

All Speaking In Tongues At Once (1Cor 14:23).

“Will they not say you are Mad?”

***Common Misunderstanding.**

One thing needs to be clarified right from the start... the bible doesn't accuse the Corinthian church of all speaking in tongues at once. That is right; the bible very clearly, does not accuse them of all speaking in tongues at the same time during the voice gifts. This is the common mistake that most people make. The following observations reveal Paul's real point of concern.

The problem at Corinth was that, during the operation of the spiritual gifts (as opposed to times of prayer), they **spoke in tongues only**... the tongues were not being interpreted. The phrase 'all at once' is not used in the Corinthian verses, thus they are not being accused of all speaking at once; rather, they **only** spoke in tongues. This is a significant difference!

***Comparing the two key verses.**

There is very solid evidence to support the fact that Paul wasn't accusing them of all speaking in tongues at once... consider the context of the two key verses. Verse 23 and 24 have two common phrases... “**all speak with tongues**” and “**all prophesy**”. If we maintain the error of assuming that they all spoke in tongues at once, then we need to give the same meaning to the same phrase in verse 24. Notice that Paul appears to be giving them permission, for **all to prophecy at once**. That's right... '**all prophesy**'.

If all prophesied at once, wouldn't it be equally as mad as all speaking in tongues at once? Of course it would and yet that is the instruction ...read verse 24 again. Therefore, there can only be one possible way of correctly interpreting the text.

23...if all you do is speak in tongues. (not about all at once)!

24 ...if all you do is prophesy. (not about all at once)!

***Lack of edification.**

Paul is addressing the lack of edification, only at the time the voice gifts were exercised. No one besides the tongue speaker was edified because no one understood the meaning of the language... all they were doing was operating the gift of tongues. **5 I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater [is] he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.** Paul outlines the edifying values of each gift when used with correct application.

It would certainly be foolish to speak a message to **all people** unless they understood the meaning (v11). The “madness” (v23), referred to the fact that the tongues were not edifying to anyone else apart from the speaker... because without the interpretation, no one understood the utterances. **23...and if all speak with tongues** (only), **and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?** Without the interpretation, it is meaningless... madness... no value to the understanding mind.

The text in question.

1Corinthians 14:23 If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and **all speak with tongues**, and there come in *those that are unlearned, or unbelievers*, **will they not say that ye are mad?**

24 But **if all prophesy**, and there come in one that believeth not, or *one unlearned*, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all:

***Proper understanding.**

11 Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh [shall be] a barbarian unto me. Because no one understood the meaning of the tongue... but if **all they did was prophecy** (instead of using tongues without interpretation) then... **24 ...and there come in one that believeth not, or [one] unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all:** They are edified because they understand what is being said... the gift is understood and effective. **In simple terms, verse 23 has nothing to do with the prayer time** and thus doesn't even raise the issue of all praying in tongues at the same time! Nor do any other verses! It should be very clear at this point, that the bible is definitely not forbidding them to all pray in the Spirit together in times of prayer.

***Conclusion.**

Verses 23&24 refer exclusively to the use of the voice gifts (personal prayer is not meant to be interpreted for the benefit of others, thus it cannot be the topic).

For all to pray in tongues at times of prayer is neither unscriptural, nor unseemly (disorderly), as long as it occurs at the correct part of the meeting and complies with good manners. If anything can be taken from chapter 14 relating to the prayer time, it would have to be the following verse...

40 Let all things be done decently and in order.

Praying in the Spirit is not indecent, nor is it out of order if the correct scriptural and behavioral restraints apply.

The practice of praying in tongues to address the needs of the people, is not limited to two or three in the scriptures (as the gifts are). To confuse praying in tongues with the gift of tongues, when we already understand the differences between both practices, will undoubtedly place limitations on the outcome of prayers and hinder faith, knowledge and edification in the church.

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