

Tongues

By

John MacArthur

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I have made every effort to ensure that an accurate transcription of the original tape was made. Please note that at times sentence structure may appear to vary from accepted English conventions. This is due primarily to the techniques involved in preaching and the obvious choices I had to make in placing the correct punctuation in the article.

It is my intent and prayer that the Holy Spirit will use this transcription of the sermon, “Charismatic Chaos” Part 10, to strengthen and encourage the true Church of Jesus Christ.

Charismatic Chaos – Part 10

“Speaking in Tongues”

by John MacArthur

Tonight, in one sense I have a difficult, impossible task; and that is to cover a subject that needs to be covered thoughtfully and carefully. In another sense, while very challenging and almost impossible to fully accomplish, I welcome the opportunity to share with you some insights that will help you to be discerning as you look at a very important issue in the Charismatic movement today; and that is this matter of “Speaking in Tongues.”

This is at the very heart of the Charismatic movement; one of their distinctives. There is no question in my mind that if you were to boil down the Charismatic movement as to its basic, several ingredients, one of them would be the affirmation that speaking in tongues is a gift for today. Not only a gift for today, but a gift to be sought by every Christian who wants the fullness of the Holy Spirit and the fullness of the blessing of God. It is so much a part of the fabric of the Charismatic movement that it is one of the primary things that they endeavor to teach the children in that movement.

Someone sent me a sample of some Charismatic Sunday School literature which is designed specifically to teach Kindergartner children how to speak in tongues. It’s titled, “I’ve Been Filled with the Holy Spirit,” and it is an eight paged coloring book. One page has a caricature of a smiling weight

lifter with a T-shirt and it says, "Spiritman", and under him is printed 1 Corinthians 14:4, "He that speaks in an unknown tongue builds himself up." Another page features a little boy who looks something like (some of you will remember) Howdy Doody, something like that, with his hands lifted up, and a dotted outline pictures where his lungs would be. This evidently represents his spirit. Inside the lung shaped diagram is printed this, "Bal Li Ode Da Ma Ta Las Si Ta No Ma," (sp.). A cartoon styled balloon then comes out his mouth and repeats the words, "Bal Li Ode Da Ma Ta Las Si Ta No Ma," (sp.). A brain-shaped cloud is drawn in his head with a large question mark in the cloud.

Do you understand the picture? These gibberish words are in the Spirit and they come out of his mouth, but a question mark is in his brain. This is how they plant in a Kindergarten child the idea that tongues goes from the Spirit to the mouth, without ever going through the brain, that it is some kind of mystical, noncognitive experience that somehow bypasses the brain. And under that picture is 1 Corinthians 14:14, "If I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful." In both cases they have misrepresented the intention of those verses. The first verse they assume "speaking in an unknown tongue" builds someone up, when in fact, Paul was saying it in a negative sense. It puffs your ego, or it, at best (if you do it in private) would benefit you, which would be selfish and contrary to any proper use of spiritual gifts. And the second one, "If I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prays, and my understanding is unfruitful," is a way to say, "Don't do that, because what's the point in having an unfruitful understanding?"

And yet, as early as Kindergarten, people are learning these things which are in error. This is the typical Charismatic perspective, by the way. The gift of tongues is viewed as a holy, mystical ability that somehow operates in a person's spirit and comes out the mouth and bypasses the mind. And many Charismatics are even told they have to purposefully switch off their mind to enable the gift to function. That's pretty much the pattern. I've sat in on a number of sessions where people were endeavoring to teach someone how to speak in tongues, and they always follow that same format. Usually they say something like this, "Don't think of anything. Try to empty your mind of any conscious thought."

Charles and Francis Hunter, who travel all across the world in healing explosion meetings, have as a part of their curriculum the seminars in which they teach people how to speak in tongues. They have as many as 50,000 people in some of their meetings. Charles Hunter tells people, and I quote, When you pray with your spirit you do not think of the sounds of the language. Just trust God, but make the sounds when I tell you to. In just a moment, when I tell you, begin loving and praising God by speaking forth a lot of different syllable sounds. At first make the sounds rapidly so you won't try to think as you do in speaking your natural language. Make the sounds loudly at first so you can easily hear what you are saying.

That's an interesting contradiction! Hunter doesn't explain what point there is in hearing what you are saying since your mind isn't engaged anyway. But he continually reminds his audience [that] they are not supposed to be thinking, quote, he says, "The reason some of you don't speak fluently, is that you try to think of the sounds. So when we pray this prayer and you start speaking in your heavenly language—don't try to think!" Later he adds, "You don't even have to think in order to pray in the Spirit!"

Arthur Johnson, in his excellent expose of mysticism, entitled, "Faith Misguided", a very good book, calls the Charismatic movement, "the zenith of mysticism." And he does so with good reason, because there is the desire, in some cases and through some experiences, to switch off the mind and disconnect yourself from what is rational, and reasonable, and logical. We've already noted that earlier in our study and I won't go back and belabor the point, but that is one of the primary characteristics of "Pagan, Mystery Religions," one of the primary characteristics of the Babylonian mystery religions that have found their way into all kinds of religious fabric, through the history of the world. Nearly all the teachings, distinctive to the Charismatic movement, are unadulterated Mysticism. And nothing illustrates that more perfectly than the way Charismatics themselves depict the gift of tongues.

They usually describe this gift of speaking these ecstatic syllables that have no meaning, as a sort of ecstatic experience that has no equal. They would tell us that it's a way to experience an emotion and a feeling that is beyond anything else that you will ever experience. One author quotes Robert Morris,

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

In other words, “I got more out of prayer I couldn’t understand, than I did out of prayer that I could understand!”

A newspaper article on tongues quoted the Reverend Bill L. Williams of San Jose, and he said this, It involves you with someone you are deeply in love with and devoted to. We don’t understand the verbiage, but we know we are in

communication.

If I could just interrupt and ask you to try that sometime on someone you love very dearly, and see how effective it is in communication. You could probably judge that statement accurately. He went on to say, That awareness is beyond emotion, beyond intellect, it transcends human understanding. It is the heart of man speaking to the heart of God. It is deep inner heart understanding. It comes as

supernatural utterances bringing intimacy with God.

Now, remember, all of this is occurring with absolutely no understanding of what you are saying. You have no comprehension of what it is you’re saying, and yet it is supposed to bring you into the deep understanding and intimate communion with God. The article also quoted the Reverend Billy Martin of Farmington, New Mexico, who said, “It’s a joyous, glorious, wonderful experience.” Reverend Darlene Miller of Knoxville, Tennessee said, “It’s like the sweetness of peaches that you can’t know until you taste it yourself. There is nothing ever to compare with that taste.” And other of those people who have that experience might echo sentiments similar to those. And I am just quoting you what they themselves say.

And you might ask the question, “What then is wrong with such an experience?” Well, on the one hand, there really isn’t anything particularly evil or immoral about it if you just disassociate it from the Bible and disassociate it from Christianity, and if you get some pleasure out of standing in a corner all by yourself or sitting in your room alone and talking gibberish to yourself and that does something for you, then I suppose in and of itself, from a psychological standpoint, that it’s not a moral issue—it may be harmless. If something makes you feel good or makes you feel somehow

better in control of your life, or like you've had some warm experience, so be it. But, don't call it intimacy with God. Don't say it makes you spiritually stronger, don't say it makes you delirious with spiritual joy.

And then ask yourself the question, "Could I, through this means be deceived, could this be dangerous?" And the answer to that question has to be yes. A man whom I knew and respected greatly, now with the Lord, George Gardner, who was pastor up in Grand Rapids, who wrote a very excellent book on this subject, was a former "tongue speaker" who left the Pentecostal movement. And he poignantly described the danger of surrendering one's mind and abandoning control of one's self for the sake of the euphoria of the tongues experience. He said it is a very dangerous thing and this is what he wrote in his own words,

The enemy of the soul is ever ready to take advantage of an out-of-control situation, and thousands of Christians can testify with regret to the end results. Such experiences not only give Satan an opening he is quick to exploit, they can be physiologically damaging to the individual. Charismatic writers are constantly warning tongue speakers that they will suffer a "letdown." This is ascribed to the Devil and the reader is urged to get refilled as soon as possible. So the seeker for experience goes back through the ritual again and again, but begins to discover something: ecstatic experience, like drug addiction requires larger and larger doses to satisfy.

Sometimes the bizarre is introduced. I've seen people run around a room until they were exhausted. I've seen people climb tent poles, laugh hysterically, go into trances for days, and do other weird things, as the "high" sought becomes more elusive. Eventually there is a crisis and a decision is made; he will sit on the back seats and be a spectator, fake it, or go on in the hope that everything will eventually be as it was. The most tragic decision is to quit and in the quitting abandon all things spiritual as fraudulent. The spectators are frustrated, the fakers suffer guilt, the hoping are pitiable, and the quitters are a tragedy. No, such movements are not harmless!

The first time a person speaks in tongues there is usually a euphoria because there have been so many people trying to get them to do that, that when they finally do that, there is a tremendous sense that they have arrived spiritually. And so psychologically there is a great sense of release and relief, and then there is immediately the diminishing return. Many who speak in tongues will understand the tensions that Gardner has described. He is not the

only tongue speaker, by the way, to turn against the practice and expose its dangers.

A man by the name of Wayne Robinson, who was once editor-in-chief of the publications of the Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association, was an enthusiastic tongues speaker, and he wrote a book, "I Once Spoke in Tongues" and in it he says this, In the past few years, I have become more and more convinced that the test, not only of tongues, but of any religious experience cannot be limited to the logic and truthfulness supporting it. There is also the essential question, "What does it do in one's life?" More specifically, does it turn a person inward to self concern and selfish interests, or does it open him up to others and their needs. I know people who testify that speaking in tongues has been the great liberating experience of their lives, but juxtaposed with them are the great many others for whom speaking in tongues has been an excuse to withdrawal from confronting the realities of a suffering and divided world. For some, tongues has been the greatest thing ever to happen, others have seen it disrupt churches, destroy careers, and rupture personal relationships.

Another former Charismatic writes,

To say that speaking in tongues is a harmless practice, and is all right for those who want to, is an unwise position when information to the contrary is evident. Speaking in tongues is addictive. The misunderstanding of the issue of tongues and the habit, plus the psychic high it brings, plus the stimulation of the flesh, equals a practice hard to let go of. But to equate much speaking in tongues with advanced spirituality is to reveal one's misunderstanding of Bible truth, and to reveal one's willingness to be satisfied with a deceptive and dangerous counterfeit.

That's from Ben Bird (sp.) who wrote a book entitled, "The Truth About Speaking in Tongues." There are others who practice tongues and can turn the phenomena on and off mechanically, and without feeling anything emotional. Recently, I knew of a pastor, knew him personally, who spoke in tongues and led his ministry in that direction for many, many years, and has since admitted that it was something he just did. It was nothing spiritual or divine, it was something he just did himself. There are many like that. They have learned how to do it. They can turn it on, turn it off, hone the ability to speak in those familiar sounds that most tongue speakers use, and they do it without passion.

Now, I have just introduced the subject to you and given you a little bit of a feeling for it. I want to go into the Word of God and try to show you some things that you must understand about tongues so that you will have a handle on it from the Biblical perspective. So let's talk first of all about the Biblical gift of tongues; we do know it is in the Bible and we have to deal with that. Now listen very carefully to what I say, because I don't want to lose you and I am going to flow through this fairly quickly.

Tongues are only mentioned in three books in the Bible: Mark (one time in chapter 16:17); Acts (three times, Acts 2, 10, 19); and then in 1 Corinthians. Those are the only three books of the Bible that mention tongues. Now, earlier in our study you will remember that we looked into Acts, didn't we? And we saw something about this gift of tongues, as it has become known, in the Book of Acts. We discovered that when it occurred in the Book of Acts, it was a known language (we will say more about that in a few moments). It had a very specific purpose in God's redemptive history. Along with other miraculous events in the Apostolic period it had a very unique purpose. And so we have covered the ground I think fairly well in the Book of Acts, and we saw the unique historical purpose for that gift.

It was a sign that the Spirit of God had come, that God was speaking from heaven His truth. It was also a sign to unbelieving Israel that when they wouldn't listen in the language they could speak, God would now begin in judgment to speak a language they couldn't understand. And so as Paul will point out in chapter 14 of 1 Corinthians, it was a sign of judgment. It was given as a sign gift on the day of Pentecost. Several other times in the Book of Acts it was given again so that those believers being added to the original Body of Christ would be seen to be participating in the same Body and receiving the same Holy Spirit. So it had a unique historical place in the Book of Acts.

Then it appears in Mark 16:17; it simply mentions tongues as one of the gifts that would be expressed in the time of the apostles' ministry. And again it fits into that unique historic Apostolic time period in which there was miraculous phenomena, signs and wonders, as God pointed to the apostles who were speaking His truth. On the day of Pentecost this sign drew the crowd to which Peter preached the gospel, for example.

That leaves us really with only one epistle in which tongues is even mentioned, out of the historical uniqueness of Acts and Mark 16—we come to

the Book of 1 Corinthians, chapters 12 through 14. This is the only epistle where we find anything about this, and Paul wrote for sure 12 and maybe 13 epistles beyond this one, and never in any of them does he even mention this. Only in this very early epistle does any discussion of tongues take place.

Now, Paul wrote these chapters, and you must understand this, to reprove the Corinthians for misusing the gift. It's very difficult out of this passage to get any kind of mandate to speak in tongues, to get any kind of affirmation that this is something to be sought, or something to be elevated, or something to be used, or something that will last, because, what you have here is primarily a corrective given to the Corinthians, who had prostituted the gift of tongues into something pagan that wasn't even representative of the work of the Holy Spirit. And so what he wants to do is correct and restrict the use of tongues.

Now, if we grant, and I think we must, that at the time of the writing of 1 Corinthians the Spirit of God could still use this unique ability, the fact that it was still a gift in that time and that place in the history of the Church—we know that because Paul said, “Don't forbid it.” Don't forbid people to speak in tongues, don't eliminate it. There is still, he is saying, a place for this (verse 39 of chapter 14), but, he says you must regulate it carefully; and then if you took the time to study through 1 Corinthians 12, 13, and 14, (and by the way, if you want to read in detail, I've written my commentary on 1 Corinthians which covers every verse, every phrase in this whole section)—but in this section there are some regulations.

The guidelines given were these:

1. Tongues is a sign to unbelievers. It's a sign that God is speaking. It's a sign to unbelievers.

2. If used in the Church it must always be translated, so that it can have the purpose of edifying the believers who don't know what's being said.

3. Never are more than three people to do it, and they are to do it in sequence, not at the same time.

4. There is to be no speaking in tongues unless it is interpreted.

5. Any confusion or any disorder in the assembly is an indication that what is going on did not originate with God—it's a counterfeit; it's a prostitution.

6. Women are never to do it, for they are to remain silent and not to speak in tongues.

And then as he comes to the end of chapter 14, Paul tells them to recognize these regulations as a commandment of the Lord as absolutely imperative: you have no option. In verse 37, he says, “If you think you are a prophet or you think you are spiritual, then you better recognize that what I have just said is the Lord’s command!” And a few weeks ago when we were meeting with some of the leaders of the Vineyard, they said, “Are there things in our ministry that you would point out as a violation of Scripture?” And we immediately brought up the fact that having attended a recent meeting where several thousand people were present, the leader of that meeting invited everyone, all at once, all at the same time to begin speaking in tongues. And there was total chaos, confusion, disorder, people pushing chairs back (as we told you before), falling on the floor, stretching out their limbs, falling over, fainting, all of that kind of chaos and confusion. No translation of that was going on. Women were dominant in it, and all of that violates the instruction for the legitimate use of the gift, when it was legitimate in the Corinthian time.

And so there are some very clear restrictions given here. To be honest with you, if those restriction were followed in the contemporary tongue speaking movement, the movement would come to almost a total halt. And again I point out it isn’t necessary for God any longer to give supernatural sign gifts to point to those who speak His word since we know who speaks His word. We don’t need a sign, we just compare them with the Bible. Once the authority was given then affirming speakers who speak His truth through Signs and Wonders ceased to be necessary. I can tell you in a moment whether someone speaks for God. All I have to do is listen and compare what they say with the Bible.

Now, also there was another component. Tongues in the Corinthian church was chaotic, out of order, confused—way out of its proper place. And not only that, the attitude of the people in using this gift was one of pride, selfcenteredness, “look at me,” they were putting on a show, they were parading their supposed spirituality and they weren’t using their gift for the benefit of others; that’s why he writes chapter 13, which is all about love. And he is saying, “In all spiritual gifts the proper motive is love to other people.” And he says in verse one of chapter 13, “If I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and don’t have love, I’m nothing but a noisy gong and a clanging cymbal.” I don’t care if you’re talking human language or angel

talk, anything apart from love is noise. It's noise. And then he launches into the magnificent 13th chapter, the classic in all of human literature on love, to point to the fact that the Corinthians had adulterated the gift in its expression, and they had adulterated the purpose and the motive for it because it was something other than love.

Paul says, "I don't care how you talk. I don't care whether you talk in human languages or whether you talk angel talk (and that's hypothetical because every time angels ever speak they speak in the language of men)." But he says, hypothetically, hyperbolically, "I don't care if you talk angel talk, if you are not motivated by love, it's noise, absolute noise." Unfortunately, some of the Charismatic people have taken Paul's statement, "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels," and they say, "You see, the tongues of men are our normal language, and the tongues of angels are our secret private prayer language." And they believe that the gift of tongues is a private prayer language, a heavenly language known only to God that transcends the mind, as we said earlier. It's celestial speech.

It's interesting to me that if it's celestial speech, and if it's angel talk and comes from God, why is it that somebody has to sit you down and teach you how to do it? There is no warrant in this text for such a view. Paul was simply expressing a hypothetical case, just as in the subsequent verses. He says, "If I have the gift of prophecy, and if I know all mysteries and all knowledge, and have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but don't have love, I am nothing." If I could move the earth and didn't have love—what would it matter? "And if I gave away everything to feed the poor, and delivered my body to be burned, and didn't have love, what good would it be?" This is all hyperbole! He's not really suggesting things that are, but he's taking it to its furthest expression. No matter what you did, no matter how great it was, without love it's nothing. And as I said, angels don't ever appear in Scripture talking in anything other than human language. You can compare Luke, chapter 1 and chapter 2 for a good illustration of that.

Nowhere then, and this is very important, nowhere does the Bible teach that the gift of tongues is anything other than "human languages!" And if you have a question about that, all you need to do is to go back to Acts 2. Go back there with me for a moment, verse 4, "They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other languages (it's the word language, we'll see that in a minute), as the Holy Spirit was giving them utterance." Notice

that they didn't have to learn how to do it. Somebody didn't sit them down in a chair and say, "Empty your mind and start talking in unintelligible syllables" No, the Spirit gave them utterance and they began to speak. Really; and what did they speak? It's very clear, "The multitude came together (verse 6), they were bewildered (they were from everywhere, by the way), they were each hearing them speak in his own language." It wasn't double-talk, it wasn't gibberish, it wasn't angel talk, it wasn't celestial speech, it was just different languages.

"And they were amazed and marveled, saying, 'Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans?'" See Galilee was a kind of a "Hick Town" area. "Hay Seeds" lived up there. Nobody was educated, they certainly didn't learn languages up there. They could barely speak their own language. "Aren't these Galileans? How is it that everybody is hearing them in our own language? The Parthians and the Medes and the Elamites, and the residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—we hear them in our own languages."

This is incredible! It was very clear what the gift was—it was an ability to speak a language you hadn't learned. And in that language they were declaring the wonderful works of God and everybody was hearing them. But the people were saying, "This isn't some human exercise. Something has happened here today that is divine." And so it was a sign that God had come in a marvelous way, and God had poured out His Spirit on this Church, on these 120, and the Church was born, and they all could see that a supernatural event had happened. The Church was born and the unbelieving Jews now were hearing the judgment predicted come to pass. God had through the prophet Isaiah said, "The day is coming when, because you don't hear me when I talk your language, I am going to talk a language you don't understand." And that's a sign of judgment, and after all the judgment was coming wasn't it? They had rejected and crucified their Messiah.

It was a sign that God had done something wonderful, that God had brought the Spirit and the Church was born: Gentiles and Jews all together would come to Christ and form one body; and it was a sign to unbelieving Israel that they were going to be put outside, set aside, and that the God who spoke once to them in a language they could understand, and gave them the

oracles and the covenants and the promises in the Hebrew tongue, would now speak in a language they didn't understand as a judgment.

But very clearly it was language. The word in Acts 2 is “glossa” (Gk.) [and it] means language. They were hearing people speak in their own language. That's all, it wasn't some angel talk, some gibberish, some gobbledygook, some nonsense talk. And then it says also they were hearing in their own “dialektos” (Gk.)—dialects. That also we find used in Acts chapter 2. So there were unbelievers present at Pentecost hearing God's message in their own languages and their own local dialects, not ecstatic gibberish.

Now when you come to 1 Corinthians, curiously, the King James Version has chosen to add the word “unknown” (unknown tongue), and some Charismatics have sort of felt that that gave them the right to say they weren't languages. The King James says, “an unknown tongue.” You'll notice, if you have a New American Standard [Bible], they took the word “unknown” out. Why? Because it wasn't in the original! They spoke in a tongue. What is it? “glossa” (Gk.) a language.

Whatever the gift is here in the Corinthian Church, it is the same as it was then. This is early in the life of the Church and God was still speaking, and God was still identifying Himself through this miraculous expression of languages that had never been learned by these people, and it was a wondrous thing. And it showed them that God was in their midst and God was speaking. And it was also a continuing sign of judgment on Israel. But it was a language again. The word “unknown” never appears in the Greek text. It was a language.

There is an interesting footnote to that, that you can look through carefully. Notice the plural and singular usages of the word language, and that's helpful. I believe when he uses the singular of “glossa” he's referring to the false gibberish, and when he uses the plural he's referring to languages, because you can't have plural gibberishes. There aren't kinds of double talk and gobbledygook and gibberish—there's only gibberish. It doesn't have a plural. But that is something you can study in the commentary and examine on your own.

Now, also, you will notice in 1 Corinthians, that Paul insists, verse 13 of chapter 14, that any time someone speaks in a language you must pray that he may interpret. When tongues are spoken in a church someone must interpret. Down in verse 27, “If any one speaks in a language, it should be by two or at

most three, and each in sequence and let someone interpret; and if there isn't an interpreter, then stay silent and just pray to God," because it would be selfish, self-centered and have no edification for the Church, plus it wouldn't accomplish anything. Right? Because if I am going to be the instrument of God by which He reveals His presence and I say some things that nobody understands, and nobody translates it, nobody knows whether it was real or legitimate and nobody knows what the message from God was. So it had to be translated for edification and to make the point.

You will also notice there is that word, "interpretation;" it is "hermeneuo" (Gk.), which means translation. All he is saying is, "If somebody speaks a foreign language, make sure he gets translated." That's not so difficult to understand. If someone speaks a foreign language, make sure they get translated. Why? So that everybody is edified. So that everybody can learn. [In] verse 5 of 1 Corinthians 14, he says, "Greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in languages, unless he interprets, so the church may receive edifying."

Now, do you see here, it's never to be done in private. It would be pointless. Wherever in the Bible does it say that you are to speak in a private tongue? Never! A private ecstatic, angelic speech—never! It's hard for me to argue against those who say that tongues is a private prayer language because I can't go to some text and correct them because there isn't any text! They just made it up. It's a pure invention. It's a nonexistence viewpoint. Some of them try to use Romans 8, "The Holy Spirit makes intercessions for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." How obvious is that? In the first place it is the Holy Spirit and He's making the intercession, and He's doing it with groanings that can't be uttered, not groanings that can be uttered! And it isn't us—it's Him! How can you ever convolute that? There isn't any Scripture to support it. All you have here were times when God desired to speak in a language that the people didn't know in order to reveal His supernatural presence and His Word, and then it was translated for the edification of everyone. It was a very unusual situation. It happened early on; apparently at the time of Corinth it was still going on. We hear nothing about it from then on, in all the rest of the New Testament, and when it was done, it was totally restricted and very clear guidelines were given.

Another indication, as I noted to you, that Paul had in mind human languages, is in verses 21 and 22, and that's what I refer to. Where he says,

“In the Law it is written, ‘By men of strange tongues and by lips of strangers I will speak to this people, and even so they will not listen to Me.’” Paul says this is a fulfillment of Isaiah 28:11-12, and Isaiah 28:11-12 is clearly a prophecy telling the nation of Israel that God will speak His Word in Gentile languages. Do you understand how hard that was for a Jew to accept? God is going to talk in a Gentile language? Unthinkable! Absolutely inconceivable to a Jew! But that was God rebuking Israel in their unbelief, and therefore, in order to be a meaningful sign of judgment to the Jew it had to be Gentile foreign languages because it was the Gentiles that the Jews despised and [they] thought God would never speak through a Gentile. If it was angelic speech that point would be nonsense.

Now, what was going on in Corinth obviously violated the standards that God had set down and so He reiterates them through the Apostle Paul. But clearly we can conclude then that the Corinthians were involved in counterfeiting tongues. True Biblical tongues were not gibberish—they were languages. They were Gentile languages and they were used only when interpreted for the edification of the Church so that whatever it was that God wanted to supernaturally say was clearly understood by everybody. Frankly, whatever normally passes for tongues in the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement today is not true language. That and that alone eliminates it. Modern tongue speaking, often called “glossolalia” (sp. Gk., which simply means to speak languages from “glossa” and “laleo” to speak languages) isn’t the same as the Biblical gift.

William Sameron (sp.) is a professor of linguistics at the university of Toronto. He has done some extensive research and writing on this. He says,
Over a period of five years, I have taken part of meetings in Italy, Holland, Jamaica, Canada, and the United States. I have observed old fashioned Pentecostals and neo-Pentecostals (or Charismatics). I have been in small meetings in private homes as well as in mammoth public meetings. I have seen such different cultural settings as are found among Puerto Ricans of the Bronx, the Snake Handlers of the Appalachians, and the Russian Molikhans (sp.) of Los Angeles. I have interviewed tongue speakers and tape recorded and analyzed countless samples of tongues. In every case, “glossolalia” turns out to be linguistic nonsense. In spite of superficial similarities, “glossolalia” is fundamentally not
language!

William Sameron (sp.) is one of many men who have made studies of “glossolalia.” There are abundant tapes available of it. The studies all agree that what we are hearing today is not language. And if it is not language then it is not the Biblical gift of language! The mystery religions, remember, in and around Corinth, as we have already noted in our earlier studies, were involved in ecstatic speech and they were involved in trance-like experiences. I have done some extensive study in years past on the Oracle of Delphi, and the mystical gibberish and ecstatic speech that was all wrapped up in that horrible orgiastic religion. And some of the Corinthians who were involved in all of that stuff had come into the Church with their past pagan stuff and corrupted the gift of tongues by counterfeiting it, and using these past ecstasies as if they were the work of the Spirit. What they were doing, by the way, is very similar to modern day “glossolalia,” and Paul was trying to correct them by telling them such practices circumvented the whole point of the gift of languages and didn’t qualify.

It got so bad at Corinth that it actually was shocking. Absolutely shocking. Notice verse 2, of chapter 12, he says, “You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray” (that’s a technical term for “flipping out,” going into a trance, being spaced out), “You were led astray to the dumb idols, however you were led” I mean you just followed the flow of the mysticism and the ecstasies, you just ‘flipped-out’, you went into your trance. You did that when you were pagans. Verse 3, “Therefore I make known to you,” listen, “no one speaking by the Spirit of God says ‘Jesus is accursed.’” Stop right there. This is unbelievable. Do you know what was happening? Some of those people were “flipping out” into their trance and cursing Jesus, and because it was in a trance like thing they claimed to be the gift of tongues, people were accepting it on the basis of the phenomena, even though the content was blasphemous! What this tells us is that some of this stuff may be more than some humanly induced gibberish; it may be satanic and demonic.

Imagine saying, “Jesus is accursed” and thinking that because the phenomena was ecstatic, it was acceptable. In chapter 14, verse 2, Paul criticizes the Corinthians, “For one who speaks in a language doesn’t speak to men, but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries.” He is not suggesting that you do that. He’s not suggesting that you go off all by yourself and speak in a foreign language, or speak some kind of mystery, speak some kind of gibberish. He’s condemning that, he’s

criticizing that, he's using irony; he's pointing out the futility of speaking in tongues without an interpreter, without it being edifying, because only God knows if anything was said. If you go off and do this privately, only God knows what you are doing. You're just mumbling mysteries.

Spiritual gifts were never intended for that—never. And so in verse 4 he says, “The one who speaks gibberish (and here I think he is referring to gibberish in the singular) does nothing but build himself up; but the one who prophesies edifies the whole church.” And of course, he compares tongues with prophecy. Even the legitimate gift of tongues took a second seat, for sure, to prophecy, which everyone clearly understood. But his point in verses 2 and 4 is that, never was any spiritual gift for selfedification. So to say that I have my private prayer language to build myself up and become “Spiritman,” strong, full of spiritual muscle, is to miss the whole point. You do know don't you that your spiritual gift really isn't for your benefit? Do you know that? Your spiritual gift is to the benefit of others. “As each one has received a spiritual gift,” Peter says, (1 Peter 4:10), “employ it in serving one another.”

Paul is not commending the use of tongues for self-edification, but condemning people who were using the gift in violation of its purpose and in disregard to the principle of love, which he covered in chapter 13. If you do it for yourselves you miss the whole point. It should never be done, except it be interpreted. Right? That eliminates the private prayer language. They were using tongues in Corinth and it wasn't even the real language gift; it was a fabrication coming from their pagan background. It was a counterfeit and they were doing it to build themselves up; it was egocentric. It was to make them appear spiritual. They wanted to exercise the most spectacular, showy display in front of other believers. Paul's point is that nobody profits from that kind of exhibition except the person speaking in tongues, and the chief value he gets out of it is to build up his own ego.

Tongues posed another problem in Corinth, used as they were in Corinth; they obscured, rather than clarified the message they were intended to convey. They made it difficult. Look at verse 16, he says, “If you bless in the spirit only, how will the one fills the place of the ungifted say the ‘Amen’ at your giving of thanks, since he doesn't know what you are saying?” What a statement. “For you are giving thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified.” In other words, he says, the tongues speakers in Corinth were being selfish. They were ignoring the rest of the people in the congregation. They

were muddying the message the gift was designed to communicate, doing it to gratify their own egos to show-off and demonstrate their spirituality, and nobody could even say “Amen” because nobody knew what they were saying.

*”You may be giving thanks well enough. I mean, it is possible that you may be even exercising the true gift, but the way you’re doing it doesn’t edify anybody.” I tend to think that what he is saying here is mostly a condemnation. In light of all this, somebody might say, “Well, look at the end of chapter 12, it says, ‘earnestly desire the greater gifts.’ Shouldn’t we take that as, ‘Boy, we really ought to desire this?’” That has to be properly understood. See that little phrase, “but earnestly desire the greater gifts.” People say, “Well, see that’s a good reason for you to go out and desire this gift.” Well, first of all it is in the plural, not singular. It doesn’t say an individual Christian should desire a certain gift. He already has said in chapter 12, verse 11, that the Holy Spirit gives whatever gift He wants to whoever He wants. It isn’t the question of desire, it is sovereignly given. What he is really saying here is this, it should be translated this way, “You are coveting the showy gifts.” It isn’t an imperative, it really should be an indicative. It’s a statement of fact, not a command. And, by the way, in the Greek the imperative and the indicative are the same form.

Albert Barnes takes it as the indicative; so do many other commentators: Doderidge (sp.), Locke, McKnight. Barnes observes that the Syriac New Testament renders the verse the same way. The New International Version has it right. The New International says, “you are eagerly desire the greater gifts (1CO 12:31), you’re seeking these showy things.” Then he says, “But I want to show you a better way; not that way. You’re jealously coveting spectacular things” (it’s a rebuke), “I’ll show you a better way.” And then he goes on to describe love, and then in 14 he goes on to describe the proper use of the gifts. So they were abusing these things in a number of ways.

Now, a statement that Paul makes in chapter 13 bears repeating to you, because it suggests to us that tongues would come to an end. That it served a purpose in the Apostolic era, but it would end. I don’t want to get too tied up, but look down in verse 8. “Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.” Now, the

statement made here in verse 8 is that tongues will cease. It means, literally, “to cease permanently.” It says there is going to come a time when they stop; prophecy and knowledge will be “done away.” That’s a passive verb; something will stop prophecy, something will stop knowledge. But we know what it is because verses 9 and 10 tells us, “For we know in part, and we prophesy in part;” there are those two things: prophecy and knowledge. And what’s going to stop them is “the perfect” (in verse 10).

You say, “What’s the ‘perfect’ thing?” I believe it is the eternal state. When the eternal state comes, prophecy will end and knowledge will end, but they haven’t ended yet. And there is going to be a flourishing of knowledge, and a flourishing of prophecy in the Millennial Kingdom until the “perfect” comes, the perfect state, the eternal state. Prophecy and knowledge will go on and then they will be stopped. Something will act on them to stop them. But tongues will cease by itself (it’s a middle voice verb). Tongues will cease by themselves. There will come a time when they cease, and they will cease permanently.

Now this poses a very interesting problem. We need only to ask one question, “Did they cease?” Because if they did, they ceased permanently! Right? Did they cease? They are not going to be around when the “perfect” thing comes, clearly verse 9 only refers to prophecy and knowledge being around at that point, tongues will cease by itself. Nothing will stop it; it will cease by itself. It will just end. Now our Charismatic friends tell us that all the gifts continue and tongues have not ceased. We believe they have, and how can we support that? Just very briefly. When you look at history, when you look at theology, [when] you look at the Bible itself, I believe that you can demonstrate that tongues ceased, and that when they ceased they ceased, and that was it.

First of all, tongues was a miraculous, revelatory gift, and [as] we have noted repeatedly in this study, the Age of Miracles and Revelation ended with the Apostles and those who worked along side of them. The last recorded miracles in the New Testament occurred around A.D. 58; note that, because the last book wasn’t written until A.D. 96. So you have almost 40 years with no supernatural wonders going on, even in the time in which the New Testament is still being written. From A.D. 58 to A.D. 96 when John finished the Book of Revelation, no miracle is ever recorded. Miracle gifts like tongues and healings are mentioned only in 1 Corinthians, which is a very

early epistle. Two later epistles, Ephesians and Romans, both discuss spiritual gifts, but neither mention these sign gifts. Isn't that an interesting point? The later epistles discussing the gifts don't mention the sign gifts. No mention is made of the miraculous gifts; only in this very early epistle. By that time miracles were already looked on as something in the past; read Hebrews 2, 3, and 4: it was something already in the past. Apostolic authority had already been affirmed; the message needed no further confirmation. And before the first century ended, the New Testament was written, circulated through the churches, and the revelatory gifts had ceased to have a purpose and so they passed away.

Second, tongues were identified as a sign to unbelieving Israel. They signified that God had begun a new work which encompassed the Gentiles, and once that message was made, and that it was made clear to Israel, it was really not necessary to keep repeating it. Again, it was a period of transition. They had been the people primarily involved in the old covenant; now the church was in the new covenant, in the time of transition. The sign was made to Israel; that's done with. We are now in the new covenant; no sense in repeating and repeating and repeating and repeating the sign. O. Palmer Robertson articulates it this way, Tongues served well to show that Christianity, though begun in the cradle of Judaism, was not to be distinctively Jewish. Now that the transition between old and new covenants has been made, the sign of transition has no abiding value in the life of the Church. Today there is no need for a sign to show that God is moving from the single nation of Israel to all the nations. That movement has become an accomplished fact, as in the case of the founding office of Apostle, so the particularly transitional gift of tongues has fulfilled its function as covenantal sign for the old and new covenant people of God. Once having fulfilled that role it has no further function among the people of God.

Furthermore, the gift of tongues was inferior to the other gifts. It was primarily a sign gift; it couldn't really edify the Church as prophecy, that is, preaching and teaching could. It was easily misused to edify oneself and build oneself up. And since the Church meets for edification, better to pursue prophecy. Furthermore, history records that tongues did cease. I don't need to go into all the details. You'll find, as I said, it begins to cease after 1 Corinthians; it doesn't appear any more. Peter never mentions tongues; James never mentions tongues; John never mentions tongues; Jude never mentions

tongues; they just don't talk about them. In the Post Apostolic age there is no mention of tongues. Cleon Rodgers (sp.) wrote, "It is significant that the gift of tongues is nowhere alluded to, hinted at, or even found in the Apostolic Fathers, which came after the Early Church. Chrysostom, Augustine, those Early Church theologians of the Eastern and Western Churches, considered tongues absolutely obsolete and non-existent."

During the first 500 years of the Church, the only time you really see any claim to tongues are the followers of Montanist, who was branded a heretic. The next time any significant tongue speaking arises is in the late 17th century. A group of militant Protestants in the Sevenall (sp.) region of southern France began to prophesy, experience visions, and speak in tongues—now we're talking the 17th century. They were known as the Sevenall Prophets and they were remembered for their political and military activities, not their spiritual legacy. Many of their prophecies were unfulfilled. They were rabidly anti-Catholic and advocated the use of armed force against the Catholic Church. Many of them were consequently persecuted and killed by Rome.

At the other end of the spectrum were the Jansenists, who were Roman Catholic loyalists who opposed the Reformers' teachings on justification by faith and claimed to be able to speak in tongues. And then there were the Shakers, they were an American sect of Quaker roots that flourished in the mid 1700's, the 18th century. They were led by Mother Ann Lee; and Mother Ann, a strange name for someone like her, because she regarded herself as the female equivalent of Jesus Christ and claimed to be able to speak 72 languages and believed that sexual intercourse, even in marriage, was sinful. Now how you can believe that and be called Mother Ann Lee, I'm not sure. Not only that, how you can believe that teaching and expect your movement to last, I'm not sure. They spoke in tongues while dancing and singing in a trance. In the early 19th century a Scottish Presbyterian pastor, Edward Irving, and members of his congregation practiced speaking in tongues and some of these other Charismatic things. They became known as Irvingites. Their movement was discredited [with] false prophecies. They were attributing some of their gifts to evil spirits. They became the Catholic Apostolic Church, taught many false doctrines; embraced several strange and bizarre things; created Apostolic offices, etc.

Now all of these supposed manifestations of tongues were always identified as heretical, fanatical, unorthodox, outside the Church; and we conclude that when they ceased they ceased, and there have been continual off and on fabrications of counterfeit tongues. Since these gifts did cease, the burden of proof is on the Charismatics to prove that what is happening today is valid. Why do we always have to get backed in the corner and prove our case? Why don't they take the Bible and prove theirs and look at history as well and do the same?

Some have said, "Well, this is the final outpouring of the Spirit." No it's not. The final outpouring of the Spirit Joel wrote about, will be in the Millennial Kingdom. This is not the Millennial Kingdom. And so there's so many doctrinal, historical issues at hand. Now, that leads us to a concluding thought. What kind of things are they doing then? What is going on? How do we explain what they do? Well, if you ask them they will say things like this, "What's the use in speaking in tongues? The only way I can answer that is to say, "What's the use of a Bluebird? What's the use of a sunset? Just sheer, unmitigated uplift. Just joy unspeakable and with it health, and peace, and rest, and release from burdens and tensions."

Boy, that's pretty great stuff! Or they might say, "When I started praying in tongues I felt, (and people told me) I looked 20 years younger. I am built up, I am given joy, courage, peace, the sense of God's presence, and I happen to be a weak

personality who needs this.

Now, that kind of testimony is a pretty heavy pitch, pretty powerful. If it can give you health, happiness, and make you look younger, then the potential market is unlimited. On the other hand the evidence to support such claims is dubious. Would anyone seriously argue, seriously, that today's tongues speakers live holier lives? Live more consistent lives than believers who don't speak in tongues? What about all the Charismatic leaders in recent years whose lives have proved to be morally and spiritually bankrupt? And does the evidence show that Charismatic Churches are, on the whole, spiritually stronger and more solid than Bible believing churches that do not advocate the gifts? The truth is, you must look long and diligently to find a Charismatic fellowship where spiritual growth and Biblical understanding are genuinely at the heart. If that kind of stuff doesn't produce more spiritual

Christians or believers who are better informed theologically, then what is it doing? And what of the many former tongue speakers who testify they didn't experience peace, satisfaction, power, joy, or find the fountain of youth when they spoke in tongues.

Why does it produce so much disillusionment? Why is the emotional high in the initial ecstatic experience harder and harder to duplicate? No, it is significant to note that Pentecostals and Charismatics can't substantiate their claim that what they are doing is the Biblical gift. There's really no evidence to prove it. There is no evidence that it's language. You say then, "What is it?" Could be demonic. Could be satanic. I think it was in Corinth, in some cases. Could be that. Ecstatic speech is a part of many pagan religions in Africa, East Africa. Tonga people of Africa, when a demon is exorcised, sing in Zulu even though they say they don't know the Zulu language. Ecstatic speech is found today among Muslims, Eskimos, Tibetan monks. It is involved in parapsychological occult groups. Did you know that the Mormons, even Joseph Smith himself advocates speaking in tongues? It could be demonic.

Secondly, it could be learned behavior; you just learn how to do it. If you can go to the Hunter's seminar, they will "jump start" you. It could be psychological. It could be a kind of a self-induced hypnosis, a kind of a trance, where you just yield up all of your will, and you yield up your vocal cords and you empty out your brain, and the power of suggestion takes over and you become psychologically induced. And once you have that experience, you then learn to do it and just do it. Many studies have been done to show that it is psychological. But the burden of proof is really not on us to prove what it is. Suffice it to say that this unique gift given for the Apostolic time is irreproducible today, and whatever purports to be that is not that; it is something counterfeit. A myriad of studies, which I'll deal with in the book [Charismatic Chaos], and when you get a copy you can read them in detail, give evidence of the fact that motorautonomism (sp.), ecstasy, hypnosis, psychic-catharsis, collective psyche, memory excitation, and all other kind of terms are used to describe people who go into these kinds of trance like experiences. And then on the majority of occasions it is just learned behavior. You just learn to say it and so you say it.

It is interesting to me that I have listened to people speak in tongues in many different parts of this country, on many different occasions, through

many years, and I find very similar verbiage, so what they learn kind of gets filtered and passed through the whole movement. Why do people want to do this? Why are they getting into this? Well, many people are hungry to get whatever is missing in their spiritual life and they don't know that it is all about learning the Word and walking in the Spirit. They think they can get it in one big dose, in a sort of a shot, a jolt out of heaven. Many people are hungry to express themselves spiritually and they have been coming to Church for years and they aren't involved, and they find a place where they can speak out and go through this expression, and it kind of releases their pent up feelings.

Some people want acceptance and security. Some people need to somehow verbalize their spirituality because they have so many doubts, that they are looking for something to prove that they are really Christians, and so they want to find some act, some verbalization, some physical thing that can help convince them their Christianity is real. And some people have been sitting in dead, cold churches for so long that the lifelessness, that permeates their religious experience, causes them to cry out for something other than what they have experienced.

Now having said all that, let me say this, there are a lot of things worse than speaking in tongues. Can I throw one at you? Gossip! Does that surprise you? If you speak in tongues, that's bad, but it doesn't normally affect other people in a negative way. If you gossip, that will! And so I just needed to say that as a footnote, unless we walk out of here and think because we don't speak in tongues everything is under control. Better you should talk gibberish that nobody understands, than gossip. Just to put it into perspective. Well, I have more to say, but I don't have any time to say it, and I've got to come back in two weeks and move to the next theme.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for the clarity of your Word. We want to basically understand these issues in the light of your Scripture. We want to love our true brothers in Christ who are in this movement. We do recognize what your Word teaches about this gift, and yet Lord, we want to be sensitive and gracious and loving to those who are caught up in it. Father, we do pray that you will help us understand that what you want is not for us to blank out our minds, but to love you with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. That what you desire out of us is not that we think on nothing, but that whatever is true and pure, and lovely, and honest, and of good report, we

think on these things. Not that we have a blank mind but that we have a renewed mind.

Lord, not that we seek some mystical inexplicable experience, but that we come to know you, the true and living God, and your Son Jesus Christ, through the knowledge of the Word, wherein we are made strong. Father, we will find no benefit spiritually in mystical, ecstatic, emotional highs. But we do find great benefit in the truth, committed to our hearts through the Word and applied by the Spirit. And so we pray Father, that you will direct us continually into your truth, that we might live for your praise. In Christ's Name. Amen.

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