

1 Corinthians 14:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.

Analysis

He that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God—the Greek simply has *glōssa* (γλῶσσα, "tongue/language"), with "unknown" supplied by translators. Paul's point: uninterpreted tongues are vertically directed (God-ward) but horizontally ineffective (man-ward). **No man understandeth him** (*oudeis akouei*, "no one hears/understands")—without interpretation, tongues lack communicative function in corporate worship.

In the spirit he speaketh mysteries (πνεύματι λαλεῖ μυστήρια)—*pneumati* could be "in spirit" (his spirit) or "by the Spirit" (Holy Spirit), likely the former given the context of private devotion. *Mystēria* are divine secrets, but here secrets that remain secret—unknown to hearers, thus failing to edify.

Historical Context

Corinthian worship likely included simultaneous uninterpreted tongues-speaking, creating confusion rather than worship. Paul doesn't deny tongues' validity but questions their public use without interpretation.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. What distinguishes private devotional tongues from their misuse in public worship?
2. How does speaking 'mysteries' that no one understands fail to serve love?
3. Why does Paul emphasize that tongues are directed toward God rather than men?

Interlinear Text

ὁ G3588	γὰρ G1063	λαλεῖ G2980	γλῶσση G1100	οὐκ G3756	ἀνθρώποις G444
	For	he speaketh	in an unknown tongue	not	unto men
λαλεῖ G2980	ἀλλὰ G235	τῷ G3588	θεῷ· G2316	οὐδεὶς G3762	γὰρ G1063
he speaketh	but		unto God	no man	For
					understandeth
πνεύματι G4151	δὲ G1161	λαλεῖ G2980	μυστήρια· G3466		
in the spirit	him howbeit	he speaketh	mysteries		

Additional Cross-References

Mark 16:17 (Parallel theme): And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;

Acts 10:46 (References God): For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,

Acts 19:6 (Spirit): And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.

1 Corinthians 13:2 (Parallel theme): And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

1 Corinthians 2:10 (Spirit): But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

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