

# The God who speaks (English)

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[ 0 : 00 ] I have spoken on 1 Corinthians 14 in the past and tried to deal with some of the controversial issues. We can maybe think about afterwards.

But if we understand the main point that Paul is making, then perhaps we needn't get so uptight about some of the things that people argue about and which seem even a bit confusing. And my original title for this talk was The God Who Speaks. But then I thought, well, perhaps that's slightly missing the point, actually. So I've changed it, as you can say, to The God Who Speaks English.

Well, not only English, of course. I mean, in Holland, God speaks Dutch. And in Corinth, he spoke Greek. But the point is that he speaks in a language that we understand.

Or if he doesn't, as we shall see shortly, it's very bad news. So I put a quote there. It's actually from one of my favorite poems. Lewis Carroll's poem, The Hunting of the Snark.

[ 1 : 23 ] And this particular stanza occurs when they disembark from their ship. They've arrived on the coast where the snark is to be found.

And this is the night before the hunt. And the baker recounts the warning he was given by his uncle that while the common snark is perfectly harmless, you have to beware of the snark which is called a boojum.

Because if you meet a boojum, you will softly and silently vanish away. And the bellman, who is the leader of the expedition, then says, well, why have you just mentioned this now while the snark is at hand?

Couldn't you have told us before we set off? And this is, well, this is the baker's reply. He said, I've never been guilty of deceit. But then he says, I said it in Hebrew.

I said it in Dutch. I said it in German and Greek. But I wholly forgot, and it vexes me much, that English is what you speak. So the point is, of course, that they weren't able to benefit from the baker's warning because he didn't say it in a language they understand.

[ 2 : 42 ] And that is precisely, I'll suggest to you, what Paul is getting at here. Is this going to work or not? It doesn't look like it. Oh, there we go.

So we need to put this in context a bit, this passage, because we've been, you know, for a month or so. So I wanted to remind you what was in the previous two chapters.

Chapter 12 is when he starts talking about spiritual gifts and the manifestation of the Spirit. And I pointed out that he could have used various words there.

He does talk about gifts of the Spirit. But manifestation, of course, means making visible. And he also talks about the church as the body of Christ in chapter 12.

And then in 1 Corinthians 13, we have that digression that we looked at last time when he realized he's going to go on and talk about spiritual gifts some more. But he realizes there's something he needs to say first.

[ 4 : 02 ] Because he says, any number of spiritual gifts are not going to do you any good at all if you don't have love, if they're not exercised in love for the people of God.

And he said, he gives various illustrations. He says that you could speak with the tongues of men and angels and you'd be making a lot of noise, but you wouldn't be making any music.

And he says you could be a spiritual superstar. You could have faith to move mountains. Or you could be a theological genius. Which really seemed to be a somebody.

But God says, if you don't have love, then as far as I'm concerned, you're nobody. And then he says, you could invest everything. You could give away all your money to the poor and even invest your body itself as a martyr.

But if you do that without love, then there's no profit in it. You get no credit in the bank of heaven for doing those things if you do it without love.

[ 5 : 03 ] In fact, he says in chapter 13, verse 11, it's just meaningless. It's childish. You need to grow up. And you may have noticed he returns to that theme in 1 Corinthians 14 again.

So it's that context that he's going on to talk about what actually happens in the church. And now it's clear here, I think, that he's talking specifically when they meet for, as we might be doing this evening, for what we might call a worship service.

Though Phil always said he didn't think that was quite the best term for it. But when we meet to study the word of God and together, obviously when we meet around a social meal, we might do different things.

We might organize it differently. But I think it's clear from what he says that he's talking when the church comes together to meet with God and to learn from God is what he's talking about.

And so I've got six points here, but you'll be glad to know some of them are quite short. I'd like to get to grips with his argument, as I say, by taking an overview of it rather than going through verse by verse.

[ 6 : 13 ] And I'd like to do it in those points. So let me just say what the main points are and then we'll expand each of those one at a time. So first of all, that God is made visible in the church.

Secondly, that in 1 Corinthians 14, at least, the emphasis is on God speaking. And then he talks about what happens when God is not understood.

And it turns out this is very bad news. And then he points out that God always speaks in an orderly way. There's not a sort of divine madness that you might find in pagan ecstatic religions, but rather that God speaks in a way that is orderly and peaceful.

And then finally, I'd like to make the point that instruction is at the heart of Paul's argument. So as we go through, you can see if I'm honest to the word and as it says to do there, weigh you carefully what is said and see if what I'm bringing to you is really the word of God.

So first of all, God is made visible in his church. I've already quoted from 1 Corinthians 12 where he says, Now to each one, the manifestation of the spirit is given for the common good.

[ 7 : 37 ] That's 1 Corinthians 12 verse 7. So, like I said, manifestation means making visible. As Jesus said, you can't see the spirit, you can only see its effect.

But in the church, the spirit is made visible in his gifts to the church. And in chapter 12 verse 27, he says, you are the body of Christ and each one of you is a part of it.

So, no longer have Christ with us, as Nick McQuaker said a couple of weeks ago at the ministry training course, I can't book Jesus to come and speak because he's not physically with us.

But, he is with us in the church as the body assembles. And then, in this chapter, in 1 Corinthians 14 verse 25, he says, as an unbeliever comes in, the secrets of his heart will be laid bare so he will fall down and worship God explaining, God is really among you.

So, notice that in the church, the church in a sense is there to make the invisible God visible and in a thoroughly Trinitarian way.

[ 8 : 50 ] So, the spirit is visible, made visible in the gifts. The body of Christ makes Christ visible to anybody who comes in. And, he says, God, people will say that God is with you.

The word of God, the word of the Father will be seen to be amongst us. So, it's a thoroughly Trinitarian way in which the church is to make God visible.

Now, of course, by doing that, the church can be, God can be made visible in a variety of ways and some of them are mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12 in gifts of healing and administration and there, of course, there are various other activities which are exercised in love and which make the love of God visible to the world around.

But, at the centre are the gifts of proclaiming and teaching the word. He's already said this in 1 Corinthians 12 that the primary gifts are the gifts of apostle and prophet and teacher, those were gifts that those are proclaiming and teaching the world because, after all, everything else follows from these.

If we don't know what God has to say to us, we won't know what else we're supposed to do, won't we? So, the other things that the church legitimately does, social work and all the other things that the church does, follow from the central nature of the word and so he says in 1 Corinthians 14 12, so it is with you since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church.

[10:36] We could almost paraphrase that and say try to excel in gifts that make God more visible in the church. So, God is visible in the church, that was the first point.

Now, when we come to 1 Corinthians 14, the emphasis is mainly on God's speaking and I think for the reason that I've just mentioned that everything else follows from the word.

The Greek word *lalia* to speak occurs no less than 19 times in this chapter and the word *prophetai* to prophesy occurs another four times.

So, that's 23 times altogether. Almost every verse contains some reference to sound or communication. And so, Paul is very keen that what the churches are saying should really be what God says.

It's not something the Corinthians have invented. It's not something they have a special hotline to God about as they seem to be implying by their behavior. He says in verse 36, did the word of God originate with you?

[11:50] Are you the only people it has reached? Of course not. They don't have a special hotline to God although they do have the spirit amongst them. And he says it's necessary to check that what is being spoken is really the word of God.

So, in verse 29, he says two or three prophets should speak and others should weigh carefully what is said. Actually, the word translated weigh here is not very accurately translated in the NIV.

The word is actually *diachrino* which means to judge or to discriminate. They are to separate what is really God's word from that which is bogus.

Now, in one sense actually we're better off than the Corinthians because now we have all the apostolic doctrine recorded for us in the scripture. Then they didn't. It's quite an early letter one, Corinthians, and much of the scripture hadn't been written down but then.

So they only had the word of the apostles' doctrine as it had been delivered to them probably largely verbally. So it was even more necessary to make sure that what was being spoken really was the word of God.

[13:03] God, but now we have the scripture to help us do that discrimination but we're still supposed to do it. You should all be thinking as I speak to you, is what I am saying really the word of God, really what God has to say or am I somehow distorting the word or making it mean something other than it really does because it's important that because God speaks in the church that his voice is heard clearly.

So that was the second point I had. And this perhaps now slightly touches on some of the more controversial points in this chapter but when God is not understood this is very bad news.

Now Paul doesn't well sorry we'll get to that in a minute. Now what Paul says here on tongue speaking is rather fascinating. The Corinthians obviously thought that speaking in some mystical language was evidence of a special anointing by God.

That's obviously the sort of view they would infer that from the context. And what does Paul say we would have expected depending on where we were coming from we would have hoped that either Paul would say yeah this is absolutely right.

Tongue speaking is a special blessing of God. Or we would have hoped he might have said no this has nothing to do with the Holy Spirit at all it's just meaningless babble. But he doesn't actually say either of those things.

[14:49] In fact in verse 5 he says I would like every one of you to speak in tongues but I would rather have you prophesy. When the Holy Spirit came on the apostles at Pentecost in Acts 2 they did speak in tongues but of course the point there was they spoke in languages that were understood by those who were listening.

But it seems understood. Now again we might have liked him to say well if they're not in a language it's understood.

It's not a true blessing of the Spirit. But he doesn't actually say that either. He says that you're speaking to God but only uttering mysteries with your spirit.

Nobody else understands and indeed later he points out that even the speaker doesn't understand.

He may be being edified in spirit but not in his mind. So he makes the point again so it is with you unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue how will anyone know what you're saying?

You will just be speaking into the air undoubtedly there are all sorts of languages in the world yet none of them is without meaning. If I do not grasp the meaning of what someone is saying I'm a foreigner to the speaker and he is a foreigner to me.

[16:30] The King James version I think says I'm a barbarian to the speaker and he's a barbarian to me. Perhaps that's over translating I think that's what the original Greek word meant but it does probably really just mean a foreigner but the point is that we don't speak the same language and so we don't share the same culture we don't share the same values we don't understand each other and if God speaks in a language we don't understand we are well it's bad news.

So what are we to make in this? Paul doesn't say these speaking even in a language we don't understand is he doesn't say this is not a gift of the spirit sorry about the double negative I think I have to put it that way he does say in fact that it is a gift of the spirit but he says it's there's a problem with it.

So what are we to make in this? If you speak in a mystical tongue you're speaking to God with your spirit not your mind and at best you're edifying yourself and this point is positively belabored says it four times in verse 2 verse 14 verse 16 and verse 28 if you'd like to look he makes the same point four times.

Now this can be a good thing in itself he does say that in verse 18 I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you so he's not saying it's not a good thing but he says it should be restricted to your private devotions that's clearly what he's saying here.

If this is practiced in the church it actually becomes something and I think that's what we need to look at briefly here.

[18:16] Perhaps he had in mind the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11. If you remember that story we won't look at it in detail but God prevented the building of the tower by confusing the language of the builders so they could no longer communicate with each other.

And whether it's meant to be taken literally or just as a sort of parable the idea is that the people were sundered they could no longer share a common culture because they no longer shared a common language.

But he doesn't actually quote from Genesis 11 he said he quotes some Isaiah 28 verse 11 and 12. That's the quotation in verse 21 of chapter 14 and I think it is worth actually looking at this passage in a bit more detail.

I've got it here I'll read it out to you. If you want to look it up it's Isaiah 28 but I'll read it out to you. Starting from in fact from verse 7. It's a prophecy against Ephraim of Isaiah and it says priests and prophets stagger from beer and are befuddled with wine.

They reel from beer they stagger when seeing visions they stumble when rendering decisions. All the tables are covered with vomit there's not a spot without filth.

[19:34] Who is he trying to teach? He being here presumably Isaiah himself. To whom is he explaining his message? To children weaned from milk to those just taken from the breast for it's do and do do and do rule on rule rule on rule a little here a little there.

Very well then with foreign lips and strange tongues God will speak to this people. To whom he said this is the resting place let the weary rest and this is the place of repose but they would not listen.

So then the word of the Lord to them will become do and do, do and do, rule on rule, rule on rule, a little here a little there. So they will go and fall backwards, be injured and snared and captured.

The people of God in Isaiah's time were scathing about the clear word of God. It almost seems to have been too clear to them. It's just stuff for babies they're saying. A lot of pointless rules.

We want to hear something new and exciting. I said that my word is a place of rest. You didn't want to hear that.

[20:50] Okay, you want something new and exciting? I'll do that. I told you in your own language to rest in my word but so I'll do that. It will be one that you don't understand.

One you'll certainly not understand then it will really sound like baby talk, double dutch, goody gook. The drunken prophets will be called the hearers to fall over.

That's what he says isn't it? The prophets are drunk but they that hear will go and fall backwards.

So perhaps, well, so there's obviously there's heavy irony here that Isaiah is using but I think there's something more to it as well.

He says with those of, what's he say, with foreign lips and strange tongues God will speak to this people.

So there's a bit more than just the irony there isn't he? He's saying actually the true word of God has moved on elsewhere. So that sounds very familiar.

[ 22 : 01 ] So perhaps my title actually is wrong. Perhaps God no longer speaks English or German. Places where in past times his word was received with joy.

but now it isn't. Perhaps now God speaks Mandarin or Korean or Gese but not English at all. But still at least amongst us we're still speaking English and the word has not entirely disappeared from amongst us.

But if God speaks language we don't understand we really should be worried Isaiah said it's a sign that you rejected God's word.

And I think that's what Paul's saying here. The phraseology perhaps is a little bit confusing. But I think because he uses the word unbelievers but I'd suggest to you in verses 22 to 25 he's actually using the word unbelievers in two different ways here.

He says tongues then are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers. That's verse 22. And I would suggest that what he's saying there is in fact there can be a sign if the word comes to the church and the church doesn't understand it then that can be a very warning sign that God is about to move on elsewhere.

[ 23 : 37 ] That there is a sign that you know you've rejected the clear word of God so God's going to talk to you in a language you don't understand. I suggest that's what he means when he says tongues are a sign for unbelievers.

If tongue speaking is practiced in the church and nobody understands, nobody interprets then what is being said in fact is that the word of God is being rejected and God is speaking to you in a language that you don't understand.

That may be a rather radical view but I suggest that that is what Isaiah is saying and it's Isaiah that Paul is quoting from here. So at least if God speaks in a language we don't understand we should be very worried.

It's a sign for those who refuse to believe and they will come in and think that we're mad. Which leads us to the next point.

that when God speaks in grace he speaks in an orderly way and not in a form of divine madness.

[ 24 : 54 ] It looks as though in verse 26 that Paul is kind of changing the subject here but actually I don't think he is really I think he's just pointing out that there are other ways of making God's word inaudible.

You can make it inaudible by speaking in a language that nobody understands whether it's Latin or some tongue of angels but you can also make it inaudible and even simpler method as if everybody talks at once.

That's pretty much what he's saying in verses 26 onwards. He says in verse 30 only one person should speak at any time. There's this bit that puzzles people about women not speaking in the churches.

I'm not sure we can be entirely sure what he's meant here but I point out that earlier he has said that women should prophesy as long as they have their heads covered and pray in the churches so I don't think he can mean that.

I'd suggest actually the clue is in the next verse where it says they want to inquire about something and they should ask their own husbands at home.

[ 26 : 00 ] Well why do they have to wait till they go home to ask their own husbands? Presumably because they're not sitting next to them. I think the meaning is probably that perhaps the churches were adopting the Jewish practice of the men and women sitting separately and what was happening here was that the women were having their own discussion group while the rest of the church was or the men of the church were involved in listening to the prophets.

I would suggest that's probably what is meant here. I mean there may be a bit more to it than that but interpreting this with what other things Paul has said about women speaking I mean he does say that they shouldn't have teach with the authority I think of a prophet but then he says they can prophesy so actually it is a bit confusing but I think at least here what he's saying is that we don't want everybody talking at once because if we do that people really will think we're mad it's characteristic of the insane that they live in their own private self obsessed world isn't it the world makes sense to themselves but to no one else people who are mentally ill you know think they're Napoleon or whatever it makes sense to them it just doesn't make sense to anybody else and if everybody's inhabiting their own private spiritual world and all talking at the same time then there is that self obsession really of madness and so we shouldn't give anyone the unbeliever who comes in

a real excuse for saying that we're mad and if we're all talking at once like a lunatic asylum if I can not the politically correct term of course but perhaps it makes the point they were places the old lunatic asylums were places of chaos and confusion people will think it's a lunatic asylum they've come into they'll think we're mad we should not give the unbeliever any excuse for that in fact when the unbeliever comes in and

I think in this case in verses 24 and 25 he's talking about an inquirer somebody who's interested in finding out what this new religion is all about an unbeliever comes in he will be convinced by all that he's a sinner and judged by all and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare because the message will be addressed to the church as a whole but to him and he will see that God is there and the next point I'd like to make is that when God speaks in grace he makes himself understood he says the people should consider what is said I've already mentioned the prophets had to determine whether the word spoken was truly God's word and if so what should they do about it and I've mentioned in one sense we have it easier because we have the scripture recorded for us but we still need to consider the world what is

God saying to us now in this time and place how do we need to respond to this message that might require consideration and I'd like just briefly if I may again you can talk turn to this if you like turn to Acts 21 in Acts 21 we read of Acts 21 verses 10 to 15 so if you'd rather listen it's only a short passage it says after we had been there so that we is Luke presumably as the person writing but clearly Paul and the other companions who had traveled and were on their way back to Jerusalem and they had arrived in Caesarea so on the borders of Israel but right up in the north after we'd been there a number of days a prophet named

Agabus came down from Judea coming over to us he took Paul's belt tied his own hands and feet with it and said the Holy Spirit says in this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles when we heard this we and the people there pleaded with Paul not to go up to Jerusalem then Paul answered why are you weeping and breaking my heart I am ready not only to be bound but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus when he would not be dissuaded we gave up and said the Lord's will be done after this we got ready and went up to Jerusalem this is fascinating Agabus by the way as far as I know the only prophet who is mentioned explicitly by name in Acts he's mentioned twice once here and once for predicting a famine he was perhaps almost if you like the leading prophet among the churches in

[ 31 : 29 ] Judea Paul doesn't dispute Agabus' prophecy Paul's companions took this as a warning to avoid Jerusalem indeed it's probable that even Agabus meant it that way because otherwise why did he bother to make the journey up to Caesarea and it tells us he made a special journey to go and intercept Paul before he got into Judea why did he bother to do that presumably because he wanted to warn Paul that if he went to Jerusalem this was what was going to happen now Paul doesn't dispute Agabus' prophecy but he does argue with its interpretation he says it's not a warning well it is a warning but this is not the Lord's will yes you're telling me that when I go to Jerusalem I will be bound and if necessary I'll die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus actually he didn't he probably died in Rome but since that's appropriate where else would a prophet die but in Jerusalem but since Paul was a prophet to the Gentiles perhaps died in

Rome instead but he was willing to die in Jerusalem and certainly he would be in prison there and after that time would no longer really be free so Paul and the other his companions had to discuss it it's clear they did discuss it and they had to say yes okay but what is God saying to us what is it that God really wants us to do and in the end they came to the conclusion that yes Paul was to go to Jerusalem he's been warned beforehand what would happen there but the Lord's will was that he should go to Jerusalem they needed to consider it they didn't dispute the prophecy but they needed to consider what it meant they needed to think what is God saying to us at this time and in this place and as the word is preached here two thousand or so years later several thousand miles away from Caesarea but we need to have to submit to the will of

God here as God speaks to us now in a tongue that we do understand and Chris was reminding us this morning that we need to have the word spoken by a human I think that's right you know it's not good enough just to get it off the internet or to listen to recordings or even just to read the Bible ourselves we do need to have the word of God proclaimed because this is the way it was always done and God puts people there for that purpose the word of God should be proclaimed by a human and part of the reason for that is so that it is heard and understood part of the job of the preacher is to explain it and the concern that God's word should be both heard and understood runs

all this through this chapter like a stick of Brighton rock wherever you cut it you find it's there I'll just we probably haven't got time to look at them all in detail we certainly haven't got time to look at them all in detail but let me just see if you want to flick through with me I'll just read out the verse numbers verse 2 verse 3 verse 5 verse 6 verse 7 8 9 10 11 you can miss out verse 12 but then in verse 13 verse 16 19 21 23 24 28 29 31 36 37 and 39

Paul just belabours the point that God's word should be understood it should be listened to it should be heard and it should be understood so just like to make one more point I'm not going to you will have realised talk about the issue of what exactly prophecy is we could discuss that afterwards but I don't think we'll discuss it publicly because we have got a communion and there's probably not time but it is worth discussing whether what I'm doing now is prophecy or whether it means something else is something that is worth thinking about but there is certainly a change as I've said because now we do have the apostolic doctrine recorded in the scripture scripture is closed as it says at the end of revelation nothing should be added to it I think Christians always taken the view that it doesn't just mean the book of revelation is closed but the scripture is closed with the book of revelation so certainly the job of the prophet is different the job of the prophet was always to expound the law and prediction was always a lesser point of it really but now we're in a different situation but I'm not going to stand up here and say that perhaps God never gives a new revelation but if he does it should be subject to the word of God and should be tested by the word of God and shouldn't be considered as the equivalent of scripture I think I'll certainly go that far sometimes God does speak to people in a way that is directly relevant to the situation they're in and I think we should consider that maybe we could consider that prophecy but it's not perhaps quite the same I mean well let's not get too deep into it but clear at least that God's word should be declared faithfully and explained and understood and that's the final point I'd like to make but there are a variety of word gifts even if we say the word gifts are at the centre of the manifestation of the Holy Spirit then actually there are different aspects of that in this chapter Paul mentions strengthening and encouragement in verse 3 it talks in verse about hymns doesn't he I've lost the place yeah anyone has a hymn verse 26 bring a hymn I don't know whether it means they've written a hymn or they just come along and say let's sing this hymn but either way it's a word gift and it's a gift of encouragement and there are at least in the Corinthian church gifts of revelation and interpretation so there are even a variety of different modes of word gifts but at the heart of them

Paul makes the point is instruction and you can see this just by that one verse verse 19 in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue he's clearly saying what is the most important thing we'll do other things we will say other things but the most important thing is instruction in the word of God and in the later epistles Paul actually puts even more emphasis on this so in in 2 Timothy for instance one that was one of the last that wrote he says this 2 Timothy 4 verses 2 to 3 preach the word be prepared in season and out of season correct rebuke and encourage with great patience and careful instruction instruction at the center again for the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine instead to suit their own desires they'll gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear or in Titus again also a very late letter he says he that is the preacher or teacher must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it so he is to encourage he is to argue to refute but he is to do that by means of sound doctrine sound teaching and yet don't we live in an age where sound doctrine is despised it's despised in the world really it's despised you know we don't people don't really talk about political theory anymore or policies they talk about spin it's not so much what you say is the way that you say it and it's despised among often so much even among Christians we've heard it said haven't we it's not the word kills we shouldn't be worried about teaching the word should be worried about other things well that's not Paul's view I'm afraid and it's not Jesus's view either who his primary thing most important thing he did thing that he clearly regarded as most important was teaching and then of course the outcome of his ministry and going to the cross but as far as he was behaving as a prophet the most important thing was teaching he did other things as well of course but it was teaching that was the heart of his message this actually I would suggest to you this is lethal to the church when the church loses sight of the centrality of God's word then it's a slow death that's what Isaiah was saying wasn't it he's saying you know it will become just meaningless words baby talk fairy tales and in the end you'll fall over and Paul's saying the same thing you'll just descend into a kind of madness if you don't have sound instruction among you or you'll listen to people who say things that you want to hear where on earth does this

prosperity gospel come from certainly not

[ 42 : 45 ] from the scripture I may have said this before but I think I'll repeat it now there was a church that Miriam went to up in Coventry when she was a student it was a very charismatic church and yet I have to say that when I went there there was turn that one off right you probably need to turn me up a bit yeah when I went there they did have some Bible study but the teaching wasn't really central and yet when with depression when she was a long time when she was in Coventry they were actually quite helpful to her so they supported her and were quite friendly and home church in Coventry then she moved down to London and a few years later she did say she went to St Helens and she learned more there in three months than she had in I think three years something like that she said wasn't it in Coventry but but she did still think of this as you know the church that had helped her in in Coventry and a few years later she went up there again to meet with some meet with friends and sort of renew contacts there and she was horrified one person who'd helped her a great deal announced that he was gay and more or less disappeared didn't know what happened to him and the church as a whole had been taken in by some I think Jamaican prosperity gospel preacher they'd done exactly what Paul predicted they'd found a teacher who spoke a message that they liked but it wasn't the message of Jesus Christ and that's what happens whether quickly or slowly it's what happened in the downgrade controversy we were hearing about when we heard about Spurgeon the church moved away from the Word of God and tried to focus on something else whether it was social action or philosophy or whatever it was and in that case it wasn't a quick coup de grace it was a slow and lingering death and we're even seeing the last of it now 150 whatever it is years later the slow death of liberal Christianity as it just churches where the average age is 60 odd and there is no Word of God there and yet they won't go back to this to see what had gone wrong whenever we reject the Word of God in the church and the result is a slow death and

I do fear for those churches that seem to have want to push the Word of God at least out from the centre and they may still teach it up to a point but it gets shouldered out as it was in Corinthians by things that seem more spectacular seem more even seem more spiritual in a sense but then and let us keep the Word central so that God does still speak English at least amongst us here you you you you