

- 5 Now I might wish that all of you could speak in foreign languages.⁵ But I much prefer you to be persuasive preachers.⁶ He who preaches persuasively renders a more useful service than he who speaks in foreign languages -- unless, of course, the latter interprets (what he says), so that the church may receive benefit.⁷
- 6 Now, brothers, if I come to you and speak in foreign languages, what good can I do you unless my words convey some meaning either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by clear preaching, or by teaching?
- 7 It is the same with inanimate things, such as the flute or the harp -- if they do not make a distinction in the notes, how can the melody be recognized?
- 8 Again, if a military trumpet does not sound a clear signal, who will prepare himself for battle?
- 9 So it is with you -- unless you speak clearly, how will anyone know what you say? Actually, you will be speaking into the air.
- 10 There are, we may say, many different kinds of speech in the world, and none is without meaning.
- 11 If, however, I do not know the significance of the language (being spoken), I am a stranger to the speaker and the speaker is a stranger to me.
- 12 So with you, since you are eager for spiritual manifestations, strive especially for excellence in edifying the church.
- 13 This is why anyone who speaks in a foreign language should pray that he may interpret (what he says to his hearers).
- 14 If I pray in a foreign language, my spirit prays but my understanding produces no fruit (for the benefit of others).⁸
- 15 What is the inference of what I have been saying? I will pray with the spirit but I will also pray so as to be understood (by my listeners). I will sing with the spirit but I will also sing so as to be understood (by my listeners).⁹
- 16 Otherwise suppose you are giving thanks (to God) in spirit (only), how can the person who is not conversant (with the language you use) say Amen to your thanksgiving if he does not understand what you are talking about?
- 17 indeed you give thanks in a manner edifying to yourself, but the other person receives no benefit (unless he understands what you say).
- 18 I thank God that I might speak in foreign languages more than all of you.¹⁰
- 19 Nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words which are understood, in order that I might instruct others, than (to speak) ten thousand words in a foreign language.¹¹
- 20 Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be babes where malice is concerned, but in your thinking be mature.
- 21 in the Law it stands written, "By men of foreign languages and through the lips of strangers I will speak to this people, and not even then will they listen to me, says the Lord."¹²
- 22 This shows that foreign languages are a sign not to those who believe but to those who do not believe, whereas the clear presentation of God's word is intended not for unbelievers but for believers.
- 23 consequently, if the entire church meets together in one place, and all speak in foreign languages, and uninformed persons or unbelievers come in, will they not say you are crazy?