

## I. Introduction

- A. Today is part six in our summer series. We are looking at God's message for us today from the Book of Acts.
- B. I'm calling this series **Our Turn**. That's because this book tells us that the things God began to do in the world through Jesus Christ, he now continues to do through us, his people, also called the Church. It's our turn to pick up where Jesus and his apostles left off.
- C. Today we finally come to a hotly debated topic in Christian circles. I want to talk about **Speaking in Tongues**.
- D. Most Christians have heard this phrase before. Some have not. Here is the main place in the Bible where this happens:
  - 1. *"When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all together 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)
- E. The followers of Jesus were suddenly able to speak in human languages they had never studied and never knew before. These languages represented most of the known world.
- F. Normally, when people today talk about speaking in tongues, this is NOT what they are talking about.
- G. The modern version of speaking in tongues is not speaking in languages. Instead, today speaking in tongues is what is called ecstatic utterance.
  - 1. We are going to talk about ecstatic utterances.
  - 2. But ecstatic utterance is not what happened on the day of Pentecost.
- H. There is no question that speaking in tongues that day meant speaking in normal human languages. The believers had a sudden and miraculous ability to speak in human languages they had never known before.
- I. The apostles spoke in tongues because God the Holy Spirit enabled them to do so, because the Holy Spirit wanted the thousands of unsaved people there to hear the good news of Jesus and be saved.
- J. So, tongues time. Here we go.

## II. Seven Facts about Tongues, etc.

## A. LANGUAGES — The initial experience of speaking in tongues meant speaking in human languages.

- 1. *"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 2:8-11)
- 2. They were speaking in languages. Regular human languages that they had never studied before. This is the miracle of speaking in tongues.
- 3. There can be no serious question that in Acts 2, speaking on tongues meant speaking in languages. In this instance, speaking in tongues meant the ability to speak in a language the speaker does not know, in order to communicate the gospel to someone who does speak that language.
- 4. Jesus predicted this in the one and only time tongues is mentioned in the gospels.
  - a) "And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues;" (Mark 16:17)
- 5. This is one of those extremely rare Bible verses where there is a legit question if it is authentic. Personally I doubt it, because the next verse talks about snake-handling — which we'll save for next week. BYO.
- 6. There is a technical name for speaking in tongues.
  - a) You take the word for language, *glossa*, which also means tongue.
  - b) Then you add the word for speaking, *lalia*... which gives you...
  - c) **Glossolalia... speaking in tongues.**
- 7. It is super clear that the first examples of glossolalia in the Bible are examples of the HS enabling Christians to evangelism lost people in human languages they never heard before.
- 8. Here's another word in today's vocabulary lesson. The word charismatic. **Charismatic is the word used for churches that emphasize speaking in tongues and other signs and manifestations of the Holy Spirit.**
- 9. More in a minute.
- 10. There will be two more vocabulary words for us today.

## B. INITIATION — As the early church expanded, tongues (along with other signs and wonders) initiated the Church at specific points when the gospel arrived for the first time to a new group of people.

- 1. In the beginning of Acts, Jesus tells his followers that they will spread out the gospel around the world. And they did.
- 2. Each time you see the gospel reach a new group, the book of Acts records either speaking in tongues or other manifestations.
  - a) **With the Jews — in Acts 2.**
  - b) **With the Samaritans — in Acts 8.**
  - c) **With the Gentiles — in Acts 10.**
  - d) **With the disciples of John — in Acts 19.**
- 3. As the Church expanded, the work of the Holy Spirit expanded, and each new milestone was marked by tongues or other signs and wonders.
- 4. This leads me to one of the first conclusions I've come to about speaking in tongues and other signs and wonders. I'll save it for a bit, but it has to do with bringing the gospel to cultures that have not heard the gospel before.

## C. GLOSSOLALIA — Charismatics interpret 1 Corinthians 13:1 as a different kind of speaking in tongues — something other than speaking in languages.

1. For charismatic churches, speaking in tongues doesn't always mean speaking in human languages.
  - a) *"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal."* (1 Corinthians 13:1)
2. For charismatic churches, speaking in tongues includes "ecstatic utterances." **Ecstatic utterances means syllables without human meaning coming from a person in an altered state.**
3. That altered state means that the Holy Spirit is working in a person's heart in a very powerful way.
  - a) Charismatics also include other supernatural phenomena, like faith healing, holy laughter, being slain in the Spirit, the prosperity gospel,
4. The only other place in the New Testament that mentions speaking in tongues is Paul's letter to the Corinthians.
5. When I was in my seminary days, I was friend with a charismatic pastor. He pointed to this verse and said that it means there is another kind of speaking in tongues.
6. See, he said. There are tongues of men and tongues of angels. My friend said that the tongues of angels sounded to us like ecstatic utterances. Syllables without human meaning flowing from a person in a spiritually altered state.
7. I don't agree with this interpretation, but I could see where he was coming from. We had a great discussion.
  - a) By the way, as Christians we should now how to have healthy debate.
  - b) Also, by the way, I do not believe healthy debate can happen in social media. It's too toxic too fast.
8. My pastor friend pointed to other verses to make his case. I'm putting them on the screen to be fair to the charismatic position.
  - a) *"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."* (1 Corinthians 14:2)
  - b) *"He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church."* (1 Corinthians 14:4)
  - c) *"Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret."* (1 Corinthians 14:13)
  - d) *"For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful."* (1 Corinthians 14:14)
  - e) *"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."* (1 Corinthians 14:19)
  - f) *"If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret."* (1 Corinthians 14:27)
9. Charismatics point to these Scriptures and say that speaking in tongues is a normal part of the Christian life. They say that if you are filled with the Holy Spirit, you might speak in tongues as a sign of that.
10. I do not agree with this interpretation of any of these verses. In all of these verses tongues can and should be interpreted as languages. Regular human languages just like we see in the book of Acts.
  - a) When I was younger, charismatics were saying that if you didn't speak in tongues, you weren't saved.
  - b) Later they softened that position to say that if you didn't speak in tongues, you might be saved, but you didn't have the Holy Spirit.
  - c) Later they softened that position to say that if you didn't speak in tongues, you might be saved, and you might have the Holy Spirit, but you weren't living up to your privileges as a child of God, because every Christian should speak in tongues.
11. But I always went back to this verse:
  - a) *"All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?"* (1 Corinthians 12:30)
  - (1) The expected answer is no.
12. And I also have to go back to Scripture's admonition that none of these gifts is a big deal. The big deal is evangelism and reaching lost people for Christ, BECAUSE the biggest deal of all is love!
  - a) *"But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way. Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing."* (1 Corinthians 12:31-13:2)
13. Even if speaking in tongues is for today, then it is still not supposed to be a big deal.
14. Most charismatics today will now say that speaking in tongues is one option for Christians, and probably not for all... Which is good.
  - a) But they still say you're borderline a second class Christian if you don't speak in tongues.. which is not good.
15. What do we say about this?
16. I have been a pastor for a long time. More than that, I have devoted my life to be a student of Scripture and theology. I want to be true to God's Word. I want to be faithful to Scripture. I want to study hard and reach my own conclusions — and to make sure I can make a solid Scriptural case for all of my conclusions.
  - a) Every Christian leader should feel that way.
  - b) Every Christian, in a sense, should feel that way.
  - c) We cannot outsource our own study of God's Word, and we cannot give up and say it's just too hard.
17. So what to think of speaking in tongues and the charismatic movement?
- D. GRACE — Reasonable, Bible-based Christians can disagree and must do so with respect and love.**
  1. The super-important thing is that you have to be able to make your case biblically. You have to have chapters and verses.
  2. Because if you can't do that, then your viewpoint is not coming from the Bible, your viewpoint is coming from the culture, and that's never a good thing.
  3. Do you have any viewpoints that are more cultural than Biblical? Just asking.

- a) Never adopt a Christian viewpoint because it is convenient, or makes you feel good, or because our culture promotes it.
4. I said I had two more vocabulary words for you today. Here's one.
5. There is a viewpoint that says there is no speaking in tongues of any kind for today. Some might even say that it is demonic. Healing. Tongues. Prophecy. All of it has ceased. This view is called cessationism.
  - a) **Cessationism is the theological belief that the sign gifts of the New Testament period have ceased to function. While cessationists believe God still performs miracles today, they teach that God does not specifically equip individual Christians to perform miraculous signs.**
6. Cessationists make their case from these passages. I know, because this is how I grew up.
  - a) *"Love never fails. 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." (1 Corinthians 13:8-10)*
  - b) *"God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?" (Hebrews 2:4)*
7. Cessationists believe the miraculous gifts ceased with the end of the apostolic age and the completion of New Testament revelation. They also point to the fact that the second-generation church and beyond generally did not mention speaking in tongues and other sign gifts.
8. The more I studied cessationism, the more I came to a conclusion. They can make a decent biblical case, but it's not airtight. The historical case is stronger, but that can't be how we decide doctrine.
9. The opposite view is our last vocabulary word for today:
  - a) **Continuationism is the theological belief that the sign gifts are still given today; that God never ceased to give believers the power to heal, to do miracles, and to speak in tongues.**
10. These particular spiritual gifts are called "sign gifts" because they helped to prove the reality of Christ back in the day. When the apostles caused blind people to see and made disabled walk, that was a sign of the truth of Christianity.
11. Charismatic churches today are continuationists. Continuationist churches can be called Charismatic, Pentecostal, Assemblies of God, Vineyard, New Apostolic Reformation, Spirit-filled, and Full Gospel.
12. Our denomination, the Alliance (the Christian and Missionary Alliance), is continuationist, but mildly so.
13. I'll explain that in a minute, but here are the two main things: first, that we can make a decent argument from Scripture for our position, and second, that we maintain love and respect for fellow believers who faithfully look at the same Scriptures, but draw different conclusions on secondary matters of faith. And tongues is a secondary matter.
14. Reasonable Bible-based Christians can disagree and must do so with respect and love.
- E. **MATURITY — A mature position recognizes the strengths and weakness of both the cessationist and continuationist positions... and keeps the main thing the main thing.**
  1. As I have studied all this, I believe that both sides can make a decent argument from Scripture.
  2. So did the founders of the Christian and Missionary Alliance.
    - a) Both sides are trying hard to be faithful to Scripture.
    - b) Both sides can make a strong case.
    - c) But neither side can make an airtight case.
    - d) And church history, though mostly on the side of cessationism, because it is true that the sign gifts died out after the apostolic era and the completion of Scripture.
  3. So, this is the official position of the Christian and Missionary Alliance when it comes to speaking in tongues and other sign gifts. Four words:
    - a) **Seek not. Forbid not.**
  4. This view was developed by a theology expert and prolific author named A. W. Tozer. He wrote an 84 page pamphlet for the Alliance by this title.
  5. I think this view represents a great balance, and a great maturity.
    - a) Seek not means don't make speaking in tongues your treasure hunt. Don't chase after signs and wonders or healings or all that. Whatever gifts God is giving today pale in their importance alongside the mission of evangelism and alongside the mandate to love. So seek not.
    - b) Forbid not means don't be out there demonizing fellow believers who speak in tongues or are into the sign gifts. We have to be open to the sovereign bestowal by the Holy Spirit of whatever gifts he wants to give today.
  6. A mature position recognizes the strengths and weakness of both the cessationist and continuationist positions... and keeps the main thing the main thing... and the main thing is helping people find and follow God.
  7. Personally, I am in the middle with a strong leaning to cessationism and a modified continuationism. Isn't theology fun?
  8. So let me talk a little more about Seek not and Forbid not and we'll land this plane.
- F. **SEEK NOT — God still works miracles of healing today, but through prayers of the Church, not through faith-healers, prophets, and other gifted individuals.**
  1. Once you get out of 1 and 2 Corinthians, the New Testament is silent about healings, signs and wonders, and people with sign gifts.
    - a) I believe in healing, but through prayer, not through faith healers or healing rooms. Every Christian is a minister and every Christian is a priest, and God hears all our prayers equally, in every square inch of planet earth.
      - (1) There is no healing vortex or navel of the earth you can search out where divine healing flows better than anywhere else.

- b) I believe in deliverance from demons and demonic oppression, but not through exorcists. It is faith of the humblest child of God, and the resistance of the persecuted soul, that sets the captive free and makes the devil flee from you.
- c) I believe in authoritative pronouncements of God's truth, but not through self-appointed apostles or super apostles. The humblest saint of God armed with Scripture, is mightier than the celebrity apostle *du jour*.
- d) I believe in a special work of God among his people who are returning to him in repentance and faith, but not when a church is trying to institutionalize this stuff, and manipulate it, and condition the people to actually make it happen! That is never the work of God.
- 2. It is the Church. It is the people of God. It is the body of Christ where the power of the Holy Spirit resides, collectively, and not in supposed magicians who have so-called special anointings from God.
- 3. Christian, you're anointed.
- 4. I am personally skeptical about most of what Christians today call manifestations of the Spirit. I tend to doubt it, and question it, until more evidence comes in.
- 5. However, I am open to these supernatural manifestations of the Spirit in two exceptional situations:
- G. **FORBID NOT — The supernatural signs of the New Testament era are repeated throughout Church history mainly in two exceptional situations.**
  - 1. For this, I will go back to the biblical data in the book of Acts.
  - 2. Speaking in tongues and other signs cluster around two exceptional situations:
    - a) **REVIVAL — Times of revival when large numbers of lost people are being saved and flooding into the family of faith.**
    - b) **FRONTIER MISSIONS — Times and places where the gospel is being introduced for the first time into unreached cultures and places.**
  - 3. This is the record of the book of Acts. The Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came in power, is the perfect example. Most interpreters fail to notice the obvious. The Day of Pentecost is a revival. Three thousand people were saved (Acts 2:41).
  - 4. In the great revivals of America, called the Great Awakenings, there were miraculous signs and wonders. Especially in the Second Great Awakening.
  - 5. This also goes for frontier missions.
    - a) The gospel was brought to the Jews, there were signs and wonders on the Day of Pentecost.
    - b) When the gospel was brought to the Samaritans, same thing.
    - c) When the gospel was brought to the Gentiles, same thing.
  - 6. Even today, there are credible reports from Arab cultures that as the gospel is coming in, there are these signs and wonders. Many Arabs are coming to Christ because they've had dreams and visions of Jesus calling them. They seek out a Christian, and hear the gospel, and are saved.
    - a) When God is working in bringing lost people to faith, Forbid not.
  - 7. Like I said, I'm skeptical of most of this stuff.
  - 8. I think the charismatic stuff is a big mistake when it's just Christians having a Christian good time, and they're singing, and dancing, and swaying and soaking and sweating and all of it — but nobody's getting saved in that ministry. It's a distraction from holiness. It's a distraction from evangelism. It is diverting time and money and energy and people from the Great Commission.
- III. What we can learn from each other
  - A. Let me wrap up by talking about what we can learn from each other.
    - 1. **So, what can non-charismatic Christians learn from charismatics?**
      - a) **Boldness in prayer.** Nobody can pray for healing or blessing like a sincere charismatic.
      - b) **Expectancy from God.** God is closely involved in our lives and we can trust him for great things.
      - c) **Uninhibited faith.** It's always okay to speak of God, to pray, and to quote the Bible, even if others think it's weird.
    - 2. **What can charismatics learn from non-charismatic Christians?**
      - a) **We get truth from Scripture, not experience.** Speaking in tongues (ecstatic utterances) proves nothing. Most pagan religions had speaking in tongues. Muslims speak in tongues.
      - b) **The Holy Spirit isn't central, Christ is.** The Holy Spirit points to Christ. "He will glorify me." (John 16:14)
      - c) **Evangelism matters more than spiritual experiences.** What happens in church is meant to equip you to lead sinners to the Savior beyond the church walls.
  - B. **All those who stand for Christ and the Gospel are one family of faith, and though we may disagree on secondary things, we love each other and seek to win the lost.**