what is said? One simply should not say amen to something one does not understand. .

14:17 For you indeed give thanks well, but the other is not edified. - The fact that the hearer cannot say amen is no reflection on the prayer. The problem is he did not understand the words of the prayer. Again, this verse points to the importance of edification.

14:18 I thank my God I speak in foreign languages more than you all. - It is no doubt that Paul is very thankful for his ability to speak in many foreign languages. He could communicate the Gospel wherever he went. A great advantage to evangelism is the ability to speak in various languages but it is quite worthless to edification unless there is an interpreter.

14:19 - yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in a foreign language. - We note here first that the last clause has an elliptical verb, "than ten thousand words in a tongue." According to principle # 3 this clause needs to have the verb *laleo* in it if it is speaking of foreign languages. For those who understand grammar the elliptical verb is *laleo* (speak) and could literally read, "than *speak* ten thousand words in a foreign language." The ratio given here by Paul indicates the use of foreign tongues in the church is quite useless. Five words that can be understood will do more good than ten thousand in a foreign language. One cannot teach others when he is speaking in a foreign language. To speak with the understanding is to speak words the listener understands.

14:20 Brethren, do not be children - When the present imperative is negated by the Greek negative *mee* the idea is that something already in progress is to stop. A good translation would be, "Brethren, stop being children..." When you consider a church gathering and various people speaking in foreign languages that benefit no one or at best a few it is easy to understand this imperative. It also reflects great immaturity on the part of the Corinthians. - **in understanding;** - Up until now the Greek word translated understanding has been *nous*. The word for understanding in this passage comes from the root of *phreen*, the active part of the mind. The picture given is that the Corinthians were children in their thinking and Paul is ordering them to stop it, like one would a little child. - **however, in malice be babes,** - Paul is spanking the Corinthians. He has told them to stop thinking like children. The implication is that they were adults in malice. The Greek word *kakia* speaks of vicious character. The indication is that the gift of speaking in foreign languages had caused malice in the church. One wonders how Paul treats the subject of tongues so fully and so kindly in light of these implications. - **but in understanding be mature.** - Rather than being mature in malice they are to be mature in their thinking (*phreen*). Paul is preparing them for mature thinking. He will show them how to use the Scriptures to deal with these things.

14:21 In the law it is written: With men of other tongues and other lips I will speak to this people; And yet, for all that they will not hear Me," says the Lord. - This is a rough

quote from Isaiah 28:11-12. Here is a great evidence that Paul is dealing with languages in this chapter and not ecstatic utterances. The quote comes from a time when Assyria was a threat to Israel. Israel was disobedient to God and God was going to let judgment fall. The judgment was a terrible one, should it come to pass, for woe to the people who were conquered by the Assyrians. Their torture for the conquered knew no bounds. It would be these people of Assyria, a people of another language, that God would use to speak judgment to the unbelieving nation of Israel. These tongues would be a sign to Israel but not a good sign by any stretch of the imagination. So hard had Israel become in its unbelief that Paul says in spite of this treatment they would still not turn their ways.

14:22 Therefore foreign languages are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; - This is the final reference where principle # 3 might bring the translation into question. The clause in which the word *glossa* appears does not have the word *laleo* in it and according to the principles set out should read languages or tongues rather than foreign languages as I have given it here. However, in the Greek language the word *tongues* has the definite article before it and in this case pointing to a previous reference. Literally it reads, "Therefore, the tongues are for a sign..." Which tongues does 'the' tongues refer to. It is the tongues of verse 21. And in verse 2 the words *glossa* and *laleo* are used together. The previous reference then does away with the need to repeat the verb. We have mentioned earlier that the sign signified by tongues is not a good one. It does not indicate spirituality but rather unbelief. The unbelievers in mind here are religious unbelievers; Israel to be specific. In the Isaiah passage Israel was the one nation that knew the true God, yet they were unbelieving toward God. When God gave the gift of tongues at Pentecost, it was not to show the superior faith of the speakers but to confirm to unbelieving Israelites that the Apostles were His spokesmen. When God again gave the gift of tongues in Acts 10 it was, I believe to confirm to the Apostles who would doubt that Gentiles could be partakers of the Jewish faith without being circumcised and becoming Jewish proselytes. - **but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe.** - Paul has maintained all through this chapter that tongues are not of much value in the church. It is prophesying that is beneficial.

14:23 Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those who are uninformed - The uninformed (Gk. idiotai) are people of the class given as the uninformed in verse 16. - **or unbelievers** - This is not the same group of unbelievers as given in verse 22. Those were religious unbelievers. The unbelievers in this verse are those who do not know the true God. - **will they not say that you are out of your mind?** - Paul is saying that if the uneducated people who would not understand other languages or if worldly people should come in and the church is speaking in tongues or foreign languages not understood there, they will say you are out of your mind. Understandably so.

14:24 But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is judged by all. - If all are discussing and clarifying the Word of God and sharing their faith in an a language understood, and an unbeliever or uninformed person comes in he will be convicted and convinced of his need for salvation.

14:25 And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; - It is only through the very natural way of an understood language that God's message reaches the heart of the unbeliever. - **and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is among you.** - Small wonder that Paul has been stressing the importance of prophecy over tongues. Here is the result we all long for or should long for in the church.

14:26 How is it then, brethren? - In verses 1-25 Paul has shown the superiority of prophecy to tongues. The effort has been to correct the Corinthians on their practice of speaking in tongues in the church. Paul clearly indicates the superiority of prophecy to tongues in 1-5 and then proceeds to explain the basis of this superiority. All of this is done to correct what is happening in the church at Corinth. Now Paul will deal with how, what he has said, is to affect the church. This leads to the opening question to this section which Gordon D. Fee gives thus, "What then is the upshot of all this?" How is this to affect the church practically? What follows are regulations regarding speaking in tongues and prophesying but it is not totally regulatory but also correctional. The corrective nature of this section is evident. - **Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation.** - The common error of almost all commentators on this passage is that they see this as speaking of gifts. One has the gift of singing another of teaching etc... However, the verse does not say one has this gift and another that. If the verse is speaking of gifts it should say, "Each one of you has *either* the gift of singing *or* the gift of etc..." Verse 6 has such a construction and the correlatives are given in the text. I think Paul is indicating in this verse the potential for edification in the Corinthian church. Each Christian had some *song* to share or call for. That each one had a song or psalm does not necessarily mean they had the gift of singing. That is to jump to a conclusion not indicated in the text. Each one had some *teaching* to impart. Let us say that the speaker is speaking on God's covenants. Someone in the congregation had some teaching to impart on this. If the discussion was on this or that topic there were some who could speak to those issues. All were capable of adding knowledge on one topic or another. Furthermore each one has a tongue. Every one had a language of one sort or another. If they spoke the common language well, they were able to help the church by teaching or singing etc... If they spoke in a foreign language they would be able to interpret for another of that language or communicate with them. Every one of them had a *revelation* of some kind. There are two types of revelation. One is receiving divine revelation which is recorded as Scripture. This may be the idea in verse six. The other is what we now call illumination. The Holy Spirit enlightens the minds of believers as they study the Word of God by giving them some new insight into the Word. Maybe some application to a certain local situation or some understanding. Paul is saying that they all had some such illumination to share when the topic may come up. The last item Paul mentions that each one has is an interpretation. Interpretation is of two kinds. One is to interpret from one language to another, the other is to expound or explain the application of the Scriptures or of message. The teacher in the synagogue might give a message and the interpreter might explain how this applied to the believer in daily life. It is probably the latter Paul has in mind here. The potential for edification was great in Corinth but if each one did his own thing potential for division and every evil work was also great. This brings Paul back again to one of those crucial themes that is woven throughout the whole chapter, or rather the whole topic in 12-14. - **Let all**

things be done for edification. - With this great potential for good or for evil there could only be one "purpose statement" that could keep everything on track and Paul gives it here. As the overall theme outside the church is evangelism so the overriding theme in the church should be edification.

14:27 If anyone speaks in a foreign language, let there be two or at the most three, - The most important thing in the church meeting, as Paul has stressed over and over is edification. If anyone speaks in a foreign language and he wants an opportunity to share his insight in another language then Paul says this restriction is to be enforced. A question we need to consider here is does this mean that only two or three speakers should share in this way in any given meeting or that only two or three should share before an interpretation is given? Since the interpretation involved is interpreting from one language to another it only stands to reason that the interpreter would be interpreting sentence by sentence or phrase by phrase. It would seem that one or two speakers per meeting is probably meant. - **each in turn,** - They are to speak in turn so as reduce the potential for confusion. - **and let one interpret.** - The third restriction is that one person is to interpret for the speaker. I would take it that each speaker should have only one interpreter.

14:28 But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God. - From these two verses and the need for these regulations we gather that the practice of tongues in Corinth was not edifying and was practiced even when there was not an interpreter. The regulation here is clear; no interpreter, no speaking in a foreign language (singular in context). [We need to ask this question here in light of the fact that some see tongues as ecstatic utterances. If tongues are indeed ecstatic utterances and the speaker himself does not understand what he is saying how can it be ascertained that there is an interpreter in their midst? If someone claims to have the gift of interpretation, how can it be known that his interpretation is indeed the right one?] Furthermore, if the proposition given at the outset is correct then the speaker here understands what he is saying. He could not be told to speak to himself if he does not understand what he is saying. The reason he is not to speak in the church is because he is not understood. If he does not understand what he is saying then he should not speak to himself either. The fact that speaking in tongues is speaking in foreign languages clears up this problem. Though no one in the church might understand his language, yet God does and he does and thus he is exhorted to be silent in church and to speak to himself and to God.

14:29 Let two or three prophets speak, - Though the formula for regulating prophecy is much the same as that for tongues yet a basic distinction lies in the fact that this section does not begin with the condition "if." Tongues may or may not be in a church service but prophecy will always be there. There is no "if" about it. Though prophesying is superior to speaking foreign languages it appears that even in this the Corinthians were not well ordered thus calling for regulations for this as well. It would seem to follow that if the regulation of two or three speaking in tongues means two or three in any given meeting then that would apply here as well although some argue otherwise. - **and let the others judge.** - Several things are to be noted here. First, the ones sitting by are to judge (discern) what the speaker is saying. Discernment is necessary to determine that what is said is indeed correct. One

would expect that this discernment would be based, not on the subjective experience of the judge but the objective Word of God. Second, the prophets may not just speak anything they feel led to speak. What they speak is to have its source in the objective Word of God. It is the job of the other prophets to make sure each message is in tune with God's Word. [It is sometimes bemoaned by commentators that we do not exercise freedom of worship in the way it was exercised in this early church. We must remember however, that at this time the Church did not possess the New Testament Scriptures. For example, the Corinthians are here just receiving the first letter to the Corinthians. Not even the Gospels have been written at this time. We now possess the entire revelation of God and it has become one of the primary sources of exposition in the church. Also, Paul does not commend the Corinthian way of worship as the best way of worship nor does he seek to alter their system. He lets them be in charge of the order of service but he corrects them as to how to carry it out so that edification may receive its proper stress.] Third, the "others" who are to do the judging are also prophets. In other words the "other" does not refer to any member of the congregation. The word "others" comes from the Greek word *allos*. This refers to others of the same kind in contrast to *heteros* (also meaning other) which means other of a different kind. So it would appear that the ones who prophecy are those in the church with the gift of prophecy (expounding the Scripture, see verse 3).

14:30 But if anything be revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. - The word "revealed" refers to illumination (not divine revelation in giving Scripture). The word "other" is again *allos* and keeps this revelation as being to one of the prophets. If when one prophet is speaking another prophet gains an important insight the first speaker is to be silent while the one with the revelation shares his insight.

14:31 For you can all prophecy one by one, - Within its immediate context "you can all prophecy" would refer to the prophets. With the restriction of verse 29 in place it would seem that there would be no more than three sharing in a foreign language in any given meeting and no more than three who would give a message. The words "you can all prophecy" then likely refers to the prophets taking turns meeting by meeting. - **that all may learn and all may be comforted.** - The purpose of the above instructions is that all may learn and all may be comforted. The variety of speakers would minister to the variety of needs.

14:32 And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. - The one who is gifted to proclaim God's word must be one who is well in control of his spirit. If he is the one who must do all the speaking and he cannot allow the next his turn or if he cannot be silent if something is revealed to another then he is not in control of his spirit. Did the Corinthians pride themselves in being spiritual because each one felt he had so much to say? Being loaded with things to say is not the only test of being spiritual, being able to be silent is also a test. This text is a warning against experiences where control is lost of one's spirit.

14:33a But God is not the author of confusion but of peace. - If there is that which leads to confusion in the church meetings we may be sure that God is not the source of that message or whatever the event happens to be. But God is the author of peace. He is the

source of peace. Here is one of the surest evidences of God's working; peace. The devil is well capable of creating confusion but he is not capable of giving peace. Peace has its source in God and in Jesus Christ as the first verses of so many of Paul's writings so clearly claim.

[There are several possibilities of interpretation with the phrase "as in all the churches of the saints." The one taken by the A.V. is that it is related to the subject of tongues and prophecy and is thus the conclusion of verse 33. Another position, that of Martin Luther's German translation, the NIV and numerous commentators is that it begins the admonition for women not to speak in church and reads thus, "As in all the churches, let your women keep silent in the churches...." I think it probably belongs to verse 33 and that the section dealing with women is not so much directly connected to the whole argument of the passage as that Paul includes this as an after thought or parenthesis to the fact that God is not the author of confusion but of peace. It seems that verses 34-35 do not fit into Paul's whole argument regarding tongues and prophecy but that he has wanted to mention this issue. Now as he mentions that God is not the author of confusion but of peace he is reminded of the disorder caused by women speaking in the church and he inserts these verses parenthetically. If this is correct the best way of indicating this would be to put this section in parenthesis. (Some think verses 34-35 have been inserted by someone other than Paul. There is little textual evidence to warrant such an argument.)]

14:33b-34 - Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, - The reason Paul gives for the silence of women in the church is that they are not permitted to speak. To speak in the church is to assume a position of authority. John Calvin says, "'For what is there,' some one will say, 'to hinder their being in subjection, and yet at the same time teaching?' I answer, that the office of teaching is a superiority in the Church, and is consequently, inconsistent with subjection" (Vol. xx pg. 468). - as the law also says. The antithesis Paul gives to speaking in church is to be submissive. In Paul's view for a woman to speak in church and to be submissive is not compatible. The Greek word for submission is *upotasso* which is a military term meaning "to arrange under." As certain ranks arrange themselves under ranks of higher authority so a woman is to arrange herself under male authority. This is not a palatable teaching in our day but if we maintain the authority of the Word of God then this is a requirement for us as well. - **as the law also says.** - Paul appeals to the law for backup to his requirement against women speaking in church. This teaching regarding women's submission to men begins in Genesis 3:16 and never is it changed.

14:35 And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husband's at home; - Paul either anticipates that somebody is going to say, "What about their asking questions during the service" or he knows that this is taking place so he deals with this point. If the women have questions they are to ask their husbands at home after the service. - **for it is a shame for women to speak in church.** - Paul now gives the reasoning for not letting them even ask questions in church. He does not say specifically why this is a shame but perhaps "as the law also says" given earlier answers this question as well.

14:36 Or did the word of God come originally from you? Or was it you only that it

reached? - To what are these words to be attached? I suggest that verse 34-35 are parenthetical and that verse 36 is attached to the preceding thought so that we might get the connection like this, "For God is not the author of confusion but of peace as in all the churches. Or did the word of God come originally from you? Or was it to you only that it reached?" There is a hint here again at the Corinthian arrogance that comes out a number of times in this letter. They seemed to say, "We are the spiritual ones, it does not matter what other churches do. And who is Paul anyway? Who does he think he is?" Paul points out to them that God is not the author of confusion but of peace as shown by other churches. Paul, as though anticipating their attitude to his mentioning the example of other churches adds these biting words found in this verse. First, "Or did the word of God come originally from you?" These words indicate that the Corinthians thought that they had a corner on God's Word and that Paul's teaching might have little affect on them because they were so "spiritual." Paul may be subtly reminding them that not only did God's Word not originate with them but it was Paul who brought it to them. Second, "Or was it you only that it reached." Do you think the example of other churches does not need to be an example to you? Do you think it reached you alone and no other churches can be an example to you? So Paul may be simply saying, "Look, you need to listen to me because I am the one who originally brought God's Word to you. You would not even have ideas about being spiritual in this sense if I had not brought you the Word of God. Consider also that I brought this Word to other places and they have found that God is a God of order and not of confusion as seems to be the case from the your experience."

14:37 If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord. - Paul again anticipates the response of those who consider themselves to be prophets or spiritual. Paul indicates that there is other evidence than spiritual gifts that a person is truly spiritual. That evidence is one's response to the Word of God.

14:38 But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant. - (Some translate this, "...let him be ignored" on the basis of a textual variant.) If anybody cannot perceive that the things I write to you are the commandments of the Lord then he is ignorant. The word "ignorant" stands as a contrast to the word "acknowledge" in the previous verse. - let him be ignorant. - This last clause stands as a judgment against anyone who did not recognize the commands Paul gave as being commandments from the Lord. It has a similar ring to it as that of Revelation 22:11, "He who is unjust let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still..."

14:39 Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophecy, and do not forbid to speak in foreign languages. - The superiority of prophecy to tongues again comes to the front but the final word is that they are not to forbid people from speaking in foreign languages. The Corinthians were forbidden to speak in foreign languages if there was not an interpreter present. The reason Paul does not forbid speaking in foreign languages is that if someone gives a word in a foreign language and it is interpreted then it has edifying value to the church.

14:40 Let all things be done decently and in order. - Indecency and disorder are sure signs that God is not in control. To do things any other way is to do things contrary to the nature of God and thus this final admonition.

CONCLUSIONS: I have given objective criteria by which one can determine what is meant in any passage when the word tongue/s is used. Numerous lexicons and commentaries indicate that in some passages tongue/s refers to languages but in others it refers to ecstatic utterances. Several problems arise: First, there is no objective criteria given to determine whether ecstatic utterances or languages is meant in any given text of Scripture. Second, there is no passage of Scripture that clearly shows that speaking in tongues is an ecstatic utterance. On the other hand, Acts 2 is conclusive evidence that speaking in tongues is speaking in foreign languages. Third, further questions arise on the following verses if speaking in tongues is ecstatic utterances:

Verse 3 - If speaking in tongues is a message from God to man through the one gifted to give ecstatic utterances how can it be said he does not speak to men but to God?

Verse 4 - How can it be said that the speaker edifies himself if he does not understand what he is saying? If he edifies himself when he does not understand what he is saying why could he then not edify others who also do not understand what he is saying?

Verse 16 - If the speaker does not understand what he is saying how can he know he is giving thanks?

Verse 19 - If ecstatic utterances are a gift from God and a message for the church why would Paul rather speak five words in the church with his understanding than ten thousand words in an ecstatic utterance? Would God give a gift so useless?

Verse 22 - If tongues are for a sign to unbelievers why should they be practiced for personal edification?

My conclusion is that practicing ecstatic utterances is extremely dangerous since it does not have its source in God. When I open myself up to let anything roll over my tongue that wants to come I am placing myself in a very dangerous position. Neither I nor anyone else can ever determine with certainty what I am saying nor where it is coming from.

On the other hand if speaking in tongues is speaking in foreign languages, as I believe it is, then I have objective criteria by which I can determine what I or others are saying. That is a position much more in keeping with the character of God than the ecstatic utterance view.