

Further texts and discussion

The thrust of Paul's argument about speaking in tongues is that the way the Corinthians were behaving was only to the benefit of the individual (14:4). Paul doesn't tell the Corinthians to stop what they are doing but says someone should interpret the speech so that the whole group will be encouraged (v. 13).

14:13 *Therefore, one who speaks in a tongue should pray for the power to interpret. 14 For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unproductive. 15 What should I do then? I will pray with the spirit, but I will pray with the mind also; I will sing praise with the spirit, but I will sing praise with the mind also. 16 Otherwise, if you say a blessing with the spirit, how can anyone in the position of an outsider say the "Amen" to your thanksgiving, since the outsider does not know what you are saying? 17 For you may give thanks well enough, but the other person is not built up. 18 I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you; 19 nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind, in order to instruct others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.*

Questions

- ▶ How might your character respond if they are made to feel like an outsider because of the way other characters are worshipping?
- ▶ What might the consequences be of not being built up, as an individual and as a group?

Paul sees a second issue with the Corinthians' practice. Uninterpreted tongues would confuse actual outsiders who come across the community. Paul cites the prophet Isaiah to argue that the gift of prophesy is more valuable than tongues since it can lead to unbelievers repenting.

14:23 *If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your mind? 24 But if all prophesy, an unbeliever or outsider who enters is reprovved by all and called to account by all. 25 After the secrets of the unbeliever's heart are disclosed, that person will bow down before God and worship him, declaring, "God is really among you."*

Questions

- ▶ How visible would a group of Christ-worshippers be if they were meeting in the bar space? How does this compare with their visibility in the other Pompeian spaces?
- ▶ Who might be the outsiders that Paul mentions? Consider both your character's social or familial networks and the location of the meeting place
- ▶ What kinds of reputation would Christian groups get from the nature of the early Christian meetings? Would it cause problems for your character if they were seen to be participating?
- ▶ How would your character feel about other people seeing what was going on?
- ▶ How would Paul's concern for outsiders affect your character's view of orderly worship, as raised by Paul in 14:26–32?

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