

Sunday, December 11, 2022

Tongues

[GIFT- 1 Corinthians 14, pg. 960 in the Pew Bibles.](#)

We will be walking through chapter 14, so simple hold your finger there until we get to the text. **PRAY.** Today we talk about **Tongues.**

Testify.

-Taught-looking back I'm pretty sure I didn't have the gift of tongues.

-Years later, I was praying during worship. I remember wrestling, yet wanting a deeper experience with God, and I was praying for the gift of tongues. It wasn't the first time I had prayed about and for this. "God, if this is real, give me the gift of tongues" and that morning, I spoke in tongues and it was different from what I had been taught. It was different from what I had been taught and it wasn't contrived or peer pressured, it was a gift.

-And yet, a few years after that I started studying cessationism. I put these unexplainable gifts on the shelf and took a hard look to see if they were biblical. After a few months I took them back off the shelf and have been speaking in tongues as a private prayer language ever since, not because of my experiences, but because I believe the Bible makes a strong enough case for tongues being active and present in the New Covenant, until the return of Christ.

-Yet, because there are good studies on both sides on the biblical table, I hold it with humility. I have good friends and mentors that would say this gift "*no longer exists today*". At which I smile and ask if they have ever read 1 Corinthians 14, and we laugh. THIS IS NOT A SUBJECT TO DIVIDE OVER! Why? Because it is a secondary issue. And so, if you hold to a view contrary to what I am about to teach, then know I am ok with that. I'll admit... Tongues are weird,

and a little mysterious. And they have been abused, mis-taught, and done in a non-biblical way A LOT. So I get it...

Here's what I would ask, which is not a new request from me for this series... (BLANK SLIDE). Let's start with a clean slate. Try and remove all the assumptions, the misuses, and experiences, and let's simply examine the text.

Context.

The reason why we have great detail about the gift of prophecy and tongues is because of their misuse. Which should give us a clue that the possibility of the ship going off course is easy when it comes to these gifts. Paul is writing in response to a letter the church wrote to him & he is answering their questions.

The New Living Translation takes the liberty adding "your question" in 12:1, *Now, dear brothers and sisters,* regarding your question about the special abilities the Spirit gives us. I don't want you to misunderstand this. 1 Corinthians 12:1 (NLT)*

Not in the original text, but clearly the context of the chapters of spiritual gifts.

We are not sure of their question since we don't have the letter written to Paul, but it would seem there were abuses specifically regarding tongues; 1. Spiritual arrogance and, 2. Misuse in the church gathering, which is awesome, since it provides for us great detail on how this gift works!

What are tongues? The greek word is "Glossa" means in its most basic form, the tongue or language.

Greek lexicon says this about Glossa; *"an utterance having the form of language but requiring an inspired interpreter for an understanding of the content. Most scholars assume that the phenomena described in Ac 2:4 and in 1 Cor 14:2 are significantly different in that in one instance people understood in their own regional language or dialect and in the other instance an interpreter was required. It is for that reason that many interpret "Glossa" in 1 Cor 14:2 as*

ecstatic speech, which was also an element in Hellenistic religions and constituted a symbol of divine inspiration.”¹

Which this context is why some may say, and might in some cases be true, that tongues are a pagan practice; an ecstatic speech inspired by the demonic.

At this point, since it's defined as "not understood by the speaker", I'm going to finish the sermon in tongues and pray you can interpret it yourself, Good luck!

VS 14:1-3, What do we learn?

-Tongues speak not to man but to God, (Vs. 3) In contrast, prophecy is from God to man. **1. Tongues speak to God.**

-What is he speaking? 2. Speaks mysteries in the Spirit.

BUT don't miss the imperative. **Pursue love & earnestly desire spiritual gifts**

-Identifying, stewarding, and glorifying God with the gift you have been given, starts with an earnest desire to do so!

Vs. 4-5,

Builds up himself

Paul DOES NOT say this in a demeaning fashion. In other words, "see, it's to build up yourself. Gifts are to build up the church, therefore this gift should be thrown out! That's as silly as saying we should never have individual devotional and prayer times for self-edification.

Building up: to increase the potential of someone 'to strengthen, to make more able, to build up. [Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament](#)

Tongues are to "increase your potential" to serve the Body of Christ. This has also been my experience.

3. Increases your potential to serve the church

What he is saying, however, that in the context of a church gathering, because tongues are for self edification, they should be kept to yourself UNLESS there is an interpreter.

¹ Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). [Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains](#)

What is the gift of Interpretation of tongues? **"Reporting to the church the general meaning of something spoken in tongues"**

Paul then puts the gift of tongues interpreted on even worth as prophecy BECAUSE they build up the church!

I don't want to miss **verse 5. Read. 4. Paul expressly desires all to speak in tongues.** BUT, not all of us will.

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given... 1 Corinthians 12:4-8a

It goes on to list the gifts, as we talked last week, there are a variety of gifts, to some prophecy, to some tongues, and it's as God wills. But one thing we learn for sure, it's not something we should reject.

Pursue love & earnestly desire spiritual gifts

1. Tongues speak to God

2. Speaks mysteries in the Spirit

3. Increases your potential to serve the church

4. Paul expressly desires all to speak in tongues.

Read vs. 6-12

-Exposit, Paul goes at length to say this...

Strive to excel in building up the church.

And since tongues, unless interpreted, are for increasing your OWN potential, pray or praise in tongues *to yourself* within the gathering. He goes on to make his point.

Read vs. 13-19

5. Pray that you may interpret your your gift of tongues

Read vs. 20-25

Quotes Isaiah 28, using a difficult text to to interpret a difficult text.

-Tongues and prophecy. For believers or not!?!

-Context of Isaiah 28. Prophecy to the Northern Kingdom of Samaria that the Assyrians are coming and with a language they do not understand, they will be led to captivity. A sign of Judgement! Therefore, Paul's point is If people that are checking out the claims of Christ come to church, and they hear a bunch of people speaking a language they do not understand, they will say you are "out of your minds" and leave, missing the only way to come out from judgement! Which is Christ!

Read vs. 26-28 Similar to our first set of information about tongues, we have bookend commands that are like an umbrella informing us the big picture!

Let all things be done for building up

6. two or at most three, and each in turn

7. Let someone interpret

8. No interpreter? keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God.

Read vs. 36-40

9. do not forbid speaking in tongues

But all things should be done decently and in order

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Tongues, Initial Study







1 Corinthians 14

Main Point-Misuse and proper use of tongues and prophecy

Key Words- tongue(s) 16x, Prophecy (prophet) 16x

Key Verse- vs. 40

FCF-Misuse of spiritual gifts

 General  God  Key words  Command  Truth  FCF

[1] Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy. [2] For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit. [3] On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. [4] The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies builds up the church. [5] Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built up.

[6] Now, brothers, if I come to you speaking in tongues, how will I benefit you unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching? [7] If even lifeless instruments, such as the flute or the harp, do not give distinct notes, how will anyone know what is played? [8] And if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle? [9] So with yourselves, if with your tongue you utter speech that is not intelligible, how will anyone know what is said? For you will be speaking into the air. [10] There are doubtless many different languages in the world, and none is without meaning, [11] but if I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be a foreigner to the speaker and the speaker a foreigner to me. [12] So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church.

[13] Therefore, one who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret. [14] For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful. [15] What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also. [16] Otherwise, if you give thanks with your spirit, how can anyone in the position of an outsider say

"Amen" to your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying? [17] For you may be giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not being built up. [18] I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. [19] Nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

[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.

[26] What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up. [27] If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret. [28] But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God. [29] Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. [30] If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent. [31] For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged, [32] and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets. [33] For God is not a God of confusion but of peace.

As in all the churches of the saints, [34] the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. [35] If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.

[36] Or was it from you that the word of God came? Or are you the only ones it has reached? [37] If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. [38] If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized. [39] So, my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. [40] But all things should be done decently and in order. 1 Corinthians 14

Resources and Commentaries

A simple definition is found in Wayne Grudem's Systematic Theology, **Prayer or praise spoken in syllables not understood by the speaker.**²

An explanation of 1 Corinthians 14:20-25 by Wayne Grudem

<http://www.waynegrudem.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/First-Corinthians-Fourteen-Prophecy-and-Tongues-as-Signs-of-Gods-Attitude.pdf>

Systematic Theology by Wayne Grudem (Outline of Chapter 53)³

E. Tongues and Interpretation

1. Tongues in the History of Redemption

- The phenomenon of speaking in tongues is unique to the new covenant age.
- In Genesis 11, unified language was used in rebellion against God to build the tower of Babel. To stop this, God "confused the language of all the earth" (Gen 11:9) and scattered people abroad.
- In God's call of Abraham, one language out of all the languages of the world was used in service to God, whereas in Genesis 11 God was not praised with any language.
- If we look at eternity future, we see that once again unity of language will be restored for God's praise.
- In the New Testament church, there is something of a foretaste of the unity of language that will exist in heaven, but it is given only at some times, and only in a partial way. This is shown at three levels:
 1. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit empowered the disciples to preach such that visitors to Jerusalem heard of God's mighty works in their own languages.
 2. In the church worship service, speaking in tongues plus interpretation gives further indication of a promise that one day the differences in languages that originated in Babel will be overcome.
 3. Private prayer in tongues is another indicator of restoration of fellowship with God (1 Cor 14:14-15).

2. What is Speaking in Tongues?: Prayer or praise spoken in syllables not understood by the speaker.

a. Words of Prayer or Praise Spoken to God

- They are unlike prophecy, which is directed from God to people in the church. (1 Cor 14:2).
- Paul categorizes speech in tongues as praying and giving thanks (14:28). Therefore speaking in tongues apparently is praying or praise

² Systematic Theology, Wayne Grudem. Chapter 53, Gifts of the Holy Spirit, pg. 1070

³ <http://www.waynegrudem.com/test/2009/021509.pdf>

directed to God, and it comes from the "spirit" of the person who is speaking.

b. Not Understood by the Speaker

- In Acts 2, even though the listeners heard the message in their own languages, the speakers did not understand what they themselves were saying. Tongues may, at times, be in actual human languages.

- Some have objected that speaking in tongues must always consist of speech in known human languages, since that is what happened at Pentecost. But the fact that this happened once in Scripture does not require that it always happen that way, especially when 1 Cor 14 indicates the opposite. Paul does not say that foreign visitors to Corinth will understand the speaker, but "no one" will (1 Cor 14:2, 16).

- Also, 1 Cor 14 is Paul's general instruction based on a wide experience of tongue-speaking in many different churches, while Acts 2 simply describes a unique event at a significant turning point in redemptive history.

c. Prayer With the Spirit, Not With the Mind (1 Cor 14:14-15)

- Paul is not talking about the Holy Spirit praying through us, but rather our spirit praying directly to God, even though his mind does not have to formulate words and sentences and decide what to pray for.

- Why would God give such a gift? Perhaps to keep us humble and to prevent intellectual pride. Also, it reminds us that God is greater than our understanding; he works in ways that transcend our understanding. He works in the unseen, spiritual realm in regeneration, genuine prayer, worship "in spirit and in truth," spiritual warfare, etc.

d. Not Ecstatic but Self-controlled (1 Cor 14:27-28)

e. Tongues Without Interpretation

- As Paul indicates in 1 Corinthians 14:27-28 (see above), if no one known to have the gift of interpretation is present in the assembly, speaking in tongues should be done in private.

- This practice of private speaking in tongues is confirmed by Paul's words. (1 Cor 14:4,15)

- Paul says if believers speak in tongues without interpretation in church, they will be acting/thinking as "children." - In the context of Isaiah 28 (here quoted by Paul), God is warning the rebellious people of Israel that the next words they heard from him would be words of foreigners that they could not understand--the Assyrian army would come on them as agents of God's judgment.

- In 1 Cor 14:22, Paul uses the word "sign" to mean "sign of God's attitude." Tongues that are not understood by outsiders are a negative sign—a sign of judgment. By contrast, Paul says that prophecy is a positive sign of God's blessing, which is "for believers" (22).

f. Tongues With Interpretation: Edification for the Church (1 Cor 14:5)

- In the case that tongues are interpreted, Paul says that the message in tongues is as valuable to the church as prophecy. He does not say they have the same function, but they have equal value in edifying the church.

- Interpretation: Reporting to the church the general meaning of something spoken in tongues.

g. Not All Speak in Tongues (1 Cor 12:30)

- The implied answer to each of Paul's questions is "no." The context is clear that this is not only referring to public expression of this gift, but having the gift of tongues in any form.

- It would not be surprising if the Holy Spirit gave a widespread distribution of this gift and many Christians received it.

h. What About the Danger of Demonic Counterfeit?

- This is not Paul's concern, even in Corinth. (1 Cor 12:3)

i. Is Romans 8:26-27 Related to Speaking in Tongues?

- Paul does not mention speaking in tongues explicitly here, and the statement is a general one concerning the life of all Christians, so it does not seem correct to say that Paul is referring to speaking in tongues.

- Paul is speaking of the inarticulate sighs and groans which we ourselves utter in prayer, which the Holy Spirit then makes into effective intercession before the throne of God.

- There is some similarity with speaking in tongues in that we pray even though we do not understand fully what we