



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Systematic Theology

“The Holy Spirit and the Gift of Tongues, part II”

TRANSCRIPT

It's after seven thirty, so let's begin our meeting tonight with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the privilege, again, of opening the Holy Scriptures. We thank Thee for the way in which they point us to Jesus Christ. We thank Thee for his great work for us. We thank Thee that he loved us and gave himself for us. We thank Thee that he lives for the saints, ever living to make intercession for them and, therefore, we know that he is able to save, unto the utter most, those that come unto God through him. And we pray that tonight, as we study again spiritual gifts; gifts, which Thou hast given through the Spirit that we may have the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. May he take up the things of Jesus Christ and show them unto us.

We pray, In Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] Tonight is the second in our series of studies on The Holy Spirit and the Gift of Tongues and will you turn with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 12. And will you listen as I read, beginning at verse 4, perhaps, I should begin with verse 1 through verse 11, and then we will begin at verse 28 and conclude the chapter, 1 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 1. Paul says.

“Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led. Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.”

Verse 28 gives us another listing of the spiritual gifts. Nine were listed in verses 4 through 11. Now we have some more. Verse 28.

“And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles?”

Or, remember, if you have been in our series of studies on spiritual gifts, we should render this verse. All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All do not work miracles, do they? All do not have the gifts of healing, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?

“But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent road.”

Now, we’re dealing with the fallout in 1971, from the meetings that took place at 312 Azusa Street in Los Angeles in 1906. It is there that the modern tongues movement began. And the movement has, since April 3, 1960 and the experience of Dennis Bennett announcing to his congregation of Episcopalians that he was speaking in tongues, made significant inroads into other than Pentecostal groups, vast claims are made for the speaking in “unknown tongues” or “fluent accents” as it is called. For example, this week, I’ve been reading the testimony of a German Lutheran who is pastor and director of the Lutheran church in one section of Germany. He had visited the United States, visited some of the churches in which tongues were being spoken.

And, in them, he says “During my stay in America in different Lutheran churches, I came across a new kind of spiritual awakening in which the New Testament charismatic signs have come into evidence and are practices with great discipline and order. I had opportunities to take part in different worship services in which these gifts of the Spirit were in evidence. I was impressed with the solemn liturgical beauty of these services. Everywhere they hold themselves strictly to the instructions of the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 14, verse 26, and following. The life of a congregation is [now notice these words] is made fruitful in unexpected ways. That which otherwise functions through excellent organization occurs among those involved in the awakening very spontaneously and independently. The members of the congregation visit one another. They manifest a personal concern for those outside the church. They pray for the sick and they contribute their money and their time to the ministry of the church. The pastor pointed out to me that one of these congregations, which has experienced the awakening, had shown a new recognition of social problems and set about solving them.”

Now, I’ll stop the reading there. There are a few more paragraphs, but that says essentially what Mr. Bittlinger is trying to say and that is that speaking in tongues, the evidence of the charismatic gifts has made the churches more fruitful and has even brought them to an awareness of the social problems that exist in our society today. And he has also said, by way of his own comment, that they have observed carefully the instructions of 1 Corinthians chapter 14, verse 26, and following.

Now, I’m not trying to debunk what Mr. Bittlinger has said, but I only want you to remember that you must read statements like this with a great deal of discernment. For example, Pastor Bittlinger’s comment that they are engaging in the exercising of the gifts in accordance with 1 Corinthians 14:26 and following is an assertion of his without any proof. And, of course, we may not regard the exhibition that takes place in the churches as being in accordance with 1 Corinthians chapter 14 in verse 26 at all. But, I think, we can, at least, say in fairness to him that he is probably trying to set forth what he honestly feels to be truly in accord with 1 Corinthians chapter 14.

Now, the interesting thing about this is that if we were to believe all of the things that men say about this, it would be a truly amazing movement. But there are other sides to this question. For example, this afternoon, just before the meeting, I got a call from out west and a woman wanted to ask me a few questions about speaking in tongues and speaking in tongues is just about to cause a split in their church, a Methodist church, in this particular area. And so the things that transpire when tongues are spoken are not necessarily as Pastor Bittlinger has said it.

As you may know, there has been considerable interest in the Roman Catholic Church in speaking in tongues. And, not long ago 1969 to be exact, two young people, a young couple, both with degrees in theology from Notre Dame, authored a book called “Catholic Pentecostals.” And in this book, they go on to say that through the baptism of the Holy Spirit, they have been led to a greater love for Mary; they have been led to greater veneration for the Pope; they have been led to greater devotion to the Roman

Catholic church; to increased regularity of the observance of the Mass; and more power in witnessing to these things that have just been set forth here.

I think all of us who study the Bible would come to the conclusion that the Bible, while it regards Mary as a remarkable woman, blessed among women, does not in any way countenance the worship of Mary or the veneration of Mary. But, it would seem that according to their testimony, this leads to a greater devotion to Mary, a greater veneration of the Pope, who is only a man, a greater devotion to the Roman Catholic Church and increased regularity at the Mass in which, in my opinion, we have that which is not only contrary to the New Testament but is actually a death-blow to the Cross of Jesus Christ and its significance if we are to believe what has historically been said about the Roman Catholic Mass.

And so here on one hand, we have Lutherans claiming that this has produced great fruitfulness in their church and Roman Catholics claiming on the other side that it has produced a greater worship of the Pope and love for Mary and other things which, as far as I can tell, are obviously unscriptural. Now, I’m not going to suggest that either one is lying; that is not true. They are, perhaps, honestly believers in what they are saying. But, it should be obvious to us that that is not necessarily true.

What is the value of the experience of speaking in tongues? One of its saner proponents has offered these two values. And he, too, is a Lutheran. He has suggested: first, that the chief value, the first value, is an awareness of entering a vast new spiritual realm, to use his terms. “One understands the Bible a great deal better after he has had the baptism of the Holy Spirit and has begun to speak in tongues.” He went on for a few sentences to extol the virtues of this experience for understanding the Bible. Now, if I could believe that that was true, then I would express some hope for this movement. Because, I think, if it were really true that they were understanding the Bible better, then we would have nothing to worry about because it wouldn’t be long before they would be

saying, we’re not sure that what the experience we had was really according to the word of God.

Now, I think, it also should be obvious to us, if we have known anything about the study of the Scriptures that there has, so far as I can tell, been no advance in Bible knowledge as a result of the tongues movement. In fact, it is distinguished and characterized by a failure to understand the Scriptures almost entirely. It is a movement directed toward experience and not toward the understanding of the word of God.

Now, secondly, Mr. Christiansen, who is a Lutheran pastor, has said, “Its use in private devotions has led to resulting self-edification.” Now, this is a startling thing and I think it’s so startling because it becomes evident that the very thing that Mr. Christiansen is extolling is the thing that the Apostle Paul does not. Now, that what he is saying is a rather universal claim. That is, through speaking in tongues we edify ourselves, and that is real good. I received a card today from a young lady, whom I know real well from another city, and she said “Would you please send me the name of a book, or one of your tapes, or anything concerning tongues. It has hit [she mentions a certain city] among new Christians like a storm. Also, what does 1 Corinthians 14:4, concerning self-edification mean?” Now, we’re going to talk next Monday night about 1 Corinthians chapter 14 and I hope that we will be able to explode a lot of nonsense that has been said about this chapter. But, I am going to refer to this at the present moment and ask you to turn over and read 1 Corinthians chapter 14 and verse 4, with me.

“He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.”

Now, it would seem as you read this sentence, if you took it out of its context, that the apostle is suggesting that this is a very good thing. “He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself.” There it is self-edification. But, of course, if we read only that

particular part of the sentence and if we fail to see it in its context then we are going to have a distorted view of what Paul is really saying in this place. And, unfortunately, young Christians do not know enough to study the context of Scripture and study it well. And older Christians, when they know better, rarely take the time to do it. And so the result is that among Christians they frequently reach down, pick a little clause out of its context, not knowing precisely what it means, quote it, make it mean something that it does not mean in its context.

Now, Mr. Christiansen says that “In speaking in tongues, we are self-edified and one becomes more filled with Jesus.” But, when you look at this text, it becomes obvious that Paul is not praising tongues, he is depreciating tongues.

He has said in verse 3, well, let’s read verse 2. “For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God:” [In other words, the only person who can understand a person who speaks in tongues is God. Now, that’s not a sign of praise. That’s a sign of depreciation of the gift. Only God can understand a person who speaks in tongues. It does not edify anybody. And then he goes on to say “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 an unknown tongue edifieth himself.” He doesn’t edify anybody. He doesn’t edify the church. He edifies only himself. It’s a purely selfish thing is what Paul is saying “For he that prophesieth edifieth the church.”

Now, this is an amazing thing and this, I think, points to the truth that the characteristic thing about the movement is its ignorance, its unacquaintedness with the word of God. For you see, in this text, the striking fact is that the very text by which Paul depreciates tongues in relation to prophecy, is the text with which glossalalists praise its value. Now, isn’t that an amazing thing?

Further, in 1 Corinthians chapter 12 in verse 5, we read now “There are differences of administrations.” The Greek word is the word ministrie, ministry. Now, a ministry is

something that one does for someone else. There are diversities of ministries. In other words, the gifts were given by God not for self-edification. They were given for the edification of the whole Body of Jesus Christ, the Church. And so here is a person speaking about self-edification when Paul says the gift is designed to be a service to others. Further, in chapter 13 in verse 4, we read “Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love voideth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, [Now notice] seeketh not her own.” Or as the Greek text puts it literally “Does not seek the things of itself.” And the very term that is translated “self” in self-edification or himself, is the term that is used there. In other words, the man who is filled with the spirit and really walking in the Holy Spirit is the man who is not interested in self-edification; he is not seeking the things of himself, he is interested in the service of others.

Now, Mr. Spurgeon put it well when he said “I looked at Christ and the Dove of Peace came into my heart. I looked at the Dove of Peace and it flew away.” Now, you see, when we began to speak, about the things that have happened to us, and the benefits that we obtain, we take our eyes off of Jesus Christ and also the scriptural intention of the gifts of God. Tongue talking, when the mind is absent, often is only a neurotic narcissism or self-love.

Now, what have we learned from the Book of Acts. Well, last time we learned these things, I hope. Speaking in tongues was done in a known language; that is, a language unlearned by the speaker. I was reading today another tongues speaker who said that when he discovered he was speaking in tongues, he began to utter a few phrases in Latin, which he had had as a high school student. Now, that’s not speaking in tongues if you happen to remember, *Quadruple tate quo tems, sonatu, quatatum, de la compum*. Well, you haven’t begun to speak in tongues. You’ve just remembered some of the things you learned a long time ago. And so when a man speaks in tongues in the Bible, he spoke in a known language but one that he did not know, which he had never learned, but which others recognized was their language. Now, we saw that in every case



of the Book of Acts. It is a known language. Not ecstatic speech, not ecstatic gibberish. It was not something by which you simply put phrases together, sounds together, which had no structure and could not be called a language.

Second, we learned that speaking in tongues authenticated the reception of the Holy Spirit. That is, in the three instances in the Book of Acts, which are given us, the three definite instances, they followed the reception of the Holy Spirit. So that speaking in tongues was an authentication of the reception of the Holy Spirit and, thus, an authentication of the new Christian movement or this new movement, a Christian movement. The authentication, we saw, was directed primarily to Jewish people in accordance with Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians chapter 14, verse 21 and 22, which we shall discuss next Monday night, the Lord willing.

Thirdly, speaking in tongues was never done privately in the Book of Acts. It was never done privately in the Book of Acts. In Acts chapter 2, it was public. In Acts chapter 10, it was public. In Acts chapter 19, it was public.

And, further, if we do have speaking in tongues in Acts chapter 8, it is not definite, remember, that too was public. In other words, there is no evidence of any private speaking in tongues. As a matter of fact, I think I’m going to be able to show you so that even the most doubtful of you will no longer doubt, that so far as 1 Corinthians 14 is concerned, there is no evidence that there was ever any private speaking in tongues. Now, I know what you’re going to say “Paul said he spoke with tongues more than all. He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself, only God understands him.” Yes, that’s right, if there is no interpreter around in the Church,

But now, let’s come to the second point in our outline: The evidence of 1 Corinthians. And, first of all, capital A - The evidence of 1 Corinthians chapter 12. But before we look 12, now, I want to introduce 1 Corinthians 12 through 14 by noting a few introductory things, which I want you if you are taking notes, to put down. First of all, 1

Corinthians is the only other book in the New Testament, beside the Book of Acts, in which there is a definite reference to the gift of tongues.

There are twenty-one New Testament Epistles and only one mentions the gift of tongues. Now, I think that should be important for us. It should suggest to us the fact that speaking in tongues did not have a prominent place in the early church. If it is only alluded to in one of Paul’s Epistles and only one of the epistles of the New Testament, it must be something that the early Church did not take to be a prominent thing. Isn’t that interesting? Now, I know that Paul spends three chapters on that gift in 1 Corinthians. But that only tells us that the apostle regarded the abuse of tongues as a very serious error. And, therefore, he devoted a great deal of time to it in the one church in which there was this abuse of the gift of tongues. So remember that.

Now, secondly, the first error in Corinth was the according of the gift a prominent place. In Paul’s lists of the gifts, you will notice that he puts tongues and interpretation of tongues last. He gives us one list in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, in the first part of the chapter verses 4 through 11, tongues are placed last. He gives us another list in verse 28 and, further, adds the words “first, second, third” and when he reaches the end of the list in verse 28, what should be at the bottom of the totem pole but “diversities of tongues.” Now, notice, he has said first, second, third and finally, tongues. Now, if we have a third listing in the form of questions in verses 29 and 30, which it certainly seems that we could have, for he starts with apostles and winds up again with tongues. We have three listings in one chapter of the gifts and Paul puts them last each time, tongues.

Now, of course, Paul has some other listing of gifts in Ephesians chapter 4, he lists gifts and also in Romans chapter 12, he lists gifts. And the apostle forgot all about tongues when he wrote those lists down, for he does not mention tongues at all there. So he has given us, then, a couple of lists at least in chapter 12 and tongues are at the bottom. He has given us a couple of more lists in Ephesians and in Romans, and he has not even mentioned tongues at all. One other apostle has given us lists of spiritual gifts,

and that is Peter. And in 1 Peter chapter 4, Peter mentions spiritual gifts and he, like Paul in Ephesians and Romans, does not mention speaking in tongues. So the first error in Corinth was the according of this gift a prominent place.

Now, Paul states that very plainly when he says “Covet earnestly the best gifts.” He says in chapter 14, verse 1, “Follow after love, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.” Verse 5 “I would that ye all spake with tongues [I wish that ye all speak 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.” And then, of course, tongues becomes like prophecy and teaching and so on. So the first error was according tongues a prominent place. The second error was the according of prophecy an insufficient place. That is evident from chapter 14 and we need not go into that again.

Third, the third error was that they exercised the gifts in the wrong way. They often allowed people to speak in tongues without an interpreter. And further, they allowed females to use the gift of tongues, apparently, in their meetings. And so 1 Corinthians chapter 14 is given us in order that there may be proper regulation of the exercise of the gifts in the meeting of the church and that the women be exhorted to keep silent.

Now, I noticed that when Mrs. Jean Stone, whom I do not know personally, I’m sure that she is a very lovely person. Well, I’m not sure. I hope that she is. Really, she could be an old battle-axe, as far as I’m concerned [Laughter] but I would imagine not. And I noticed, however, that when she spoke in tongues for the reporter, there was no one there to interpret. Now, I grant, that she was requested to do it and she did it. But according to the New Testament here, and Paul “You shouldn’t use the gift of tongues if there is no interpreter nearby.”

Now, I had an experience in Calgary, a few weeks ago, and I mentioned it to some of you, but others of you didn’t hear it. So I must tell you. I was coming back from

Calgary, Alberta, after Easter weekend, having preached there in a conference. And I was in the waiting room of Western Airlines, in the morning, a very manish woman came in with a Bible under her arm and a big rough voice like she had been engaged by one of the oil and natural gas companies and had been working in the fields north of Edmonton. And she began to pass out tracts, and I certainly admire her for that. And she came over to me and I was sitting there and she didn’t know I was a preacher. And she handed me a tract and I said “Thank you very much, I’m a Christian.”

And she said “Oh, Brother, that’s wonderful that you are standing up for Jesus and giving a public testimony for him.” And then she said “Where do you come from?” And I said “Well, I come from Dallas, Texas.” She said “Oh, we’ve been down there spreading the word all over the place.” [Laughter] And we engaged in a little conversation and it became evident that she was a woman preacher and had been down to Texas and been lots of places preaching the word. And so I thought well, I don’t have anything to do now but just to be my normal nasty self. [More laughter] And so I said to her “Now tell me, since you are a woman preacher, what did Paul mean when he said ‘Let your women keep silence in the churches?’” I said it nicely. [More laughter] You would have been proud of me, really.

And she said “Oh, well, that simply means that the women were to keep their children from making noises in the meeting and disturbing them.” Now, if having the experience of speaking in tongues, and she was one who had had the experience and spoke in tongues, made you a more acute Bible student, well then I must say that certainly seemed to me a puerile interpretation of that text and absolutely unique, for no other interpreter has ever thought of that meaning of that text. [More laughter]

Now, I want to say another thing before we look here at the evidence of 1 Corinthians 12. We proceed, as I said the other day, on the basis that the Bible teaches that tongues were known languages. That the clear teaching of the Book of Acts, guides us in the places in which we might be in doubt, although, I think, we shall see when we

finish 1 Corinthians 14, that that chapter, too, supports the idea that tongues were a speaking not in ecstatic language but in known languages which had not been learned by the speaker, but which were known by others when they spoke.

Dr. Walvoord, who is the president of Dallas Seminary, told a story which I cannot document at all. It may not be true. But he told it as if it were true. He said that a student at the Bible Institute of Los Angeles went to a Pentecostal meeting in Los Angeles some time ago and he stood up in the meeting when the time came for people to stand up and speak in tongues, and he had memorized the Hebrew text of Psalm 1. And so he got up and he recited the Hebrew text of Psalm 1, in the meeting. And when he sat down, a woman interpreter stood up and began to interpret. And she said that he had just spoken words in praise of women preachers. [Laughter] And so he immediately stood up and objected and he said “Well, all I did was, actually, recite the Hebrew text of Psalm 1.” And according to Dr. Walvoord, they threw him out of the meeting. [More laughter] Now, I must say, the attitude in which he went to that meeting was probably not the best, but it does throw a great deal of light on the science of interpreting the people who speak in tongues.

Now, let’s turn more seriously to the text of 1 Corinthians chapter 12, capital A in our outline - The context and teaching of 1 Corinthians chapter 12. You’ll notice that we’re going to try to cover A and B and then we’re going to save 1 Corinthians 14 for next time, plus a few lessons from the history of the movement of speaking in tongues.

Now, the evidence of 1 Corinthians chapter 12. In the very first verse of 1 Corinthians 12, Paul lets us know that what he is saying in these three chapters 12, 13, and 14, about spiritual gifts is something that is an answer to a question that they have sent to him. “Now concerning spiritual gifts.” A number of times in the epistle, Paul says that. For example, back in chapter 7 in verse 1, he says “Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me.” And verse 25 “Now, concerning virgins.” In chapter 8, verse 1, the same expression in the Greek text “Now concerning [we have as touching]

concerning things offered unto idols.” He takes up that subject in chapters 8 through 10, so that when he comes to chapter 12, verse 1, he says again “Now concerning spiritual gifts.” And so, evidently, the Corinthians had written Paul and they had said to him, “Now we’d like some information about certain things. We’d like to know about things sacrificed to idols. We’d like to know about the subject of marriage. We’d like to know about the subject of virgins. We’d like to know about spiritual gifts.” And so in verse 1, we have the beginning of Paul’s answer to their question. “Now concerning spiritual gifts.”

If you will look at your text carefully, the word “gifts” is in italics and Campbell Morgan, among interpreters, has suggested that perhaps the opening verses do not have to do with spiritual gifts but just the spiritualities, I think, as he puts it. But the evidence for spiritual gifts is very strong when we realize that in the 4<sup>th</sup> verse, we do have “Now there are diversities of gifts.” And the word “charisma” is used which is the term for spiritual gifts. And so I am inclined to think that in verse 1 we should translate it as the Authorized Version has done it. “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.” Apparently, some were ignorant about spiritual gifts and there are many ignorant about them in nineteen hundred and seventy-one. And the first thing that he does is to warn them that speaking in tongues is not like the old ecstasy and gibberish that characterized their heathen idolatry. For you see, speaking in tongues is not a unique Christian phenomenon. It took place in places outside of Christianity. The Mormons, today, regard it as one of the teachings of their church. We believe in tongues. We’ll talk about that next time. So, you see, the Corinthians had been exposed to heathen religions in which they did have the experiences of speaking in, what is called speaking in tongues in the twentieth century. Speaking in fluent accents or speaking in ecstatic gibberish. And so he warns them. He says “You know that you were Gentiles, carried away, swept away.”

Now, if there is a better term to describe what is happening to a lot of people within the Christian movement today, particularly, the immature ones, I don’t know what it is. “Carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led.” In other words, the first thing I want to tell you is that the use of the spiritual gifts is not in any way to be compared with those old experiences you had as a non-Christian. “Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.” In other words, if you are really led by the Holy Spirit then you will be acknowledging the deity, the supreme deity and lordship, of Jesus Christ. That is the characteristic of the person who is really under the influence of the Spirit. He doesn’t talk about the Spirit, he talks about Jesus Christ and what he has done for him at the Cross at Calvary and the benefits that flowed from it. So Paul begins there warning them against being swept away by ecstasy, as they were when they were unbelievers. Seizure is not spiritual. You should be led of the Spirit not led away by ecstasy.

Now, he makes these points in these verses. The first point, the gifts are not rewards for effort; they are presents of grace. Verse 4 “Now there are diversities of spiritual gifts.” And the word that is used in that text in the Greek is the word *charisma*. Now, charisma is a term, which is derived from the Greek word for grace, which is *charis*. And so, a charisma is a grace gift. So the very first thing that we learn about the spiritual gifts is that they are presents of grace. They are not anything. They are not gifts that rewards for effort. They are not signs of dedication. They are gifts of God in grace.

Now, do you know what that means? That means that they come to us apart from any of self-merit whatsoever. Consequently, if we were to say that if we practice certain gifts that means that we are spiritual, we are denying the fundamental character of the grace gifts. They are sovereign disposals of God according to the freeness of his love. That’s how you were saved. That’s how you receive a spiritual gift. You don’t receive a

spiritual gift because you are more dedicated than anyone else or because you’re dedicated at all. You receive it out of grace.

Second, the variety in gifts is not due to variety of dedication. It is due to the divine will. Look at verse 11 “All these things worketh the one and the same Spirit, dividing to each one as he wills.” In other words, if you have the gift of teaching and if I have the gift of evangelism, it is purely the sovereign will of God out of grace that you have it. If I have the gift of evangelism, I don’t have a better gift than yours. So far as we know, in the New Testament, these gifts here, aside from certain orders in which the apostle puts them, are gifts that come out of grace. And they are also do to the divine will.

Third, the gift is to be treasure for what it does for the church, not for the individual. Now, this is something extremely important. Paul calls them in verse 5 “administrations.” Or, again, as the Greek text puts it, using the word ministry “And there are diversities of ministries.” Now *diakonia* is the word from which we get the English word “deacon.” It really came from a word that means to stir up a lot of dust, and so a deacon is a person who stirs up a lot of dust. *Konios* is the Greek word for dust. And so it has the idea of a servant. A deacon is a servant. And so, the gifts were given to serve others, not to get off in your room and pat yourself on the back and saying “I’m speaking in tongues. I’m edifying myself.” Now, that is precisely contrary to the spirit of the apostle’s statements. The gifts are for the church, not for the individual. Never does Paul suggest that they are for the individual. Gifts are for the whole of the body of Christ, to edify the church. Read these chapters and see for yourself.

Fourth, there are not just nine gifts, as is sometimes claimed. There is a fellow, I understand, over the radio in Dallas. I won’t tell you what station because you’ll go and turn and start listening to him. But I’ll tell you it’s got four letters in its call and the first one begins with a K and the last is Y. [Laughter] And, also, there’s a lot of other nonsense on that station, too, which is operated by a good friend of mine. But still, that man keeps



talking about nine gifts. Now, there are more than nine gifts. There are nine gifts in 1 Corinthians 12: 4 through 11. But then we have three other passages in which gifts are mentioned in the New Testament. Right here, Romans 12, Ephesians 4, 1 Peter chapter 4, so we have a number of places where gifts are mentioned and there are far more than nine of them. I say this because last time someone came up after the meeting and wanted to discuss that point. Now, there are more than nine gifts.

Fifth, there is a diversity in the importance of the gifts. Now, notice verse 28. It says “And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets.” Now, that is God’s sovereign will that that gift be more important. That does not mean that the person who has it is more important than I am or than you. But the gift is more important. I would understand that because he then gives us the illustration of the body and how each member is absolutely essential for the body.

Tongues, as we’ve said, stand last in the list. And I read an exposition of these gifts today and when the man finished a rather thorough exposition of them and pointed out that tongues was last in the list, he said “Even he who runs may read.” And so, don’t miss the point.

Sixth, not everyone is expected to be a tongue-talker. Now, notice verse 30 again “Have all the gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues?” Now, you’ll remember that I have pointed out before to you, so that you know a little Greek now, that the term that is used for introducing a question in Greek may indicate the kind of answer that the questioner expects. For example, if the one who asks the question puts a little “me” before his question, he let’s his listener know that he expects the answer “no.” If he were to use “Ooh,” then he lets his listener know that he expects the answer “yes.” So, we can know from Greek the kind of answer that the questioner expects. Now, we do it in English in different ways. We say “You want to go out to see the Cowboys, don’t you?” Now, we expect a “yes” answer. And if you say, “no,” we’re shocked. Or, if we say “You

don’t want to go out and watch those bums, do you?” Then you know that we don’t expect you to go out to see the Cowboys. Well, that’s the way we do it in English.

Now, Paul used the term “me” here when he said, “have all the gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues?” He meant by that that all do not speak with tongues, do they? In other words, tongues, then, cannot be a gift by which we are enabled to worship God better, for you see, there can never be any distinction in worship among Christians. There is distinction in service. Some men are elders, some are deacons, some are not officers in the church at all, some are men who have gifts of teaching, some have gifts of illumination, others have gifts of administration, helps, governments, the gifts are for service and, consequently, each has one, but they are different.

Now, Paul says, “All do not speak in tongues, do they?” If amid this diversity, there were some who had the opportunity up to approach God in a way that others cannot, we would be perfectly right in accusing God of partiality among his own family of believers. So it is obvious to us that when Paul says “All do not speak in tongues, do they?” He is distinguishing this gift as a service from other gifts and not saying that some do not have the right to approach God as closely or as intimately as others. So that blasts the idea that we worship God better when we speak with tongues. It’s just contrary to the Bible. It’s just unscriptural. We can say it just as plain as that. When a man says that speaking in tongues is a means of approaching God, personally, in order to worship him more intimately, he’s just denying the truth of the word of God. And if Paul were here, he’s jump up and say “Wait a minute! Wait a minute! You don’t understand the Scriptures.” So, I think, that’s one thing that we can learn.

Now, I did read today that to get around this, Pastor Christiansen, the Lutheran pastor that I quoted before, said “Well, that seems to be the teaching. It’s true, it does expect the negative answer.” He agreed with the Greek. He had a little Greek himself. But he said “It seems to me that what Paul is doing is saying that all do not speak with tongues in the church.” Because, after all, in verse 28, he says “And God hath set some in

the church.” And so Paul is talking only about what goes on in the Church. Now, that sounds very good until you think a little bit. And if that is true, and all Paul is talking about here is what goes on in the church, then outside of the church, Christiansen would say, “Everybody may speak in tongues.” Well, if that’s true, then everybody can be an apostle. Everybody can be a prophet. Everybody can be all of these other things, and what we would have is we would have a whole church composed of thousands of apostles, for you see, that is precisely what his reasoning leads him to. If he’s only talking about “in the church” then all the gifts are for everybody outside the church. And so while I’m only an humble teacher of the word here, wait ‘til I get outside. Then, I’m an apostle. You better pay attention to what I say. See, that kind of interpretation, again, is ignorance. It’s immaturity. And if having this gift leads you to a better understanding of the Bible, it’s escaped me. Now I know you’re going to think I’m very mean and nasty, but sometimes that’s the only way you can make people listen. And, Paul every now and then got a little upset himself, remember?

Now then, let’s look at 1 Corinthians chapter 13. I think we’ve said everything that is of theological importance here. If we were giving an exposition, we would go down verse by verse. But this is a study in systematic theology, remember, so we cannot speak of every point that comes before us.

Now, the evidence of 1 Corinthians 13. And I’m going to go right to the problem, which is the meaning of the verses beginning with verse 8.

“Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, [That’s tongues] I understood as a child, [That seems to be prophecy] I thought as a child: [That seems to be knowledge, or vice versa --] but when I became a man, I put away childish

things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.”

Now, what does Paul mean when he says “But then that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.” Now, different interpretations have been given of these verses and particularly of this one. And I hesitate to disagree with my friends. And I’m not disagreeing with all of my friends, just some of my friends.

Now, I have a very good friend, who says that 1 Corinthians chapter 13, verse 10, means “tongues will cease with the completion of the canon of Scripture.” In other words, when the twenty-seven books of the New Testament came to recognition by the Church; it is usually placed historically at 397 A.D. at the Third Council of Carthage. There was a recognition by the Church as a whole of our twenty-seven books of the New Testament. It was then that tongues were to die off “For that which is perfect is come.” Now, I do not agree with that interpretation. I would like to think that’s true because that would settle the question of whether we should speak in tongues today. If it were really true, that with the coming of the canon, tongues would die out, well then that would settle the matter. And I would be happy to believe that.

But I don’t think that Scripture supports it. Because, you see, what is stated here is that when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away. And he says in the 12<sup>th</sup> verse “Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face.” And then we shall as we are known. In other words, when that which is perfect is come, then we’re going to have complete knowledge. As I look around at my friends, and even my friend who gives me this interpretation, he doesn’t know everything perfectly yet. I think he has an idea, he knows about 98% of it but, nevertheless, he doesn’t really know everything. Now, I’m kidding again see. I’ve got a smile through the camera here.

So, it’s obvious it seems to me, that this cannot really be the meaning of that verse. When that which is perfect is come, we’re going to know as we are known. And that has

not come yet. It has not come for me. And it is not come for anyone that I know. And even those that know a great deal more about the Scriptures than I, it has not come from them. In fact, I’ve noticed that many of my friends who know a great deal about the word, acknowledge each day, that they’ve discovered they know a little less than they knew yesterday. So, that cannot be the meaning.

Now, I have another real good friend, who has a unique interpretation. And he says that this means that “tongues is going to cease before prophecy and knowledge.” Well, I don’t think that that really is the teaching of the passage. It’s rather vague and difficult to understand precisely what is meant, but he likes to make a great point over the fact that in verse 8 it says “tongues shall cease” and the word is the middle of the Greek *pauo* which he feels means “they shall cease of themselves.” That is, they will die out. The other gifts may go on but tongues is going to die out. There is some support for it. He’s a Greek scholar. He has taught Greek. In fact, he learned from a really good teacher. I taught him some of his Greek. [Laughter]

Now, I still do not agree, however, with that interpretation. I just don’t think it satisfies the text and the context. I want you to notice that when it says “When that which is perfect is come.” It’s speaking about something that is neuter. It’s not a “he.” It’s “that which is perfect, that which is mature.” When that comes “that which is in part shall be done away” with. And I do not think that we could believe that “That which is perfect” is any more than the age that is coming when Jesus Christ comes again. In other words, when he who is the perfect one comes, then the perfect age shall come for us who are believers, and then and then only, when we are in the presence of the Lord, shall we know as we are known. Well, that means then that so far as this text is concerned, verse 10, that doesn’t say anything about the impossibility of speaking in tongues today. Yes, that’s right. And I want to make very plain that I have never said, I never will say, it is impossible to speak in tongues today. I will only say that what is going on today,

under the name tongues, is not what the Bible says is speaking in tongues for the most part.

Now, as far as I can tell, God is able to give the Biblical gift of speaking in tongues today. And if someone should come back from Africa, and say, he ventured on a tribe, in which the Gospel had never been preached, and suddenly, by a work of the Holy Spirit he was able to get up and preach the Gospel to them in a language that he had never learned himself, I would be willing if there be witnesses, proper witnesses, to believe that that could take place. But I have noticed that the Pentecostals have to learn the languages on the mission fields just like anyone else. And those that teach them say they are a little slower than most in learning the languages. [Laughter] Now, that again may be unfair; but that’s what they say. That’s what they say. So, I’m inclined to think then that what this means is that tongues is a possibility in the biblical sense until Jesus Christ comes.

Well then, should we expect him today? Well, now, there is a text, which people often overlook. You know what text it is? Well, it’s the same thing I was talking about when I began the study tonight by saying that we, who are Christians who studied our Bibles a lot, we fail often to do the thing that we know is the first rule of biblical interpretation. What is it? Look at the context, look at the context. Why, he has said in verse 10 “when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.” And then, for some reason, he talks about being a child and an adult. What in the world has that to do with the text? “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child.” Now, that might clue us in because he’s talking about three gifts: tongues, knowledge, prophesy. Isn’t he? “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man.” What do I do? I throw away my toys. I put all of my little toys that I played with when I was a child in a sack and leave them for grandchild, for granddaughter or grandson or just throw them in the trash can.

Now, what in the world does that have to do with the text? Well, I think, really, that what Paul is telling us is the history of the church on earth, is going to be like the history of a child growing up. And there are certain features of a child’s life, which will be put away as the child matures, and that we are to liken to the history of the church. Now, all of us know, I hope, that in Hebrews chapter 2, remember, Paul said or the writer of that epistle said, one of my students heard that slip, oh, he would be really excited, [Laughter] Hebrews chapter 2, remember, we referred to, and it said “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;” (Notice the past tense, this is still the 1<sup>st</sup> Century between 50 and 70 A.D., and the writer of this epistle is already talking about the assigned gifts in the past tense. Notice, verse 4) “God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?” So he looks back at the time they received the Gospel and he remembers those gifts of authentication; that was the babyhood or infancy of the Church.

Now, my diagram here is designed to represent Pentecost and the beginning of the church; it’s infancy. Now, Ephesians chapter 4, describes for us the churches reaching maturity. If you’ll read that chapter, you will discover it is a chapter about the collective maturity of the church. And God has given spiritual gifts to bring the whole church to maturity. Read the passage. We don’t have time to look at it.

Now, that is going to take place when Jesus Christ comes, so 1 Corinthians 13:8 says “When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.” Now, there are three gifts, knowledge, prophecy, and tongues, which were in existence in the infancy of the church. They are the things that have to do with us when we are babes, when the church is like a little baby. It’s then that they use the gifts of tongues, prophecy and knowledge. Why? Well, because it was the day of authentication of the truths of Scripture, so far as tongues are concerned.

Now then, they faded out. That is represented in my diagram by the dotted line. We do not have them any longer. We had them in the infancy of the church; we do not have them in the days in which we are living, which are days of maturity for the whole church. We know more about the Bible than any age, any generation ever has known today. Read the fathers, you’ll discover they are really the children of the Christian faith. They don’t understand, often, some of the simplest principles of grace that we understand today. Some of them are not even Calvinists. They are bound to be little babes. So that’s the history of the Church and so when Paul says “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I thought as a child and I reasoned as a child, when I become a man, I put away childish things.” Tongues, prophecy, knowledge are the baby talk of the beginning era of the Christian church.

Now, you see, Paul has given us a simple illustration to tell us we should not expect the gifts of prophecy, knowledge, tongues, today. Now you say “Well, Dr. Johnson, I’m not so sure about that.” Well, will you read 1 Corinthians chapter 14, verse 20? Paul says, talking again about tongues “Brethren, be not children in understanding. “Be not children in understanding.” “In malice be children, but in understanding be men.” In other words, don’t be carried away by the tongues gift. Use it all out of its proportion and, thus, be guilty of playing like a little child.

And, I’ll never forget I had this experience more than once but in some of the churches in which speaking in tongues took place as a practice, they called it, not knowing this text of Scripture, baby talk, baby talk. Because, you see, it sounded so much like it to them. And they began to refer to it that way. And they did not realize how truly they were speaking, even assuming it was the genuine gift. It is baby talk.

Now, next time, we’re going to look at 1 Corinthians chapter 14, and I did bring that tape tonight, but we don’t have time to play it. I’ll play it next time. It’s not all that important. Oh, you want to play it?



Let’s close with a word of prayer because we want to get the tape through. I was requested to go a few minutes more tonight because Mr. Parker wanted to fix up the room in there. I was going anyway, but he did request that I do it. So let’s have a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for Thy word and Thy truth. And, Lord, deliver us from the immaturity that is manifested so often around us when the subject of tongues comes up. We have sympathy and we have love for those who are involved in that which we feel is erroneous, and we pray that Thou will deliver them. And we pray that Thou will give us the humility that is proper for a child of God who has received everything in grace.

And this we ask in Jesus’ Name. Amen.