

TO THE CHRISTIANS IN CORINTH

Speak in strange languages? Can they all explain these languages in plain words? No, of course not.

⁸¹ And yet, it is right for us to desire the higher gifts. Now I will tell you the highest gift of all. It is love.

13 Suppose I speak in all the languages of men and of angels. If I have no love I am no more than a loud gong or a sounding cymbal.

² Suppose I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all secrets and possess all knowledge. Suppose I have enough faith to move mountains. If I have no love, I am good for nothing.

³ If I give away all I have to the poor, and even if I give my body to be burned, but have no love, it does me no good.

⁴ Love is patient. Love is kind. Love does not envy; love does not boast, it is not vain. ⁵ Love does not look down upon others; it is never rude. It does not insist upon having its own will. It does not get angry at little things; it does not nurse hurt feelings. ⁶ Love is not glad when others go wrong. It is glad when they do right. ⁷ Love stands true through every trouble, believes the best always, always hopes for the best, is always patient.

⁸ Love is the gift which never ends. The gift of prophecy will end. The gift of speaking in strange languages will end, knowledge will end. ⁹ Because we know only a little of the truth, and we prophesy only a little of the truth. ¹⁰ When we have perfect knowledge this small knowledge of ours will pass away. ¹¹ When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. Now I am a man and have stopped acting like a child.

¹² As yet we cannot see the real world. We see only dark shapes of things as in a mirror. But in the next life we shall see everything clearly, face to face. Now I know only a little part, but then I shall understand it all, just as Christ now understands all about me.

¹³ Faith, hope, and love, these three last for ever. But the greatest of them all is love.

14 Aim first to have such love. Then, if you desire the other gifts of the Spirit, seek especially to preach. But do not try to speak in a strange language. ² When any one speaks in strange languages, he does little to save other men, for he speaks not to men but to God. And no one understands the secrets he is telling except the Spirit of God. ³ But the man who preaches speaks words that build men up. He makes them strong, and gives them comfort. ⁴ The man who speaks strange languages builds himself up. The man who preaches builds the church up. ⁵ While I hope you will be able to speak in strange languages, I am more eager for you to preach. He who preaches is of greater use than he who speaks a strange language, unless some one explains it in plain words, so that the church may be built up.

⁶ Brothers, if I come and speak to you in strange languages, do I help you? No, I do not help you unless I reveal some truth, or teach some knowledge, or preach.

⁷ Unless clear notes are played on a flute or on a harp, will any one know what tune is played? ⁸ If the soldier who blows the horn does not sound a clear call to arms, who will prepare for battle? ⁹ It is the same with you if you speak in a strange language. Your words mean nothing to others. And if nobody knows what you have said, you are speaking into empty air. ¹⁰ There are many languages in the world. All of them have a meaning to somebody. ¹¹ But if I do not understand the language which another man is speaking, I shall regard him as a stranger from a foreign land, and he will think the same of me.

¹² So this is what I tell you. If you are eager for gifts of the Spirit you should desire most those gifts which will build up the church. ¹³ If any one speaks in a strange language, let him pray that his words may be explained. ¹⁴ If I pray in a strange language, my spirit prays, but my mind helps nobody.

¹⁵ What then am I to do? When I pray, I will pray with both my spirit and my mind. And when I sing praises, I will sing in words the people can understand. ¹⁶ If you praise God with your spirit in words which nobody understands, how can an ordinary

man say "Amen" to your praise? ¹⁷ You may give a beautiful prayer of thanks but you do not build the other man up. ¹⁸ I can speak strange languages more than any of you, and I thank God for this gift. ¹⁹ Yet in a church meeting, I would rather speak five plain words that would teach something to others than ten thousand words in a strange language.

²⁰ Brothers, do not be like children in your thinking. Be babies as far as evil is concerned, but in your thinking, be grown-up men. ²¹ In our law, it is written:

"I will speak to My people by the lips of strangers
in a foreign language,
but My people will not listen to Me," says the
Lord.

²² Strange languages may act as a sign to win over those who do not yet believe. But they never do anything to build up those who have faith. Preaching, on the other hand, aims to help those who believe rather than those who do not believe. ²³ Especially I warn you, never let people speak strange languages all at one time in your meetings. Some one from outside who does not believe, might enter, and he would think you were all mad.

²⁴ But if he comes in when you are preaching, he may feel condemned for his sins. He may be called to account through your words. ²⁵ The secrets in his heart may be laid bare. He may fall on his face and worship God, and declare that God is indeed with you.

²⁶ Here then is a good rule, brothers, when you hold meetings. One of you may sing a song of praise, another teach a lesson. Another may reveal the truth that God gave him. Another may speak in a strange language, and another may explain its meaning. Whatever you do in the service, always aim to build up the members of the church.

²⁷ If some of you want to speak in strange languages, do not allow more than two or at the most three to do so. Have each one speak in turn, and let some one explain it in plain words.

²⁸ If there is no one to explain it, tell them to keep silence in the church and speak their strange language within themselves to God.

²⁹ If some of you are inspired to preach, let two or three speak while the rest weigh what is said. ³⁰ If a person who is seated feels moved to tell what is revealed to him, the man who was preaching should stop. ³¹ You should all have a chance to speak and then every one will learn and be encouraged. ³² Those who are inspired to preach must keep their desire under control. ³³ God desires good order and peace in the church.

³⁴ As for the women, it is the custom in all the churches for them to keep quiet in church. They are not allowed to speak. The law says that women should be under the rule of the men, and we follow that law. ³⁵ If they wish to ask about anything they should ask their husbands at home. We do not consider it proper for a woman to speak in church. ³⁶ Do any of you object to this custom? Well, I ask you, was it from Corinth that the word of God first came? Or are you the only people who heard it?

³⁷ If any man says he is filled with the Spirit, and if he thinks he is a prophet, he shall agree that what I have just written is the Lord's command. ³⁸ If he does not follow this custom, he should not be recognized.

³⁹ So my brothers, I say again that you should especially desire to preach. But if any one has an urge to speak in a strange language, allow him to do so. ⁴⁰ But do everything properly and in good order.

15 I want you to remember, brothers, the Good News which I preached to you. You received it. You now stand on it. ² And by it you are being saved, if you hold fast to it—unless you do not know what you really believe.

³ So I will tell you the most important truth which I received and passed on to you. It is this: Christ died for our sins as our Holy Writings said He would. ⁴ He was buried and was raised