

## An Uncertain Sound

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by Greg Gwin

### **“For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare for battle?” (1 Corinthians 14:8)**

In this context the apostle Paul was addressing the use of spiritual gifts in the first century church. The illustration is an obvious one: in a battlefield situation, the trumpeter must give clear signals so that the soldiers will know whether to advance or retreat. In regards to spiritual gifts, Paul was making the case that speaking in tongues (one of the miraculous gifts given by the Holy Spirit) would not be beneficial if there was no interpreter (another gift) to explain the message.

While we no longer have the miraculous gifts Paul was discussing, the principle of his illustration has important applications to many pertinent matters. We are concerned that uncertain sounds are emanating from many brethren. Just as the apostle explained, people will not be properly advised, and their correct reaction to spiritual dangers will be lacking. For example:

### **Social Drinking**

Too often we hear brethren who express a disconcerting lack of conviction against all alcoholic consumption. They typically express it this way: “I don’t drink, but I’m not sure we can say that it is absolutely wrong to do so.” These folks need to realize that their unclear warning will be taken by the weak and the young as a full license to drink alcohol. Good and positive arguments against social drinking are available. Use them, and warn the people!

### **Dancing**

A preacher was reported to have preached a sermon about dancing, and at the conclusion he stated that everyone would just have to make up their own mind if it was sinful or not. You guessed it — all the young people rushed off to the prom. You see, his “*uncertain sound*” left them unprepared to make a right judgment — in fact it empowered them to make exactly the wrong decision!

### **Immodest Dress**

Again, we hear too many of our brethren expressing doubts about standards of modesty. They will be heard to say things like, “I don’t think you can draw any absolute lines.” They mean, of course, that no one can say for sure if this is too short, too tight, too low cut, etc. The implication is that everyone must just figure it out for themselves. We deny it! The Scriptures give clear teaching on what parts of the body must be covered to avoid “*nakedness*” — and modesty would keep one far away from those limits. Teach this, and help folks — especially young folks — know how to dress and act as God desires.

We need clear and plain teaching and preaching. We do not need to hear uncertain sounds coming from our pulpits and Bible classes. To put it bluntly, if you don’t know or can’t be sure, please keep your doubts and reservations to yourself! On the spiritual battlefield we need to hear clear and certain sounds. Think!

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