

"The Gift of Tongues"

1 Corinthians 13-14

Introduction: On Friday morning as I sat on the porch early God impressed upon my mind a message different than what I had planned. My intention today was to preach on the "LAST INVITATION" given in Revelation 22 but instead we are going to be in 1 Corinthians today looking at a message on the "GIFT OF TONGUES".

In the Corinthian church there was a great deal of emphasis placed upon the speaking gifts. Gifts such as prophecy, knowledge, wisdom and especially tongues. The church viewed the speaking gifts as the most important gifts and those which were not speaking gifts as being less important. But Paul reminded them that all gifts are very important, and all gifts are needed.

1 Corinthians 12:18-25

18 But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

19 And if they were all one member, where were the body?

20 But now are they many members, yet but one body.

21 And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

22 Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary:

23 And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness.

24 For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked.

25 That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.

So, getting back to the point, there were many in the church who were longing for the gift of tongues and for that reason the gift was being abused.

There are churches today that teach that the gift of tongues still exists, and they claim to practice the gift within their lives. Then there are churches like our church which believes the gift no longer exists today. So, what are we to believe?

Today I want to use the Bible to help you to see why we believe the Gift of Tongues no longer exist.

I. What was the Gift of Tongues?

I believe that God answers this question in the book of Acts.

Acts 2:1-6

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

² And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

³ And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

⁵ And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.

⁶ Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.

The gift of tongues was the gift to speak a foreign language without studying the language. It was not babbling as many claim today. It was a gift from God to be able to speak in a foreign language.

In the church at Corinth there was a practice that was very similar to what happens in many churches today. In the church at Corinth they would participate in a sensual type of music which would ramp up the emotions to the place that people would begin to become so emotional they would then claim to speak in tongues which was nothing more than unintelligible noises.

1 Corinthians 14:9-11

⁹ So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air.

¹⁰ There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification.

¹¹ Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me.

II. What was the Purpose of Tongues?

The answer to this question is seen in 1 Corinthians 14:22.

Notice 1 Corinthians 14:22

Here in the first part of this verse we see that tongues were for a sign to the unbeliever. But this raises a question, "What were tongues a sign of?" Let me answer this by first of all stating what tongues were NOT a sign of.

1. Tongues were NOT a sign of spirituality.

There are those who claim that speaking in tongues is a sign of being very spiritual. But that certainly is not what the Bible teaches. The Corinthians spoke in tongues and they were carnal believers.

1 Corinthians 3:1-3

And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.

² *I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.*

³ *For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?*

1 Corinthians 1:7-11

⁷ *So that ye come behind in no gift: waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ:*

⁸ *Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

⁹ *God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.*

¹⁰ *Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*

¹¹ *For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.*

So, tongues were not a sign of spirituality as some teach today. There are even those who teach that if you do not speak in tongues then you are not saved.

2. Tongues were a sign to unbelievers.

Notice 1 Corinthians 14:22

Tongues were a sign of coming judgment to the unbelieving Jew. Every time the gift of tongues was exercised in the Spirit there was always an unbelieving Jew present.

Acts 2:1-5

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

² *And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.*

³ *And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.*

⁴ *And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

⁵ *And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.*

When we read this text, we need to ask ourselves the question, "Why are we told there were Jews dwelling at Jerusalem?" That is to be expected. We are given this information to let us know that when the believers at Pentecost spoke in tongues there were Jews present. There were always Jews present when the gift of tongues was used. It was a sign of coming judgment to the unbelieving Jews.

Notice 1 Corinthians 14:22 again.

²² *Wherefore* *tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.*

The very first word of this verse is so important. It is the word "wherefore" and this word connects verse 22 with what was recorded in the previous verse.

1 Corinthians 14:20-22

²⁰ *Brethren be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.*

²¹ *In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.*

²² Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.

In verse 21 Paul quotes from the book of Isaiah. This is the key to understanding the gift of tongues. Let me show you a few verses.

Isaiah 28:1,

*Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of **Ephraim**, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower, which are on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine!*

Now let me give you the background of what is being said here in Isaiah. The people of Ephraim had rejected God and His Word. They refused to walk in obedience to God's commands. Let me show you what the leadership was like.

Isaiah 28:7-8

⁷But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment.

⁸ For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean.

⁹ Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts.

¹⁰ For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little:

Because they would not listen to the Word of God then through Isaiah God sent them a stern warning.

Isaiah 28:11

¹¹ For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people.

God was telling them that since they would not walk in obedience to His Word He would send someone upon them that would speak another language and they would be forced to walk in obedience to their word. Those who would come and speak the foreign language would be the Assyrians and the Babylonians.

Now notice 1 Corinthians 14:20-22 again.

God used those who would speak a foreign language to bring judgment upon the northern tribes because they had rejected God.

In the same way the unbelieving Jew had rejected Jesus Christ. They mocked Him and crucified Him and the rejected the message of the Apostles. So, God was warning them of a coming judgment with the gift of tongues. They had rejected His Son Jesus Christ and just as Ephraim would be judged so would the unbelieving Jews.

Now keep that thought in your mind.

III. The Ceasing of Tongues

Notice 1 Corinthians 13:8

⁸ *Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, **they shall cease**; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.*

In this verse Paul points to 3 gifts all which the Corinthians placed the greatest importance on. These were the speaking gifts, and these were the gifts that many desired. He contrasts these 3 with love. These 3 gifts would come to an end but love never will for love is eternal.

Let me explain the GIFT OF PROPHECIES and the GIFT OF KNOWLEDGE.

✓ **The gift of prophecy**

This was really a twofold gift in Paul's day. The gift of prophecy was the ability to teach the Truth of God's Word. The reason I say it was twofold was because the Truth that was taught could be Truth which had already existed, meaning it was something that had been revealed in the past. But the gift also included the ability to speak NEW revelation given by God concerning future events. The gift still exists today but not both aspects. The ability to speak NEW revelation does NOT exist today because the Bible is complete and there is no need for NEW revelation. So, the gift today would be the ability to teach the Truth of the Word of God.

✓ **The gift of knowledge**

The gift of knowledge was the supernatural ability to expound upon Truth which had already been revealed and then apply it to the life of the believer. Knowledge pertains to things that are to be done.

Notice 1 Corinthians 13:9-10

⁹ *For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.*

¹⁰ *But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.*

The GIFTS of KNOWLEDGE and PROPHECIES would cease when THAT WHICH WAS PERFECT WAS COME.

Ephesians 4:11-13

¹¹ And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

¹² For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

¹³ Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

The GIFTS of KNOWLEDGE and PROPHECIES will cease when the body of Christ is complete or when we are raptured away for there will be no need of the gifts for we will be like Jesus Christ.

But tongues would cease in a different time. Tongues were a sign to unbelievers about a coming judgment. They were not for the edifying of the church.

Tongues ceased in AD 70 when the Romans conquered Jerusalem. The Jews had rejected God's Word concerning His Son, so God sent the Romans who spoke a different language to bring judgment upon the Jews.

Conclusion:

What about what happens in many churches today concerning those who claim to speak in tongues? Let us keep in mind that Satan is a counterfeiter and he will counterfeit the gifts so as to confuse the church and to cause division. God's Word tells us tongues would cease and they did. There is absolutely no need of the gift today.