

Sha'ul of Tarsus & His Letters ~ Part 85

1 Corinthians ~ Part 25

Note: To examine the graphics in this series, click on them for a pop-up version.

As I emphasized in my previous post, we are delving into the profound significance of **Sha'ul's Letters to the Corinthians**, a crucial cornerstone of our faith.

Regarding Spiritual Gifts ~ Part 5

Tongues Are A Sign

²⁰ **Brothers, don't be children in your thinking. In evil, be like infants, but in your thinking, be grown-up.** ²¹ **In the Torah, it is written,**

*"By other tongues,
by the lips of foreigners
I will speak to this people.
But even then, they will not listen to me,"
says Adonai.¹*

²² **Thus, tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is not for unbelievers but for believers.**

Sha'ul draws on a passage from Isaiah to emphasize the use of tongues as a sign to unbelievers. The sign indicates that tongues are intended to function as a sign of **God's** activity. When rightly practiced, tongues can draw people to **God** (see below).

Prophecy Teaches

²³ **So if the whole congregation comes together with everybody speaking in tongues, and uninstructed people or unbelievers come in, won't they say you're crazy?** ²⁴ **But if you all prophesy, and some unbeliever or uninstructed person enters, he is convicted of sin by all, he is brought under judgment by all,** ²⁵ **and the secrets of his heart are laid bare; so he falls on his face and worships God, saying, "God is really here among you!"**

Won't they say you're crazy? Some **Believers** seem oblivious to the effect their practices have on outsiders. They form a closed circle and encourage one another in a style that conveys only weirdness rather than conveying love (chapter 13) or even judgment to outsiders. Such groups should reevaluate their practices regarding evangelistic effectiveness: are people who could be won to faith being turned away by the oddness of it all? In this regard, **Sha'ul** is a sensible man.

Orderly Use of Gifts

²⁶ **What is our conclusion, brothers? Whenever you come together, let everyone be ready with a psalm or a teaching or a revelation, or ready to use his gift of tongues or give an interpretation, but let everything be for edification.** ²⁷ **If the gift of tongues is exercised, let it be by two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret.** ²⁸ **And if there is no one present who can interpret, let the people who speak in tongues keep silent when the congregation meets—they can speak to themselves and to God.** ²⁹ **Let two or three prophets speak, while the others weigh what is said.** ³⁰ **And if something is revealed to a prophet who is sitting down, let the first one be silent.** ³¹ **For you can all prophesy one by one, with the result that all will learn something and all will be encouraged.** ³² **Also, the prophets' spirits are under the prophets' control;** ³³ **for God is not**

¹ Isaiah 28:11-12.

*a God of unruliness but of shalom. As in all the congregations of God's people, ³⁴ let the wives remain silent when the congregation meets; they are certainly not permitted to speak out. Rather, let them remain subordinate, as also the Torah says; ³⁵ and if there is something they want to know, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for a woman to speak out in a congregational meeting. ³⁶ Did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached? ³⁷ If anyone thinks he is a prophet or is endowed with the Spirit, let him acknowledge that what I am writing you is a command of the Lord. ³⁸ But if someone doesn't recognize this, then let him remain unrecognized. ³⁹ So, my brothers, eagerly seek to prophesy; and do not forbid speaking in tongues; ⁴⁰ but let all things be done in a proper and orderly way.*²

I appreciate how Warren Weirsbe summarizes today's blog:

A. Tongues (vv. 26–28).

Tongues are not to be allowed without interpretation. Only three are to speak in order.

B. Prophecy (vv. 29–33).

Two or three prophets are to speak, and the others are to test their messages to see if they come from God. (Note the gift of "discerning of spirits" in 12:10, and see 1 Thes. 5:20–21). Speakers are to edify the church and maintain proper order. If a speaker gets "carried away," it is proof that the Spirit is not speaking, for there is self-control when the Spirit is at work.

C. Women in the church (vv. 34–35).

Relate these verses to 11:5ff and 1 Tim. 2:12. The women were abusing their gifts and using them out of place. **Sha'ul** does not say that women have no spiritual gifts or that they should be slaves to men. He teaches that if men and women act out of place in the church, they tear down the church instead of building it up. **Sha'ul** also lays a responsibility upon the men; they were to teach their wives spiritual truths but to do so at home. It is sad to say that in many families, the wife has to teach the husband!

D. Obedience to the Word (vv. 36–40).

"If any of you are spiritual," says **Sha'ul**, "you will prove it by obeying the Word of God!" The Spirit of God never works apart from or contrary to the Word of God, and nowhere is this principle needed more than in spiritual gifts. Somebody's subjective emotional experience cannot guide us, but the unchanging objective Word of God can guide us.³

In our next post, we will eagerly explore **Sha'ul's Letters to the Corinthians**, starting with 1 **Corinthians** 15:1 and delving deeper into the new topic of **Regarding The Resurrection**. Stay tuned for more insights and revelations.

² 1 Co 14:23–40.

³ Warren W. Wiersbe, Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1992), 462.