

## **Miracles, Healings and Tongues**

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 1214

Now we've been studying these gifts and the principles upon which these gifts operate. We found out that it's very important that all believers minister their gifts for the building of the body. If the body is built, then the witness is effective because the building of the body brings unity and unity brings single testimony to the world.

Specifically, we began to enumerate the spiritual gifts. We found in 1 Corinthians 12 a list of them and also in Romans 12, a list. We put the list together and we came up with, first of all, with what we chose to call the permanent edifying gifts. These gifts were given for the building of believers. They are to be ministered among the believers and they build believers up individually, and thus they build the body up as a total.

But there were also some other gifts that were not designed for edifying the body. They were designed to confirm the Word to unbelievers. These gifts did not have a design in connection with the church itself, but with unbelievers. They were to confirm the Word. For example, three preachers came to town and all three preached different messages, and you were living in the time of the New Testament era, whom would you believe? Well, you would be likely to believe the one who performed the miracles. Even as Nicodemus said to Jesus, "We know that you're a teacher come from God because nobody could do what you do except," what? "God be with Him." It was obvious that Jesus was from God because there were miracles confirming His testimony.

He claimed it and then He said, "If you cannot believe what I say, believe me for the very," what? "works' sake." The confirmation of the claims of Christ was miracles. Miracles were never ends in themselves. They were always signs pointing to His claims.

Now, when the church continued, the early church, the apostolic era, these gifts were given to confirm the word of the apostles and the prophets. This is clear in Scripture. They were given certain miracle gifts. They were not for the church. They were not for believers. They were for unbelievers to confirm to them that the message preached by the apostles and prophets was, in fact, from God.

Now, there are four of these gifts listed in the New Testament: miracles, healing, tongues, and the interpretation tongues – or better, languages and the translation of languages. That's the exact Greek rendering. Now, they have no continuing role in the body we believe from Scripture, as we shall see, but existed for the apostolic era, designed to confirm the Word before the New Testament canon was complete and specifically while God was still directly doing signs in the face of Israel. We'll get into that.

Now let me suggest their nature from several passages. Mark chapter 16, and we just want to look at these passages. While you're looking up Mark 16 let me just say this. I trust and pray that you will hear what I say this morning as it is given. I believe and I have many dear and precious friends who

are involved in movements that believe these gifts are for today. I have preached in their churches. I have fellowshipped with them as believers in Jesus Christ. At all points we agree to disagree when we run into each other at this point. I desire not to ride by hobbyhorse. I trust and pray to God that I'm not that deductive, but to be objective with Scripture. I am open to anything that the Spirit of God will teach me. I pray that. I pray that God will keep my tongue from saying anything that is not of Him. At the same time, knowing that it's an awful tough thing for Him to get past my blind spots.

Nevertheless, what I say, I say in love and yet I say with a boldness that can only be mine from study of the Word of God, and I trust that you'll hear it in that way. It is no reflection upon the salvation and the genuineness of many people who are involved.

All right, Mark 16:14. All we're trying to do is bring it all to the light of Scripture. Mark 16:14, "Afterward, He appeared unto the eleven as they sat eating and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart because they believe not those who had seen Him after He had risen." You remember the testimony came to the disciples that Jesus was risen, and they weren't too sure about that. "And He said unto them," verse 15, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow those who believe."

Now He says to the 11 that attending your message to confirm the faith of those who believe will be certain signs. "In My name shall they cast out demons," and here He, I believe, is talking directly about the 11. "They shall cast out demons; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; they shall drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them." That is, they can take poison with no effect. "They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."

Now, here is an interesting thing. Here is a scripture that suggests to us that these who were to go out and proclaim the message would have attendant miracles. Really, all of the four gifts that we talk about are here. The gift of miracles, for example, would certainly be the ability to take up serpents and drink any deadly thing and not be hurt. That is a miracle. The gift of healing is indicated here. It says that they will be able to lay hands on the sick, and they will recover. Tongues is indicated here as it says, they will speak with new languages.

All of those gifts then are represented here as our Lord promises to the 11 that they should be confirmed by these gifts and by these miracles. Now, if today we are to assume that anyone still has all of this that is meant for them, then we must find ourselves agreeing with the Appalachian snake handlers and with those who would perhaps from the Church of the Firstborn, it's called, drink poison and so forth and so on. It doesn't work like they want it to work very often. Nevertheless, if we take part, we must take all because it says, "These signs shall follow those who believe." If it's a permanent thing, then we're stuck with the whole thing.

Second Corinthians 12:12. We continue just to look at some passages to set a frame of reference. Second Corinthians 12:12. Paul's talking about his apostleship here, and he's verifying the fact that he was an apostle by saying this, "Truly," now watch it, a definite article, "the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, in wonders, and mighty deeds. Definite article. Not some signs; "these signs." A definite identification of certain signs given to apostles. "These signs of an apostle." The apostles had certain signs granted to them. Now, what were they? Well, apparently they were granted back in Mark 16.

Now, for a further word, I want you to notice Hebrews 2. Now remember, the book of Hebrews was written to just who it says: Hebrews to Jews, which becomes very important. Verse 3 of chapter 2, "How should we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord." Of course, they didn't hear it from Him, but it, "Was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him."

Now the word "confirmed" means made believable or made finally true. That which was affirmed or stated was confirmed, made believable. How? Verse 4, "God bearing them witness with signs, wonders, diverse miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit." Now, these certain gifts of the Holy Spirit were to confirm the Word in the hearing of these Jews. That's exactly what the passage says. "These words were confirmed to us." The preaching was done. The confirmation came through the deeds done by the gifts of the Spirit given to the apostles.

So we conclude then that certain spiritual gifts called gifts of the Holy Spirit were the signs of an apostle. They had, therefore, their significance in the apostolic ministry, which was a foundational ministry. In the early church, when there were myriad voices giving all kinds of messages, God confirmed the truth by these special gifts granted to apostles to confirm in the hearing of those who heard.

Warfield, Benjamin Warfield, perhaps not superseded by any as a biblical scholar in his own right, and that in itself is not an accreditation; only a statement of fact – said this, "These miracle gifts were part of the credentials of the apostles as the authoritative agents of God in founding the church. Their function thus confined them to distinctively the apostolic church and they necessarily passed away with it." If we believe that Ephesians 2:20 says that the apostles and the prophets were the foundation, then the signs of an apostle went when the apostles went. If the signs of the apostles were the confirming gifts of the Holy Spirit, then we can tie the whole thing together. We can see then that as the apostles passed from the scene, so did the gifts of the Spirit given to them as confirming signs passed from the scene with them.

Now, certain passages in Acts specifically assign and associate these gifts to the apostles. Just to pull out maybe one here in Acts 14:3 just to give you an idea, it just says this, "A long time therefore abode they," Paul and Barnabas in Iconium, "abode they there speaking boldly in the Lord, who gave testimony under the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands."

Here's an example of how God used these gifts. They would preach, and their preaching would be confirmed as divine because they did miracles. Now, I don't believe that the church today needs this kind of confirmation. The church today does not need confirmation. I can tell you right now if three people come into town and all three have a different message, I can tell you immediately who is from God. The standard is not who does miracles. What's the standard? The Bible, because here is that standard that God has granted to confirm anybody's message.

Paul even said in 1 Corinthians 14 to the prophets, he said, "When you prophesy, be sure that you prophecy ties into the doctrine that I've taught you." So we must be careful then to realize that the verifier today of any man's message or of any man's experience or of anything spiritual is the Word of God. It is the final test and is the final authority and rule of faith and practice. So we cannot assume then that these verifying or confirming gifts any longer are needed to confirm the Word. The

Word is established.

To say that we need miracle signs today, particularly of all places in our society in America and in churches where the Word is in everybody's hands, is to overlook or deny the finality and the authority of Scripture. I'm reminded of Luke 16:31 where it says, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither would they believe the one who rose from the dead." When you have the Scripture, that suffices. That's the point. Even by the time Paul wrote Ephesians, he says, "There will be evangelists and teaching shepherds." He says, "They will build the body," but he makes no mention at all of any of these miraculous gifts. Then when you read Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus, you find that the tool is the Word of God. He continually says, "Teach sound doctrine. Teach sound doctrine."

Now if, in fact, these confirming gifts do exist today, as some say they do, if they do exist today, then they would accompany great Bible teachers, or they would accompany people who are giving out the gospel in lands where there was no Bible to confirm their message. But they would not accompany groups of Christians who have in their hands the Scripture. That has absolutely no significance at all. It has nothing to do with the biblical gift. The great historic Bible teachers agree that these gifts do not belong to them. If you go back in history and trace the men who have committed unto us, the great works of theology, they were not involved in this. These gifts were for apostolic times then as a foundation ministry.

Now, let's look at the gifts specifically, and we can only do a cursory look at them. First of all, the gift of miracles, 1 Corinthians 12:10. In listing the gifts, he talks about miracles, the working of miracles. Now, you say, "MacArthur, are you telling me that miracles have ceased?" No, I don't think miracles have ceased. I know they're going on all over the place. I've seen miracles constantly. God is a God of miracles. You say, "Well, give me the definition of a miracle." A miracle is no big thing. Everybody gets all – the unbeliever gets all upset about a miracle. It's nothing. It's nothing.

Let me show you what I mean. We live in a little natural world. Let's call it a pond, okay? Our little pond. We say everything in our little pond is just the way it ought to be. Well, a miracle is no different than God, if He exists, sticking His finger in the pond and making a ripple. I mean if there's a God up there, then a miracle is no big thing. It's just like throwing a rock in a pond, and the ripples go on. Pretty soon, the pond calms down and goes back to normal. Read C.S. Lewis's book on miracles. He covers the whole subject very aptly. A miracle is God just sticking His finger in the pond and making a ripple. If there is a God and He made the pond, He can stick His finger in it any time He wants. So a miracle is nothing to get upset about. In fact, miracles prove God exists. That's why the German rationalists crucified their souls when they eliminated all of the miracles from the Bible. They came up with humanistic philosophy. No, God does do miracles. Miracles go on all the time, miracles of healing.

I even believe that God could give to a missionary somewhere the ability to speak a language he didn't know. That's a miracle. I don't think that's the biblical gift of tongues. That was an apostolic gift, but I think God can do miracles with people's mouths as much as He can do with any other part of their body. God still does miracles. We see Him do them all of the time. The greatest miracle He does is the miracle of a new birth. I mean I'm a miracle. He had to be powerful to change me. Like the little boy said, "It's not even finished yet."

Our Lord, when He was on earth, did many miracles. He always did them to attest to His truth, but

God today may do some miracles so that you can give your testimony, and someone could say, "Well, a God that can do that must be real." That may be true, but no longer to substantiate written revelation, which is a closed system. So I'm not saying that miracles have ceased. I'm only saying that miracles are different today and that the gift of miracles has ceased because it was apostolic.

You can study the history of miracles, and you'll find there were four great periods of miracles in the Bible. At the other periods in the Bible, they just don't even exist. The period of Moses, a time of miracles. The period of Elijah and Elisha, again. Then a great long period of time with no miracles, and then all of the sudden during the life of Christ and the apostolic era. Miracles had a limited purpose and a limited time always, and people just don't continually do miracles. The gift of miracles today, we believe, has ceased with the ceasing of the apostolic era. To be able to drink poison, to be able to walk around and perform all kinds of wonders and signs and mighty deeds is something that belonged to that era.

There is nothing in all of Paul's writings to Timothy about being an evangelist and a pastor to Titus – there is nothing at all about miracles. There is no indication of the doing of miracles as even an emphasis in Paul's own life. After he went to Philippi for a period of two years at least, it says nothing about miracles. There never was any record of miracles in Antioch, in Corinth, in Thessalonica, Derbe, Berea, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. Very limited, very temporary.

I was driving to Hume Lake, and I passed a big tent out in the vacant lot, and the sign outside said, "Miracle services. Miracles Monday through Friday." Miracles Monday through Friday. Assembly line miracles.

We believe that the Word of God to us says nothing about the gift of miracles for this age, but that those are the gifts of the apostles. They have been temporary in any age, and with the completion of the New Testament Scripture, the authentication of any messenger is not his ability to do miracles, but his ability to teach the Word accurately. Adherence to the Word is now the attestation of any man. We could say more about it, but let's go on.

Healing. What about healing? This is certainly a miraculous gift in its basic indication in 1 Corinthians 12, as it's listed there as the ability to heal. "To another" it says, "healing," verse 9. Now, do you say that then God doesn't heal the sick? Of course not. God heals the sick. He restores the sick, but there are no people today walking around who, at will, heal everybody in response to a gift as in the apostolic era. Today God heals by His sovereign will and in response to prayer. You can find even if you go into the book of James, and maybe you ought to look at chapter 5 for just a moment with me. James, incidentally, was written before 1 Corinthians. It says in the book of James in verse 13, "Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray." Verse 14, "Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church. Let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith shall save the sick." That's what it says. "God shall raise him up."

Even in James, which may be the first book in the New Testament in terms of chronology, maybe the oldest, even in the book of James when anybody was sick, it doesn't say, "Go get the one who has the gift of healing." It says, "Pray for him." God never intended the gift of healing to have any real particular relationship with the church at all. This was a sign to confirm the Word to unbelievers. You can study Jesus Christ and you will find that those He healed were unbelievers. He was involved in confirming His claims in the minds of unbelievers. When the church got sick, they prayed for each other, and God answered prayer.

I believe the gift of healing enabled one who was an apostle or a prophet as a proclaimer of the Word to be confirmed in the minds of unbelievers by miracles. I say again, if the gift of healing existed today, it would not belong to so-called healers. It would belong to Bible teachers. It would belong to people who were out proclaiming the gospel as a confirmation that it was true; not to a certain segment of the people, revivalists or whatever we call them.

Even in the later year of the apostles' ministry, this thing began to wane. It's interesting isn't it that Paul, when Timothy was sick, said to him, "I know how to get yourself fixed up. Take a little wine for your stomach's sake." Now if there was the gift of healing around, somebody could have taken care of it a lot easier than that. I've often thought too, wasn't it interesting in 2 Timothy 4 that Paul says, "I left Trophimus at Miletus sick." Now, if Paul has the gift of miracles at that time and the gift of healing, he could well have healed Trophimus, but there never seems to be any instance in the New Testament where this gift is ever exercised toward a believer.

Yet in all of this healing that's going on today, so much of this is just all these people who have historically been in the church getting in these long lines to get healed. That doesn't follow the biblical pattern.

I was interested this week, and certainly wouldn't classify all of them in this category, but the testimony of this Marjo Gortner. I don't know if you heard about it, but he finally told all. He was the one who at four years old was supposed to have the gift of healing, and his parents put him on the stage as it were, and he began a ministry of healing and went on and on. It was an interesting thing that I was with my dad last week, and we were sitting there talking about this. He said, "You know, I ought to go see that movie. They just made a movie about it because they called me on the phone when they were making that movie," my dad said, "And they asked me if they could use a news release and a news interview that I did when he was only four years old, and they came to my church and asked me what my opinion was." He said, "I told them what my opinion was; that it was a fake, that it was a hoax, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera."

Now, I don't know whether he's in that movie or not. He doesn't either. Anyway, apparently, the movie exposes the whole thing as a fraud. He said, and I heard him say it on Dick Cabot or somewhere, that he didn't know of one really physically legitimate healing in all the years of doing it. But he was aware of the fact that there was a great service done to people who has psychological problems. He was also aware of the fact that the people who there on Monday night were back on Thursday with a new disorder, and that's very common.

I did a study in college on this whole thing, and this came up again and again and again and again. So we have to be very careful in understanding the biblical directives for healing. I believe God heals, but I believe He heals in response to His sovereignty and in response to prayer. If there are people today who seem to see God heal in response to their ministry, then I say from Scriptural evidence, they may have the gift of faith to which God responds as they pray. But the gifts of healing were apostolic, and they could go about healing the unbelieving to confirm the Word. Thus, when the Word came, that gift ceased to have any point.

Don't forget for a minute too that some of the healings may be real. God may desire to heal somebody. Satan also can heal. Matthew 7, read it. You can read about it in Acts 8. You can read

about it in Acts 13. Satan can heal. In fact, Jesus Christ did all of this, and they finally concluded that He was from Satan, didn't they? What He did, He did by the power of Beelzebub. They were so familiar with the fact that Satan could counterfeit everything, that the Jews assigned Jesus to Satan and said, "It's Satan doing the healing. Satan can do these things." The idea that certain people can heal in an assembly line fashion is non-biblical. I've often thought if they really had the gift of healing, they'd be in the hospitals, not in tents. They'd be going to unbelievers, and they'd be preaching the gospel and confirming the Word to them.

So the gift of healing, and we should do a study all on that entire thing sometimes in the future because it is important. So the gift of healing, again, never was intended for believers, never was intended as a permanent thing. It was a sign of the apostles. It was one of the gifts of apostles. Today and even at the oldest book in the New Testament, James, the injunction is, "Pray for the sick."

All right, then thirdly, we come to the tongues and interpretation. We'll take that together because we're not going to spend a lot of time but just some biblical thoughts. I want you to consider several things in regard to this. What was the gift of tongues, and what is its use? Now, the gift of tongues as it's known thanks to the King James, should be known as the gift of languages. The word is *glossa*. It's the traditional, historic word for language. It doesn't really mean anything but language. The gift was a Spirit-given ability to speak a foreign language. It was just a miracle that God could use as a sign to confirm the Word.

The most important thing that happened in Acts 2 was the preaching of Peter, right? That tremendous sermon. It was in response to that sermon that 3,000 people repented, right? But what really confirmed in their minds that Peter's sermon was from God? What was it? It was all those people speaking in their own languages the wonderful works of God. It was a confirming gift. It was intended for unbelievers. It only pointed to the sermon. It never was an end in itself. It only was a pointing of a sign to hear the sermon. It was a confirming gift. How else would they know it was from God? Well, when they saw that miracle, where else could they assign that thing? When they heard Peter, after having done this, stand up and preach, in effect they said, "Oh! After that miracle, we must assume this is God's message." At least the 3,000 believed that.

Now, let me take it a step further. In addition, tongues was a sign only – I'll say it again - only to Jews. It never had any point to Gentiles. In Acts 2, Jews. In Acts 10, "They of the circumcision heard it and believed." All the way through Acts, every time tongues occurs, Jews are present. It is pointless to Gentiles. So we've concluded two things: it was pointed among believers; it is pointless among gentiles. So then, look at the movement today where a lot of Gentile believers do it each other. It is totally anti-biblical.

Now, let me show you what I mean by that. Look at chapter 14, verse 21. First Corinthians 14:21 says this, "In the law it is written." Here he goes back to the Old Testament. Isaiah 28:11, Isaiah 28:11. "In the law it is written: 'With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people.'" That little phrase, "this people" refers in the context of Isaiah, to Israel. So God says, "I am going to talk to Israel, but I'm going to talk to Israel with other – ." It doesn't really say "men of" in the original. It just says, "With other tongues and other lips." "I am going to talk to Israel with a miracle of the mouth," is what He says. "With tongues and other lips, I am going to talk to Israel."

That's the whole point of tongues. It was to Israel. "This people" only refers to them. Now, watch in

verse 22, “Wherefore, tongues are for a sign. Tongues are for a sign.” What does a sign always do? It always point to something else. Here it is always pointing to the gospel, always, always to the gospel. Now watch, “It is a sign not to them that believe.” Tongues never had any point to believers. It never had any meaning to believers. That’s the whole problem in Corinth. They were exalting this thing, pushed it all out of whack, confused it with the oracles that they were so familiar with in their pagan worship in which there was much ecstatic speech. They had the whole mishmash going on there, and Paul was trying to straighten it out without totally eliminating it because there are a lot of Jews still in Corinth.

He knows that there are times when it can be used to confirm the Word to an unbelieving Jew. So, in straightening it out, he says, “First of all, get it right. It is not to them that believe.” Yet today in this movement, all you ever hear is that you’re not a real Christian until you’ve done it. All these Christians – or you’re not the fullest kind of Christian you should be. I shouldn’t say real; that would be inaccurate. You haven’t experienced the fullness of the whole thing. Then you have a whole lot of Christians doing it to each other. There is no reason for that. They have all the revelation God ever intended right here in this book. When the Word of Christ dwells in them richly, which is what it is to be filled with the Spirit, they will experience all of the experience there is to experience. So we see it’s got to be brought to the test of Scripture.

Now, in quoting from Isaiah 28:11, He assigns it definitely to Israel. Now I take it a step further in verse 22. “Tongues are not for them that believe, but to them that believe not.” What “them that believe not”? The Jews, who believe not. Then he says, “Why don’t you try preaching? That’s good for everybody. That’s good for those who believe.” He says, in effect, to the Corinthians, “You don’t need any more experience, folks. You need doctrine.” That was their problem.

Now, watch verse 23. This is confusing if you don’t understand it. “If therefore, the whole church be come together.” Here’s what was going on in Corinth. They had all the Christians who would get together. This is the whole church, you see, Christians, in the one place and they’re all speaking with tongues. They’re all really going on and on, speaking in all these languages. Perhaps, most of them weren’t languages at all, but just kind of gibberish. We’ll talk about that in a minute. “There come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say they are mad?”

Now, you say, “Well, wait a minute. It doesn’t make sense.” In verse 22 it says, “Tongues are a sign to that that believe not.” In verse 23 it says, “If them that believe not come in, they’ll think you’re mad if you do it.” You say, “What’s the difference?” The difference is this: they are a sign to Jews that believe not. Corinth was not a Jewish city. What was it? It was a Gentile city, Greeks. The problem was Gentiles were coming in, and they couldn’t figure out what was going on. They were having to be exposed to a phenomenon God never intended for a Gentile. That’s what Paul has to mean here. They’re coming into your assembly, and you’re all doing that.

I’ll give you an illustration. I have a Gentile neighbor who lives next door to me, right next door, and we’ve been endeavoring to share Christ with this lady and her husband. My wife has shared with her. I’ve shared with her. I went to visit her in the hospital when she had a severe heart attack, and prayed with her and explained that gospel and all of this. We’ve been through it and really endeavoring to win them to Christ. They come out of a very difficult background, a religious background, which is always the hardest to get people to Christ because they’re very religious people, very good people.



We have really been working and praying and passing back and forth information and giving them tapes and having them turn on the *Voice of Calvary* and watch it on TV, and just everything we could do. She came over to my wife the other – just, all broken up and just really a mess and said, “Boy, I’ve got to ask you about something.” She said, “A lady came over and took me to a meeting,” and she said, “Those people were crazy.” So my wife probed a little bit, and this lady had come and taken her, an unbelieving Gentile, into a tongues thing. She had sat there and she concluded the whole thing was mishmash and slammed the door shut on our opportunity to communicate Christ to her.

She thinks that people who would do that are out of their minds. Since they name the name of Christ and they carry the Bible, and they go through the same thing we go through, we must be a part of the thing. She likes us, so she doesn’t go that far, but in her mind that’s what’s happening. Exactly what Paul said, that is never intended for Gentiles. That was a special sign God gave to Jews in a special era.

Now mark this, beloved; that is clear from Scripture that it was to Jews. That is clear. We cannot argue with that. That is not my opinion. That is the Word of God that says that. Now, if in 70 A.D., God destroyed Jerusalem and stopped dealing with Israel and turned to the Gentiles, then by that fact alone tongues had to cease because God no longer is in the business of giving special signs to Israel, true? He has for the time temporarily done what to Israel? Set them aside and what? Blinded them. The signs to Israel are over to the present time; therefore, this as a sign to Israel has ceased. If it has ceased as a sign to Israel, that’s all it ever was to begin with. It must have ceased.

Now, what are we saying? We’re trying to bring to the testimony of Scripture all these truths. Now, today what we have is an out of context exaltation of this gift in verse 20. It says, “Brethren, be not children in understanding: however, in malice be children, but in understanding be men.” Immaturity is to take a gift overlooking the purpose for which it was given and to use it for another purpose or to pervert it. This gift has clear design by God. Always to unbelievers. Had no point, never had any point in building the body. It never had an effect on the body, and always to Jewish unbelievers. Every time tongues is ever seen in the New Testament Jews are present. Because they weren’t present in Corinth, it is condemned. Yet, He allows for it to exist because of the tremendous Jewish population moving in and out of the Corinth center of commerce.

Read Acts 18. There were Jews there, and so the gift needed to be in Corinth because of the many Jews, and it could be rightly used toward those Jews. But it had been pushed way out of whack, and especially so since those Corinthians had come out of the oracles and that which involved ecstatic speech was a part of their whole worship. There’s a recent study being done on this to go into the history of this thing. It’s been found that they spoke in ecstatic languages. They call it the “language of the gods” and they dragged this in and confused the whole mess. Paul, in love, is endeavoring to straighten the issue out.

Let me add another thing. In addition, it was always a known language. It may have been foreign to the speaker, but it was always genuine. There are many reasons for that. In Acts 2, *glossa* means languages, and it lists them: Parthians, Medes, Elamites, dwellers of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Cretans, Arabians. Right on down, it tells exactly which languages they were. It even uses *gene glossa* in 1 Corinthians, which means “kinds.” *Gene, genos*, from which we get “genus”, kinds of languages, varieties of languages. There couldn’t be varieties of gibberish. Gibberish is just gibberish. So it has to be languages and varieties.

Then when it says, "The gift of interpretation of tongues," that's the word *hermeneia* which means "translation of languages." These were languages. In 1 Corinthians 14:7, he even says it's got to have grammatical structure. It says, "Even things without life giving sound, whether flute or harp, except they give a distinction of the sounds, how shall it be known whether it's piped or harped?" They were just mumbling. These Corinthians had just really perverted the whole thing, and he says, "It's not even distinct. It's not genuine. It can't be translated." So these things must be brought to our attention.

Now, according to modern linguists, can we look at the tongues movement today and conclude that it is language? Well, I give you the testimony of a man, and there are many things about this that we could talk about. Let me just give you this thought. William Samarin has recently written a book, and it's the title I think of *The Tongues of Men and Angels*. Now, he's a linguistics expert. His life has been spent studying linguistics. He has a Ph.D. in linguistics. He is the professor of linguistics at the University of Toronto in Canada. He was raised in the United States in the Russian Molokan community in a part of it that was totally absorbed in tongues. He spent his entire life as a child growing up in the tongues thing. He finally decided to study this thing, and he spent most of his life studying it.

He said this, "Over the period of years, I have taken part in these tongues meetings in Italy, Holland, Jamaica, Canada, United States," et cetera. "I have observed old fashioned Pentecostals and neo-Pentecostals." That's 1960 on. That's the new movement in all the denominations. "I have been in small meetings in private homes as well as mammoth public meetings. I have seen such different cultural settings as are found among the Puerto Ricans of the Bronx, the snake handlers of the Appalachians, Russian Molokans in Los Angeles, the Pocomanias in Jamaica," et cetera. He goes on.

"I have interviewed tongues speakers and tape-recorded and analyzed countless samples of tongues. In every case, in every case," he says, "glossolalia turns out to be linguistic nonsense. In spite of superficial similarities, glossolalia is fundamentally not language." Now, that's the testimony of a linguistics expert. This has been the findings of many of them.

Now, let me say this. As I said earlier if, you say, "Does that mean that God could not do this today, that it couldn't be genuine?" No. Who would ever say that about God? Who would ever say God couldn't do anything except lie? That's what the Bible says. But let's say this, if God desired to give some missionary the ability to speak a language he didn't know for the sake of communicating the gospel at a crisis situation, He could do that. That's not the gift of tongues. That's just a miracle God performed on the spot.

This gift was for Jews. It was always a known language. It was not so much to speak the gospel, as it was to show a divine supernatural act that they might hear the gospel when it was preached. The true gift was always a known language, always an unbeliever's sign, and always a Jewish unbeliever. It has absolutely no point for believers, and that's what's so hard for so many people to understand. There are believers just getting together and speaking to each other in tongues, which is not what the biblical pattern is all about.

Now, you say, "Well, how did the Corinthians abuse it?" Well, when we study 1 Corinthians, which

we'll do in some years from now, decades, whatever, we'll find out that they abused this like they abused everything. Any way possible to abuse it, they abused it. That church was a mess. There was division, carnality, sexual perversion, lawsuits between Christians, moral abuses of the believer's body, ignorance of marriage relationship, ignorance of the purpose of virginity, violations of Christian liberty, insubordination of women, abuses of the Lord's Supper, ignorance of spiritual things, even the denial of the resurrection of the body. That was a messed up church.

So when you come to 14, you expect them to be messed up in the area of spiritual gifts and truly they are. So Paul writes to correct the abuses. In chapter 14, just a couple of things he says. In verse 1, "Follow after love." All the gifts that are ministered, truly are ministered in love. Theirs wasn't ministered in love, but in division, carnality; therefore, it wasn't the true gift. "Desire spiritual gifts." That is, in your congregation when you come together, desire that God minister to you through the gifts. "But rather the gift of prophecy or preaching." He defines that gift in verse 3 as speaking to edification, exhortation, and comfort.

Then in verse 2 he says – and this is what they were doing, "He that speaks in a tongue speaks not unto men, but unto God." You're speaking mysteries in your spirit. Why don't you do something we can all benefit from? Like teach, preach, which presupposes study, which is where you get spiritual truth, which is how you grow. At best, verse 4, he says, "You are liable to edify yourself," which is selfish. We have same problem today, is selfishness in exercising this thing. Oh, we must not be selfish. The exercise of spiritual gift, in its true sense, is selfless. It is to build you up. It is not to build me up. It is not to be centered on me at all, but for me to go out and create some kind of a spiritual experience for myself is the height of selfishness. But to minister edification to everybody else, what a blessed thing that is.

As I say, He must allow for it to exist for the sake of Jews, so He puts some qualifications on it in verse 27. In the church of Corinth, "If any man speak in a tongue, only two and only three," because they were just going all over the place. Only two and only three. Any time they meet together and God designs to do this, there may have been unbelieving Jews there that needed this gift to be ministered. Only two and three and that, one at a time, and with an interpreter. If you don't have an interpreter, verse 28, then don't say anything. Just sit there and pray. Verse 28, "Speak to yourself and God."

Then he says this, verse 34, "Let your women keep silent in the churches." Now if that was adhered to, 75 percent of the movement would be over tomorrow because it's dominated so much by women. "For it is not permitted unto them to speak." You see, that was the problem. Women had taken this thing and run away with it.

Now, what have we seen? Well, we've seen that Paul puts some very strict regulations on its use, even in Corinth, and then shows us its significance. We know that it was for Jews and for unbelieving Jews. Therefore, when God ceased to deal with Jews, He ceased to give signs to Israel. There ceased to be any need for this gift because that's what it was, a sign to Israel. In Corinth, it became a massive confusion.

Now, we've talked about how we know it's ceased. Our theology tells us that. It had a temporary purpose; we see that. But let me give you another thought, 1 Corinthians 13:8. If we look at verse 8, I think we'll see a good place to begin. "Love never fails." Hmm, then he must be going to compare it with something that does. "Whether there be prophecies, they shall *katarge*," be rendered

inoperative or be superseded. “Whether there be tongues, they shall cease,” *pau*, stop. “Whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.” Now, the word “vanish away” in connection with knowledge and “done away” in connection with prophecy, same word, *katarge*. I means rendered inoperative or superseded.

Now, prophecy and knowledge will be superseded. What it means is that there will come a fulfillment when all prophecy and knowledge will be superseded by full knowledge. What about tongues? Well, that’s a different word altogether. Tongues shall not be rendered inoperative. Tongues doesn’t even appear in verses 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13, which talks about when the perfect thing comes. Tongues is already gone. It says this, “Whether there be tongues, they shall *pau*,” P-A-U-O, cease. The word in the active voice means to make to cease. In the passive voice, it means to cease by itself. Tongues shall cease by themselves.

Now watch this; this is interesting. It says, “Tongues shall cease by themselves. Knowledge, it will be rendered inoperative. Prophecy rendered inoperative.” Then he goes on to talk about those two in verse 9. “We know in part, we prophesy in part.” Tongues has already vanished. He goes on to talk about the perfect thing coming. Then he goes on to talk about prophecy and knowledge, but no tongues anymore.

Now, if we understand that it was a gift to the Jews, we can assume that it sopped at least by 70 A.D., true? When Jerusalem was destroyed and God began to work with the Gentiles. Since we look at the Greek word carefully, and Paul chose a very distinct word, we could translate it in a vernacular sense, “Tongues shall fizzle out by itself.” That’s what it means. It’ll just stop all by itself. You see the difference? He uses a different verb and a different voice and a different tense. He must be wanting to say a different thing.

You say, “Well, when did it fizzle out?” Well, as I said, the indication at least would be 70 A.D. as a good starting place. Listen to what George Dollar says from Dallas Seminary. I read, “Some 35 years ago, a distinguished American educator, Dr. George Cutten of Colgate University took a close look at any historical instances of the speaking in tongues. After research, it was Cutten’s conclusion that in the ancient church, the church of the fathers, there was not one well-attested instance of any person who exercised speaking in tongues or even pretended to exercise it.”

“In the early church,” listen to it again, “the church of the fathers, the first centuries, there was not one well-attested instance of any person exercising tongues.” Apparently, historically it stopped all by itself, just as Paul said it would. The voice of church history then is also against the modern movement and would label it as unhistorical.

Cleon Rogers says this, “After examining the testimony of the early Christian leaders,” and he spent much time and study as a historian in this. He says, “Whose ministry represents practically every era of the Roman Empire, from 100 to 400, it appears that the miraculous gifts of the first century died out. They cannot be found in those first 400 years of the church.”

Now, you can say, “Well, yes there was. There was Montanus and there was Tertullian in the early church,” and you’re right. But Montanus was a heretic, who was branded as demon-possessed, and claimed that God only spoke through him, and he was the one in whom the Holy Spirit dwelt and he alone. Now, that guy has got a problem, and Tertullian was his disciple.

Now, during the Dark Ages, there was some Catholics that spoke in tongues. The Shakers was the first modern American sect. They were celibate. They were communistic, and their leader was Mother Ann Lee, who said the Second Coming was fulfilled in her. The Seventh Article of Faith in Mormonism advocates tongues. It's a part of Mormonism. The modern movement was born in the Azusa Street Meeting in 1914.

Now, beloved, listen to this. If tongues ceased historically around 70 A.D. or the end of the first century, and then for 1,800 plus years they didn't exist, what is there to make us believe that what's going on today is real? I mean has the Spirit of God sucked out that strategic gift for 1,800 years of the church? There's nothing in the Bible to say it will be re-given again. Where has it been for 1,800 years if it's an integral part of the life of the church? Has the Spirit of God made a gross mistake? I think not. I think we need to bring what's going on today to the light of Scripture.

You say, "Well, what is going on? What is it then?" Well, there's so many explanations. Number one, some of it – and again, some people are so sincere and so genuine and so desirous of this, that I don't want to disparage that at all. I want to be accurate only in the sense of evaluating it. First of all, some of it is just plain fake, just fake.

I'll never forget preaching one time and a lady stood up and began to speak in tongues in the middle of my message. I was just a young guy in seminary, and I was really kind of hard-pressed as to what to do. So I just simply said, "I really think the Lord would probably only have us speak one at a time. Since prophecy is the greater gift, why don't you sit down and do yours later?" I mean that's about the best I could think of at the time. I really didn't know how to handle it, but the point was she just turned it off and sat down. Just, bing, and sat down. If it was of the Spirit, I doubt very seriously whether I would have had that sense or whether it would have come and gone that easily.

Samarin, in his book said, "Speaking gibberish is child's play." If you read Bredesen's little thing about how to speak in tongues, and he's one of the key leaders in the movement, he says, "Just keep saying ba, ba, ba over and over as fast as you can." Paul says, "When I was a child, I spoke as a child. When I became a man, I put away childish things." God doesn't want baby talk. He says, "I'll pray with my Spirit, but I'll also pray with my," what? "with my understanding." Don't talk to God in those kind of words. God is not interested in hearing that.

So some of it I think is just put on. Some people so desirous of something experiential and of pressure from their peer group just do something to be doing it, and they get good at it. Then other of it I think even has to be psychological. When you stop to consider that it's a thing that's done by many groups and has been historically, having absolutely nothing to do with Christianity, it very much can be catalogued in a psychological phenomenon. People bring upon themselves a self-induced state of hypnosis, et cetera, et cetera. Much of it is psychological.

Some of it I believe is Satanic, and I have had personal encounter with demons vocalizing through an individual. I'm not going to go into details. Just believe me; it is true. Isaiah chapter 8 says this in verse 19, "And when they shall say until you, seek unto those who are mediums and wizards that peep and that mutter, should not a people seek unto their God?" Israel was looking for some kind of weird supernatural experience, and they got it. They got some demons that peep and mutter. In the Septuagint, the Greek word *eggastrimuthous* translates "ventriloquist." Demons can impersonate.

There are ventriloquist demons. That's the indication of that text.

Somebody I read last week in the paper said they had just had a conversation with Dr. Pike. Nobody had a conversation with Dr. Pike. Dr. Pike is removed and there's a great gulf fixed. What they had a conversation with was a demon impersonation of Dr. Pike, and they can speak and say what they want to say. Just because it happens doesn't make it true. You bring your experience to the light of Scripture. One writer said, "You simply lapse into silence, resolve not to speak a syllable of any language you have ever learned. Your thoughts are focused on Christ, and you simply lift up your voice and speak out in confidence that the Lord will take the sound you give Him and shape it into language." What is that? That is not speaking to God with your understanding.

Paul says, "I will pray with my understanding. I will sing with my understanding." You say, "Well, John, why do people seek this? Why do they do it?" Well, let me give you four reasons, just quick. One, there's a departure from systematic Bible interpretation. They don't know what belongs where in God's plan. I talked to a guy who was having problems with this. He was not into this movement, but I knew he would be soon because he couldn't figure out the Second Coming and he didn't understand the distinction between Israel and the church. He was fouled up on the old covenant and the new covenant.

He graduated from a seminary in this area, and he just really had no definitive theology at all, just floated all over the Bible. Everything was sort of spiritualized into a big mishmash. He said, "I have decided." He was really a frustrated soul for a long time. Finally, he said, "I've decided to just apply all of it to everybody." I said, "Good. What time are your sacrifices?" You can't apply all of it to everybody. That doesn't work. God operated in different times and in diverse manners according to His own design for specific reasons.

When people do not understand systematic Bible interpretation, when they didn't understand what goes into what categories theologically, then they run into all kinds of problems. I dare say there are many of those who would say that who aren't drinking cyanide, et cetera, or playing with snakes. You cannot do that. There must be systematic Bible interpretation, and if they're not taught that, then they fall prey to this.

Secondly, I think another reason people go into this is because they're starved for the Word of God and supernatural experience. This is so true, and my heart goes out to these people. My heart longs to teach them the Word of God because there is everything. When the Word of Christ dwells in you richly, everything is yours, right? These people don't have that, and so they starve for the Word of God. They're starved for something real, something divine going on in their life, and they grasp at anything they can grasp at. The fault of the thing lies right at the feet of the people who stand in front of them and should be teaching them, but aren't.

The third thing is I think many people want physical feeling and emotional experience because they have a lack of faith. They don't really believe, and they have to continually be shown, their faith is so weak. That's doubt looking for proof. People want some kind of a supernatural thing, and then I'll believe. They keep grasping.

Then fourthly, I think people seek it because it's been offered as a quickie way to spirituality, that you can get there that fast. You're automatically in the upper group. So what am I saying? Well, the

modern movement has no base in Bible doctrine. Experience is no standard. The flesh and Satan can make counterfeit experience. Tongues is not unique to Christians. We can't say experience verifies it.

Do you know that in 11 B.C., there are reports from Byblos on the coast of Syrophenicia that tongues was going on there? They were speaking ecstatic languages. In 429 to 347, the dialogues of Plato talk about it; 7 to 19 B.C., Virgil in the Aeneid describes the sibylline priestesses on the Island of Delos in these ecstatic languages. The Pythoness of Delphi recorded by Chrysostom did it. The mystery religions, the Greco-Roman cults; they are all involved in this. This is age-old stuff. Mohammedan's do it. The Dervishes of Persia today utter the name of Allah and go into violent shaking, spinning, trances and ecstatic speeches. The Eskimos of Greenland engage in it. Their religious services are led by the Angekok, who is the medicine man or priest, and there is dancing, nudity, all kinds of orgiastic things. In the midst of this, they speak in these languages, these non-languages.

Freuchen in the *Arctic Adventure*, which I think came in *National Geographic*, said this, "Suddenly one of the men, Krisuk went out of his head. Unable to control himself to the regular rhythm of the service, he leaped to his feet, crying like a raven and howling like a wolf. In ecstasy, he and the girl, Ivaloo, began to yell in a language I couldn't understand. If there's such a thing as speaking in tongues, I heard it then."

It's not necessarily confined to Christianity. Tibetan monks do it. In fact, they've recorded some of the Tibetan monks, and talk about demonic. Some of them speak English and haven't got the faintest idea about English. Others have quoted in English, great pieces from Shakespeare. Some of them have even quoted Freud in German, demonic activity.

We must bring everything to the test of Scripture. The dangers of the modern movement: they confuse the doctrine of the baptism of the Spirit. They subordinate Christ frequently to the Holy Spirit. They create two levels of Christians; those that have and those that haven't, the upper and the lower group. They create a false unity.

The Bible predicts in Revelation 17 there will be a one world church. I used to wonder how in the world that would ever happen when everybody's got their own theology. But there's something happening today that for the first time in history is just tearing across all the denominational lines. Thirty thousand Catholics are now at least involved in the inner workings of a charismatic movement. Eight to 14 million people are involved in this right here. It's crossing all the denominational lines.

People are getting together sans doctrine. It doesn't matter what your doctrine is as long as you've had this. It could well be that this can be that which can be the catalyst to bring the ecumenical movement that results in the false church in Revelations.

I close with this, 2 Peter 1:3, and this is for you to meditate on. It says this, "According as His divine power," that is, Christ Jesus our Lord. "According as His divine power hath given unto us all things." What has He given unto us? Some things? Will we need more? "All things that pertain to life and godliness." How do we get them? "Through the knowledge of Him." When you were saved, you received all you need. You don't need to seek for anything else. You seek to know the Word of God, and you seek to know Christ better. There's no spiritual commodity, dear one, that you need

that you don't have. The only question is a question of yielded obedience to that which is yours in Christ. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you this morning for giving us the time to consider these truths. We speak with boldness, Lord, because we speak from your book. Yet we know, Father, that many dear ones whom we love, whom we cherish indeed are part of this. We would not be unkind; we would not be unloving; we would not be unfair. Least of all, God, we would not be biblically inaccurate, and so we have endeavored to rightly divide the Scripture. Father, as the shepherd of this flock, I feel the responsibility to protect them, secure them from those that would try to threaten them and destroy the unity and to disparage their completeness in Christ.

So, Father, we've spoken these things, trusting the Spirit of God to do His work. We pray that each of us would search his own heart and recognize indeed that all that we need is ours in Christ, and be content with such as we have. But not content until we are ministering in faithfulness, in yieldedness, and in obedience. Thank you, Lord, for your Word and for these who have gathered to learn it. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.

As we close our service this morning, we all ought to be commissioned and sent somewhere specific to deliver what we've learned. But maybe God has somewhere specific for you to go. Maybe this has helped answer some questions in your heart. Let me just say that when you're dealing with folks who are in this, don't come on as perhaps as strong as I've come on to you. Come on in love. Share the biblical principles. What I say to you, I say because you're my charge.

When you're trying to share these principles, don't be shy about the principles. Be sure they're shared in love, lest we become guilty of doing that thing which we desire not to do, exercising our gifts outside of the context of love.

Father, thank you again for this morning. Thank you for every precious life here, for every soul that you've laid claim to. God, just really multiply their ministry. Use them all. Bind us together in a common love of each other because we love Thee. In Jesus' name, amen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2023 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<https://www.gty.org/about#copyright>).