

Tongues . . .

Bringing Forth Fruits

Did you know you can cut short the time it takes for you to develop in the love of God? It's entirely possible. You can bypass all the ineffective, natural avenues people use to make themselves more loving. Instead, you can go after the love of God with the kind of tenacity that never gives up, even when it hurts! That's what the apostle Paul is talking about in First Corinthians 12:31 when he says, **But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.**

Paul goes on to say in First Corinthians 13:1, **Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity [love], I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.** What he is saying here is that a person can have the capacity to speak in tongues and yet still be a divider, a hater, or an envious person who causes a lot of trouble. What Paul is NOT saying is that a person who establishes a strong prayer life of edification by consistently praying in tongues could REMAIN a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal!

You see, when you consistently pray in tongues for your personal edification [Jude 20], God will purge the old brass out of you and give you gold. He will show you a more excellent and much quicker way to develop in love.

Now, it is admittedly very difficult to die to the world in order to walk in this kind of love. I've certainly learned that in my own personal experience. There have been times when people I associated with in ministry turned against me, often criticizing me despite the fact that I had helped them and had always been there for them when they were in need.

At times it seemed like my decision not to defend myself against the criticism of others was stripping me of my manhood. But that's all right – I'm never going to stop pursuing love. My roots are growing big and deep, so you can imagine what the full-grown tree will look like! I'm determined that when I go home to be with the Lord, a whole lot of large, healthy fruit will be hanging off a bunch of large, healthy limbs!

That should be your goal as well. Sure, it is difficult to allow your flesh to die. It's never easy to let the other person rant and rave and leave in a fury while you keep your mouth shut. Each time you choose to do the right thing, a death process goes into operation. But NOTHING is stronger than the power of love when it is operated according to the Spirit of God and His Word.

So the more excellent way referred to in First Corinthians 12:31 is to go after the love of God with the same tenacity you go after the gifts of the Spirit. You are supposed to pursue the manifestation of God's love in your life as much and as hard as you would go after anything else God has provided for you.

According to the apostle Paul, that is what qualifies you to partake of the meat of the Word. Those who can only bear the milk of the Word are those who choose to remain carnal, envious, and full of strife (1 Cor. 3:1-3).

As I fall more and more in love with the Lord, it becomes increasingly clear to me that we have to reach a certain place in God's love before we can even walk in His peace. If we hold on to something in our lives that has the capacity to hurt others, peace is still a long way from us. We may admire others' speeches on peace, but that's as close as we'll get to experiencing the peace Jesus gives. Whatever it is in us that hurts people will keep us from living in the peace of God.

This is especially true regarding our families. Our families are not supposed to be the "catch-all" for our bad days. The love of God cannot pour through our families to the world as long as we remain carnal and full of strife, stuck on the milk of the Word.

On the other hand, a "meat-eater"— someone who covets the things of God with earnest fervency – allows no place in his life for envy, strife, or division. No matter what other people are doing around him, he just won't be a part of such things. When someone walks over to him with a juicy bit of gossip, he will just say he doesn't want to hear it.

In Ephesians 4, Paul talks about what it takes to qualify for the meat of the Word. First, in Ephesians 4:7, it says, **But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.** The grace Paul is talking about is our individual callings. Each of us has a different calling according to the grace that has been given us.

Paul says something similar in Romans 12:6: **Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us....** Right before that, he also says, **For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith (v. 3).**

Paul is saying, "You didn't call yourself, nor did you place yourself in a particular position within the Body of Christ – GOD did. Therefore, why should you think of yourself more highly than you think of others?" This goes along with Ephesians 4:7, which says, **But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ** – in other words, according to the measure, or the position, God is calling us to fill in the Body of Christ.

Paul continues in Ephesians 4:8-10: **Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)**

Paul wants us to understand that the same Jesus who ascended to Heaven first suffered death and then descended to the lower parts of the earth. He did so in order to lead captivity captive and equip us with these gifts by grace. We did not pay for them. We did not earn them. We received them in the measure for which we were called.

Believe God when He says you are called to fill your measure. The measure of faith was sent for you to fulfill YOUR call, not mine. That is why you alone get judged for it. First, the Lord gave you the grace for your call; then He gave you the measure of faith to fulfill it. You may fall short, but it's not because He didn't give you everything you needed to succeed.

Now look at what Ephesians 4:11 says: **And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.** Notice that Paul lists all five ministry gifts. In First Corinthians 12, he lists them again, along with the three other operations of God: **And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.**

This list in First Corinthians 12 includes all eight operations that make up the structure of God's government and include everyone in the Body of Christ. The list begins with the office of the mighty apostle, followed by the prophet and teacher. However, it also encompasses the offices of pastor and evangelist within "miracles, then gifts of healings," since these two gifts of the Spirit are the main ones that empower and qualify the pastoral and evangelistic offices. Miracles and the gifts of healing also provide the entry level into the fivefold ministry offices because all five offices should be equipped with these spiritual gifts.

Ephesians 4:12 tells us the reason God gave all these gifts: **For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.**

It is significant that Paul lists these as three separate purposes. When we look at Ephesians 4:11 and First Corinthians 12:29 together, we discover why he did that.

First of all, we see that God gave the first five operations – the fivefold ministry offices – **FOR THE PERFECTING OF THE SAINTS.** Those in the fivefold ministry are supposed to supply the Body of Christ with the revelation knowledge they receive from the Lord. They are to minister the Word of God to bring the saints from spiritual milk to strong meat. In this way, the saints can mature until their transformation is complete.

Next, First Corinthians 12:29 lists the operations of helps and governments. And what do these two operations do in the Body of Christ? They fulfill the second purpose listed in Ephesians 4:12: **THEY DO THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY.**

Finally, the eighth operation – diversities of tongues – is listed. The most important manifestation of the diversities of tongues is the direct operation of the Holy Spirit within the believer's spirit to edify himself. That is the purpose that this one operation fulfills: It is given **FOR THE EDIFICATION OF THE SAINTS.**

Jesus gave all these gifts to the Body of Christ so we could become spiritual "meat-eaters" – people who don't divide, who don't envy, who don't engage in bitterness and strife. That's why He gave these gifts ... **till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ (v. 13).**

Ephesians 4:14-16 goes on to say: **That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the**

measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

By what is the whole Body of Christ fitly joined and compacted together? By that which every joint supplies according to the effective working of every calling according to its measure. This results in an increase of the Body for the edifying of itself in love.

So let God search your heart and prepare you for the more excellent way. Covet love, forgiveness, and peace with the same fervency and tenacity you covet the thought of God using you to raise the dead. When someone is criticizing or fighting with you and your flesh just wants to "put their lights out," choose love instead. The more you choose to walk in God's love, the more you strip the enemy of his power to dominate you!

What are you really fighting for when you choose to walk in the love of God? You are contending for a high level of operation within the measure of your part in the Body of Christ. You are fighting for the increase of that measure so you can come into the fullness of your calling in obedience to the Head.

Knowing this truth makes it a little easier to die to self and pursue love, doesn't it? It helps to know you are fighting for an increase of your measure in the Body. With every decision you make to walk in love, you bring increase to the Body for the edifying of itself in love!

So, when someone says something ugly to you and you know you could say eight different things to retaliate, stop for a moment and let the anointing of the Holy Spirit clear your head and quiet your heart. I know it's hard to hold your tongue, but you can do it. He will help you.

Let the Lord take that soul of yours and submit it to His work of edification as you faithfully pray in other tongues. Let Him help you see people in a new light when they do things to hurt or offend. Thank Him continually for the more excellent way, and never stop coveting earnestly a life that is lived according to His love.

There is a way for you to walk in the love of God, but it is only by His strength. You can draw on that divine strength, but you have to pursue His more excellent way. Choose to forgive others of every offense. Ask the Lord to help make you willing to be mortified through the power of the Holy Spirit. Then get ready to experience the pleasure of walking in a whole new level of supernatural peace!

Your co-laborer,
Dave Roberson