“The Teaching on the Gift of Tongues—Parts 1-3”

Or

“Get Off Your Preoccupation with Speaking in Tongues”
or
“Follow the Principle of Love in How or When You Use Your Gifts”

*Introduction:*

- Chapters 12-14 is one subject: We all have been given gifts from the Holy Spirit to be used for the benefit of others. (1 Co. 12:4-7)

- The way to use our gifts is through our love and because of our love for one another. (1 Co. 12:31)

- If we use our gifts for self-centered reasons, rather than to serve one another, then we are like a resounding gong and a clanging symbol. (1 Co. 13)

- He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself. (1 Co. 14:4)

- If I speak in tongues what good am I to you? (1 Co.,14:6, 9)

- Excel in gifts that build up the church. (1 Co. 14:12)

- In the church I would rather speak 5 intelligible words than 10,000 words in a tongue. (1 Co. 14:19)

- Stop thinking and acting like children. (1 Co. 14:20)

- You give the impression you are out of your mind. (1 Co. 14:23)

- Teaching the Word of God is what is important. (1 Co. 14:24-25)
Preface:

I. Background on the Gift of Tongues

- Only three historic instances of actual speaking in tongues in Scripture in the early church–Ac. 2:10; 19
- Each instance was actual foreign languages.
- The hearers needed no interpretation.
- These were not an emotional outburst of an unrecognizable language.

II. Background on the Context of Paul’s Discussion of Tongues in I Co. 14

A. Paul is dealing with problems that have arisen in Corinth church since he left.
   1. Paul didn’t bring this up; he is answering a question they had sent him.
   2. Their main problem is self-centeredness.

B. In Ch.12-14, emphasis is on use your gift with love and benefit of others, not self-centered use. (1 Co. 12:31-13:1)

   Therefore all such questions to judge the merits or demerits of tongue speaking must be decided by the requirements of Christian love for others, which is opposite of self-centeredness.

C. Important Definitions:
   1. Tongues (plural form with a singular subject) refer to a known language. (Ac. 2:1-11; 1 Co. 12:30; 13:1)
   2. Tongue (singular form) refers to an ecstatic utterance that cannot be reduced to a consistent phonetic system, therefore needing an interpreter. (1 Co. 14)

III. Important Points to Consider:

A. Tongue speaking was a practice resulting from emotions and zeal and not the Holy Spirit.

B. If this were indispensable evidence of spirituality and infilling of the Holy Spirit, we would expect Paul to urge all to pray for this gift. Instead he discourages it.
C. We have no record that this phenomenon occurred in any other N.T. Church; nor did Paul introduce this to other churches.

D. Mk. 16:17 is the only time Jesus mentioned new tongues (referring to the language being new to the person using it). No other gospel mentions this.

E. Purpose for speaking in tongues was for witnessing, not communicating with God. Jesus never used unknown tongues.

F. Scripture never mentions a specific sign to show that a person is baptized or filled with the Holy Spirit.

G. In the spiritual gifts lists (Ro. 12:6-8; 1 Co. 12; Eph. 4:11-13; and 1 Pe. 4) tongues is mentioned only once (1 Co. 12) and is placed near last. Is it important?

H. Speaking with emotional, unrecognizable utterances is not confined to Christian groups. (Pagan Greco-Roman in Paul’s day, Asian, African, Haitian) This is similar to Corinthian church practice.

I. Can we conclude that the Corinth church in its carnality and self-centeredness had something other churches in Scripture didn’t have?

Pop Quiz:

1. How many historic instances of actual speaking in tongues do we find in scripture in the early church? 3

2. What was the purpose of speaking in a tongue? For witnessing (in foreign languages)

3. How many of the other churches Paul addressed did Paul talk about speaking in tongues or encourage to speak in tongues? 0

4. In what scripture does it indicate that speaking in tongues is THE indicator of being filled with the Spirit? None

5. Are the Christian churches the only place you would find the phenomena of speaking in an unknown utterance? No, in the very immoral Greek religions, Africa, Asia, Haiti.

6. How right-on spiritually were the Corinth church? The worst

7. What was the main root problem of the Corinth church? Self-centeredness
Lesson:

I. Prophecy/Teaching edifies the whole congregation; tongues is self-edification; therefore speaking in tongues that no one understands is not using your gift in love and is worth nothing. (1 Co. 14:1-5; 1 Co. 13)

   A. Desire spiritual gifts that can be used to love one another. (1 Co. 13; 14:1)

   B. Difference between teaching God’s Word and speaking in an unknown utterance is that one edifies others, and the other is self-centered. (1 Co. 14:2-5)

II. Speaking in tongues that no one understands is meaningless and useless to others. Instead, seek to build others up by your gifts or words that others may benefit. (1 Co. 14:6-12)

   A. Question: What good is it? (1 Co. 14:6)

   B. Paul gives three illustrations to prove his point that speaking an unknown utterance is of no benefit to others. (1 Co. 14:7-11)

   1. A flute or harp

   2. A bugle or trumpet

   3. Someone speaking words that no one understands.

   C. Tongues (speaking an unknown utterance) is not spiritually beneficial to anyone, so don’t seek to do it! (1 Co. 14:12) (see 12:7; 14:12)

III. The effects of tongues are emotional rather than rational. (1 Co. 14:13-19)

   A. Don’t speak or pray or sing in tongues in the church because it is not beneficial to your mind or anybody else’s. (1 Co. 14:13-17)

   B. I would rather speak 5 intelligible words than 10,000 words in an unknown tongue. (1 Co. 14:18-19)

       Therefore in this passage, Paul emphasizes that an uncountable number of utterances in unintelligible tones has no place in the Church and is useless.

IV. The purpose and procedure for the gift of tongues (1 Co. 14:20-28)
A. A call to be mature, to think through this matter. (1 Co. 14:20)

B. The purpose of tongues as a sign to unbelievers—for speaking to foreign unbelievers in their own language. (1 Co. 14:21-25)
   1. This gift is to be used by the believer to share the gospel with unbelievers, not to benefit believers. (1 Co. 14:22)
   2. Speaking in Tongues in a service turns believers and unbelievers off if confusing. (1 Co. 14:23)
   3. Teaching and preaching the Word of God is what convicts unbelievers and believers alike. (1 Co. 14:24-25)
      a. Heb. 4:12
      b. 2 Ti. 3:16-17

C. The procedure for tongues in a service. (1 Co. 14:26-28)
   1. Everything done must be for the purpose to strengthen the body. (1 Co. 14:26)
      • Heb. 10:24-25 is our goal
   2. If someone speaks in a tongue, not more than two, or at the most three participants. (1 Co. 14:27)
   3. Can only speak one at a time. (1 Co. 14:27)
   4. Someone must interpret. (1 Co. 14:28)

V. The procedure for prophecy and teaching ministry in the church (1 Co. 14:29-40)
A. Only two or three prophets should speak, one at a time. (1 Co. 14:29-31)

B. Other prophets hold each other accountable to make sure of pure doctrine. (1 Co. 14:32)

C. Orderly service is the order of the day. (1 Co. 14:33)
   • Jas. 3:14-18

D. Women should not take the prime teaching role or leadership in the church. (1 Co. 14:34-35)
VI. Do You Disagree? Then take it up with God! (1 Co. 14:36-38)

VII. Summary:
A. Paul did not forbid speaking in an unknown tongue
B. But allowed only with an interpreter present,
C. In an orderly fashion,
D. Exercised only for the benefit of others, and
E. Motivated by love for others, not for self-gratification. (1 Co. 14:39-40)

Application:
1. Our church adheres to the belief that this gift has ceased; and does not subscribe or allow its use in our church. What someone does on his or her own is not addressed one way or the other. Don’t make this “minor” a “major.”

2. The Holy Spirit indwells every believer at the time of receiving Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.
   - Jn. 3:16
   - Ro. 8:9-10
   - 1 Jn. 4:13-15

3. The evidence that you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit has nothing to do with tongues, but everything to do with your fruit.
   - Gal. 5:22-23
   - James 2:14-26

4. Experiences must always come under the judgment of the Word of God; and that which is not in harmony with Scripture must be renounced and abandoned.

5. Some people are fighters. Few things hurt the cause of Christ more! The last verse of this chapter emphasizes dignity, beauty, harmony, humility, unity, and order. Instead of loading your shotgun with new found material concerning tongues, instead turn your attention to
using your gifts to minister and edify others that you are surrounded with. Love is the “most excellent way.”