

February 6, 2022

Tongues: a Sign of Divine Judgment; Prophecy: a Sign of Divine Blessing

1 Corinthians 14:20-25

Tongues and the Reformation

In January of 1519, Ulrich Zwingli the Swiss Reformer did the unthinkable during worship service in Catholic dominated Europe: he refused to speak in tongues to the people of God. For nearly 1,000 years all worship services were spoken in tongues—specifically the Latin tongue—and the common man was unable to understand. Zwingli decided to speak in German as he preached through the Gospel of Matthew. The effects of this decision were nothing less than world transforming. Jonathan Cruse reports: “Every man, woman, and child who could possibly get there crammed into Zurich’s Great [Cathedral]¹ to hear him. Other Reformers soon followed suit: Luther, Calvin, and Bucer.”² We could say that the Reformation began, because of the Reformers obedience to this very passage of Scripture. Why was the world in spiritual darkness prior to the Reformation? Because the worship services were completely unintelligible. The Word of God was hidden in the Latin tongue.

Judicial blindness

Paul is saying that when this happens—when unintelligibility rules the day—it is a sign of judicial blindness. It is a sign that the people have shut their ears to the Word of God, and so He hands them over to confusion and chaos. That’s how Paul reasons with the Corinthians. Tongues without interpretation—without intelligibility—is a sign of Divine judgment. Yet they preferred it over preaching. Paul says it is because they are children. Little children can’t discern

¹ Original—“Minster”

² Jonathan Landry Cruse, *What Happens When We Worship*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Reformation Heritage Books, 2020), pg. 117-118

that a \$100 bill has greater value than a shiny red ball. The ball is bouncy, the \$100 bill is not. Tongues are showy and flashy and requires very little from its listeners. Preaching is logical and expositional and requires much from its listeners. The Corinthians chose the flashy gift because they were spiritual children. So Paul unpacks what prophecy or preaching *is*. There's nothing like it in all the universe. When God's Word is faithfully and accurately preached, the Living God manifests His power and presence among His people. The only thing that preaching can be compared to is the creation of the World. Just as God said in the beginning "Let there be light" so in preaching God turns on the lights causes us to see the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (**2 Corinthians 4:6**). Beloved do you believe that? Beloved, are you hungry and thirsty for the preached Word? Is it the desire and longing of your heart? "God if I can't have anything else, please, please, let me hear Your Word." If that's not the cry of our hearts, it's simply because we don't believe what God says about His Word.

The Big Idea...

In corporate worship unintelligibility (tongues without interpretation) is a sign of God's judgment, whereas comprehension (preaching) is a sign of God's power and presence

★ Our Doctrine

★ Our Duty

★ Our Delight

I. Our Doctrine

What does the Law say?

In v.20, Paul rebukes the Corinthians for preferring tongues over prophecy, and he calls them children for doing so. We'll come back to that. Let's first look at Paul's reason for making such a claim. Please look at v.21 "In the Law it is written, "By people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners will I speak to this people, and *even then* they will not listen to me, says the Lord." To understand what Paul is saying, we need to go directly to this quote. Please turn with me to **Isaiah 28**. If you're thinking " But Isaiah was a prophet, his writings were not part of the Law as Paul said." The answer is that Paul is using "the Law" to refer to the whole OT not merely the Pentateuch (the first five books).³

Judah had strayed

Here's the context of **Isaiah 28**. Judah had started to despise God's Word, *meaning* they weren't listening or obeying God. That's why God sent the prophets because Israel and Judah had strayed. Look at v.9 The "he" in this verse is Isaiah speaking on behalf of the Lord, so I'm going to change the pronoun to 'I'. "To whom will [I] teach knowledge, and to whom will [I] explain the message?" Then he answers: "[to]...those who are weaned from the milk, those taken from the breast?" In other words, Judah has become like little babies incapable to be taught the Word of the Lord because of the hardness of their hearts.

The judgment of tongues

And so Isaiah pronounces a curse upon them in v.11, and this is what Paul quotes in 14:21 "For by people of strange lips and with a foreign tongue the Lord will speak to this people, ¹² to whom he has said, "This is rest; give rest to

³ Just like Jesus did in John 10:34, or Paul did in Romans 3:20. cf. Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians*, (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 2018), pg. 293. Furthermore, Isaiah's prophetic ministry was not independent of the Law. The prophets interpreted the Law, and announced the blessings and curses of the Law so it's not inaccurate for Paul to refer to Isaiah as the Law.

the weary; and this is repose”; *yet they would not hear.*” Judah didn’t not want to hear God’s Word of rest and peace. They mocked the Word. Look at **v.13** *And the word of the Lord will be to them* [this is how they hear Isaiah’s preached Word] precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little...” These phrases are simple one syllable words in the Hebrew.⁴ It’s the English equivalent of “blah, blah, blah.” That’s how they heard God’s Word, ‘blah, blah, blah’ and so as a result, end of **v.13** “...they may go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.” Isaiah is prophesying about the Babylonian captivity. To sum it up as one commentator says

“Very well then, Isaiah says, if you treat the plain Word of God as gibberish, what you will get is gibberish. You don’t listen to God when the prophet speaks, and so maybe you will understand it when your streets are full of Babylonian soldiers speaking a strange language.”⁵

In other words, confusing tongues was to be sign of God’s judgment on the nation for rejecting His clear Word.⁶

Tongues is a sign for unbelievers

Please turn back with me to **1 Corinthians 14**. Notice what Paul says in light of that in **v.22** “Thus tongues are a sign *not* for believers but for unbelievers...” *Now* Paul has already labored to show how tongues *when used correctly* were a great blessing in order to spread the gospel. Because of the Holy Spirit empowered gift of tongues, there was no corner of the world where the

⁴ Reformation Heritage Study Bible

⁵ Douglas Wilson, *Partakers of Grace: A Commentary on The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, (Moscow, ID.,: Canon Press, 2018), pg. 223

⁶ “The meaning is, that when a people are disobedient, God sends them teachers whom they cannot understand; when they are obedient, he sends them prophets speaking their own language. This is the natural conclusion from the premises contained in v.21. When the Hebrews were disobedient God sent foreigners among them; when obedient, he sent them prophets. Wherefore, i.e. hence it follows, that unintelligible teachers are for the unbelieving; those who can be understood are for the believing.” Hodge, 296

Apostles could not go and proclaim God's Word. *But* here he's speaking of tongues used incorrectly. Tongues *here* means unintelligible speech without an interpretation, which is what the Corinthians were doing in corporate worship. When used like this, it is a Divine judgment. Calvin paraphrases Paul's rebuke to the Corinthians this way: "You see, brethren, that what you so eagerly desire is not a blessing bestowed by God upon **believers**, but a punishment, by which He inflicts vengeance upon **unbelievers**."⁷ God sends unintelligible confusing teachers to those who do not believe, but He sends prophets who speak His Word to those who believe.

'You're madmen'

And Paul immediately illustrates this. Here's one judgment on local churches who disobey this principle. Look at **v.23** "If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders [those who don't understand the language spoken] or unbelievers enter, *will they not say that you are out of your minds?*" When God brought me out of the prodigal country, I landed in a charismatic Church. I'm thankful to God for how they cared for me. But I had to leave after being there a year. Why? Because it wasn't a place I could bring my friends. They spoke in tongues without interpretation and I knew that my friends would think I was crazy. It paints Christianity to be a religion of confusion and fanaticism.

Doctrine: unintelligibility in worship is judgment

And so we arrive at **our doctrine**: "*...unintelligibility (tongues without interpretation) is a sign of God's judgment.*" Consider 5 proofs.

Proof #1: God judged the builders of Babel with tongues

In **Genesis 11**, we read of the people of the East building a tower. v.1 says "Now the whole earth had one language and the same words...[**v.4**] And they said to one another..." "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top

⁷ John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries XX*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: BakerBooks, 2009), pg. 453-454

in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, *lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.*” Did you catch that? They did not want to be dispersed over the face of the whole earth. But that was the very thing God commanded man to do in the Cultural Mandate (**Genesis 1:28**⁸). So what did God do? **Genesis 11:7-9** “Come, let us go down and there *confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech.*”⁸ So the Lord dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. ⁹Therefore its name was called Babel, *because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth.* And from there the Lord dispersed them over the face of all the earth.”

Proof #2: God threatened the confusion of tongues in the Law

After God brought Israel out of the Egypt He delivered the Law at Mt. Sinai. Later He pronounced the blessings for obedience and the curses for disobedience. One of the main curses for disobedience was that God would send a people whose *language they did not understand* to destroy them. **Deuteronomy 28:49** “The Lord will bring a nation against you from far away, from the end of the earth, swooping down like the eagle, a nation whose language you do not understand.”

Proof #3: God judged Judah through a Babylonian tongue⁹

God kept good on his promise and sent the Babylonians against Judah in 587 B.C. and destroyed them. **Jeremiah 5:15** “Behold, I am bringing against you a nation from afar, O house of Israel, declares the Lord. It is an enduring nation; it is an ancient nation, *a nation whose language you do not know, nor can you understand what they say.*”¹⁰ What’s absolutely fascinating is that the name Babylon finds its origin from the Tower of Babel. It means “confusion.” Babylon, who is the enemy of God’s OT people and God’s NT people is Babylon or “confusion.”

⁸ This is repeated after the flood as well in Genesis 9:7 “And you, be fruitful and multiply, increase greatly on the earth and multiply in it.”

⁹ He did the same thing with Northern Kingdom of Israel only with the Assyria people.

¹⁰ Also see Ezekiel 3:4-7

When God judged His OT people He sent them to “confusion.” When He saves His NT people in the book of Revelation, He saves them from “confusion.” **Revelation 18:10** “Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, “So will Babylon [the city of “confusion”] the great city be thrown down with violence, and will be found no more.” Confusion is what God saves His people from, and confusion is what He judges others with.

Proof #4: Pentecost was a judgment of Old Israel

We underestimate what took place at 70 A.D. when Jerusalem fell. This was not *merely* one nation (the Romans) conquering another (the Jews). It was Divine judgment for Israel rejecting the Messiah. Jesus told the Jews in **Matthew 21:43** “Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a [nation] producing its fruits.” What nation did Jesus give the kingdom of God to? The Church who is called “a holy nation” in **1 Peter 2:9**. At Pentecost, when the disciples spoke in tongues, Peter explained it by quoting the Prophet Joel “And in *the last days* it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh.” The last days were upon the Jewish nation, and the proof of it was that God had sent tongues as a sign against the Jews. The Church made up of Jew and Gentile was now receiving the Kingdom of God and the Ascended Christ was removing it from the Jewish nation. That’s why Peter urged his listeners “Save yourselves from this crooked generation” (**Acts 2:40**). Judgment was coming upon the nation in less than 40 years.

Tongues was a sign against the unbelieving Jews that Jesus was transferring the kingdom to another people.¹¹

Proof #5: Tongues has been a judgment throughout history

I've already mentioned how the prior to the Reformation, Rome insisted that all preaching be done in Latin, a tongue which the common man did not understand. Certainly the spiritual darkness that existed was a judgment for insisting on unintelligibility. But numerous other examples abound.¹² Consider just one. In 1994 at the Toronto Airport Vineyard Church, a wave of unintelligible tongue speaking began which brought attention from all over the country. In the end, even the Vineyard movement defrocked the church from its membership because of the excesses that followed including uncontrollable laughter, "drunkenness" in the Spirit, people were roaring like lions, and barking like dogs.¹³ The church had literally become a circus. When they ignored the clear Word of God's revelation, God handed them over to confusion and chaos.

¹¹ "The miracle of Pentecost was a shocking message to Israel. They knew what this meant. It was the sign from God that the Chief Cornerstone had come, and that Israel had rejected Him to its own damnation (Matthew 21:41-44; 1 Peter 2:6-8). It was the sign of judgment and reprobation, the signal that the apostates of Jerusalem were about to "stumble backward, be broken, snare, and taken captive." The Last Days of Israel had come: the old age was at an end, and Jerusalem would be swept away in a new flood, to make way for God's New Creation. As Paul said, tongues was a sign, not to this who believe, but to unbelievers" (1 Cor. 14:22)—a sign to the unbelieving Jews of their approaching doom." David Chilton, *Paradise Restored: A Biblical Theology of Dominion*, (Horn Lake, MS.: Dominion Press, 2007), pg. 114

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The Reformation Study Bible notes on Acts 10:46 "Together with v.45 ("the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles"), this shows that the prophecy of Joel 2:28-32—a prophecy about Israel's blessing that began to be fulfilled at Pentecost in believing Jews—is also being fulfilled in Gentiles. Thus, they also are become true end-time Israel in fulfilling this prophecy about Israel. This is why some Jewish bystanders are "amazed": they see a prophecy intended for Israel being fulfilled among Gentiles. Of course, the reason for this, noted in Acts 2:17-21, is that Jesus as true Israel was the first Israelite to fulfill the Joel prophecy, and all who identify with Him become Israel, and thus fulfill the prophecy.

¹² . In 150 A.D. a man named Montanus spoke in unintelligible tongues and led many astray by saying that his utterances were equal or even superseded Scripture. He said "...as the writings of Paul superseded those of Moses, so his ecstasies and utterance were to supersede those of Paul." Ronald E. Baxter, *Charismatic Gift of Tongues*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Kregel Publications, 1981), pg. 11

¹³ *The Jonathan Edwards Encyclopedia*, Gen. Ed. Harry S. Stout, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017), pg. 566

So to review: "...unintelligibility, confusion, chaos is a sign of God's judgment" and this is proved 1) At the Tower of Babel; 2) As prophesied in God's Law; 3) As demonstrated in the fall of Judah to Babylon; 4) At Pentecost as a sign to Israel's judgment in 70 A.D. and 5) Throughout history, specifically the Reformation.

What does this have to do with me?

Now perhaps you are here this morning, and you are saying to yourself "I'm not even a Christian, this has nothing to do with me." Actually this has everything to do with you. God is not *asking* you to believe His Word. He's not *asking* you to bow the knee to King Jesus. He commands your belief. He commands your allegiance. Jesus is the King of kings and Lord of lords. And He has demonstrated the truth of His claims through God-breathed Scripture.¹⁴ Unbelievers who reject God's clear revelation are handed over to confusion of mind.¹⁵ Dear unbelieving friend, the reason why you feel lost and confused in this world, is because thus far you have not acknowledged the truth of God. That can change for you this morning. Jesus holds out a promise to you. "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (**John 8:12**) Turn to Christ, turn to His Word, you will be able to see for the first time. "Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path" (**Psalms 119:105**).

That's **our doctrine**: "...unintelligibility, confusion, chaos is a sign of God's judgment"

¹⁴ And through the irrefutably clear evidence of nature

¹⁵ "And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind..." Romans 1:28

II. Our Duty

We have 3 duties...

1. Informatory Use

First, we must *consider* what it means to not be children in our thinking. Look at Paul's commands in **v.20** "Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature." Now the Scripture in some places tells us to *be* like children. When it comes to conversion, we are told to *be* like children. **Matthew 18:2** "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." Meaning, you must count yourself as the lowest of low, you must humble yourself, in order to enter the kingdom of heaven.¹⁶ Likewise Paul says *here* that we should "*be* infants in evil," *meaning* we should be totally inexperienced in practicing evil.

But there are other places in Scripture where we are told *not* to be like children.¹⁷ Here Paul says we should *not* "..be children in our thinking." The Greek word for *thinking* here means perceiving and judging. Paul is saying don't perceive like little children, don't judge like little children. Let's illustrate this. Boys and girls, imagine if you offered to your little baby brother or your little baby sister a choice between two gifts. In one hand you have a gift certificate for Disneyland that for every member of your family. It lets you ride all the rides for free, eat all your favorite foods for free, it even pays for your travel and hotel. In your other hand, you have Buzz Lightyear action figure, complete with sound effects and flashing lights. Which gift would your baby sibling choose? Buzz Lightyear. Why? Well for one, they probably aren't old enough for Disneyland, but aside from that, they haven't yet learned to correctly judge

¹⁶ Those who think they are great and think they have something to offer to God, don't come to God. Grace is the stumbling block, namely that the only thing you have to offer to God is your wretchedness and sin.

¹⁷ **Ephesians 4:14** says we should *not* be like "...children who are tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine." Likewise we should not be like children "...who lives on milk [and] is unskilled in the word of righteousness" (Hebrews 5:12-13).

the value of things. They don't understand which gift is more valuable. Our job as parents is to raise our children to start to value greater things more than lesser things. That's what Paul is doing here with the Corinthians. He's saying they were like children because they were valuing lesser things—speaking in tongues—more than greater things—the preaching of the Word. That's our **first duty**, to *consider* that we must learn to judge the value of spiritual things rightly.

2. Experimental Use

That brings us to our second duty, we must *examine* ourselves. Beloved, are you acting like a child or someone that is mature when it comes to public worship? Do you know how to *rightly value* the spiritual gifts? The particular gift in view is prophecy. As we demonstrated last week, this gift of prophecy *here* is not foretelling future events, but rather it is preaching the Word of God. That is what edifies, and encourages, and comforts as **v.3** says. **Revelation 19:10** “For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

So ask yourself: do you rightly value the preaching of the Word of God? Paul is going to tell us in **v.24-25** what preaching accomplishes, but before we get there, examine yourself, where does the preaching of the Word fall in your priority list? What would your calendar reveal? Is the preaching of the Word your number one priority or do you often put other things first? What about when you are out of town on vacation. Vacations are good, a great blessing from God. But do you try to find a local church where you can hear the Word of God? What would your checkbook reveal? Do you give so that you can ensure the preaching will continue, or do other things seem to crowd out leaving just scraps and crumbs that you offer to Him? What are you teaching your children by your own example about the preaching of the Word? When they leave the house, will they be able to say that Dad and Mom counted the preaching of the Word on the Lord's Day as the most important thing of their spiritual life? Or will they find justification from your example to skip Church when they feel like it? That's our **second duty**, we must *examine* our lives to see what value we place on the preaching of the Word.

3. Admonitory Use

That brings us to our third duty, we must *rebuke* ourselves if we judge the preaching of the Word *wrongly*. We must *rebuke* ourselves if we value *anything* above the preaching of the Word.¹⁸ Loved ones, don't you realize that Paul says that preaching is especially for us. Look at the end of **v.22** "...prophecy is a **sign** [*a manifestation of God's presence*¹⁹] not for unbelievers *but for believers*." Whenever the Church devalues the preaching of the Word, God sends judgment. This was true in the OT²⁰ and it's true in the NT. In Revelation, those Churches that were straying from His Word, He told them to repent else He would come and remove their lampstand (**Revelation 2:5**), *meaning* "if the church does not shine its light of witness"²¹ through the faithful preaching of the Word, He would remove the Spirit of God—the very life of the Church—from their midst. It's the Church's responsibility—your responsibility, my responsibility—to make sure that we value, love, protect, persevere in the preaching of God's Word. Paul's words here were not just to the leaders at Corinth, they were to the whole Church. The Church has a collective responsibility to uphold the preaching of the Word.

¹⁸ Causes of these evils

- i. Ignorance - 'I don't know what the Bible says' or perhaps your Church hasn't taught you what you should value, or perhaps you didn't grow up in a Christian home.
 - 1) If ignorance is the problem, then...
- ii. Pride - "This is the way I was taught, this is the way I've always done it, therefore I see no reason to change."
 - (1) If pride is your problem, then...
- iii. Depraved customs/examples of others - consumerism of the American Church. We don't learn how to do worship from the Church, but from the Bible.

¹⁹ cf. Hodge, pg. 295

²⁰ Jeremiah 29:18-19 "I will pursue them with sword, famine, and pestilence, and will make them a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse, a terror, a hissing, and a reproach among all the nations where I have driven them, ¹⁹ *because they did not pay attention to my words*, declares the Lord, *that I persistently sent to you by my servants the prophets, but you would not listen*, declares the Lord."

²¹ Reformation Study Bible, pg. 2308

That's **our duty**: we must 1) *consider* that being children in our thinking *means* to value preaching wrongly; 2) *examine* ourselves to see if the way we spend our time, talent, or treasure devalues the preaching of God's Word; 3) *rebuke* ourselves if we value *anything* above the preaching of the Word.

III. Our Delight

The greatest miracle on earth

It's not enough for Paul to *simply* assert that prophecy or preaching is the greatest gift the Church should earnestly desire. He must demonstrate it. Beloved consider the Apostle says is achieves when the Word of God is preached in the power and blessing of the Holy Spirit.²²

1. An Awakening

First, preaching the Word achieves *an awakening*. Look at v.24 "But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, *he is convicted by all...*" When Paul says "if *all* prophesy" he means that if *all* the speakers speak under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.²³ If an unbeliever or outsider enters, when the Holy Spirit is speaking through men, he enters a realm that he can't resist. Now if you say here: '*But v.22 says that "...prophecy is a sign not for unbelievers but for believers."* Clearly unbelievers benefit from preaching here.' True. I believe Paul means that prophecy is *not* for unbelievers *who are destined to perish*,²⁴ but it is for unbelievers who are destined for eternal life.²⁵ That's what's in view here. A portrait of *how* an unbeliever—which you and I once were—is impacted by

²² "...my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God." 1 Corinthians 2:4-5

²³ Hodge, pg. 298

²⁴ "They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do." 1 Peter 2:8

²⁵ Calvin says here "[prophecy] was not given to unbelievers, who perish, whose hearts Satan has blinded, that they may not see the light which shines forth from it. (2 Cor. 4:3-4)." Calvin, pg. 457

preaching. The first thing that happens is that He is awakened²⁶ —v.24 says *he is convicted by all*. What is he awakened to? Remember “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Rev. 19:10). He is awakened to the reality of this God-man named Jesus. He is awakened to his sin, of the need for righteousness and the judgment to come.²⁷ Preaching awakens souls to the testimony of Jesus.

2. An Accounting

Second, preaching the Word achieves *an accounting*. End of v.24 “...*he is called to account by all*.” This phrase *called to account* means to be *examined* or *judged*. The preached Word forces the conscience to testify of guilt. Hebrews 4:12-13 says that the Word discerns all “...the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.” Preaching causes you to be naked and exposed to the eyes of Jesus to whom you must give an account. It is He who is to judge the living and the dead.

3. A Revealing

Third, preaching the Word achieves *a revealing*. Beginning of v.25 “...*the secrets of his heart are disclosed*.” Every unbeliever’s conscience testifies against himself. Unbelievers simply suppress their conscience, with alcohol, or entertainment or success or whatever. *But* what preaching does for the unbeliever *who God has claimed as His own*, is that it forces him to agree with his conscience. The secrets of his heart are disclosed, and for the first time he agrees and condemns himself. This is precisely what happened when Peter preached about the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Pentecost. Acts 2:37 says “Now when they heard this *they were cut to the heart*, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” Preaching forces souls to condemn themselves before God.

²⁶ cf. John 8:9 for a similar use of the word

²⁷ John 16:8 “And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.”

4. A Delighting

Fourth, preaching the Word achieves *a delighting*. Middle of v.25 “...and so, falling on his face, he will worship God.” Perhaps your thinking, ‘Paul skipped a step what about conversion? What about the man believing in Christ?’ But Paul rightly shows us how believing in Christ is the first act of worship. Jonathan Edwards beautifully says here that

“[Conversion is] a real sense of the excellency of God and Jesus Christ... revealed in the gospel...He that is spiritually enlightened truly apprehends and sees it, or has a sense of it. He doesn’t merely rationally believe that God is glorious, but he has a sense of the gloriousness of God in his heart. There is not only a rational believe that God is holy, and that holiness is a good thing; but there is a sense of the loveliness of God’s holiness. There is not only a speculatively judging that God is gracious, but a sense ...of the beauty of [His grace].”²⁸

In other words, conversion doesn’t merely create a believer, but it creates a believer who worships. Preaching doesn’t *merely* create converts, it creates worshippers.²⁹

5. A Communing

Fifth, preaching the Word achieves *a communing*. End of v.25 “...and declare that God is really among you.” Here is the thing that new converts get that long time believers need to remember. Conversion is such a life altering, eternity shaping event, that the only explanation is that God must be present in the preaching. That’s what this new convert confesses—the only explanation for

²⁸ Edwards Encyclopedia, pg. 111-112

²⁹ “Edwards ...viewed the ‘greatest miracle-gift’ as the salvation of souls ‘to behold the beauty of Christ as do the angels in heaven through Spirit-empowered preaching and prayer.” *Ibid*, pg. 567

this change that has happened to him is that *God must be present in preaching*. Loved ones, preaching the Word is not a lecture about God.³⁰ It's not a TED talk. It's not entertainment. It's a *visitation*. Each member of the Godhead is present and they are the Ones who are speaking. They are drawing near to us in preaching. In fact, the true Preacher of the Word of God is God Himself.

The Father preaches to us. **2 Corinthians 5:20** "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, *God making his appeal through us.*"

The Son preaches to us. **Ephesians 2:17** "And he [Christ] came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near."

The Spirit preaches to us. **1 Corinthians 2:4** "...my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power."

Beloved God is in our midst when the Word is preached. Preaching is sweet communion with God. That's why Paul compares preaching to the creation of the world itself (**2 Corinthians 4:6**). Because through God shines His Divine and Supernatural light through it so that we can see the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Preaching achieves the greatest miracle³¹ on

³⁰ "If the preacher is light without heat, the preacher will fill the heads of the hearers but will neither reach their hearts nor save their souls. If heat without light, full of misdirected zeal, the preacher will stoke the corrupt passions of the people. The preacher needed both light and heat, and to this end was to study the Scriptures with diligence and spend much time in prayer seeking God. There was no obligation on God to bless the means, so the preacher must pray that God would work by His Spirit. Sermons might be a fitting means, but awakening was a diving work. Only God could fill the hearers' hearts with divine light so they could recognize the reality of God's word in Scripture." Edwards Encyclopedia, pg. 458

³¹ How can the Word achieve this? Because it has an invincible efficacy. See Petrus Van Mastricht, *Theoretical-Practical Theology, Vol. 1: Prolegomena*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: Reformation Heritage Books, 2018), pg. 130

earth.³² It doesn't *merely* make converts, it creates worshippers. It is bringing Heaven down to Earth. It is bringing Christ down to His Church.

4. Hortatory Use

So then what is Paul exhorting us to in this passage. Simply this: that we would believe what preaching is: communion with God. And that we would be what preaching accomplishes: the greatest miracle on earth, making worshippers of God. What follows if we believe that this is what preaching is? **First** we will not be children like the Corinthians and trade it for lesser things. **Secondly** we will pray for it. Paul said "...pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ" (**Colossians 4:3**). **Third**, we will invite others to come. We have found the Messiah, we have found forgiveness of sins, we have found eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord. How could we not invite others to taste and see that the Lord is good? **Fourth**, we will help support it financially. Investing in the Word is the greatest investment anyone could ever make. **Fifthly**, we will never miss the preaching of the Word except under some necessity. Beloved God is here. Every Lord's Day God visits us. How could we ever miss this?

³² I think this is why Jesus said in John 14:12 "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father." Instrumentally the Apostles played a part in conversion through their preaching. Conversion is a great miracle than even rising someone physically from the dead.