

**FOUNDATION OF FAITH!
GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT
PART 11
GIFT OF TONGUES**

This morning we are continuing our series Foundation of Faith and we are specifically looking at the gifts of the Spirit. Of all the gifts that the Holy Spirit gives to us the one we are going to be looking at this morning is probably the most controversial, the most misunderstood and the most abused. Let me share this story with you from Paul Harvey. He wrote,

Our “For What It’s Worth Department” hears that Speedy Morris – basketball coach for La Salle University – was shaving when his wife called out to tell him he was wanted on the phone by Sports Illustrated.

Speedy Morris was so excited by the prospect of national recognition that he nicked himself with his razor and ran – with a mixture of blood and lather on his face – and fell down the steps.

But he got to the phone.

And the voice on the other line said:

“For just seventy-five cents an issue you can get a one-year trial subscription. . . .”

- Paul Harvey, Paul Harvey’s For What It’s Worth, p. 118

Now we laugh at that but the reality is, how many people are fooled by what they hear, what they read, what they see? Many are and this is especially true with spiritual gifts and like I have said, especially with the gift of tongues. And what we are going to do this morning is not only look at this gift but also examine and see if it is for today, what is this gift all about? We will look at what the Scriptures have to say and I do pray that you are open because I would tend to believe that with all of you here this morning, there is a lot of different ideas about what the gift of tongues is all about and if it is even around today. But again, we have the truth tester, the Word of God and by His Spirit we will see what this gift is all about!

If you would, turn to I Corinthians chapter 12, and let's begin reading in verse 7 where Paul tells us, **“But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.”** I Corinthians 12:7-11.

The gift of tongues or speaking in tongues, GLOSSA, (gloce-sah') in the Greek, is kind of personal prayer language given by God and the believer can communicate with God beyond the limits of knowledge and understanding. And it is this gift that has divided the body of Christ into two main groups and there are those that are in between those two groups. Let me explain.

On the one end of the spectrum there is what we would call the charismaniacs. They believe that anything and everything goes. Then, on the other end of the spectrum you have those who we would call charisphobics. These people are terrified of the spiritual gifts and they believe that most of them have passed off the scene. Remember what Paul said in I Corinthians 14:40, “**Let all things be done decently and in order.**”

The charismaniacs have the first part of what Paul said down pat, “**Let all things be done.**” And the charisphobics have the last part of what Paul said down pat, “**be done decently and in order.**” I think they are both wrong in their thinking, in what they believe. I see that there is a balance between them both and the Lord wants us to exercise these gifts and to exercise them as He has instructed us to do or as Paul said, “**Let all things be done decently and in order.**”

We are going to spend a few minutes looking at what these two extremes believe to help us better understand the balance that God wants in our life. And if you are on one side of these extremes or the other, please understand that I am not putting you down. I am just trying to explain your position and see how it compares with what the Scriptures have to say. I find it interesting that right in the middle of Paul’s writings on spiritual gifts he spends a whole chapter speaking on love. That is very important, especially when we speak on spiritual gifts. Paul made it very simple and very easy for us to understand as he wrote in I Corinthians 13:13, “**And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.**”

Now before we look at what the gift of tongues is all about, let's look at these two extremes of this gift, what some say this gift is and isn't. I think it is important because you will hear arguments on both sides and so we will look at these and then look at what the Scriptures have to say regarding these gifts!

THE TWO EXTREMES REGARDING THE GIFT OF TONGUES

1. CHARISMANIACS

First we are going to look at the abuse of this gift, what we have called the charismaniacs. This group of people believes that the manifestation of being filled or empowered by the Spirit is speaking in tongues. If you don't speak in tongues then the Holy Spirit has not come upon you or empowered you for service.

First of all that kind of attitude can easily led to spiritual pride and if you don't have this gift there are all kinds of pressure placed upon you to manifest it, even to the point of faking it so you fit in with the spiritual elite. And yet that kind of thinking, that if you don't speak in tongues you are not empowered by the Holy Spirit, is not Scriptural. How do I know that they are wrong regarding this, that a sign that you are empowered by the Spirit is speaking in tongues? Because the Scriptures don't support it!

First of all Paul tells us in I Corinthians 12:28, “**And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.**” Did you see that?

Tongues are way down on the list of spiritual gifts. The way some talk you would think that tongues is the most important spiritual gift. Yes it is important because God has given it to us, but lets not read into the Scriptures that which is not there.

Another point that Paul makes as he goes on to say in verse 29 of I Corinthians chapter 12, “**Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?**”

Paul is asking a rhetorical question with the answer being “No, not all speak in tongues nor do all interpret the message of tongues.” How can that be if tongues are a sign that you are empowered by the Spirit of God, that the Spirit of God has come upon you to empower you for service? That is easy, as you read that you can easily see that it is saying to us that tongues is not the sign of being empowered by the Holy Spirit. Yes we do see this happen at times in the book of Acts where the believers were empowered by the Holy Spirit and then they spoke in tongues, but as you will see in a few minutes, that is not how it always happened.

Also, understand that not everyone is going to speak in tongues, don't feel that you are lacking because you don't. On the other hand we should not be afraid of this gift, as some are, because it is a beautiful gift that the Holy Spirit gives to us.

Let me just share with you something that I received a few weeks ago. You may not believe this, but I will share the story with you. There is a minister who posted on Facebook some comments and then, she began typing in tongues! I know, hard to believe and that is why I will share this with you to show you how bizarre it can get as people move away from the Word of God! We are told,

Pentecostal minister Juanita Bynum has raised brows over prayers posted on her Facebook page where the minister appears to pray “in tongues.”

In a series of posts published on Aug. 17, on one of Bynum’s many Facebook pages, the minister typed messages where it was believed by commenter’s and critics that the she was praying in tongues. . . .

In the third post, published about a minute later, the “tongues” text started to appear:

GIRD THEM UP IN THE SPIRIT...GIVE THEM A MIND TO PRAY LIKE
NEVER BEFORE....WE CALL ON YOU JESUS....YOU ARE OUR HELP AND OUR
HOPE!!!!!!!!!!NDHDIUBGUGTRUCGNRTUGTIGRTIGRGBNRDRGNGGGJNRIC YOU
ARE OUR HELP AND OUR HOPE!!!!!!

RFSCNGUGHURGVHKTGHDKUNHSTNSVHGN YOU GOD.....YOU ARE
OUR HELP AND OUR HOPE!!!!!! OUR HOPE IS IN YOU FATHER.....OUR
STRENGTH FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS IS IN YOU FATHER.....HELP US
NOW.....LORD WE DON’T ASK FOR HELP FOR JUST THEM....THIS IS US....THIS
IS A PART OF OUR OWN BODY.....

I am sorry, but you will never find in the Scriptures the spiritual gift of typing in tongues! This truly is an abuse of what God has said and that is why we have been taking our time going through the gifts of the Spirit so that we see what the Scriptures have to say and not what man has to say. We have been taking our time going through these gifts so that we can understand what these gifts are about and how they are to be used and this is obviously not of God!

2. CHARISPHOBICS

The second group is the charisphobics and this group generally believes that the manifestation of this gift of tongues has passed off the scene at the close of the apostolic period when the New Testament canon was completed. And many times they will go to I Corinthians 13:8-10 as their proof text, where we read, “**. . . But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.**”

Now it does sound like Paul is saying that tongues will pass of the scene and their rational goes like this. They believe that Paul, in I Corinthians 13:10, was speaking of the completion of the New Testament when he said, “**. . . when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.**” Thus, the gift of tongues has ceased. The gift of prophecy has failed. The gift of knowledge is done away with. You see, we don’t need them anymore because we have the Word of God.

It sounds good but I don't believe that is what Paul is speaking of. I think their understanding of this text is flawed. You see, when Paul spoke of, "**. . . that which is perfect has come . . .**" he was not speaking of the completed Word of God. I realize that I may have opened up a can of worms here, but I think it is important to understand what Paul is saying so we don't come to the wrong conclusion.

And I don't believe it is that difficult to figure out. Listen to what the rest of what Paul has to say in I Corinthians chapter 13 beginning in verse 11, where we read, "**When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.**" I Corinthians 13:11-12.

Also, in II Corinthians 3:18 we read, "**But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.**"

What I want you to notice in these verses is the context. What is the context? It is looking at God dimly through a mirror and the mirror represents the Word of God. We don't have a clear or complete look at Him yet. We are being transformed into His image. But one day, when He comes back for His Bride, the Church, we will see Him face to face, we will have glorified bodies, they will be new.

Thus, we won't need the gift of prophecy for the Lord will be with us. We won't need the gift of knowledge for the knowledge of the Lord will fill the earth. And we won't need tongues for these corrupted bodies of flesh will be transformed and praise will flow from our lips unto Him. And so Paul was speaking of Jesus at His second coming when he said, "**... that which is perfect has come ...**"

I hope that clears that up. That which is perfect speaks of Jesus and the mirror is looking at Jesus through the Word of God. We have a glimpse of Him but one day we will see Him face to face, we will clearly see Him and these gifts will no longer be needed!

Also, within this group of charisphobics are those who believe this gift is totally a human invention of made-up sounds. Or some feel it is some kind of emotional outburst as you are worked up into this state of mind and unknown sounds come out of your mouth. Some even go as far as saying that the people that practice this gift are opening themselves up to demonic spirits to speak through them. How ridiculous that is, for God has given us this gift to be used in our lives today. This is not something outside the Scriptures, but clearly taught in the Scriptures!

Now as much as some would like to disagree with that, let the Scriptures speak for themselves. Let's not get stuck in our own personal biases. Jesus said in Mark 16:17-18, "**And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.**"

Who is Jesus speaking to? That is a very important question for us to answer because how we answer it will determine what Jesus is saying here. You see, when Jesus spoke these words it was not just to the apostles. It was not just to the disciples, but He spoke these words to “**... those who believe ...**” And the way I understand that is Jesus is talking to all of us who believe! And one of those gifts that Jesus was speaking of was the gift of tongues.

You see, if Jesus spoke of this gift we don't need to fear it, we don't need to assume it has passed off the scene; we don't need to try to negate it, but just let the Scriptures speak for themselves and receive all that God wants us to have.

In saying all that, what is this gift called tongues? Simply put the gift of tongues is a supernatural ability that has been given to us by the Holy Spirit so that we can communicate with God in a language we don't know and don't understand. It bypasses the intellect. Now this can be a modern language spoken by others but one you have never spoke. It could be some ancient dialect from a people that have long since passed off the scene. Or it could be, as Paul tells us in I Corinthians 13:1, that it is an angelic language or a heavenly language. Let's look at some Scriptures to see a little closer what this gift is all about.

THE GIFT OF TONGUES

1. SPEAKING TO GOD

Here is an important issue regarding the gift of tongues. The gift is used to speak to God with. In I Corinthians 14:2 we read, **“For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.”** As I have said, this is important for us to understand, when we speak in tongues we are communicating with God. Prophecy is God speaking to His church. Tongues are man speaking to God in an unknown language. Thus the focus of what we say in an unknown tongue is God. We will deal more with this and the interpretation of tongues in our next study but the focus is upon God.

Now we see this manifested in four different ways. They are *prayer, worship, giving thanks* and it will *strengthen the inner man*. We will look at these four a little closer because this is all part of this gift.

A. *PRAYER*

Tongues is a prayer language unto the Lord, it is about Him! In I Corinthians 14:14-15 we read, **“For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding.”** Prayer unto God can be in tongues at times, especially when we don’t know what to pray for. But that is not the only way we are to pray. You see, if we only pray in tongues we wouldn’t know when God answered our prayers.

But we can pray in tongues as Paul said in Romans 8:26-27, **“Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.”**

And thus, as we pray in the spirit, we pray unhindered by our flesh, so selfishness and other sinful attitudes are eliminated from our prayer. Think if it this way, as the fifteenth-century Italian reformer Savonarola put it, “When prayer reaches its ultimate, words are impossible.”

B. WORSHIP

Tongues is about worship, the worship of the Lord. We are told in I Corinthians 14:15-16 we read, **“What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding. Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say ‘Amen’ at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say?”** As we speak in tongues we are worshipping the Lord, our focus is Him.

C. GIVING THANKS

Tongues is also used to give thanks unto the Lord. In I Corinthians 14:17 we read, **“For you indeed give thanks well . . .”** When we speak in tongues we are giving thanks to God, something we should be doing not only in tongues! But the focus is on the Lord, it is all about Him and that truly is what this gift is about!

D. STRENGTHENS THE INNER MAN

And lastly, this gift does help to strengthen the inner man. In I Corinthians 14:4 we read, **“He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself . . .”** Tongues does not necessarily build up the church, for the words are unto God, but it does strengthen the individual who is exercising this gift. We read in Jude 20, **“But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit.”** That is not to say it can’t edify the church, it can but prophecy is more edifying than tongues to the church!

Now that we have seen what this gift of tongues is and its purpose in our lives, lets spend some time looking at some New Testament examples and then we will look at a modern day example of this gift of tongues being exercised in an improper manner and being done properly in the body of Christ. The best place to start is where the gift is first mentioned, for, according to the Law of First Mention, it lays down the meaning for how it is to be used in subsequent verses of Scripture, it helps us to define it.

NEW TESTAMENT EXAMPLES OF THE GIFT OF TONGUES

1. THE DAY OF PENTECOST - ACTS 2

Let's begin reading in Acts chapter 2 starting in verse 1, where we read, "**Now when the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.**" Acts 2:1-4.

As they waited for this day, it has now been some 10 days since Jesus was taken up into heaven, and some 50 days after His resurrection and the Holy Spirit falls upon them and empowers them to be witnesses of Christ. And we see two manifestations that are never repeated again in the book of Acts or in any other part of the Scriptures. First was the audible sound of a mighty rushing wind. Second were the visible tongues of fire resting upon them. These were never seen again and were unique for that day.

But, what was not unique was they were filled with the Holy Spirit! Too often we focus on the wind or the fire, but that is not the issue. The issue is the empowering of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

And as they were empowered by the Holy Spirit they did not become helpless puppets, moving as the Holy Spirit pulled their strings. Paul seems to point this out when he tells us in I Corinthians chapter 14, **“But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God. . . . For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.”** I Corinthians 14:28, 33.

Paul is pointing out that we have control of the gift of tongues. We in fact can even speak to God quietly within ourselves or in a whisper if we feel the Spirit moving instead of interrupting a service. One woman, speaking of what transpired when the Holy Spirit got a hold of her said she was at the grocery store, at the check-out counter, and all of a sudden she just started speaking in tongues, she couldn't control herself. That is wrong! In fact if that were the case we would all move around in fear never knowing when the Holy Spirit was going to do this to us, at a business meeting, a movie theater, or whatever. God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, and thus the confusion comes from the enemy.

Let's continue on reading in Acts chapter 2, beginning in verse 5 where we are told, **“Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, ‘Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs - we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.’”** Acts 2:5-11.

Keep in mind that Jerusalem was packed for the Feast of Pentecost with Jews coming from near and far and as the disciples spoke they heard them speaking their own language, or DIALECTO in the Greek. So picture what is going on here. They heard this wind and saw the tongues of fire and they then heard these men speak in their own dialect perfectly. That amazed them because they knew these men were Galileans and they had their own accent and were also thought of as the simple country folk of their day, they were looked down upon.

And so here we see the gift of tongues being exercised right after they were filled with the Spirit, and they spoke known dialects perfectly even though they didn't know what they were saying, but the other people were able to hear them in their own dialects speaking praise unto God for all His wonderful works. Again, the focus is the Lord and many times when people say they are exercising this gift, that is not the focus at all!

2. EMPOWERING BY THE SPIRIT - ACTS 4

In Acts chapter 4 Peter and John are thrown in jail for healing a lame man. And after a period of time, when the religious leaders realized they could not hold them any longer, they threatened them and told them not to speak of this Jesus any more. And Peter and John said “**... ‘Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.’**” Acts 4:19-20.

As they were freed they went to their brothers and sisters in Christ and had a prayer meeting. And in verse 31 of Acts chapter 4 we read, “**And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.**” What was the evidence here that they were empowered by the Holy Spirit? They spoke the Word of God with boldness. Yes tongues are evidence that a person is filled with the Holy Spirit, but it is not *THE* evidence as some like to teach.

3. REVIVAL IN SAMARIA - ACTS 8

In Acts chapter 8 Philip goes down to Samaria and revival breaks out, people are getting saved. Now Peter and John head to Samaria to help out, and as they get there they pray for these new believers to be empowered by the Holy Spirit. We read in Acts 8:17 “**Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.**”

Did you notice that it doesn't say anything about tongues being exercised here? We know that something was different in their lives at this point because Simon the sorcerer wanted to purchase it with money, which was a common practice in the occult back then, selling your secrets, your powers. Thus, there was something visible that was manifested in their lives, but we shouldn't try and imply that it was this gift of tongues; it could have been something else or even a combination of gifts being exercised by these individuals.

4. GENTILES SAVED AND SPEAK IN TONGUES – ACTS 10

In Acts chapter 10 we see Peter go to the house of Cornelius, a gentile, and share the Word of God with this man who was seeking the Lord. And when Peter gets there Cornelius has invited family and friends to hear about Jesus and they get saved. And in Acts 10:44-48 we are told, **“While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered, ‘Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?’ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.”**

As God's Word is given to these gentiles they get saved and after they were saved, the Holy Spirit came upon them empowering them for service. And we see here that the gift of tongues is in operation and as it is we see praise given unto God. Now, if tongues were spoken, how did they understand what was said? It is possible that the gift of interpretation of tongues was also in operation and as the gift of tongues was used so too was the gift of interpretation and they heard God being praised, magnified, as He should be!

5. ENCOUNTER IN EPHEBUS - ACTS 19

In Acts chapter 19 Paul goes to Ephesus and finds a group of people who were followers of John the Baptist, but not of Christ, they were not saved as yet. And so Paul shares Christ with them, and we read beginning in verse 5 of Acts chapter 19, "**When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. Now the men were about twelve in all.**" Acts 19:5-7. Here they not only spoke in tongues but they also prophesied which shows us different evidences for the empowering of the Holy Spirit.

We are going to spend the remainder of our time looking at two different examples of the gift of tongues in operation in the church today. One is the wrong way this gift is to be exercised and the other is the correct way.

PRESENT DAY EXAMPLES OF THE GIFT OF TONGUES

1. INCORRECT MANIFESTATION OF THIS GIFT

It has been some 20 years or so since this event, but it is still very clear in my mind. I was an assistant pastor at Calvary Chapel Elk Grove and on one Sunday morning during worship, which was wonderful, a woman stood up and spoke in tongues and then gave the interpretation to what she said. I can't tell you what the tongues sounded like, but her interpretation went like this, "My little children. You are not worshiping me in Spirit and in truth!"

The moment she did that the worship of God stopped and all eyes were focused on her, and I do believe at that point she had stopped the true worship of God. As she finished there was much confusion in the church. And what took place next was that a few of the other assistant pastors and myself came and escorted her outside, no, not to lay hands on her but we did explain that it was inappropriate to do that, why it was wrong.

First of all worship that Sunday was awesome and we were focused on Jesus until this woman spoke and then we were focused on her! Secondly, she said that the Spirit made her do it when it reality, we found out latter, she had told her husband she was going to do this very thing.

Even if it were true, that the Spirit made her, listen to what Paul said in I Corinthians 14:32, “**And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.**” You are in control, you are not going to go to Piggly Wiggly and then at the check-out counter start speaking in tongues! Third, tongues is a praise and prayer language unto God, it is not a language of rebuke unto man. She could have been exercising the gift of prophecy or knowledge but again, she told her husband and others she was going to do this, it was not of God! Fourth, she brought about confusion, disunity in the church when the Bible tells us “**For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.**” I Corinthians 14:33. Things got so bad, people taking sides, some saying it was of God while others saying it was not of God, that Pastor Phil had to have a special church meeting to discuss this because of the division, the disunity, the confusion she brought to the church! That truly is not of the Spirit!

Here at Calvary we believe in the empowering with the Holy Spirit, we believe in the gifts of the Spirit but we do not see the gift of tongues in operation on Sunday mornings or Thursday evenings during our Bible studies because the primary but not exclusive use of tongues is private, as you spend time alone with the Lord. When we have our praise, prayer and worship time, usually between books of the Bible, that is when the gift of tongues can be exercised and then only if there is the gift of interpretation!

Then why did Paul encourage the Corinthian church to use the gift of tongues in their service? Keep in mind that this was an early letter and the Bible was not yet completed. Thus, as church began, some would read a Psalm, another would give a teaching, someone would speak in tongues and someone would interpret the message of tongues, the teachings would be judged to see if they were of God or not and-so-on. But as we look to the Pastoral Epistles we don't see tongues as something that was in operation during the church service, during the teaching of God's Word, for why would God interrupt Himself? In fact, Paul told Timothy in I Timothy 3:14-15, **“These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”** And you will see in the Pastoral Epistles that it is the teaching of the Word of God that is the focus. I am not saying the gifts are not important, but to use the gifts apart from the Word of God is just asking for trouble and abuse!

Here at Calvary we see the gifts of the Spirit being exercised. As I teach the Word of God the Word of Wisdom, the Word of knowledge, prophecy, teaching are being exercised and these supernatural gifts can be exercised in a very natural way, I may not even know it until someone comes up afterward and tells me “Who told you that is what I was going through?” or “How did you know that?” Or “That is just what I needed to hear!” You see, God knew these things and I am just a vessel that He uses to flow through as you are. There are the gifts of administration, the gifts of help and-so-on that are exercised.

And let me say this. Just because there is the abuse of this gift does not negate it. Just because some church leaders did not believe that this gift was for us today does not make it obsolete. We must look at what the Word of God has to say and as we saw, it is for those who believe in Jesus, this gift is for today!

2. CORRECT MANIFESTATION OF THIS GIFT

The next story I want to share with you is how this gift of tongues is suppose to operate. Jon Courson, who is the pastor of Applegate Christian Fellowship in the Applegate Valley of southern Oregon, tells us of this story he was involved in. He said:

“I’ll never forget a meeting I attended at the Lake Arrowhead Hilton where about 100 believers had gathered together for a time of waiting upon the Lord. Since hotel rules dictated that the bar remains open whenever the conference room was in use, the bartender stood in the back of the room polishing glasses while we studied, worshiped, and prayed.”

“Towards the end of the meeting, a fellow stood up and gave a beautiful utterance in tongues. Because there was no interpretation, the brother overseeing the meeting wisely said, ‘We thank the Lord for that utterance, but since there is not interpretation flowing here tonight, that will be our only public utterance in tongues.’”

“When the meeting concluded, the bartender approached us, and with tears running down his cheeks, said ‘I must talk to that man who stood up and prayed. How does he know my tongue? I’m Iranian, and he worshiped the True and Living God in perfect Farsi.’”

“Needless to say, the bartender got saved that night.”

Do you see how that was done without confusion! Attention was not drawn to any one person and since there was no interpretation of tongues that night the leader told his brothers in the Lord that no further tongues were publicly allowed at that time. And yet there was one person who understood the language that was spoken, the bartender, who heard this man speak in his dialect even though the man speaking didn't understand a word he was saying. But the bartender did and he heard him praise the True and Living God and this man got saved! That is a good look at what the right way is to utilize the gift of tongues in a public setting.

Even though we see this gift in operation today, many focus on the abuse and say that there is no evidence for this gift. One pastor/teacher put it like this. In a pamphlet on The Gift of Tongues he concluded by writing this,

All of those supposed manifestations of tongues were identified with groups that were heretical, fanatical, or otherwise unorthodox. The judgment of biblically orthodox believers who were their contemporaries was that all those groups were aberrations. Surely that should also be the assessment of any Christian who is concerned with truth. Thus, we conclude that from the end of the apostolic era to the beginning of the twentieth century there were no genuine occurrences of the New Testament gift of tongues. They had ceased, as the Holy Spirit said they would (1 Cor. 13:8). The gift of tongues is not for today.

- A Grace Community Church Distinctive, The Gift of Tongues

Now if that is the criteria to see if something was of God, then I can show you that because there are heretical Bible teachers and there are even today, then we should not have Bible study. Now we see the foolishness of that. You can't use abuse to negate something that is of God. Yes, there are those that abuse this gift and manufacture this gift, but there is that true spiritual gift of tongues that the Lord said is for those who believe and did not limit it to a certain period of time, that it has ended. And, like I have said, it will end one day, when the Lord returns, but that has not happened yet and thus, may we not negate this gift that God has for us!

Before I bring this study to a close, let me share a few more Scriptures with you. Did Paul the apostle speak in tongues? You bet he did for he tells us in I Corinthians 14:18, "**I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all.**" Why was the gift of tongues important to Paul? Because he recognized it was a language of praise and worship unto the God he loved that bypassed human intellect and was a perfect form of praise and worship.

But how often people place such a heavy emphasis on this one gift over the other gifts and that is wrong. Please understand that I am not saying we should not desire the gift of tongues, we should but keep in mind that for the most part this gift is between you and the Lord. And notice what Paul says as he goes on in verse 19 of I Corinthians chapter 14, "**yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.**" The Living Bible puts this verse like this, "**But in public worship I would much rather speak five words that people can understand and be helped by than ten thousand words while 'speaking in tongues' in an unknown language.**"

Why in the world would Paul say that? Because Paul understood that prophecy **“speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men.”** I Corinthians 14:3. You see, prophecy builds us up, it encourages us and it comforts us, the body of Christ. It is God speaking to His church while tongues is man speaking with God in an unknown language. Can tongues speak to unbelievers? Yes, as we saw it can but prophecy does much more and the same is true for believers.

Let me give you an example that happened to me several years ago at one of our summer concert outreaches. There was this person came up to me, someone I didn't know, and said he had a word from God for me. Now something happened that caused a delay in him speaking to me, but when he did come back Joe Muench was with me. And once again he expressed his desire to share with me what God had spoken to him about me, a word from God that he had for me.

Now I don't know if I was exercising the gift of the word of knowledge here or I just knew what was going to happen before it happened. I was positive I knew what this guy was going to do. And you know what, he did just that, he spoke this message to me in tongues, and there was no interpreter. So I have no idea what God was going to say to me that day, and I guess I will never know. When he finished speaking he just turned and walked away and Joe and I looked at each other and there was really nothing to say. And that just shows me that it was not of God, for if God had a message for me, He would have allowed me to understand it and He would not have used the gift of tongues to give me this message.

You see, the reality is this. The gift of tongues is not God speaking to man with a message, but tongues are man speaking to God in an unknown language. If he did have a word of God for me it would have been a word of prophecy, not tongues!

It is as Paul said in I Corinthians chapter 14, beginning in verse 6, **“But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you unless I speak to you either by revelation, by knowledge, by prophesying, or by teaching? Even things without life, whether flute or harp, when they make a sound, unless they make a distinction in the sounds, how will it be known what is piped or played? For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle? So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air. There are, it may be, so many kinds of languages in the world, and none of them is without significance. Therefore, if I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be a foreigner to him who speaks, and he who speaks will be a foreigner to me. Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel.”** I Corinthians 14:6-12.

Paul’s point is simple, prophecy speaks to the church, and that is the gift that should be desired in a public setting. Tongues are used more in your private devotions. If you desire this gift, ask God and just wait upon Him for He will give it as He sees fit. It is a beautiful prayer and praise language unto God, don’t be afraid of it. It is as Paul said, **“For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.”** I Corinthians 14:2. The gift of tongues!