

The Master Teacher

1 Cor 14:1-19

I. INTRODUCTION.

- A. Daniel Webster said, "If we work on marble it will perish. If we work on brass, time will efface it. If we rear temples, they will crumble to dust. But if we work on men's immortal minds, if we imbue them with high principles, with just fear of God and love of their fellow-men, we engrave on those tablets something which time cannot efface, and which will brighten and brighten to all eternity."
- B. The work of teaching Scripture is so very important.
1. Those who teach truth touch eternity.
 2. My favorite quote about church work comes from Dennis Jones, president of Heritage Christian University. When I was in school, Brother Jones would come to chapel, stand up, and say, "Fellas, we are changing the population of heaven!"
- C. That is the work those who teach do on a weekly basis. Whether we are teaching adults or children, whether we do so publicly or in a home, we are impacting lives and changing the population of heaven.
- D. Worship services in the first century church seem to have allowed more individuals to teach & impact lives than services generally do today.
1. The Spirit would give those Christians revelations to be passed on in the assembly: "When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation" (1 Cor 14:26).
 2. The context of miraculous gifts demands that we see each of these teaching tools—hymns, lessons, revelations, tongues, and interpretations—being given miraculously by the Spirit.
 - a. But, there was a serious problem in the way the brethren at Corinth were using their miraculous gifts.
 - b. In the first place, some were bragging about the superiority of the gift God had given them & causing the others to feel inferior.
 - c. Not only were some feeling superior to others, but those with miraculous gifts were all speaking at once.
 - "If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret" (14:27).
 - "Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged" (14:29-31).
 - It was almost like an episode of *The Jerry Springer Show* where all the guests were trying to talk over one another.
 3. To combat both extremes, Paul has spoken of the superiority of love.
 - a. Love, for example, isn't going to boast that my gift is better than yours and cause you to feel inferior.
 - b. Love also isn't going to cause me to feel that I have to speak over you and make sure that I get the floor and you don't.
 4. Paul also combats those two extremes in the text we're studying this morning.
 - a. He does so by showing the purpose of tongues and of prophecy.
 - b. The purpose of prophecy is instruction, teaching.
 - This morning, we want to examine the purpose of prophecy to see how we might be a "Master Teacher."
 - You might be thinking, "Sounds great for a teacher training worship, Justin, but I don't teach, so there's nothing here for me."
 - I don't buy that for a second.
 - There's not a one of us who doesn't teach & teach with our mouths. We may not teach publicly, but we all teach. Those of us who are parents teach our children, those of you who are

grandparents teach your grandchildren, and there are others of you who may speak truth to co-workers, neighbors, and friends.

E. Let's examine this passage this morning so that we might teach in whatever station the Lord has placed us.

II. CONSTRUCT, vv 1-5.

A. Paul tells the Corinthians to desire earnestly the spiritual gifts.

1. The word translated "earnestly desire" in the ESV & simply "desire" in the KJV is the word from which we get our term "zeal." The idea of "zeal" is quite closely tied up in this word—it means that you really, really want something.
2. Why would Paul write to the Corinthians and tell them to desire earnestly these gifts when these gifts had caused so many problems in Corinth?
 - a. It all has to do with the purpose of gifts: "The one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation" (v 3).
 - b. The Corinthians weren't to desire these gifts to make themselves look good but to help the entire body.
 - How do we use the gifts we've been given? Granted, we do not have miraculous gifts as the Corinthians had, but do we appropriately use the talents God has bestowed on us?
 - Do we teach because we like the authority or so that we can help others come to know Jesus more fully?
 - Do we clean the building so that others will see how hard we work or so that we can assist our brothers and sisters?
 - Do we use our talents—whatever those talents are—for our self-aggrandizement or for the building up of the body of Christ?
 - God expects us to use our gifts for his purpose, not our own.
 - Speaking of our knowing the truth, Jesus says, "Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more" (Lk 12:48).
 - In the Parable of the Talents, Jesus tells of a landowner who gave his servants talents.
 - When the landowner returned home, he called the servants before him to give an account.
 - The servants came before him and delivered the talents back to their master—those talents, as Jesus makes clear in the Parable, did not belong to the servants to do with as they pleased, but they were to use them for the advantage of their owner.
 - Likewise, our spiritual talents. Are we using our talents for the good of the body?

B. The one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation, v. 3.

1. The term for "upbuilding" literally means "construction."
 - a. It is often used of the act of construction, and it is even more frequently used of the finished product, i.e., a building.
 - b. Thus, in the figurative sense, it refers to building people toward maturity.
 - c. Helping people reach maturity is so very important.
 - The Lord Jesus established offices in the church to lead his body to maturity: "He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Eph 4:11-12).
 - Two of the offices Christ gave—apostles and prophets—are no longer available today and were to help the infant church reach mature manhood.
 - Two of the offices Christ gave—evangelists and teaching-shepherds—still exist in the church and assist Christians of any age in reaching maturity.
 - As we teach—whether publicly, in our home, or in answer a question from a co-worker—we are helping others reach maturity. Do we regularly help others reach spiritual maturity?
2. The term for "encouragement" could also be rendered "exhortation" (KJV).

- a. When applied to a person, this term refers to a mediator, an intercessor, and it occasionally refers to an attorney who would argue cases before a court on another's behalf.
 - b. The concept is aid, assistance, or help.
 - Prophecy was to help the hearers as they strove to please God.
 - The author of Hebrews applies this word to his entire book: "I appeal to you, brothers, bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly" (Heb 13:22).
 - The Hebrew Christians were being greatly tempted to turn back from the Gospel & embrace Judaism once again.
 - Thus, the Spirit guided the author to write Hebrew to help them as they strove to do what's right. The Book was to help them remain Christians rather than lapsing back into Judaism. The author is helping these Christians do what's right.
 - As we teach, therefore, we are encouraging others to do what's right. Are we encouraging others to do the right thing with the words of God?
3. The term for "consolation" or "comfort" (KJV) refers to encouragement.
- a. It's not an exact synonym for the previous word, however.
 - The idea in the previous term is assistance or help, with an eye toward helping someone do the right thing.
 - The idea in this term is to provide solace or comfort.
 - The specific word under consideration occurs only here in the NT.
 - The verb form of the word occurs only twice in the NT, but both times are in John 11 in the same context.
 - Notice John 11:19, for example: "Many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother."
 - The term carries the idea of helping someone with his or her grief, to console, or to provide comfort.
 - b. Are there not many times we seek words from God for comfort?
 - Whether it be with the death of a loved one, or guilt from sin, or great disappointment in life, we all need comfort.
 - As we speak the words of God, we are able to provide such comfort. Are we comforting the hurting with the words of God?

III. COMPREHEND, vv. 6-12.

- A. For Paul, this whole issue of tongues in the assembly centers on intelligibility.
1. If someone came and spoke in tongues in the assembly without someone to interpret for him, the church could not be exhorted, encouraged, or consoled, for they would not understand what was said.
 2. To make his point, Paul uses two illustrations:
 - a. Musical instruments must make distinguishable notes so one can make out the melody. If you're listening to the radio & the guitar or piano or whatever does not change notes, how are you going to understand the melody?
 - b. Bugles give distinct notes so that soldiers can prepare for battle. If soldiers cannot differentiate between the battle cry and the call to mess, how effective are they going to be?
 3. If you cannot understand the language, Paul says, you might as well be in a foreign country.
 - a. I know that many of you have traveled abroad and most of the time in large cities, at least, we can find people who can speak English. But, if you can't find someone to speak English, you're going to be hurting.
 - b. About thirteen years ago, I spent two weeks in Tirana, Albania on a mission trip.
 - On the Sunday before I left, I was privileged to preach in the assembly.
 - Because there were many in the assembly who did not speak English, I had a translator.
 - I would say a sentence in English and he would then translate what I had just said into Albanian.

- As I opened by sermon, I made a fatal mistake.
 - I was talking about those who opposed Christianity with everything they have.
 - I began by saying that when I was young, my brothers & I fought “like cats and dogs.” He didn’t understand that idiom, he paused, and I had to rework my opening. The entire sermon went downhill from there.
- Why? Because we spoke two different languages, used different expressions, and had a hard time communicating.

B. What’s the point of all this?

1. People need to understand what we’re saying as we teach.
2. Spiritual understanding is so important.
 - a. “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth” (Jer 9:23-24). If we do not speak understandably, how will anyone ever come to understand and know the Lord?
 - b. “This is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent” (Jn 17:3). If those who hear us do not understand us, how can they know the only true God, Jesus Christ whom he has sent, and how shall they ever have eternal life?
3. We must teach understandably.
 - a. We need to begin where people are. With the woman at the well, Jesus began talking about water—which the woman had come to get—and he moved from there to eternal life.
 - b. We also need to speak in terms that are comprehensible. Look at the Parables—Jesus taught great, eternal truths through them, but he did so using images the people of his day understood well.
- C. A young preacher with great concern and sincerity ended his sermon like this: “And now, my friends, if you do not believe these truths, there may be for you grave eschatological consequences.”
 - a. One of the elders went up to him after his sermon and said, “Did you mean that they would be in danger of hell?”
 - “Why, yes,” the preacher said.
 - The elder said, “Then why in the world didn’t you say so?”
 - b. Let us make sure that we aren’t out to impress others with our knowledge but to impress them with the Gospel of Jesus!

IV. CLARIFY, vv 13-19.

- A. The one who speaks in a tongue should pray for the power to interpret.
 1. This isn’t just for the task of building others up as Paul as argued throughout the passage.
 2. Notice what else Paul says, “If I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful.”
 - a. Apparently, in first century worship, speaking in tongues often occurred in the context of prayer.
 - Notice what Paul says at v 2: “One who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God.”
 - This seems to have been a manner in which God received the praise & adoration he so rightly deserves. In Revelation John saw around the throne 24 elders who constantly proclaim: “Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created” (Rv 4:11).
 - b. Also, the worshiper certainly seems to have had no idea what he was saying. Paul says, “My spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful.”
 - We understand that the OT prophets did not understand their predictions of the Spirit was making through them (1 Pt 1:10-12).
 - It seems that something quite similar was taking place in the tongue-speaking of the first century church: the Spirit was coming upon men & they were speaking in tongues without the slightest clue what they were saying.
- B. What should one do?
 1. One should pray for the power to interpret, 13. Why?

2. Paul says, "I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also" (v 15).
 - a. It wasn't enough simply to be filled miraculously with the Spirit and to utter words to God. Paul says that the mind needs to be involved.
 - b. The Greek term for "mind" is used just as we use the English term "mind."
 - The term refers to the center of thinking. The clearest example is in Lk 24:45. After the Resurrection, Jesus appears to the disciples and Luke records: "He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures."
 - Praying or singing with our minds means that we understand what we sing & what we pray.
3. Do we understand what we say and do during worship?
 - a. When we pray, do we mean and know what we say, or do we simply rattle off a bunch of "good-sounding" phrases?
 - b. When we sing, do we know what's being taught through the song?
 - c. As we give, are we giving because we have been fully persuaded in our minds we're doing the right thing, or do we give because "you're supposed to give"?
 - d. As we take the Lord's Supper, does our mind go back to Golgotha with the full realization the horror there is on account of our sin?
 - e. As we study from Scripture, does our mind concentrate on what's being said or on what's for lunch?
 - f. How engaged is our mind in worship?
- C. Do you need to engage your mind in obedience this morning?