



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Systematic Theology

TRANSCRIPT

“The Holy Spirit and the Gift of Tongues – III: Speaking in Tongues”

Let’s have a word of prayer together.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful for the present opportunity to study the Scriptures together. And we pray, again, for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. May our time together be profitable and fruitful. And enable us to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We commit the hour to Thee.

In Jesus’ Name. Amen.

[Message] Now, this is the third and final study in our series on the gift of tongues and the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and I’m going to ask you tonight, if you will, to turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 14, and will you listen as I read this entire chapter, 1 Corinthians chapter 14. Paul says.

“Follow after love, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy. For he that speaketh in a tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries. But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort. He that speaketh in a

tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church. I would that ye all spake with tongues but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying. Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine? And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped?”

Now, the apostle is not trying to suggest that speaking in tongues is like playing on a harp or like playing a pipe. But, he’s trying to point out that nothing really makes sense and communicates in its own sphere, unless its sounds are distinct.

For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air. There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification. Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me. Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church. Wherefore let him that speaketh in a tongue pray that he may interpret. [Or, that one may interpret.] For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also. Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest? For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified. I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all: Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my

voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue. Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men. In the law it is written, with men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.”

Now, this is a text that refers to God’s speaking to the children of Israel through the judgment that he would bring upon them, first by the Assyrians and perhaps others who would come and speak tongues, which to them were unknown tongues, that is not in a sense that they were unknown to others, but they were unlearned by them. This is one of the indications that the kinds of tongues that are referred to here are “known” languages. And so in verse 22, he continues.

“Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe. If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad? But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth. How is it then, brethren when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying. If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three.”

Now, I let that ‘unknown’ get by me then but we’ve been talking about this before and you know that that is not unknown. It is in italics. It’s simply in a tongue.

“Let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; [That is, one by one] and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God. Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted.”

Now, we are not to take that text out of its context. It does not mean that all may prophesy, all may speak in tongues, but he means ‘all who have those gifts’ may speak in the meeting, providing that they exercise, follow the regulations that are given. Verse 32.

“And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints. Let your women keep silence in the churches: [And this doesn’t mean that they are to watch out for the little children that they have with them. [Laughter] But, they are to keep silence in the church] For it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience as also saith the law. [In other words, this is not Christian doctrine originated by Paul, it’s Christian doctrine originated in the law of Moses.] And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church. What? came the word of God out from you?”

In other words, are these regulations only for you, or came it unto you only, as if you have the right to transform the regulations that have been given by the apostles to the whole of the Body of Christ, as if there were some special situation to exist in Corinth? Now, the 37<sup>th</sup> verse, which I think is a very important verse, he says.

“If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.”

In other words, if we want a test of who is spiritual, the text is simple. He’s the one who follows the directions that Paul gives us in this chapter.

“But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant. Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order.”

Now, we are now concluding our discussion of the fallout from the meetings at 312 Azusa Street, Los Angeles, which took place in 1906, where the modern tongues movement, probably, had its beginning. Vast claims have been made for the experience of glossalalia. It is claimed that there are these values, among others. First, one enters into a new spiritual realm and understands the Bible better. Larry Christiansen, a Lutheran pastor has made that remarkable claim that as a result of speaking in tongues, one enters a new spiritual real and understands the Bible better.

And then secondly, its use in private devotions results in self-edification. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 14 in verse 4 “He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself.” And I remarked that it was a strange growth in the knowledge of the Bible that enabled glossalalists to use a text to praise the experience of speaking in tongues, which Paul uses to depreciate it. Because, this verse, the 4<sup>th</sup> verse, is an attempt by Paul to depreciate the speaking in tongues. When he says “He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself.” He’s not saying that in a good sense. He’s saying that in a bad sense. That such a person does not edify the church, the only person he edifies is himself. And it is Paul, also, who has said, in the preceding chapter, the great chapter

on love, in chapter 13 in verse 5, that love does not seek the things of itself. Self-  
edification is not a genuine Christian goal.

Now, Howard Irvin, who is a Baptist minister, converted to glossalalia, has said  
“We don’t say that the experience of speaking in tongues makes us better Christians than  
anyone else. We just say it makes us better Christians.” In other words, it results in self-  
edification.

Pat Boone has made even a more remarkable claim in his book. He wrote, you  
know, last year, a book entitled “A New Song.” And, the general theme of that book is  
that if we have the baptism of the Holy Spirit and if we speak in tongues that will bring us  
success in the economic world and relief from physical problems. But, I’ve been saying  
all along, it’s safer to follow Paul than to follow Pat. [Laughter]

Now, what have we learned? What have we learned so far? Now, let’s note these  
things. First of all, tongues-speaking was in a known language. We have spent a great  
deal of time on that and I’m going to look at it again tonight from the standpoint of this  
chapter, because we have some things here that pertain to that subject. Secondly,  
speaking in tongues authenticated the reception of the Holy Spirit and thus, the new  
Christian movement. And we also saw that this authentication was directed, primarily, to  
the Jews and that tallies with what we read in 1 Corinthians chapter 14.

Third, we saw that speaking in tongues was never done privately in the Book of  
Acts. And I may have gone out on the limb, one of you who is a careful student, checked  
me up on it afterwards. I may have gone out on a limb in saying that, so far as I can tell,  
from 1 Corinthians 14, the apostle does not really sanction private speaking in tongues at  
all. But in chapter 14 in verse 28, there may be a text that goes against that remark in its  
entirety, as a blanket statement. For Paul does say “If there be no interpreter, let him  
keep silence in the church and let him speak to himself and to God.” That, it would seem  
to me, indicates clearly that speaking to himself privately is a secondary thing; not as  
valuable as speaking for edification in the church but it may indicate that he permits it.

On the other hand, it is possible to understand this as he is to speak to himself privately, quietly, in the meeting of the church and not publicly. But I think the other interpretation is to be preferred and so I would like to say that while there is no, so far as I can tell, stress in the New Testament on speaking in tongues privately, this may be permission from Paul to speak in tongues privately, in those days, if there was no interpreting which enabled one to speak in the church for edification.

Fourth, we pointed out that speaking in tongues was not a universal gift. 1 Corinthians chapter 12 in verse 30 translated is “All do not speak with tongues, do they?” Now, I also pointed out that some of said “Well, that simply means all do not speak with tongues in the meeting of the church. But, you may speak in tongues out of the church.” Now, that kind of interpretation tricks a lot of people until they think. But you’ll notice that this is one of a list of gifts. And the first is in verse 29 “Are all apostles?” Or, “All are not apostles, are they?”

Now, we surely wouldn’t interpret that to mean all are not apostles in the church, are they? But outside the church all may be apostles. Now, that surely is not Paul’s meaning? So obviously, that interpretation is wrong. He is saying that the gift of speaking in tongues belongs to some, hence, it can never be a means by which we worship God, for as far as worship is concerned, every Christian is on the same ground. As far as service is concerned, we’re on different ground because some of us have one gift, others have other gifts. Some of us have utterance gifts, some do not have utterance gifts. In service, we differ; in worship, we are all on the same ground. Therefore, speaking in tongues, which is an experience that belongs only to some, can never be a means of worship, for one would have an advantage in worship over another, and thus, the Bible’s other teaching would be brought into contradiction to it.

Fifth, speaking in tongues was to be treasured only if it edified the church, not the individual. Only if it edified the church, not the individual

Sixth, speaking in tongues was the least important of the gifts. It is last in the two clear lists in 1 Corinthians 12. And if there are three lists there, as I suggested last time there may be, it’s last three times. And so Paul stresses as much as he possibly can that speaking in tongues is the least important of the gifts.

And finally, seventh, speaking in tongues belongs to the infant stage of the church’s history. And we pointed out in chapter 13, verses 10 and 11, that the Apostles has given us a hint, I did not say that that text proved it, he gave us a hint of the fact that speaking in tongues belonged to the infant stage of the church.

Now, you will remember, that I put on our overhead projector this outline of verses 10 and 11, gave you what I think is the interpretation of it, pointed out that knowledge, prophecy, and tongues are three temporary gifts of the same character, and they belong to the infancy stage of the church. I pointed out that as the church grows in maturity throughout the age of the church, as is set forth in Ephesians chapter 4, we should expect the gifts that belong to its babyhood, to die out. And that is precisely what has happened. Knowledge, prophecy, tongues, as spiritual gifts, have died out. And thus, history conforms to what we expect to see from that text.

Now, last time we got to this point in our outline. We looked at the evidence of the Book of Acts, the first time that we were together. Then, last time, we looked at the evidence of 1 Corinthians chapter 12 and chapter 13. So we are at “C” in our outline which is the context and teaching of 1 Corinthians chapter 14. Now, let’s continue with it from that point and it’s capital C - The evidence of 1 Corinthians chapter 14, chapter 14, verses 1 through 40.

And let me say just a word, by way of introduction to this particular chapter. This passage is the chief passage for tongues advocates. Whatever shred of evidence there is for their viewpoint in the New Testament, it is found here. It is not found anywhere else. It is unfortunate, in the renderings of the New Testament, which we have had, that interpreters, translators, interpret from the standpoint of their understanding of theology

and in this chapter, for example, have often misled their readers by interpreting the expression “to speak in tongues” as to “speak in the language of ecstasy.”

For example, not long ago, we were given the complete New English Bible. And if you have that new translation and read 1 Corinthians chapter 12 and 13 and 14, you will discover that in their rendering of speaking in tongues, they have given us a rendering like that. They speak for example in 1 Corinthians chapter 14, verse 2 “For he that speaketh in a language of ecstasy.” And so a person reading it is immediately thrown off the interpretation of the chapter, for he is told at the beginning that the language is not a known language but an ecstatic tongue, or an ecstatic language, gibberish. Now, the question, of course, is that right? That is their privilege after interpreting the New Testament, to take that viewpoint. But we should be on guard because every one of us has to make up our own mind. What does 1 Corinthians 14 say? Does it support that? Or does it not?

Now, Dr. Vernon McGee, when he begins his exposition of chapter 14, he likes to say “Now, the chief message of 1 Corinthians chapter 14 is cool it!” [Laughter] Now, there is a lot of truth in that because that perhaps was the general interpretation so far as the Corinthians were concerned. But, of course, the Corinthians lived in a different age from the age in which we live. And so to speak to us and to say to us that the chief message of this chapter is now “Cool it!” is to interpret it without reference to the historical situation in which we are living today.

I think it would be best for us to begin with a brief treatment of the argument of the chapter. And so, we are at Arabic 1 in the outline - The argument of the chapter. We cannot expound in detail these forty verses. We are in a Systematic Theology Course and, consequently, what I am saying to you is based upon an exegesis of these verses. There are three movements and I have listed them here, just to give you a little hint as to what I am going to do. And, the first movement is the relation of the gifts to one another verses 1 through 25.

And, the key point that Paul makes in these first twenty-five verses is this. The thing that is important in the meeting of the local church is edification; the building up of the saints. Edification. Now, let me show you how often that term appears here so that you can see that this is the thing that Paul is concerned about, more than anything else, edification. Verse 3 “He that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification.” Verse 4 “He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.” Verse 5 “I would that ye all spake with tongues but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.” Verse 12 “Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.” Verse 17 “For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified.” And verse 26 “How is it then, brethren, when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.”

So the chief idea that Paul is trying to get over is that anyone who speaks in the assembly of the saints, should speak with the aim of edification in mind. The goal is the edification of the church; not the edification of oneself. That’s just the opposite of the aim of the true exerciser of the gifts of God. The aim is to edify the church. So we should never, if we are teachers of the word or if we have gifts, which we exercise in the meetings of the saints, we should not praise the gifts for what they do for us. But we should seek to exercise them to the edifying of others. That’s the important thing.

In fact, you will notice that Paul never exhorts anyone to seek the gift of tongues. Now, that’s a startling thing. He never exhorts anyone to seek the gift of tongues. Now, he does say in verse 1 of chapter 14, he says “Follow after love, and desire spiritual gifts.” Literally, spiritual things, but then he quickly says “But rather that ye may prophesy.” And so what I want you to seek is spiritual gifts but I want you to seek particularly, prophesying. At the end of chapter 12, verse 31, he said “But covet earnestly the best gifts.” And he’s already said tongues is the last. So never does he ever exhort anyone to

seek the gift of tongues. Self-edification is not a Christian goal and as a result of what is said here, in these verses, now, he will point out that tongues do not build up, in verses 2 through 5. They do not benefit us, he will point out in verses 6 through 13. And finally, he will say, tongues only bemuddle us if there is no interpreter, in verses 14 through 25.

Now, I want to say one thing about a text, which has been misunderstood by some, verse 2 “For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God.” You know, it’s a funny thing, I’ve heard people who advocate tongues turn to that text and say “You see, when you speak in tongues, you’re speaking to God.” And that’s wonderful, but Paul uses it in precisely the opposite sense. His sense is it’s bad. Because you see, it doesn’t edify the church. It’s self-edification. “He that speaketh in an unknown tongue.” “He that speaketh in a tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God.” Why does he speak only for God? Why, only God can understand him, that’s why. “For no man understandeth him.”

In other words, when a man gets up in the assembly of the saints and launches out into the exercise of his gift of speaking in tongues and no one understands what he is talking about, well to whom is he speaking? He’s not speaking to me. I don’t understand what it is. If somebody jumped up in the meeting and started speaking in Polish, well, he wouldn’t be speaking to me. He wouldn’t be speaking to most of you. Maybe there is some Pole in the audience that would get something out of it. But, probably, most of us would be completely in the dark and the only person who would understand, would be God and that’s what Paul means. He doesn’t mean to praise this kind of language as if it’s a language by which one speaks to God. He’s trying to say no one else understands it but God. It’s bad. Don’t do it in the assembly of the saints. It’s amazing to me how people can read the Bible and read it in a wrong way because they never bothered to read the next verse “for no man understandeth him.” That’s why he speaks to God.

Now, also, he points out, in verses 14 and 15 that the reason has no control if a man gets up and speaks without any interpretation. The emotional may be a hindrance,

he says in verses 16 and 17. And then he points to himself. He says, in my own case, I omit speaking in tongues in the church, when there is no interpreter. And, finally, tongues exercise a judicial effect upon unbelievers, in accordance with the plan of God, as set forth in the Old Testament verses 21 and 22.

Now, coming to the regulation of the gifts in verses 26 through 38. Paul sets forth rules for the use of tongues. Now, he says, here are the rules. Not more than three should speak. In other words, if four people have the gift, somebody is going to have to keep quiet. Further, they should speak in turn. That means, apparently, in the church at Corinth, they’d been jumping up at the same time and had been speaking. Have you ever seen people in a prayer meeting get up at the same time and both start talking? It’s very difficult to follow along with them in their prayer, ‘til finally, one gives up and waits for the other to finish. Well, apparently, they’d been doing that in the church at Corinth. They’d been jumping up and speaking in tongues at the same time and so the apostle said not more than three, be sure to do it in turn and don’t do it if there’s no interpreter present.

Now, the rules for prophesy are similar. Now, I think also, we should point out this. It is evident from what is said here in 1 Corinthians 14 that in the meetings of the early church, it was possible for more than one man to get up and speak. Well, that means that in the meeting of the church, it was not a meeting in which one man presided and did all of the speaking and no one else had an opportunity to exercise his gift. It’s obvious that the kind of meeting they had was a meeting in which there may be the exercise of the gifts of utterance. And the man who had the gift of teaching may, at the Spirit’s direction, rise and teach. The man who had the gift of pastor-teacher may rise and teach. The priests may rise and exercise their priestly ministry, providing they were male. And the meeting was a meeting in which prophecy might be exercised. Now, that was a temporary gift, we’ve already studied that. But, nevertheless, it was possible for that to be exercised in the meetings of the church.

Now, that is why, today, there are some churches that follow that particular principle, because it seems to be a New Testament principle. The church should be a reflection of the Body of Christ and, consequently, all of the members of the body who have gifts of utterance should be allowed to express or use their gift in the meetings of the church.

This is not the only place that Paul mentions this. He mentions it in other places as well. He says, for example, in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 in verse 19 “Quench not the Spirit.” Now, that means quench not the manifestations of the Spirit, because some brethren get up in the meeting and you don’t like what they’re saying, don’t then say, we ought not to have anybody get up in the meetings and speak. He goes on to say “Despise not prophesyings.” Now, just because Brother Abromides gets up and prophesize things that you don’t like, don’t go to the elders and say, now, would you shut that brother up. And let’s not have any more prophesy, because it makes me uncomfortable. “Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” And so, in the early church, there was freedom of utterance and the members of the assembly were expected to listen to what was said and to respond to that which they felt was of God.

And now, we have some rules for the other sex, in verse 34. He says “Let your women keep silence in the churches.” I wonder if the reason Paul inserted these words here is because he had the most trouble in the Corinthian church came from the side of the females? Now, if the history of the modern Pentecostal movement is any indication, I would have to say that that is probably true. Because, one of the things that characterizes the modern Pentecostal movement is the leadership of the women within it. And, we all know, if we are aware of anything, that there are many, many female Pentecostal preachers, aside from the one that I met in Calgary, recently. And it may well have been that one of the reasons this is inserted here is because they were giving great difficulty in the church at Corinth.

Dr. McGee told the story over the radio, a few years back, of a woman who attended a tongues meeting. And as she was leaving the meeting she was approached by a devotee who said “Wouldn’t you like to have the gift of tongues?” And she said “Oh, Lord, no, I’d like to get rid of a thousand feet of the one I have.” [Laughter] And most of us, even the men, would acknowledge that there is a temptation when we have an opportunity to speak of going beyond that which we ought to.

Now, listen to Paul’s words. He says “Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home.” Now, I wondered why he did not say, let them ask the pastor. Well, this answer is very simple. The early churches had no pastor who was “the” pastor of the church. And further, the best Bible teacher you’ll ever had, as Mr. Pryor likes to say “The best Bible teacher, ladies, that you will ever have should be your husband.” He should be the person who is most available. He should be knowledgeable enough in the word to answer all your questions. And so ask him. Now, suppose someone should come up to me afterwards and say “Dr. Johnson? What am I going to do? I don’t have a husband?” Well, I would presume from that the thing that you should do is to make friends with some woman who does have a husband and ask him through her.

But Paul doesn’t try to handle all of those little problems that come to our minds as exceptions. He says “And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.” And then he says, in verse 37 “If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.” And, he gives us a resume of the chapter in verses 39 and 40, by saying “Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order.” Someone has said, Paul tactfully retains the gift of tongues, for it is a gift of God, but he also suggests a tactical substitution of it with prophecy.

Now then, let’s come to the nature of the gift in the chapter. This is Arabic 2. Now, I want to answer the question that is frequently raised in the light of chapter 14. Well now, are we sure that Paul is not talking about “ecstatic speech?” And let me suggest one or two of the arguments that have been suggested, that go contrary to what I have said but Paul is talking about in Acts or rather Luke is talking about in Acts and Paul is talking about in 1 Corinthians. Will you notice chapter 13 in verse 1 “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.” Now, will you notice it says “With the tongues of men and of angels.” And so perhaps, that suggests that the ecstatic speech or the gibberish is a kind of heavenly language. And Paul is referring to that when he says “The tongue of angels.”

Now, I’d like for you to notice that Paul also says “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels.” And so if we were to try to argue on the basis of the fact that tongues were the tongues of angels, we should have just as much right to point out that they were the tongues of men, and the tongues of men are known languages.

But when you look at these first three verses, you will notice, and particularly if you look at them in the Greek, for he uses the third class condition, which is a kind of supposed so kind of condition. What Paul is giving us is a “suppose so” kind of language. And he does not intend for us to look at this in any other way. For example, he says in verse 2.

“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, and have not love, I am nothing. 3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor.”

In other words, Paul is using “suppose so” language. And this interpretation of what tongues is, just fades away. He’s really saying “Suppose we were to speak with the

tongues of angels, and have not love? Well then, we would be a sounding brass, a tinkling cymbal.” He’s trying to stress the importance of love.

Now, another thing, chapter 14 in verse 2 it is said “For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him.” Well now, if no man understands, then it is not a known language. But I pointed out that when he says “No man understandeth him” he means if there is no interpreter. In other words, if you just launch into the gift of tongues in a meeting and there is no interpreter, you’re speaking an unknown language. That is, to the audience no one understands because there’s no interpreter. So that text does not have anything to do with the nature of tongues either.

Then, some have said “Well Paul uses the verb *laleo*.” Now, *laleo* is said by them to refer to incoherent speech because, occasionally, it is used in Greek literature of the sounds that an animal might make. And so since Paul uses *laleo* and only *laleo* in this chapter some tongues advocates say, therefore, he’s trying to give us a term that is useful for incoherent speech or ecstatic speech. Now, I’d like to say, in the first place, Paul does not use only *laleo* here. They have omitted, they have forgotten one particular place, which is incidental. And that may be why they have forgot it, but chapter 14 in verse 16 reads this way “Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?” And that’s the word *lego*. And so the word that is used to “say” is also used in this chapter in addition to *laleo*. And so that objection falls to the ground.

Further, the reason Paul uses the verb “*laleo*” in this chapter is because in the quotation from the Old Testament that’s the term that’s used and he realizes that God has spoken or “will speak” to Israel by unknown languages. And he uses the same term that God used through the prophet in the Old Testament.

Further, in verses 34 and 35, it’s obvious that the term “to speak,” which is used of the women, is a term that is used of asking questions. And so it is intelligible speech that Paul has in mind. Almost all of the usage of this term is of known languages.

On the other hand, eliminating then these objections, which do not hold up. Here are the reasons then why we can say that when Paul speaks of the gift of tongues he is speaking of known languages and why the New English Bible is wrong in its rendering.

First place, the evidence of the terminology of the New Testament is on the side of known languages. In biblical literature, the term for tongue *glossa* refers to other speech than intelligible speech only twice out of many, many usages. And then it refers to stammering, not ecstatic speech. And so the use of the term *glossa* in the Old Testament Greek translation and in the New Testament is almost entirely on the side of known languages.

Second, the term “to interpret” is a term, which is always used in biblical Greek, of translating one language into another language; never of interpreting gibberish.

Third, Luke, we have already seen, uses terms, which in his book only refer to known languages. For example, he uses the work “*dialektos*” and you can trace it through the Book of Acts. It always refers to a known language.

Fourth, the effectiveness of tongues as a sign demanded that it be different from the gobbledygook of Hellenistic religions. For example, in Hellenistic religions, they spoke in tongues, too. So if in the church, somebody should get up and spout off a few, so called, sentences of nonsense, what sign would that be? Someone would stand up and say, “Well, they do that over in the heathen religions. That doesn’t prove anything.” And I might say that today, it doesn’t prove anything when someone gets up and utters a long series of syllables of nonsense. It doesn’t prove anything. It may prove that they can speak Pig-Latin or something like that, but that’s all it proves. It’s not of divine character. But, if someone stood up in the meeting of the church and began to speak in Russian, and he’d never been to Russia, and there was some Russian sitting over there and said

“My goodness, that fellow speaks beautiful Russian” and we were to find out that it was someone who had never been there; well, then we’d say, “My, that’s a miracle, that’s a miracle. What did he say?” “Well, he spoke about the wonderful works of God.” Well, then, that would be a testimony to what that man was saying. So the effectiveness of tongues as a sign demanded that it be different from ecstatic speech.

Fifth, if the normative practices in the, let me look at my notes correctly here, in the normative practice of ecstatic speech, if the normative practice was ecstatic speech, Paul’s concern to avoid the charge of madness would have led to banning tongues entirely. In other words, if it was just common for men to speak in gibberish then Paul would never, Paul would have just said, don’t speak it at all because someone who’s an unbeliever may come in and say you’re mad. But you see, if they spoke what was to the unbeliever gibberish, but some one got up and interpreted, then that which appeared to be gibberish would make sense. But if it was always just gibberish and that’s all, then Paul would have banned it entirely, because when the unbeliever came in, he would always say, you’re mad. Further, chapter 14, verses 10 and 11, demand distinct sounds as in a harp or a bugle. There had to be distinction in sounds and so it has to be a known speech. And finally chapter 14, verse 21, demands known languages because he refers there to the language of the Assyrians by which God would speak to the Israelites.

Now, third, the purpose of the gift. Why did God give the gift of tongues? Well now, we pointed out in this chapter that God gave the gift of tongues to edify the church, but there was no edification unless there was interpretation. And so by interpretation, speaking in tongues became the means whereby the church was built up through exhortation, edification, comfort. So that was one reason why God gave the gift of tongues. But he also gave the gift of tongues in order that it might be an authentication to the children of Israel and also might bring them under conviction of coming judgment. And that seems to be Paul’s point in verse 20 and 21. Look at those verses “In the law it is written, with men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people.”

Now, who is “this people?” Why “this people” is Israel. If you turn back to Isaiah chapter 28, you will discover that in the context it is Israel. “With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people.” What is he speaking about in the context of Isaiah? Well, he’s telling Israel that if you do not turn to me, the time is coming when I’m going to bring the Assyrians down upon you and they are going to be the means of your judgment. And they’re going to speak in tongues that you do not understand. And so these invaders who would come down speaking in other tongues would be the sign of God’s judgment upon Israel. So when it took place, they might turn in conviction and respond to the messages that the prophets had given them.

So he concludes, “Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not; but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.” So he says “The other reason that God gave the gift of tongues is that through this gift of speaking in a known language, which the speaker did not understand but which others would, and through the interpretation of it, through this miracle, God might bring conviction to the hearts of Israelites, that God was with this new movement; and, consequently, he was going to judge them for their rejection of Jesus Christ.”

Now, third, I want to turn to the evidence of history. The advocates of speaking in tongues emphasize the first century and the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They say little, if anything, of the centuries intervening. The voice of history is opposed to the exercise of the gift of tongues.

Now, Dr. Warfield or Professor Warfield made the statement that “The fact that tongues do not exist between the time of the first centuries and the time of modern times is an evidence of the fact that God had ceased to give the gift.” And I think there is a great deal to be said for that. It’s the same kind of evidence that we have when we realize that in seventy A.D. God destroyed the temple in the city of Jerusalem. Now, you’ll remember, when Jesus Christ died “The veil of the temple was rent in twain from

the top to the bottom.” Not the bottom to the top, from the top to the bottom as if God were signifying I am doing away with the whole of the Mosaic Law. And so “From top to bottom, the veil of the temple was rent in twain.” Then, remember, in seventy A.D. in fulfillment of the words that Jesus uttered “The temple was destroyed.”

Now, that was God’s speaking in history. And just as he spoke in the destruction of the temple and in doing away with the cultist of Israel, inaugurating the new age, so when the gift of tongues was given, it persisted throughout the Apostolic period and then is absent from the scene. Now, that is God’s way of saying that that gift is done away with. Now, I think that Professor Warfield has an important argument there. But I’m not going to try to stress that any more than that.

I want to turn to some of the testimonies that we need to consider, just briefly, in the question of history. There is the testimony of Plato. Plato refers to glossalalia and you may remember that his dates are about five centuries before the time of Christ. Speaking in tongues is not a Christian phenomenon only.

Second, the testimony of the Gnostics and Irenaeus. Irenaeus, in the second and third centuries refers to the fact that people were speaking in different languages. That’s all he says, so we don’t know a whole lot about what he was saying. But the Gnostics did speak in tongues. Now the Gnostics, for the most part, are not Christians. And so again, this is not a Christian phenomenon. Then there is the testimony of Montanism. Now, we have talked about Montanists when we began this series. Montanism is the classic sect type of movement and it is the ancient progenitor of the Pentecostal movement. There is a striking similarity between Montanism and Pentecostalism. It is debatable that the Montanists ever spoke in tongues. There is no clear evidence of any speaking in tongues after the apostolic age, that is, in the sense of the New Testament.

Fourth, the testimony of the intervening centuries. Well Christiansen makes reference to chapter 14 of 1 Corinthians and says this is a very difficult chapter because we don’t understand the situation in our fifth century. So by that time the whole situation

of speaking in tongues had died out, which is further evidence of the fact that it was a first century phenomenon connected, primarily, with the testimony to Christ in the first century.

G. B. Cutton has written a dissertation on the subject of the history of tongues. And he has pointed out, although he acknowledges the existence, he has said “One of the striking things about tongues is its comparative infrequency since the apostolic age and modern times.” Now, why is that? Why is it?

Edward Irving in 1832 began a movement in which there was a great deal of speaking in tongues, although he, himself, did not speak in tongues. And of his actions, Carlyle said “God is evidently working miracles by hysterics.” And the London Times, which sent out a reporter to observe the meetings, where that reporter was told to look for “ravings, screamings and bawlings.” And that doesn’t sound to me like something extremely spiritual.

Mother Ann Lee, who was one of the leading lights of the Shakers. She was the founder of the Shakers. By the way, it’s “Mother Ann Lee.” And she was regarded by them as the female principle in Christ; Jesus being the male principle. She is said to have testified in 72 different languages before Anglican Clergymen, who were also noted linguists. There is no proof of that at all.

And then, the testimony of the Mormons. Mormons have as one of their doctrinal statements, they believe in speaking in tongues. I’m going to read from the Mormon articles of faith and this is what they say. It’s article number seven. “The Articles of Faith of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” “We believe in the gift of tongues, prophesy, revelation, visions, healing, interpretation of tongues, etc.” Whatever that means. Now, I think we can see from this that from the time of the first century to the time of the present, tongues has been absent in the experience of the church. Calvin did not speak in tongues. Whitefield did not speak in tongues. Edwards did not speak in tongues. Moody did not speak in tongues. Graham, at the last I heard, is not speaking in

tongues. Augustine did not speak in tongues. Go right down the list of the men to whom we are indebted in the past, they have not spoken in tongues.

It would seem strange to me that the gift of tongues would be so important for the experience of a Christian if, throughout all of these centuries, God has not been giving that gift.

Well now, let me conclude. We conclude by saying this. Tongues then, are a temporary gift of the apostolic age, designed to serve as an authentication of the Christian movement. While the gift is not impossible for today, I said that because I don’t know of any text that says God cannot give the gift today, the word, history, and experience strongly condemn present practices and suggest that the gift was a temporary one. Well, the natural question that the person asks is the question that Mr. Prier referred to yesterday morning, which I did not understand. Why the present outburst of ecstatic utterance? Well, perhaps, a longing on the part of some for a deeper Christian life and perhaps they have been misled to think that this is the way they may attain it. But any life that is deeper Christian life must be conformable to the word of God. I am inclined to trace the present phenomenon to three things. First, ignorance of the Bible and immaturity in the Christian life. For example, Dennis Bennett, who is probably regarded as the one who has instigated the modern movement. I have referred to him a couple of times previously and referred to the date in 1960, when he addressed his church and told them of his experience of speaking in tongues.

Dennis Bennett in a letter, which I read, addressed to Bill Bright, of Campus Crusade, made reference to the fact that in some of his meetings, certain languages had been used. And he named some common languages like French and German. And then he said, Ancient Egyptian, by which I think he understood, Coptic Egyptian. Now, it is simply ignorance to say that Coptic Egyptian has been spoken in a meeting of the church. For, in the first place, there is no one today who knows what Coptic Egyptian sounds like. No one has spoken it for years and years. How would it be possible for anyone to

understand it? Why, even languages that we know we frequently have a difficult time hearing. But a language such as that, no one knows how it sounds. And so that is just simply ignorance.

Now, I think also, and I really feel myself that most of this movement is an emotional movement. I think that connected with it is a tremendous psychological instability and, therefore, in my mind, most of the phenomena are explained as simply emotional maladjustment.

Let me, for example, read you the testimony of a man who describes how he got the gift of tongues. This is the testimony of the Reverend Warren Oliff and it comes from the Full Gospel Men’s Voice Magazine. It’s his testimony, which he wrote of how he experienced the gift of tongues. And I want to tell you, if this is the way to speak in tongues, as long as I live, I’ll never speak in tongues. That is, as long as I am conscious and living, I’ll never speak in tongues. He describes how he was interested in a deeper Christian life and how he went into a certain Baptist parsonage and then he, I’m going to continue from there. “As a fleece, I told the Lord to curl my tongue in my mouth until it hurt if all that was happening was truly the Spirit of God. Suddenly, I lost control of my tongue. It flipped to the left of my mouth, curled under and rolled back into my throat, until I thought I would swallow it.”

And then he puts a parenthesis here. “(I had the worst sore throat of my life, for the next four days.)” [Laughter] “Then from head to foot, a sensation of cleansing and warmth came over me. I slid from my chair onto the floor and knew that Pentecost” (Well, I think what this says on the other side of the page, I forgot and stapled it together,) “I discovered that Pentecost was” (I hate to tear my notes. It’s almost like tearing the Bible) [more laughter] “Pentecost was not a denomination, but a dynamic experience for the believer. I had received it in a Southern Baptist parsonage with a spirit-filled Southern Baptist pastor and his wife praying for me in tongues. This was unbelievable but true.”

And then he describes how he was driving home at sixty miles per hour in a blinding rainstorm, he sang, cried, praised, prayed. (It’s a good thing he was praying.) “With one hand raised in the air.” One arm, driving through a blinding storm, 60 mph. Well, the Lord’s providence pertains to Christians who have the mistaken gift of tongues, too. “After about ten minutes, my jaw relaxed and my lips and lower face began to tremble. Then came fluent expression. I spoke for the next forty-five minutes, in that strange and enjoyable, exuberating speech. I didn’t know one word that I was saying; but it was from heaven.” [More laughter --] Oh my, now how anyone can call that spiritual, I don’t know.

I have here with me an interesting comment from a dissertation by a doctor from South Africa, University of Witwatersrand, in South Africa, and he has some interesting psychological tests information, which I think are interesting. This dissertation is called “Glossalalia.” This dissertation contains some psychological tests that were taken by a test group of Pentecostals who had spoken in tongues. And two control groups of similar educational and vocational standing took the tests as well. One was comprised of Pentecostals who had not spoken in tongues, and the other of reformed church members whose pastor had believed that tongues had ended with apostolic times. (A fellow like me.) Psychologically, the latter group ranked highest, followed by the Pentecostals who had not spoken in tongues. The Glossalalics were discovered to have had, psychologically, a poor beginning in life, characterized by insecurity, conflict and tension, which led to a turning from the orthodox and the traditional, to an environment of sensitiveness for emotional feeling, and a group of people clinging to each other for support, toward the goal of being freed from themselves. Now, these psychological tests do not tell us anything, of course, finally, but it seems to me that that is an explanation that satisfies the facts. It is largely psychological instability.

You may be interested in what happened to me a few weeks ago, when I was in Oklahoma City. I gave all I’ve given you in three hours in one hour up there or, at least,

tried to. And when I finished in these meetings, we were opening it up for questions. And each night, they would ask me questions. And, of course, finishing the subject of tongues, I knew there were some in the audience who had spoken in tongues and I anticipated some difficult questions. And so when I opened it up, one man raised his hand and he asked a question, which was a very simple question. And I was able to answer it. And then another man stood up and he said “Dr. Johnson, I would like to make a statement?” And I said, “Uh, oh.” What he’s going to do is to denounce me for having said the things I’d said or try to give a long proof for the opposite view.

And so I said “All right, go ahead.” He said “I would like to confirm everything that you have said tonight.” And I breathed a little sigh of relief, of course. But then he went on to give a most amazing testimony. He said “Dr. Johnson, and I say this for the rest of the people who are here, that I was for thirty years a member of a Pentecostal Church. But I was not a Christian. As a matter of fact, my father was a Pentecostal Minister and is, still, a Pentecostal minister. And further, Dr. Johnson, I spoke in tongues. But I was not a Christian. It wasn’t until I reached the age of thirty.” (He was about thirty-six or seven now.) “It wasn’t until I reached the age of thirty that I realized that I was not a Christian and that I believed in Jesus Christ.” And so he gave that testimony and, of course, that settled all the questions. Nobody asked anymore questions after that. And since there was a quiet there, I said to him “I would like to ask you a question? Can you explain to me, speaking in tongues?”

He said “I think I can.” He said “Anybody can speak in tongues. All you have to do is just be around people who are speaking in tongues. You learn it just like you learn anything else. And you listen to it and you listen to the speech, and pretty soon you’re making a few little sounds like that, or you can, until finally you are able to speak in tongues.” He said “I know anyone can speak in tongues if they just stay around those who do.” Now, I said “Well, then, to what do you attribute speaking in tongues?” He said, “Well, I attribute it to psychological maladjustment or psychological disturbance, just

as you have.” Well, I’m not saying that that necessarily proves that what I said is right, because I’m not really sure. But that is the way I analyze it.

When, about three weeks ago, just a week or so after I had heard the testimony of this young man in the church in Oklahoma City, I was in Calgary, and while there came in contact with a Pentecostal minister, who had been a minister for many years in the Canadian Pentecostal church. And he was quick to tell me “Now, we in Canada, in the Pentecostal church are not wild and hysterical as they are in the United States.” So I asked him “Do you speak in tongues?” “Oh, yes” he spoke in tongues. “Well, why do you not speak in tongues now?” “Well, I do not believe it’s scriptural.” He is a man being used of God as an evangelist and Bible teacher in the province of Alberta. He spoke in tongues for many years, was a leader in that denomination, but now has come to believe that it is un-scriptural. Now, I know that a lot of people think that it is simply demonic influence. And I am not ruling that out. I think that some of the things that happen as a result of association with this movement do seem to be demonic.

It would seem to me that the Mormon Church’s speaking in tongues is surely demonic. You know the story of it. Brigham Young came into the presence of Joe Smith, to whom the angel, Moroni, had revealed some metal plates that Joseph had dug up, which the world has as the Mormon Bible. And when he came into the presence of Joe Smith, Brigham Young began to speak in tongues. And that was evidence that the plates were correct, that Smith was a prophet, and that Mormonism was right. Truly, this was wonderful, a religious movement founded upon one member of the human body. And, that the one of which James writes “And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.” I think that is demonic. And I think some demonic things do happen in the meetings in which tongues and other forms of the exercise of the temporary spiritual gifts take place. But I am not knowledgeable enough to accuse any particular person of being under demonic influence.

As far as I’m concerned, I don’t really anticipate having a great deal of contact with the demons and I’m not anxious to have any. And I don’t know a great deal about their activity. But I know that some of the things seem to have that kind of explanation. But I think most of it is simply psychological phenomenon.

Now, I hope, as a result of our study for three Monday nights, that at least you have seen that speaking in tongues was a speaking in a known language, it was a supernatural thing that was designed to authenticate apostolic testimony, that speaking in tongues, while possible today, is not probable today. The word has given us a hint regarding that. But, particularly, that what is going on today in the modern tongues movement does not tally with what we have in the New Testament. And I hope that none of you are misled and tempted to seek to speak in tongues. For you can, if you wish, in the modern tongues way.

Let’s bow in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for Thy word and Thy truth and we ask Thy blessing upon us. Deliver us from that which is unscriptural. And, Lord, whatever I may have said that is contrary to Thy word, may it be erased from our minds. But that which is in accordance with Thy mind may it be from our hearts and guide us in our lives.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.