

# GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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## PRAYING WITH THE SPIRIT AND UNDERSTANDING

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**P**Aul writes, “*What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will praying with the understanding also...*” (I Corinthians 14:15).

What is the distinction between the “spirit” and “understanding” which should characterize our prayers in the assembly? Some would answer by saying that praying with the spirit involves praying with fervency while at the same time understanding what one is saying in his prayer. This same distinction would apply also in their thinking concerning “*I will sing with the spirit and with the understanding also.*”. We will have “spirited” singing while “understanding” the meaning of the words we are singing.

The context helps us determine the meaning of words and phrases. A closer examination of the context of I Corinthians 14:15 helps us see that it is not “my understanding” that is being emphasized in the phrase “with the understanding”, but the understanding of those who are listening to me in prayer. This point is clearly made in Paul’s next statement:

*“Else if thou bless with the spirit, how shall he that filleth the place of the unlearned say the amen at the giving of thanks, seeing he knoweth not what thou sayest? For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified” I Corinthians 14:16).*

Edification demanded that one understand what was being prayed. Paul in I Corinthians 14, is teaching the saints to properly use their miraculous spiritual gifts. In verse 14 he writes, “*For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.*”. Apparently, when one prayed in a tongue, he, in his spirit, understood what he was saying. But if one listening in the assembly did not know the meaning of the words in the language being spoken, the person’s “understanding” would be “unfruitful”. The effort in prayer was unfruitful because, without the other person knowing what you are saying, edification did not take place in the other person.

Edifying not only ourselves, but the other person is the goal of assembling together. According to Paul, edification runs through the different avenues of

“exhortation” and “consolation” on one hand, to convicting “reproof” on the other (v.3, 24). The “giving of thanks” in “prayer” serves also as a channel for edification.

While we live today when the miraculous spiritual gifts have fulfilled their purpose in revealing and confirming the message of the gospel (cf. I Corinthians 13:9. Mark 16:20), we can still make some application from I Corinthians 14:15.

First, We must make sure that our prayers in our assemblies emphasize the “giving of thanks”. Many times we are asking God to do something for us in prayer, which is scriptural (Matthew 7:7-11). However, we must make sure we also publicly “thank” Him for the blessings He has given us.

Second, while speaking in a language all understand, we must make sure we are heard in our public prayers. If we do not speak up into the microphone so others can hear, how can one say “amen” at the giving of thanks, “seeing he knoweth not what thou sayest?”