

1 Corinthians 14:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?

Analysis

If I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you?—Paul uses himself as an example. The verb *ōpheleō* (ὠφελέω, "profit, benefit") echoes the love principle (13:3, "it profiteth me nothing"). **Except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine**—Paul lists four intelligible modes of Spirit-prompted instruction:

1. *apokalypsis* (ἀποκάλυψις, "revelation, unveiling")
2. *gnōsis* (γνῶσις, "knowledge")
3. *prophēteia* (προφητεία, "prophecy")
4. *didachē* (διδασκαλία, "teaching, doctrine").

All four require intelligibility.

Paul's rhetorical question expects the answer: "You gain nothing from my tongues." The fourfold list encompasses the range of edifying Spirit-speech—whether unveiling mystery, imparting knowledge, prophesying, or teaching, all must be understood to profit hearers.

Historical Context

As an apostle with extraordinary gifts, Paul could have flaunted tongues. Instead, he subordinates even apostolic gifting to the edification principle. His self-reference makes the argument irrefutable.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. Why does Paul apply the edification test even to apostolic ministry?
2. How do revelation, knowledge, prophecy, and teaching differ yet share intelligibility?
3. What would you 'profit' from a worship service conducted entirely in tongues?

Interlinear Text

νυνὶ	δέ	ἀδελφοί	ἐὰν	ἔλθω	πρὸς	ὑμᾶς	γλώσσαις
Now	G1161	brethren	if	I come	unto	you	with tongues
G3570		G80	G1437	G2064	G4314	G5209	G1100
λαλήσω	τί	ὑμᾶς	ὠφελήσω	ἐὰν	μὴ	ὑμῖν	λαλήσω
I shall speak	what	you	shall I profit	if	G3361	to you	I shall speak
G2980	G5101	G5209	G5623	G1437		G5213	G2980
ἢ	ἐν	ἀποκαλύψει	ἢ	ἐν	γνώσει	ἢ	ἐν
either	by	revelation	either	by	knowledge	either	by
G2228	G1722	G602	G2228	G1722	G1108	G2228	G1722
προφητεία	ἢ	ἐν	διδαχῇ				
prophesying	either	by	doctrine				
G4394	G2228	G1722	G1322				

Additional Cross-References

Ephesians 1:17 (Parallel theme): That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:

Romans 6:17 (Parallel theme): But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.

2 Timothy 3:16 (Parallel theme): All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org