

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 ὄφελο (ώφελέω, "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 (διδαχή, "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 G80 if G1437 I come G2064 unto G4314 you G5209 with tongues G1100
G3570 G3570 G3570 G3570 G3570 G3570 G3570 G3570

λαλήσω τί ὑμᾶς ὡφελήσω ἐὰν μὴ ὑμῖν λαλήσω
I shall speak what you shall I profit if G3361 to you I shall speak
G2980 G5101 G5209 G5623 G1437 G3570 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

προφητείᾳ 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:

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