20 Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature. 21 In the Law it is written, “By people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners will I speak to this people, and even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord.” 22 Thus tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is a sign not for unbelievers but for believers. 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 minds? 24 But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, 25 the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you.  
 Paul continues the conversation by encouraging the brethren to not be childish in their thinking. This is a reflection back onto chapter 13, where Paul reflected on at one time thinking like a child but as he grew into a man he put childish ways behind him. Here it is focused more on the idea of pattern of living. The Corinthians are being childish in their spirituality in two ways.  
 The first is the assumption that they have already attained spiritual perfection in this life. This assumption was discussed early in the letter and criticized by Paul, and will be criticized in the coming chapter. The truth is the kingdom has not been fully consummated yet, and we see through a mirror dimly.  
 The second is the assumption that as they gather they should be promoting themselves. In this way they are seeking the spiritual gifts not for the purpose of the congregation, but for the purpose of being seen. This is a childish way of thinking. The purpose for utilizing ones gifts while gathering isn’t for others to boast in them, but God.  
 Thus the encouragement continues to be infants, be newborns, in evil, but in thinking be mature. It is, again, a reminder that we are not called to let go of our minds, but we are called to be a reasonable people who proclaim the truth and seek to understand and know more about our God and His ways and how we can best be obedient in this life. If we do sin, let it be accidental without realizing we are sinning or without planning to sin.  
 Paul then makes a quotation from the Law. This could be interesting in the sense that he is quoting from Isaiah, but for the early Christians the Law included the actual Law, the Prophets, and the writings. As such to claim it comes from the Law is to emphasize the importance of the whole Old Testament.  
 At this point he makes a quotation which is not an exact quotation from Isaiah 28:11-12. I say not exact because he does not quote it entirely, and there is some difference between his Greek quotation and the Septuagint. Some might be bothered by this, but it ultimately changes nothing when it comes to the text itself and the emphasis for both Paul and Isaiah in context.  
 For in Isaiah 28 the criticism is against those who would claim to be prophets and people of God. Instead of actually following God they chose to follow other gods and other beliefs. Thus, the judgment would come against them which would be invasion from a foreign land. This judgment would be meant for them to recognize that they were foolish in trusting in other gods, but instead of heeding the warning, instead of recognizing their sin, they would not listen to God.  
 Now comes one of the most complicated moments in I Corinthians. What does Paul then mean with verse 22 where he says tongues are a sign not for believers but unbelievers? It seems probable that Paul is recognizing that in Isaiah and in the past God used other nations as a sign to the Jews for their unfaithfulness. As such, when Paul says here that tongues are a sign not for believers but unbelievers, he may be reflecting on the fact that in the past that the unbelievers were the ones judged by God for the unfaithfulness and as such experienced foreign nations.  
 Thus the unbelievers were not to be understood as the foreigners invading, but the unbelievers are those in the nation who *should* be believing but aren’t. Isaiah doesn’t make this proclamation to the faithful believers in Israel and Judah, but the unfaithful unbelievers in Israel and Judah. It is a sign for the community that God is not for them but against them. While there would be faithful believers who experienced the hardships because of the unfaithful, the proclamation is not against them though they may feel the effects being in the same community.  
 Speaking prophetically, however, is a sign of belief. Those who are in the midst of the prophets do not experience the judgment of not being able to understand, but instead will be given the truth of God and will be able to learn and seek greater faithfulness to God.   
 In light of all these things, we come to verse 23. If the whole congregation speaks in tongues, and outsiders enter, the only conclusion they will have is that the congregation is out of its mind. There would be nothing communicated, nothing shared. It would be as though an outsider came in and everyone was speaking a different language to each other not able to understand one another. This is not a the basis for a strong community, and instead shows an absurdity amongst each other.  
 Contrast this with prophecy. If all were prophesying, if all were able to communicate the truth, then what would happen to that same individual, that same outsider? They would more likely be convicted because through the prophetic message of the Gospel comes conviction. It comes the reality of who we are in Christ and who we are as outsiders of Christ.  
 Once such an individual does experience the truth being laid bare, then the response will be that of Isaiah, to fall on their face in worshipping God Almighty. The conclusion would not be you are out of your minds, but that God is really among you. Clearly the contrast is significant, if only the Corinthians would stop and think about what Paul is communicating, and perhaps if we would as well.  
  
Main Point: The main point of these verses are to conclude a long argument about corporate worship. The Corinthains have focused greatly on what we could call ultra spirituality. This has led to a childish way of behaving where the focus is on themselves, their own personal experience when gathering, their own esteem and being seen, rather than seeking to bless one another. If the purpose of gathering is for the individual, then the logical conclusion is what Paul describes, a group coming together and speaking in tongues. This, however, is not the purpose of gathering but instead should be to be faithful to God by blessing one another. As such even the outsider who enters will conclude that the congregation is out of its mind if they all speak in tongues, for nothing is being communicated one to another, but if all were to prophesy, then even the outsider would fall on their face in worship to God for God is with such a people.  
  
Application Points  
1). Surely God is with Us: When it comes to congregational worship many people have it backwards. What I mean is, oftentimes we think that by coming on Sunday we will be able to receive all that we need spiritually. Indeed, we think that coming to Church is meant to be an experience for us personally, where we can grow, and where the focus should be on what we want.  
 Unfortunately, this individualistic view is far from what the gatherings of the New Testament show. Instead, they show a time of corporate learning, of being educated, and of being able to practice our spiritual gifts together, not for the sake of the individual, but for the sake of the community. It shows an emptying of oneself for others in the same way Christ emptied Himself for us.  
 Some might think that is rather exhausting. Indeed, who would want to be part of something like that? We are busy enough, and now I am telling you when we gather the focus should be on each other rather than on our own personal benefit first and foremost. Sounds like work. Sounds like not focusing on having ones cup filled, but on emptying ones cup for each other. It should radically different then the idea of personal fulfillment which is often associated with congregational worship today.  
 Perhaps, that is why many times we feel so alien to our own congregations. Perhaps the reason why we feel alien is because everyone is so focused on themselves when we gather that no one is focused on each other. In this few are actually being uplifted, and few are feeling connection with one another during gathering times because when we focus so greatly on ourselves and our own desires, wants, and needs, it’s hard to notice the other person right next to us.  
 Now I do want to be cautious about our language here. Indeed, in context Paul does not say anything negative about personal spirituality or the spiritual gift of tongues in and of itself. Instead, he is focused on the abuse, on the selfishness, that people have when it comes to this particular gift in public worship. He does not say speaking in tongues have no value for the personal believer in their personal devotion, instead he is entirely focused on the community experience and the necessity for the community to be built up.  
 If everyone speaks in tongues, however, no one is being built up. If we are all being selfish in our understanding then no one is being built up. Instead, all are seeking their own personal desires and in this the congregation fails. Instead, the goal should be to encourage one another to be faithful together, and showing true faith in Christ.  
 What do I mean true faith in Christ? Well, Christ repeated the same mantra as Paul, and showed it at the cost of His life. By focusing on the other, on the will of God His Father and seeking His pleasure, Jesus emptied Himself of life itself. What was the result of this emptying? Did it lead to Jesus being forever in darkness? Did it lead to Him lacking, in the end? Did it lead to Him wanting more?  
 No, it led to Him receiving everything. If we have trust in Christ, put our faith in Christ, then we would seek to live in accordance with Christ, trusting that as we empty ourselves for one another for the glory of God, we will find fulfillment. That it won’t be found in us being childish, wanting and only thinking of ourselves, but instead by looking around and seeking to be emptied for one another. It is the reverse that we find what we need.  
 This way of understanding changes our perspective from one like a child into maturity. We all know our children. We all have experienced them. What are some things they never need to learn? The word “no.” The word “mine.” To take what they want when they want it. To seek to gratify themselves above all. It requires us to gain knowledge, to mature in our thinking, in order for us to break free from the childish perspective we have in our brokenness.  
 This is why Christ is so important. He breaks the brokenness within ourselves and shows us the way. He, through His life, death, and resurrection puts to shame the wisdom of the world which at times whispers to us, and at times yells at us, to be more selfish, to think of yourself more. He shows us what happens when we let go of such ways. The more we live according to Christ and His ways, the more we will bless those around us, and then in turn be blessed, not because we are seeking self, but because God will be among us.  
 This leads us to think of the way Paul utilizes Isaiah to make his point. In Isaiah the speaking of foreign tongues is a sign for the unbelievers, it is for those to see that God is not with them but against them. If in unfaithfulness it leads to this for the community, God coming against them, then isn’t it the wiser choice to seek to be faithful to God instead? If our options are to have God for us or against us, then why would we not seek God in our midst? If faithfulness leads to this then faithfulness is the only good option.  
 Indeed, what is the purpose of our gatherings? It can often be the case that our purpose is to make ourselves more known. To look good to everyone on the outside. I think by having this kind of understanding it has led to many congregations giving themselves over to the world and the culture. Because if we seek to dress to impress and gain attention for ourselves, then we will do whatever we can in order to make ourselves look good.  
 Yet, is this the purpose? Is this what we should be seeking? We’ve discussed the issue of our individualism, but this individualism can become corporate. How can we make the Church look good? How can we make the congregation look good? By watering down the Gospel? By not teaching the hard truths? By making Christianity nothing more than easy peazy lemon squeezy?  
 But, what if our focus and our attention was not on the outside world? What if our goal was not to be seen as making ourselves look good? What if the purpose we gather together is for us to encounter God? For God to be among us? What if we don’t seek our own esteem, but seek God Himself? This should be the primary focus of our gatherings, and this can be accomplished by simply being faithful to what the Lord has commanded us to be.  
 It requires us to be forced into a maturity both individualistically and corporately. It requires us to gain more and more knowledge, doing the hard work of asking ourselves what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ, what it means to bear our cross, what it means to love Jesus above all else. To continue to learn about this God and His desires for us so we can seek to be the most faithful we can be, knowing that by seeking faithfulness to God as individuals and as a congregation will mean God will be among us, and we can know this not because of the emotionalism, or being ultra spiritual, but simply because God Himself has promised to be with the faithful and we place our faith and trust in Him and His Word and because we trust Him we seek to be faithful in whatever season we find ourselves in.  
 Throughout this chapter, and even previously in the letter, Paul has emphasized this point. There is nothing more for us to say then let us seek to be faithful in all things. Let us seek to be faithful knowing that as we remain faithful to our calls that God will be here with us. When we seek Him above all, that is when God will be among us, and when people will experience the truth and fall on their faces saying, surely God is with you.  
 Let this be our purpose, let this be our goal, and let us not be content with anything other than God with us. Let us not be deceived into thinking that we are the end all be all, but that God in our midst is, rejoicing in faithfulness, rejoicing in goodness, rejoicing in each other as we seek God with us as individuals and together as we gather.  
 Let us be a thoughtful people, recognizing our need for change, our need to set aside our childish ways, and seeking to honor God as mature people who seek Him in all things. Praise God for what He has accomplished through Jesus. Praise God that His Spirit can dwell among us. Praise God that we can seek, and we can find, the greatest of blessings which is God Himself.