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Heresy Happens!

Truth Matters!

## Why We No Longer Speak With Other Tongues

While I was a student at U of M through the influence of some friends I went to a series of meetings called "Life In the Spirit" seminars hosted by the Word of God Community. At the end of the 6 weeks two brother laid hands on me and I began to speak in a *language* that was not my own, nor did it seem to originate from my conscious mind. I had received the **subsequent baptism** in/of the Holy Spirit.

From that point on my prayer life took a dramatic change. I began to spend hours each day praying *in the spirit*. Over the years I estimate that I spent 90% of my time praying in other tongues. Praying in a way that (1) I did not understand what I was praying, (2) that I had no way of knowing if my prayers were being answered.

I was taught that while I prayed in the spirit my mind was **unfruitful**, and we were told this was a **good** thing. Over the years I spent at least 5,000 hours in "prayer" with my mind in neutral, not knowing what I was saying, not really knowing my prayers were being answered. . .but somehow I was being edified *mystically* by this practice.

I was taught that whenever we had questions . . . pray in tongues

I was taught that praying in tongues was the gateway to the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit (Kenneth Hagin)

I was taught that I was waging spiritual warfare by praying in a *warfare* tongue (Roberts Lairdon)

I was taught praying in tongues was intimate communion with the Lord spirit-to-Spirit

However, after actually sitting down and studying the **Bible** and looking into the whole issue of other tongues I came to some very astounding conclusion! ***What I thought I had as an enablement from the Holy Spirit was nothing more than a self-deception.*** I never had a real language, nor did any of the 1000's I have heard speak in tongues, nor the almost 1,000 I laid hands on for the "gift" receive a real language.

The following article was donated to ICCDM from Cornerstone PCA's web site and this brother has broken down the issue in a very understandable way. I hope it is a blessing. If you are still "speaking" in other tongues I urge you to read the texts, and be open to a new realm of true intimacy with our Lord by talking to Him in a way you understand!

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## A Biblical Analysis of the Gift of Tongues, Part 2

### Acts 2:12

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On the day of Pentecost after the gift of the Holy Spirit was received, the disciples spoke in tongues and we read of the crowd's response in Acts 2:12.

Acts 2:12, "And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying

one to another, What meaneth this?"

This is a question that has been both asked and answered in a variety of ways in our day. Charles Fox Parham, the founder and President of Bethel College in Topeka, Kansas, believed that the gift of tongues was the gift of evangelism -- such that missionaries wouldn't have to take time for normal language study, but could enter directly into the mission field.[1] Robert Morris, a leader in the charismatic movement, believes the gift of tongues is the gift of praise.

"For me... the gift of tongues turned out to be the gift of praise. As I used the unknown language which God had given me I felt rising in me the love, the awe, the adoration pure and uncontingent, that I had not been able to achieve in thought-out prayer." [2]

Pastor Bill Williams of San Jose, California, believes the gift of tongues is the gift of communion.

"It involves you with someone you're deeply in love with and devoted to. . . . We don't understand the verbiage, but we know we're in communication." [3]

For these and other reasons, many today believe that the gift of tongues is relevant and *needed* in the church today. Yet, what is the purpose of the gift of tongues? This is the very same question that was asked in Acts 2. Is the gift of tongues and evangelistic tool? Is the gift a means of private communion with God? Or is tongues a gift of praise? Or is it something totally different than these things?

While we could go to a variety of sources to either confirm or deny these suppositions, **there is no safer and authoritative ground on which to stand than to address this question from Scripture.** And when we do this, we are brought to Paul's treatment of this gift in 1 Corinthians 14 where he **specifically** addresses the purpose of the gift of tongues.

The believers at Corinth strongly desired the showy and spectacular when it came to spiritual gifts.[4] And so they desired the gift of tongues as the chief of all gifts from God. Paul's response was two-fold: First he shows the Corinthians that if they are going to seek anything from God as believers, they should seek to love as He loves.[5] Second, he dethrones the gift of tongues showing that of all spiritual gifts given to the church, the most important gift is prophecy, not tongues.[6] [7]

Now in his comparison of tongues and prophecy, Paul argues according to the following in 1 Corinthians 14:1-19:

1. Paul demonstrates the **inferiority** of tongues.
2. Paul demonstrates that tongues do not edify.(8)
3. Paul demonstrates that by itself, the gift of tongues is unintelligible to the listener.(9)
4. Paul outlines the **purpose** of tongues and prophecy.(10)
5. Paul details the procedure for the exercise of tongues and other such gifts of the Spirit.(11)

And so, if we are going to understand the purpose of the genuine gift of tongues, the passage to which we must go is Paul's treatment of it in 1 Corinthians 14:20-25. Now when we examine this text we conclude that the purpose of the gift of tongues, first of all, is the proclamation of judgment.

### **The Purpose of Tongues, a Proclamation of God's Judgment, 1 Corinthians 14:20**

1 Corinthians 14:20 – 22, "Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men. In the law it is written, With *men of other tongues and other lips* will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord. Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying *serveth* not for them that believe not, but for them which believe."

To understand the purpose of tongues as outlined in this passage, let us walk our way through this text point by point. First of all, tongues are a sign. (verse 22) "Wherefore tongues are for a sign. . ." And what is a *sign*? In the Bible the word *sign* means a declaration of something. For example, circumcision was the declaration of the covenant in the Old Testament. In Romans 4:11 it was a declaration of a person's union with God. The rainbow serves as a declaration of God's grace in time of judgment. And so, according to 1 Corinthians 14:22, tongues are a declaration of some truth.

Secondly, tongues are a sign to unbelievers. "Not to them that believe, but to them that believe not. . . ." Unlike prophecy which declares the blessing of God as it is a gift given to edify the body of Christ, tongues declare a message from God to unbelievers. Now the question that must be asked is this: What is it that tongues, as a sign, declare to unbelievers? The answer to this is found in Paul's quotation 1 Corinthians 14:21-22 (NAS): "In the Law it is written, 'By men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers I will speak to this people, and even so they will not listen to Me,' says the Lord. *SO THEN* [based upon the truth quoted in Isaiah] tongues are for a sign. . . ."

To understand the purpose of tongues as stated in 1 Corinthians.14:22, we must understand what Paul means by his quotation in 1 Corinthians 14:21. [12] To do that, let's examine Isaiah 28 for a moment.

The context of Isaiah 28 is a passage written to the rebellious people of Judah. Verses seven and eight describe the scene: the covenantal heads of God's people – who should have been a source of blessing and encouragement – have become a curse because they value pleasure more than God.

Isaiah 28:7 -8, "But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble *in* judgment. For all tables are full of vomit *and* filthiness, *so that there is no place clean.*"

The picture presented here is one of filth and disgust. God had taken a people from the nations and made them His special people. And yet, these people time and time again rebelled. In fact, the rebellion got so bad that drunkenness was pervasive among God's leaders. No place could be found that had not been tainted by vomit. It is in this context, God sent Isaiah to pronounce – amazingly – blessing and hope if these sinful leaders would repent.

Isaiah 28:12, "To whom he said, This *is* the rest *wherewith* ye may cause the weary to rest; and this *is* the refreshing: yet they would not hear."

Indeed, rather than responding to this message with repentance and faith, these wicked leaders ignored the message of Isaiah – in fact, not only did they not listen to it, they mocked it!

Isaiah 28:9 - 10, "Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? *them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little:*"

In essence they said, "Isaiah, your teaching is so juvenile and elementary. It's the "ABCs" of theology. We know what we are doing!" And yet, God will not be mocked.<sup>(13)</sup> Because of the rebellion of His people, yea because of their continued unbelief, God must send forth His judgment!

Isaiah 28:11, "For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people."

This is referencing the coming Babylonian captivity which would occur in 586 BC.<sup>[14]</sup>

Isaiah 28:13, "But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, *and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.*"

As the people mocked Isaiah's *simple* message<sup>[15]</sup> the next *simple* message would be the message of judgment that they may go and stumble backward, be broken, snared, and taken captive.

And so because of His people's stubborn and rebellious heart – their heart full of unbelief – God warned of a coming judgment- a judgment that would occur in 586 BC. And how would this judgment be identified? When a people of a "strange tongue" – in this case the Babylonians – come to conquer and destroy Judah, then the people would know that God's judgment had arrived!

In fact, in this context notice that tongues are not a New Testament phenomena. At least four times they appear in the Old Testament. <sup>[16]</sup> And each time they represent a sign of God's judgment against apostasy, rebellion, unbelief and rejection of God. And thus, the Old Testament presents a unified testimony as to the significance of tongues – this is a

testimony that any New Testament Jew would have understood if they had the eyes to see!

Prophecies from the 15th, 8th and 6th century BC all unite to make the same point – when tongues God's people, the people will know that God's judgment has come!

Now, based upon this Old Testament setting for tongues, what does Paul mean in 1 Corinthians 14 that "tongues are a sign to the unbelievers? In other words, what is the purpose of tongues? There can only be one answer, tongues are a sign of God's judgment to unbelievers – for the sin of unbelief.

On the day of Pentecost when the Disciples amazed the **Jewish** multitude with tongues and the multitudes asked the question "what does this mean."<sup>[17]</sup> In the context of redemptive history, the answer is obvious. Just as the darkness that covered the earth at the time of Christ's crucifixion was a clear statement of God's judgment against His apostate and unbelieving people, <sup>[18]</sup> so also tongues represented the same message to these same Jews on account of their rebellious unbelief: God is not pleased with your religion!

Robertson again wrote this:

"Tongues clearly indicate God's judgment on unbelief. If the Lord would bring such devastating judgment on his old covenant people as the Babylonians brought on Israel, then he surely will bring a finalizing judgment of even greater proportions on all who hear and reject the gracious message of the new covenant."<sup>[19]</sup>

Now is this the significance of tongues throughout the New Testament?<sup>[20]</sup> The answer is an emphatic YES! Each of these occurrences represent the same message/sign from God.

"A dramatic change is taking place in the outworking of God's plan of redemption. People of God, beware- God will not be mocked! The true child of God is the one who trusts in the Lord, and not in themselves. To continue in an unrepentant state, thinking that your religion of good deeds will save you, will reap the judgment of God on account of your unbelief!"<sup>[21]</sup>

And so, what is the purpose of the gift of tongues in the New Testament? It proclaims the judgment of God against His unbelieving people! And that is why Paul begins this section on the purpose of tongues with this exhortation:

1 Corinthians 14:10, "Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men."

The gift of tongues is not a toy designed for your own personal benefit. It is a powerful tool through which God proclaims His wrath against all who will not believe! And yet there is a positive side to this gift.<sup>[22]</sup>

## Tongues is a Vehicle of God's Blessing, 1 Corinthians 14:24 -28

1 Corinthians 14:27 -28, "If any man speak in an *unknown* tongue, *let it be* by two, or at the most *by* three, and *that* by course; and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God."

To understand this use of tongues, we first must understand the relationship between interpreted tongues and prophecy.

1 Corinthians 14:2, "For he that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth *him*; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries."

Recall last week and our discussion of this passage we said that all mysteries that Scriptures speak of are revealed truths. In fact they are the truths about God's way of redemption that once were concealed but now have been revealed. In essence, it is a revelational phenomenon. And thus we concluded that tongues are vehicle of revelation.

1 Corinthians 14:5, "I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater *is* he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, **except he interpret**, that the church may receive edifying."

when tongues are united with a divinely directed interpretation the gift is on the same level as prophecy! The gift of tongues, combined with the gift of interpretation, equals prophecy. And thus, it is no surprise to read this in Acts 2:

Acts 2:16-18, "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and **they shall prophesy.**"

Peter quotes this in response to the outpouring of the gift of tongues at Pentecost, Joel's prophecy concerns the manifestation of the gift of prophecy,<sup>[23]</sup> and yet Peter quotes Joel in reference to the manifestation of the gift of tongues! From this we conclude that in the mind of God, tongues interpreted and the gift of prophecy were virtually synonymous!

And thus, Paul writes:

1 Corinthians 14:27-28, "If any man speak in an *unknown* tongue, *let it be* by two, or at the most *by* three, and *that* by course; and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God."



Interpreted tongues were welcome in the church because in this form they were equivalent to the gift of prophecy, and thus they were able to edify the body of Christ. But again, if there is no interpreter there can be no exercise of this gift- because tongues by itself is NOT FOR THE CHURCH!

Now with this in mind, notice Paul's teaching:

1 Corinthians 14:24-25, "But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or *one* unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on *his* face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth."

This text does relate to tongues. Don't miss it if interpreted tongues and prophecy are equivalent, then the same purpose that is attached to prophecy is attached to interpreted tongues. And what is the purpose of prophecy / interpreted tongues? Simply, the salvation, growth, establishment and edification not of the individual but of the body of Christ!

And so, the New Testament gift of tongues has two purposes: to proclaim God's judgment against apostasy, and it provides for the blessing of true believers when interpreted.

As one searches the Scriptures, one cannot find any other stated purpose for this gift. Thus, to assert that the gift of tongues is a personal gift from God for the edification of the individual is to deny the Scriptures. In fact

nothing could be a greater perversion of God's design for the body of Christ, salvation and ministry in the kingdom then to insert the concept of personal, individual blessing to this gift. Every gift that God gives an individual is designed for the benefit of the body of Christ unto the glory of God!

1 Corinthians 12:7, "But each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit **for the common good**."<sup>[24]</sup>

1 Corinthians 14:26, "How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. **Let all things be done unto edifying**."

1 Peter 4:10, "As every man hath received the gift, **even so minister the same one to another**, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

Hodge, commenting on 1 Corinthians. 12:7, wrote this:

"When . . . the gifts of God, natural or supernatural, are perverted as means of self-exaltation. . . it is a sin against their giver, as well as against those whose benefit they were intended."<sup>[25]</sup>

To assert that the gift of tongues is a means of evangelism also is wrong. Unlike the perception of many today, the true gift of tongues was never

used as an evangelistic tool. Recall that in Paul's day, God had united the ancient world under a single power – Rome – and a single language – Greek. And thus, there was need for a special gifting of languages by which to minister to the natives of a foreign land. Those who heard the Apostles speaking in their own dialect on the day of Pentecost all spoke Greek[26] Those to whom Paul went on his missionary journeys all were united by a single language, Greek! Tongues were not needed, nor were they ever used, as a tool of evangelism in the Bible!

According to the Bible, tongues represent a simply a sign of God's judgment against apostasy and a sign of blessing when interpreted. And since this is the case, just as when you pass an exit on the highway you no longer have need for a sign to declare the location of that exit so also it is with tongues there is no longer a need for tongues in the church today. In fact, today that which witnesses to judgment against unbelief and blessing for obedience is the Word of God. Indeed let us not be babes in our thinking, the need for tongues today is past. But the message that tongues conveyed is still here.

Rather than playing with tongues as you would a toy, let us evaluate the basis upon which we stand before God. Is the basis upon which we stand the deeds that we do? Or is it the person and work of Jesus Christ?

As broken people, let us long for our Savior as He has revealed Himself to us in His word!

Let me close with the words of A. B. Simpson:

"Once it was the blessing, now it is the Lord; once it was the feeling, now it is His Word; once His gift I wanted, now the Giver own; once, I sought for healing, no Himself alone."

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## Footnotes

[1] "The Touch Felt Around the World", *Charisma*, January 1991, page 80

[2] John L. Sherrill, *They Speak with Other Tongues*, page 83

[3] Dr. John MacArthur, *Charismatic Chaos*, page 221

[4] 1 Corinthians 12:31 and 14:12.

[5] 1 Corinthians 13

[6] 1 Corinthians 14

[7] Based upon Paul's statement in verse 31 of showing the Corinthians a "more excellent way" and his repeating the thought of 1 Corinthians 12:31 in 1 Corinthians 14:12, it is best to translate verse 31 in the indicative thus rendering a statement rather than a command, "But you earnestly desire the greater gifts. . . ." The phrase in the original could be either imperative or indicative.



[8] 1 Corinthians 14:1-5

[9] 1 Corinthians 14:6-19

[10] 1 Corinthians 14:20-25

[11] 1 Corinthians 14:26-33

[12] This is a quotation of Isaiah 28:11

[13] Galatians 6:7, 8 "**Be not deceived; God is not mocked:** for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

[14] July 25 586 BC is the date traditionally given for this captivity.

[15] Isaiah 28:10

[16] Genesis 11:9, Deuteronomy 28:49, Jeremiah 5:15, and Isaiah 28:11

[17] Acts 2:12

[18] This is based on the nuance that darkness carried in the Old Testament – compare Matthew 27:45.

[19] *The Final Word*, page 49

[20] Acts 2:3; 10:46; 19:6 etc.

[21] *The Final Word*, page 49

[22] The sign of the rainbow is a symbol of God's grace in judgment, likewise the sign of tongues is a statement of God's grace in judgment.

[23] cf. Acts 2:17; Joel 2:28

[24] New American Standard Version

[25] Charles C. Hodge, *Commentary on 1 Corinthians*, pp. 243-244

[26] cf. Acts 2:5

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## A Biblical Analysis of the Gift of Tongues, Part 3

### 1 Corinthians 13:8-10

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The modern Tongues movement traces its origins to a small Bible college in Topeka, Kansas. In 1900 a man by the name of Charles Fox Parham founded what he called "The College of Bethel." And though the college

folded after one year, what happened at Bethel on January 1, 1901, would dramatically alter the church in the twentieth century.

Now to understand what occurred in 1901, you must understand a little about Charles Parham and Bethel College. Mr. Charles Parham was a member of the "Holiness" movement – a movement which taught that through a "second blessing" of the Spirit a Christian could attain sinless perfection in this life. And yet, he struggled with an important question : was there a universal "sign" which indicated that the "second blessing" had actually occurred? Was this sign of the "second blessing" outward reactions like shouting or jumping? Or was this sign something else? Now as is the case in many institutions today, Parham enlisted the help of his students in answering this question. And so, in the later part of December 1900, Parham gave his students a rather unusual homework assignment:

"The gifts are in the Holy Spirit, and with the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the gifts, as well as the graces, should be manifested. Now, students... see if there is not some evidence given of the baptism so there may be no doubt on the subject." [1]

Charismatic historian Vinson Synan records the students' findings:

" . . . December 30, Parham found that the verdict was unanimous. The report was 'while there were different things [that] occurred when the Pentecostal blessing fell... the indisputable proof on each occasion was, that they spake with other tongues.' In the light of this conclusion, the entire school agreed to seek for a restoration of Pentecostal power with the evidence of speaking in tongues." [2]

And so, on January 1, 1901 the student body gathered in search of tongues. At first nothing happened. Then, Vinson Synan continues:

"Later during the day, a 30-year-old student by the name of Agnes Ozman came to Parham and requested the laying on of hands so that she might receive the Holy Spirit with the apostolic sign of speaking in tongues. She testified: 'As he prayed and layed [sic] hands [upon] my head, I began to speak in tongues, glorifying God.'" [3]

For the next fifty-eight years, tongues largely remained a Pentecostal phenomenon. Then in 1959, the "Tongues movement" spilled over denominational lines when Dennis Bennett, rector of St. Mark's Episcopal Church experienced what he believed to be the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the gift of tongues. [4] After this, the "Tongues movement" quickly spread into numerous denominations including Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, and Lutheran churches. And today, it encompasses Catholics, theological liberals, and even several pseudo-Christian fringe groups.

Now the question we ask in light of all of this is this: could what occurred at Bethel College and what is occurring today be the Biblical gift of tongues? Does Scripture allow for the *CONTINUATION* of this gift today? To answer this, notice 1 Corinthians 13.

## The Context of the Continuance of Tongues, 1 Corinthians 13:8-10

1 Corinthians 13 :8 -10, " Charity never faileth: but whether [there be] prophecies, they shall fail; whether [there be] tongues, they shall cease; whether [there be] knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away."

As we seek to understand this passage, it is important that we keep the broader context of this epistle in mind. As most of you know, Corinth was a major trade city in the ancient near east. All north south trade in Greece went through Corinth. All east west trade also went through Corinth. Now with the good that came along with being a "trade" city, also came the bad. In classical Greek, *corinthiazesthai* was a word that literally meant to behave like a Corinthian. And thus at the time of Paul, Corinth represented gross immorality and drunken debauchery. Corinth was synonymous with moral depravity. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, we get a flavor of some of the characteristic sins of a Corinthian: fornication, idolatry, adultery, effeminacy, homosexuality, stealing, covetousness, drunkenness, reviling, and swindling. And thus, it is no surprise to discover that the church at Corinth had numerous problems. They struggled with factionalism,[5] worldliness,[6] and compromise (they wanted the best of both worlds, and Paul warned them that that was impossible). [7]

Now, amazingly, the people of the Corinthian Church had the gifts of the Spirit[8] and for the most part, right doctrine.[9] Yet, they lacked one important thing: love![10] And thus, they were selfish, self-designing, self-willed, and self-motivated. When it came to church life – their focus was on self-exaltation. When it came to worship – their focus was receiving from God. When it came to spiritual gifts – they focused upon the showy gifts (especially tongues)! And so in 1 Corinthians 13, Paul sets out to demonstrate the incomparable gift of love.

1 Corinthians 13:8, "Charity never faileth: but whether [there be] prophecies, they shall fail; whether [there be] tongues, they shall cease; whether [there be] knowledge, it shall vanish away."

"Love never fails" means that love will not decay or be abolished. Love is eternal. And thus, to invest in love is to invest in eternity. Now this was in contrast to the gifts of the Spirit which had captivated the hearts and minds of the Corinthians: "But if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away." [11] Because the focus of our study this morning is on the gift of tongues, let us turn our attention to the phrase, "whether [there be] tongues, they shall cease."

"whether [there be] tongues, they shall cease" – *eite glossai, pausontai* – the verb that Paul attaches to tongues is very important. Unlike the verb he uses for both prophecy and knowledge (*katargeo*), through the inspiration of the Spirit of God, Paul says that tongues will *pauo*- cease.

Now *pauo* has a very important nuance in the Greek. It means to stop or to

come to an end. As a middle voice, it carries the added significance of stopping by itself. And so, whereas prophecy and knowledge, as passives, will be done away when the perfect comes,[12] the time would come when tongues would stop all by themselves. Tongues had a built in stopping mechanism.

his text does not indicate the WHEN of the cessation of tongues would occur – only that a time would come when tongues would stop themselves. This raises a very important question for us this morning: has the gift of tongues ceased? The Answer to this question is, "Yes" on account of three reasons.

### **A Biblical-Historical Case for the Cessation of the Gift of Tongues**

It is a rather interesting study to examine the occurrences of the gift of tongues in the Bible. Tongues surface in the EARLY EPISTLES – early in the book of Acts, and in the first epistle to the Corinthians. Then tongues seem to disappear. Now God's Word has more to say about spiritual gifts than just 1 Corinthians 12-14. In fact, the Bible addresses the issue of spiritual gifts in at least two other places: 1 Peter and Romans. And yet notice, each of these epistles were written AFTER 1 Corinthians and fail to mention the gift of tongues![13]

Now the significance of this is seen when we recognize that as the Apostolic age came to a close, the nature of sinful man did not change – men were as much sinners in 60 AD as they were in 40 AD. **And thus if tongues were still operative in the later part of the Apostolic age, we would expect no less of a struggle with "tongues" than the church had at its beginning. And yet, there is no hint of struggle.** Again, gifts are mentioned and taught about in the later epistles. But nowhere in these later Epistles do we find teaching on tongues – the misuse of tongues apparently no longer was a problem. Which leads us to the conclusion that either God's people overcame their abusive tendency when it came to tongues – and thus there no longer was a need for teaching on this gift – or tongues no longer were an issue because the gift no longer existed.

**Now, when we take into consideration that toward the end of the Apostolic age – that which receives the emphasis in the Apostle's writings is NOT the revelational gifts – they are no longer needed as the Bible is almost completed. But rather sound doctrine,[14] the faith,[15] the deposit of truth,[16] the trustworthy message,[17] and scripture.[18]** The answer to the question of "Where is Tongues?" becomes obvious: tongues were no longer were needed, the gift of tongues ceased.

Robertson put it this way:

"[Toward the end of Paul's life] the Apostle is concerned to make provision for the church's ongoing need for the truth in the future. Along with the other apostles, he will soon be gone. [As such] he locates God's provision for the future not in an ongoing experience of the special gifts of tongues and prophecy, but in the established revelation that has been provided during the

years of the apostolic age... So the New Testament provides significant evidence of the decline of the revelational gifts."<sup>[19]</sup>

And so from the perspective of Biblical history, we conclude that the gift of tongues' absence most likely reflects the cessation of this gift in the New Testament. Yet, there is another reason for believing that the gift of tongues ceased in the apostolic age.

## A Historical Case for the Cessation of the Gift of Tongues

As we have just seen, toward the later part of the Apostolic age, tongues disappear from the pages of Scripture. Now, that doesn't necessarily mean that they were gone – they could have just lost their significance yet still remained. And yet if that were the case, we would expect some mention of tongues in the post-apostolic writings. **When we look at this large body of writings we can find no mention of this gift IN THE CHURCH in the first 500 years following the Apostolic age.** In all the writings of the early church fathers which address the numerous problems of the post-apostolic church, there is no hint of tongues. In fact, Chrysostom said, speaking of tongues:

"The obscurity is produced by our ignorance of the facts referred to and by their cessation, being such as then used to occur but now no longer take place."<sup>[20]</sup>

Augustine wrote this:

"In the earliest times, 'the Holy Ghost fell upon them that believed: and they spake with tongues,' which they had not learned, 'as the Spirit gave them utterance.' These were signs adapted to the time. For there behooved to be that betokening of the Holy Spirit in all tongues, to shew that the Gospel of God was to run through all tongues over the whole earth. That thing was done for a betokening, and it passed away."<sup>[21]</sup>

Now it should be noted that the above is not to imply that "tongues" were absent altogether from history. Indeed, "tongues" erratically surfaces throughout history among cults and spurious "Christian" movements.

For example, in the second century, the **followers of Montanus** claimed to speak in tongues. Montanus believed himself and two women to be prophets. They accepted continuing revelation that supplanted the Word of God. As such, the rest of the church in his day branded Montanism as a serious heresy to be rejected including Augustine and the Council of Constantinople.

The next time any significant tongues-speaking movement arose was with the **Cevennol Prophets** of the seventeenth century. The Cevennol prophets likewise were outside of the church – their primary emphasis was on politics and the military. In the 1700's another group arose inside the Reformed Christian Church called the **Jansenists**. They rejected the doctrine of justification by faith. The **Shakers** of the mid-1700's spoke in tongues. Their leader was Mother Ann Lee who regarded herself as the female equivalent to Jesus Christ. Finally, the early nineteenth century a

Scottish Presbyterian minister named **Edward Irving** practiced tongues. Yet, their prophecies contradicted one another and their movement was saturated with controversy, division, and false doctrine.

In light of this sordid history, there are few Charismatics who embrace any of these previous tongue-speaking movements as influenced by God. In fact, New Testament scholar Thomas Edgar observed this:

"[The cessation of tongues] is an irrefutable fact admitted by many Pentecostals."[\[22\]](#)

And so, from the perspective of church history, we conclude that tongues disappeared in the middle of the Apostolic age only to supposedly resurface in the church in 1901. Now much of this really is of little significance in light of the final "case" for the cessation of the Gift of Tongues today.

### **A Theological Case for the Cessation of the Gift of Tongues**

Over the past couple of weeks, we have discovered two important characteristics of the true gift of tongues: their nature: interpreted tongues were a revelational gift equivalent to the proclamation of the Word of God, [\[23\]](#) and their purpose: tongues served as a proclamation of God's judgment against apostate Judaism.[\[24\]](#)

In this context, recall some of the points we made. The Bible we hold in our hands is complete -- during our study of the gift of prophecy, we discussed this. Recall that Christ is the final Word from God,[\[25\]](#) and that the writing of God's Word occurred during the founding of the church -- and era which we are beyond today.[\[26\]](#)

**We also discussed that to add to the Bible is to place yourself under a curse -- only God can add to His Word.**[\[27\]](#) And thus, with the completion of the word of God, there no longer is a need for a revelatory gift like tongues.

The message to which tongues witnesses as a sign to unbelievers has been posted. Recall that the Biblical gift of tongues -- untranslated -- represented a declaration on the part of God that Judaism at the time of Christ was apostate. Now, if we want to witness to that reality today, we need only look to our Bible. Another way of putting it is that at some point travelling into Denver, you will notice a sign declaring the location of Denver to advocate the gift of tongues today would be like going out to where a sign has already been posted for Denver, and there putting a *second* sign! Indeed in this age, the message of the gift of tongues has been posted -- we do not need another sign!

And so because of the nature and purpose of tongues -- interpreted tongues were revelational and uninterrupted tongues were a sign of God's judgment against apostasy -- we conclude that this gift passed away with the close of the Apostolic age. Therefore, we must conclude that what occurred in 1901 at Bethel College and which spread throughout Christendom is NOT the genuine gift of tongues. The true gift passed away in the Apostolic age.



## What is occurring now?

What then is it that is occurring in the "tongues movement" today? MacArthur[28] put it best when he catalogued three possible explanations for what is going on in the tongues movement today: Satanic activity, learned behavior, or psychological inducement.

### Tongues May Be Satanic or Demonic

This primarily applies to occurrences outside of the church because a Christian cannot be demon-possessed.[29] I strongly hesitate to ascribe much of what is going on today directly to Satan or a demon. And yet, this isn't to say that Satan isn't behind the *deception*- as the chief of liars.[30] In this regard, I refer you to *Encyclopedia Britannica* which has articles on glossolalia among pagans in their worship rites.

### Tongues may be a Learned Behavior

With MacArthur, I am convinced that this is behind most of the tongues speaking in our day. For example, men like Charles and Frances Hunter hold seminars to instruct people about how to speak in tongues. In his book *The Psychology of Speaking in Tongues*, John Kilcahl concluded that glossolalia is a learned skill.[31] A more recent study conducted at Carleton University demonstrated that virtually anyone can learn to speak in tongues with minimum instruction and modeling.

"Sixty subjects who had never spoken in tongues or heard anyone else do it were used in an experiment. After two brief training sessions including audio- and videotaped samples of tongues speaking, all the subjects were asked to attempt to speak glossolalia for thirty seconds. Every subject in the test was able to speak passable glossolalia throughout the thirty-second test, and seventy percent were able to speak fluently." [32]

Again, this represents probably ninety percent of all tongues-speaking that occurs in the church today.

### Tongues Can Be Psychologically Induced

Here the tongues-speaker goes into motor automatism, which is clinically described as radical inward detachment from one's conscious surroundings. Motor automatism results in disassociation of nearly all voluntary muscles from conscious control – it is that which occurs at Rock concerts. When the emotion is so high people lose control of their muscular functions and roll around and talk in a gibberish manner.

Dr. E. Mansell Pattison, a member of the Christian Association for Psychological Studies, wrote this:

"I can add my own observations from clinical experiences with neurological and psychiatric patients. In certain types of brain disorders resulting from strokes, brain tumors, etc. the patient is

left with disruptions in his automatic, physical speech circuit patterns. If we study these 'aphasic' patients we can observe the same decomposition of speech that occurs in glossolalia. Similar decomposition of speech occurs in schizophrenic thought and speech patterns, which is structurally the same as glossolalia.

"This data can be understood to demonstrate that the same stereotypes of speech will result whenever conscious, willful control of speech is interfered with, whether by injury to the brain, by psychosis, or by passive renunciation of willful control."<sup>[33]</sup>

And so we conclude that the gift of tongues as operative in the Apostolic age – Biblically, historically, and theologically – ceased. The tongues as evident in the church today is easily understood as a learned or an emotionally induced phenomena.

## Our Response

In closing, how ought we to respond to our charismatic brothers and sisters who insist that their "experience" is genuine?

### **Humbly.**

Romans 12:3, "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think [of himself] more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."

Indeed, let us look upon brothers and sisters in the "tongues movement" with humility. The most detrimental activity for the body of Christ that involves the tongue today is NOT the speaking in a counterfeit tongue it is gossiping, grumbling, and complaining.

James 3: 6, "And the tongue [is] a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell."

### **Let us be careful.**

For as we judge the tongues speaker we not judge ourselves on account of our slanderous and rebellious tongue.

### **Let us also approach our brethren lovingly.**

1 Peter 1:22 - 23, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, [see that ye] love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."

1 Peter 4: 8, "And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins."

Indeed, let us never forget that love is the theme of the very section of 1 Corinthians in which Paul's teaching on the charismatic gifts occurs. To look upon others in anger or hatred on account of their aberrant behavior is to "strain out a gnat and yet swallow a camel."<sup>[34]</sup> As Christ said, let us be known by our love.<sup>[35]</sup>

### Let us also look to ourselves.

Galatians 6:1, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

It would hypocritical to condemn a charismatic brother or sister when we have yet to "arrive" in our theology. Though we may be convinced of a brother or sister's error, let us be careful. Though our criticism may be warranted, it may nevertheless be sin if expressed as ones who are high-minded.

### Let us approach them thankfully.

2 Thessalonians 2:13, "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:"

The amazing thing about this verse is that Paul wrote it in a section in which he was correcting the Thessalonians for false doctrine.<sup>[36]</sup> In other words, regardless of their theology, genuine brothers and sisters are trophies of grace for which we must give thanks to God.

This does not mean that we should not try to correct those who are wrong. Rather, it means that we should do so with an attitude that says, "I love you and am thankful for God's working in your life!"

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## Footnotes

[1] "The touch Felt Around the World" *Charisma* [January 1991], page 83

[2] (Ibid.)

[3] (Ibid.)

[4] Compare, *Charismatic Chaos*, pages 19-20

[5] 1 Corinthians 1:10-13; 3:1

[6] 1 Corinthians. 5:9-11

[7] 1 Corinthians 6:9-10

[8] 1 Corinthians 1:7

[9] 1 Corinthians 11:2

[10] 1 Corinthians 12:31

[11] New American Standard

[12] 1 Corinthians 13: 9-10

[13] Tongues disappear after Acts 19:6 (which is relatively early in the Apostolic age.

[14] 2 Timothy 1:13

[15] Titus 1:13; 2 Timothy 4:7

[16] 2 Timothy 1:14

[17] Titus 1:9

[18] 2 Timothy 3:16

[19] *The Final Word*, pages 76, 77-78

[20] "Homilies in First Corinthians," Philip Schaff, ed., *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 12, page 168

[21] "Ten Homilies on the First Epistle of John," Philip Schaff, editor, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 7, page 497

[22] "The Cessation of the Sign Gifts," *Bibliotheca Sacra* (October-December 1988), page 374

[23] 1 Corinthians 14:2, 5

[24] 1 Corinthians 14:20-22

[25] Hebrews 1:2

[26] Ephesians 2:20; 3:5

[27] Revelation 22:18

[28] Compare Ephesians. 2:10; John. 1:5; etc.

[29] John 8:44; Revelation 12:9.

[30] *The Psychology of Speaking in Tongues*, John Kilkahl, page 74

[31] *Chaos*, pages 240-241

[32] Quoted in *Chaos*, page 243

[33] Matthew 23:24

[34] John 13:33-34.

[35] Compare 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

[36]

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