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The Priority of God's Word over Tongues

14: 1-40



The stage has been set. **Paul** has instructed **the Corinthians** concerning **spiritual gifts** (to see link click [Cf - The Unity and Diversity of Spiritual Gifts](#)). In addition, **he** has impressed upon **them** the value of **love** and its supreme necessity in the exercise of all **spiritual gifts** (see [Ct - The Priority of Love Over Spiritual Gifts](#)). With this clearly before **his** readers, **Paul** now takes up **the gift of tongues**. **The Corinthians** overestimated this **gift** and thus became unbalanced. **Paul** now proceeds to correct that mistake. **He** does this by showing, at some length, that **prophesying**, or speaking forth **God's Word**, is the most needed, and most fruitful, **gift** for the Church. **He** makes an extended comparison between **prophecy** and **tongues**, and thus shows the priority of **prophecy** over **tongues**.⁴³⁷

One must not confuse **prophecy** with **prophecy**. The word **prophecy** is a verb and the last syllable is pronounced "sigh." **Prophesying** is speaking forth **God's Word** (**Ezeki'el 37:4-5**) and declaring **His** intention to **His people** as seen here (see [DI - The Word that Builds Up](#)). But, the word **prophecy** is a noun and the last syllable is pronounced "sea." **Prophecy** was a **spiritual gift** (see [Cp - The Gift of Prophecy](#)) during the apostolic era (see the commentary on [Acts Ck - Paul Went on to Jerusalem Despite Warnings](#)). **The prophet** had knowledge of **the near historical future** or **far eschatological future** from **God**. **The prophet** spoke for

Him and was held accountable for **his prophecies** (see **Deuteronomy [Dk](#) - A Prophet Like Moses**).

Having recognized that there is a role for both speaking in **tongues** and speaking forth **God's Word** in **public worship**, **Paul** senses that **he** must conclude by giving some principles concerning **their** regulation (see **[Dp](#) - Order in Public Worship**). Unless **things are not done in a proper and orderly way, the Corinthian** church will have no influence on the society around **them**. How sad that would be for **Paul** the missionary!⁴³⁸

But before bringing this chapter to a conclusion, **Paul** defends **his** apostolic authority once again. With a series of rhetorical questions, **he** asks how it is that **the Corinthians** consider **themselves** to be the lone authority on **God's Word**. If **they** didn't write **it**, then **they** should obey **it** just like **all the congregations of God's people** are obligated to do. Then **Paul** concludes with a direct confrontation with **them** over **his** status as **an apostle**.