

## INTRODUCTION

I had a tremendous spiritual experience in the early 1970s as part of what is now called, "The Jesus Movement." In fact, I traveled with a singing group from Sanford University to Expo 1972 at the Cotton Bowl in Dallas. That was the epitome of the Jesus Movement. There was a lot of zeal and excitement for Jesus coming out of the Jesus Movement. There is always some excess when you go along with anything like that, and right on the heels of the movement was a renewed interest in speaking in tongues. Some of my Baptist friends at Sanford University were teaching when you were baptized in the Holy Spirit the evidence of being baptized or filled with the Holy Spirit was speaking in unknown tongues. For a couple of years it swept our campus. I don't know how it happened. I was already a preacher at the time and dozens and dozens of people came to me for counsel in the biblical teaching regarding tongues. I think God used me during that time to try to bring a biblical perspective to what the Bible says about speaking in tongues. It's something I have studied for a number of years.

Some believe every Christian ought to speak in tongues, otherwise they are missing out on all God has for them. A lot of Bible teachers on radio and television, Kenneth Copeland and others in the so-called faith movement, say speaking in tongues is an experience for every Christian. On the end, some people, usually ultra conservative Baptists, say all speaking in tongues is of the devil. Although I deeply respect Dr. John MacArthur, he makes a strong point in saying there is absolutely no gift of speaking in tongues today. I believe the Bible teaches somewhere between these two extremes about speaking in tongues. I believe there is a spiritual gift of speaking in tongues. However, I do think it is much misunderstood, abused and misused today. In fact, in my experience I would have to say I believe about 90% of what is passed today in speaking in tongues is not what the Bible teaches about it. I wish you could approach this tonight as if you knew absolutely nothing about speaking in tongues as if you had never heard anybody preach anything about it before, because what does it matter what some Dr. Wigglejaw says about it? Let's see what the *Bible* has to say about it.

1 Corinthians 14:1-25. "Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy. For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries with his spirit. But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort. He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. He who prophesies [preaches] is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may be edified. Now, brothers, if I come to you and speak in tongues, what good will I be to you, unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or word of instruction? Even in the case of lifeless things that make sounds, such as the flute or harp, how will anyone know what tune is being played unless there is a distinction in the notes? Again, if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle? So it is with you. Unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue, how will anyone know what you are 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 then I do not grasp the meaning of what someone is saying, I am a foreigner to the speaker, and he is a foreigner to me. So it is with you. Since you are

eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church. For this reason anyone who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret what he says. For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind. If you are praising God with your spirit, how can one who finds himself among those who do not understand say, 'Amen' to your thanksgiving, since he doesn't know what you are saying? You may be giving thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified. I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue. Brothers, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults. In the Law it is written: 'Through men of strange tongues and through the lips of foreigners I will speak to this people, but even then they will not listen to me.' Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers; prophecy, however, is for believers, not for unbelievers. So if the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and some who do not understand or some unbelievers come in, will they not say that you all are out of your mind? But if an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying, he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all, and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, 'God is really among you!'"

## **I. TONGUES IS A SECONDARY SPIRITUAL GIFT**

I want to say three main things about the gift of speaking in tongues. Notice the word is *glossolalia*. That's the actual Greek word *glosso*, meaning "tongue" and *lalia*, meaning "speaking in tongues." First, notice that it is a secondary gift. We know there are at least eighteen different spiritual gifts from studying 1 Corinthians 12. Of these eighteen gifts, not many are ranked—except two gifts: Prophecy (preaching) and speaking in tongues. Paul compares and contrasts the gift of speaking in tongues with the gift of inspired preaching.

### **1. Tongues is less important than prophecy**

He says without a doubt, tongues or speaking in tongues, is a secondary gift. He says it is less important than prophecy. Look at verse 1. Paul says, "You should eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially prophecy." Sometimes people say, "Pastor, I thought you taught not to desire any specific spiritual gift, that God is sovereign and he gives spiritual gifts to people as he wills. Who am I to say, 'God, I don't want this gift. I do want this other gift.'" If you ask for it, it's not really a gift! The key is in 14:1. He is talking collectively to a church, saying, "Church, you had better earnestly desire that within your body there is the gift of inspired preaching!" The problem with the church at Corinth is they had a whole bunch of people popping off speaking in tongues, but there was very little exercise of the gift of inspired preaching. That's why Paul said they were in a mess and had problems. He said, "Inspired preaching is much more important than speaking in tongues."

### **2. Tongues is a prayer language**

Number two, speaking in tongues is a prayer language. Perhaps you have been in churches where someone is speaking in tongues. I know I have. Maybe you have seen it on television, because these days, you can get everything and anything on television. Have you ever seen a worship service where somebody jumps up and starts speaking in tongues? It sounds like gibberish! The Pastor or the leader or somebody will usually say, "I have an interpretation of that." Somebody else will say, "I have an interpretation of that," because they rightly understand you can't have the gift of tongues without interpretation. Then the interpretation proceeds to sound like a message from God to the people. I've heard it before. Someone will speak in tongues and someone else will stand up and it will be a message from God saying, "Oh, my children. Hang on there. Be strong. Be faithful. Don't give up. I love you. I care for you and I died for you!" Everybody says, "Wow! This is a special message from God!" The only thing wrong is it is WRONG! Tongues is not God speaking to man. Read it with your own eyes in 1 Corinthians 14:2. If you learn anything about tongues, it is this: "Anyone who speaks in a tongue doesn't speak to men but to God." What do we call it when we talk to God? Prayer. It is a prayer language. Some people are given a gift to exercise. It is not some message from God to the group. It's a prayer language.

### **3. Tongues is personally edifying**

Point number three, tongues is personally edifying. Notice in verse 4, Paul says when someone speaks in tongues, "He edifies himself." That word *edify* means to "strengthen, to build up, to encourage." The whole purpose of spiritual gifts is to edify the body of Christ. The reason Paul says speaking in tongues is a secondary gift is because of all the gifts, tongues is the only one and along with interpretation that is personally edifying, because the person who prays in tongues edifies himself. They get built up. There is nothing wrong with that, unless the person does it at the expense of edifying the body of Christ. Where they become so self-centered they don't care about anybody else. That's what is wrong with the gift of tongues. For some people it has just become an end unto itself. "Oh, I speak in tongues. I have arrived!" No! When you are only edifying yourself, you have a long way to go before you have arrived. It's personally edifying so it's better to edify the church.

### **4. Not every Christian has this gift**

Point number 4: Not every Christian has this gift! I know some wonderful, lovely, godly people who read this same Bible, worship the same God and who love the same Jesus I love, who insist every Christian has the gift of tongues. Do you know why I firmly believe not every Christian has the gift of tongues? Because the Bible teaches not every Christian has the gift of tongues. Look at 1 Corinthians 12:29-30. Paul starts asking a series of questions. "Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? *Do all speak in tongues?* Do all interpret?" You're saying, "Well, all he is doing is asking the question. He's not answering the question." In the Greek language, whenever you ask a question and you presuppose an answer—yes or no. In the syntax of the grammar you answer the question. For instance, if I were going to ask a question in the Greek language and I anticipated the answer would be, "Yes," then I would use the Greek particle (we would call it *omicron upsilon*, "ou") There would be an "ou" at the end of every question. Sometimes when people translate, for example, Italian or Spanish, back into English, they will answer their own questions. They'll say,

"You want some more tea? Yes." "You want another taco? Yes." They'll ask the question and then they'll answer it. That's like the Greek language. On the other hand, in the Greek language whenever someone asks a question and they presuppose without a doubt the answer was, "No," they used another particle, *mu epsilon*, "me." Read any Greek text of the New Testament and added to every one of those questions in verses 29 and 30 is the particle *me*. In other words, without a doubt, you can read every question in verse 29 and 30:

"Are all prophets?"

"No."

"Are all teachers?"

"No."

"Do all work miracles?"

"No."

"Do all have gifts of healing?"

"No."

"Do all speak in tongues?"

"No."

"Do all interpret?"

"No."

There is not any one gift every Christian has and no Christian has every one of the gifts. That's the diversity of spiritual gifts. Not everybody has every gift. When somebody comes up to you and says you have to speak in tongues, that it's something for every Christian, you show them what the Bible says. The Bible clearly teaches not every Christian speaks in tongues. If you want to argue from another source, ask them this. "Would you say Billy Graham is a godly man?" I don't know many people Pentecostals, charismatics, independent Baptists or anybody that wouldn't say Billy Graham is a godly man. "Yes." "Would you say Billy Graham is filled with the Holy Spirit?" "Yes." He's won more people to Christ than anybody in the history of the world. Well Billy Graham has never spoken in tongues! That's not the only reason I believe it. I believe it, because the Bible teaches it.

## 5. Tongues is not the evidence of the filling of the Holy Spirit

Number five: It is not the evidence of the filling of the Holy Spirit. Let's go to Acts 2:1-4. Where did the experience of speaking in tongues first occur? It was at the Day of Pentecost. They were all gathered, all 120 disciples. This was the Day of Pentecost and they gathered and they prayed for ten days. If you read Acts 2, you will know they were all in one automobile. What was it? They said they were all in one accord! So there was a Honda Accord! They were all gathered in an upper room in one accord, praying for ten days. This was *Pentecost*, fifty days after Passover. Jesus appeared for forty days, then he ascended and then there was this ten-day period of prayer. Then the Bible says they were all in the Upper Room and there was a sound like a mighty rushing wind. It says, "cloven tongues of fire." Now the words "tongues of fire" confuses people; it has absolutely nothing to do with speaking in tongues—it just means "split lanes of fire," little sparks, a little light here a little light there appeared over the heads of all the disciples. The Bible says, "and they all began speaking in tongues." They were filled with the Spirit and they all began speaking in tongues. Where else does it occur in the book of Acts? In chapter 8 in Samaria and again in chapter 10, it talks about Cornelius and again in chapter 19 in Ephesus. These are the incidences of speaking in tongues in the book of Acts. But there are other times in

the book of Acts where it speaks of the believers being filled with the Holy Spirit and they *didn't* speak in tongues. So sometimes when they are filled with the Holy Spirit they speak in tongues, but not on every occasion. If we are going to look at speaking in tongues very evenly balanced and equally with all the other spiritual gifts, it is a very shaky doctrine to say any one gift of the Spirit is evidence of the filling of the Holy Spirit. The evidence of the filling of the Holy Spirit is not a gift of the Spirit; it is the FRUIT of the Spirit: Love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, meekness, faith, self control. It's not the gifts—it is the fruits.

## II. TONGUES IS A "SIGN" GIFT

### 1. Tongues creates curiosity in unbelievers

Secondly, tongues is a *sign* gift! In other words, it has a purpose to point people toward something. Look at 1 Corinthians 14:22. "Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers." Number one, speaking in tongues creates curiosity in unbelievers. That's why Paul could say, "It's a sign to unbelievers." What that means is people who just hear of the experience of speaking in tongues are curious. They say, "Wow. What is this all about? This is freaky. This is weird." What is the purpose of a sign? A sign is to promote or point to something else. If you told me you were coming to Green Acres Baptist Church next Sunday and you stood out there around one of our signs and plopped down in front of that sign and said, "Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!" You'd be coming to the sign instead of the body of Christ. That's the problem with tongues. A lot of people stop at the sign and never move on to what the sign is pointing to. One of the reasons Paul compares and contrasts prophecy with tongues is because in a real sense they work together.

### 2. Prophecy is used to teach the truth

Look at the next point. After curiosity has been created, then prophecy is used to teach the truth. For instance, look at verses 24-25. "If an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying, he will be convinced." Curiosity is created by speaking in tongues, but he is not convinced until someone prophesies or teaches. Then it says, "He will be convinced he is a sinner, and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. He will fall down and worship God." Some people really struggle with the gift of speaking in tongues. One reason why is because they say, "To me it seems like there are two different gifts. You have this prayer gift over in 1 Corinthians 14, because without a doubt it's prayer. Then I look over here in Acts 2, and Acts 10, and Acts 19 and to me it seems like some kind of foreign language—like somebody who could not speak Phoenician and all of a sudden they start speaking Phoenician." Some people believe even today that is what the gift of tongues is: The ability to speak a foreign language to preach the gospel. The only problem with that is remember what it says in 1 Corinthians 14:2? "For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God." It's prayer. Some say, "What happens in 1 Corinthians 14 is one kind of tongues. What happens in Acts 2 is another kind of tongues." No it's the same thing. Sometime go back and read Acts chapter 2. This is what happened: They were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in tongues. What do you think they were speaking? What do you think they were actually saying? If you could have been there, and you could have heard what they were saying, what would they have been saying? "Come to Pentecost Baptist Church"? "Come to Jerusalem Baptist Church."

We want to tell you about Jesus!"? Were they saying, "Jesus came to a planet, he gave his life, he died, he was buried, he was resurrected."? Were they preaching? No. Read it for yourself. It says, "They were praising God in that language God gave them to pray in. The miracle of Pentecost was in the hearing. I have studied this many times. In Acts chapter 2, they spoke in *glossolalia*, but the people heard *dialecto*. You are smart enough to tell what the word *dialecto* means. Languages! There were people in Jerusalem from all different provinces, all different nations—so many different languages—and what they witnessed were the people at the Day of Pentecost praying and praising the Lord. They were speaking the greatness and the glory of God and these people heard it in their own language. *And it caused them to be curious*. Wait a minute! After they heard them speak in tongues, did those people come forward and say, "Man, I want to trust Jesus right now! I'm ready to get saved!" No. They gathered, because a crowd gathered and said? "These folks are drunk! They've been drinking new wine!" Paul said, "No no no! They are not drunk as you suppose. They are intoxicated on the Spirit, but they are not drunk with wine. Besides, it's only nine o'clock in the morning. Who gets drunk at nine o'clock in the morning?" Then read it for yourself. Simon Peter stands up and exercises the gift of prophecy. Man, he preached the word to them right there in a language they could understand. Then they were convinced of their sin. They said, "What must we do to be saved? Tell us what to do!" In Acts 2:38, Peter says, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." And the Bible says "three thousand of them got saved right there!" It was the gift of tongues in that one experience that created a curiosity on the part of these unbelievers and attracted them to the gathering and then Simon Peter preached and they got saved.

Dr. Dale Moody has written forty or fifty books and quote the Greek and Hebrew text by heart. Some time ago, he wrote an article for a Baptist publication about speaking in tongues:

"Speaking in tongues in the New Testament is always precisely what 1 Corinthians 14:2 says it is. It is an ecstatic utterance that can be understood only when one has the gift of interpretation. Sometimes radical reaction sets in some believers interpret 1 Corinthians 13:8, to mean that speaking in tongues was a gift of the Spirit only until the New Testament canon was completed and then it ceased." [That's what MacArthur believes] "These modern expressions are reactions to the movement of the Spirit. The apostle Paul apparently was not aware of a future New Testament when he wrote this letter. Besides, the context indicates that speaking in tongues will cease only when knowledge and prophecy is done away with and that is in heaven."

### III. IT IS A SAFEGUARDED GIFT

In Moody's book, *The Spirit of the Living God*, he says the miracle of Pentecost was the miracle of hearing. They heard these people praying and everyone heard it in their own *dialecto*, as these people were praising the Lord. So there is not just one kind of speaking in tongues in 1 Corinthians and another kind in Acts: It's exactly the same thing consistent throughout the Word of God. It is a secondary gift, it is a sign gift and number three, it is a safe guarded gift. It is a safe guarded gift. What I mean by that is it is a strictly regulated gift. If tongues were going to pass away say, for instance, in the first century as some people argue, why do you think the Bible devotes so much material to restricting how and when it should be used? It is THE most

regulated gift in the New Testament. Because obviously (we've seen it happen) it has caused more confusion and division and heartache than any other spiritual gift. I've known churches that divided over speaking in tongues. God never wanted that to happen! I've known Christian families that were estranged because of two different opinions about speaking in tongues. God never wanted that to happen! That's why he set down some very clear requirements about speaking in tongues.

## **1. Tongues is generally inappropriate in a public worship setting**

First of all it is generally inappropriate in public worship. How do we know? Look at verses 18-19. Paul says, "I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible [words you can understand, prophesy] rather than ten thousand words in a tongue." How do we know for certain? I told you tongues is a prayer language. All of these are expressions of prayer. If you are praising God, what is that? That's prayer. He says in verse 16, "If there is nobody there to interpret it, you are talking into the air. It is worthless to the body. Nobody will know when to say, 'Amen' to your thanksgiving." What is thanksgiving? That's prayer. Keep reading in verse 17. "You may be giving thanks" that's what prayer is. So you can't miss it! That's what tongues is: It is praying in this unknown language. But in the church it is generally inappropriate.

This may shake your socks a bit, but every Baptist church I have ever served has had members who speak in tongues. There are members of Green Acres Baptist Church who have the gift of speaking of tongues. I know because they have told me. These are good, godly people I love and I have just shared with them in a loving spirit the ones who have talked with me and I have said, "That's wonderful as long as you exercise it according to the New Testament which means generally in public worship it is inappropriate. It is a private prayer language most of the time." How do we know? Because Paul says "I speak in tongues more than all of you, but in the church I just don't do it." What does that mean? If he did it more than anybody else, it means he did it privately. So, it is generally inappropriate in the church. When does the gift of tongues cause problems and division in the church? When someone violates the teachings of the scripture and they jump up in some worship service and just start babbling. Everybody says "Ooooooooooh!" and are scared to death. So many people are afraid of it! I fear God but I don't fear anything God is doing! I don't have to protect His reputation and you don't either. He's pretty settled in heaven. There's not a vacancy in the Trinity! You don't have to be afraid. Chill out! There are folks in this church I know have the gift of speaking in tongues and I don't think they will ever use it in a public setting even in a group setting. It is something they do privately and they exercise other gifts to build up the body.

## **2. Tongues should not be exercised without interpretation**

Number two. This is a key: It should not be exercised without interpretation. That's why Paul says, "Even if you have the gift of tongues a person should pray that he has the gift of interpretation so that he can understand it." Look at verse 13. Even if you have the gift of tongues and you practice it personally, the Bible says you should have interpretation. "For this reason anyone who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret what he says." You can babble on all you want, but until God gives you an interpretation of what you are praying, it has

no bearing or meaning for you. You don't edify yourself. Of course, we are going to see next week Paul makes it very clear. He says, "In the church if somebody stands up and starts speaking in tongues, it can't be done uncontrollably. It has to be done in an orderly fashion and there have to be people who can interpret it."

It's never happened to me, but it happened to a friend of mine a few years ago in his church. God was blessing this church. There was an exciting spirit in this church. They were getting ready to build a building and they just happened to be in one of these big capital fundraisers. There was a lady in this church (and I hate to say this) but most of the time when tongues are abused and cause problems in a church, I don't know why but it has come from women. That's just observation. I don't want to get too far ahead here but we're going to get to the passage where Paul says for women to be quiet in the church. Some of you women have struggled with that for years. It's in the context of tongues, because they are the ones who caused the problems in Corinth. Anyway, during a Sunday morning worship service at my friend's church, this lady got so full of the Spirit, she stood up and started babbling! It didn't go on very long until my pastor friend said, "Sister-So-and-So has stood up and spoken in tongues. Is there anybody here who has an interpretation, because the Bible says there must be an interpretation for it to be exercised." There was not a word! Nobody there gave an interpretation for what she said and so he looked at her and said, "Ma'am. You are out of order. Sit down and be quiet!" And she sat down and was quiet. Then he kept on preaching. He said later if he had just thought a little bit quicker he would have said, "Oh yes, I have an interpretation. This dear lady prayed, 'Dear God. I'm so excited about this building program I'm going to give \$50,000 to it!'" But she never spoke in tongues again in the church. He said, "You're out of order!" That's what you're supposed to do. When somebody does it not according to the Bible, they're out of order. I had a man do it one time when we were receiving a new member. He said, "I don't think we ought to receive this black person in our church!" I said, "Sit down, brother! You're out of order!" When somebody is out of order in the church, you need to say, "You are out of order. Sit down and get quiet." It needs to be spoken in love, but it needs to be spoken.

### **Key: Tongues is abused by the spiritually immature**

The final thing is the key to it all. Tongues is abused by the spiritually immature. If someone is spiritually mature, and they have the gift of tongues, it never causes a problem. But someone who is spiritually immature will cause all kinds of problems. Look verse 20. Paul says, "Brothers, stop thinking like children." In other words, "You are being immature and childlike. You are messing up the church with this issue." "In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults." He is saying, "Grow up!" There are so many more important things in the Christian life.

So this is an issue. It is a secondary, minor gift. Notice the final thing Paul says about it in verse 39: "Therefore, my brothers, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues." Because I believe every word of the word of God, I am not going to forbid anybody from speaking in tongues. But I am going to make sure it is done according to the Bible if it ever is anyway exposed to me but we can't say, "Don't do it!" Let's just believe the Bible.

The key is spiritual gifts in operation building up the church, but much more important than gifts



is love for one another.

## OUTLINE

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It is..

1. Less important than prophecy
2. A prayer language
3. Personally edifying
4. Not a gift every Christian has
5. Not the evidence of the filling of the Holy Spirit

#### II. A "SIGN" GIFT

1. It creates curiosity in unbelievers
2. Prophecy is used to teach the truth

#### III. A SAFEGUARDED GIFT

1. Inappropriate in a public worship setting
2. Should not be exercised without interpretation

Key: Abused by the spiritually immature



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For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes