**The Gift of Tongues, No. 6 – BD31-01**

This is the sixth in the series on the study of the gift of tongues. You perhaps have noticed that we have spent considerable time on this particular spiritual gift, and it’s a temporary one, nonexistent today at that, in comparison to what we have spent on the other gifts. However, the apostle Paul had the same problem. The problem was that in his day the gift of tongues was being abused. It was being distorted, and when he came to writing the book of 1 Corinthians, he had to spend chapters 12, 13, and 14 simply discussing this gift alone in order to try to clear it up and to stabilize people on what they were doing in the Corinthian church.

Now the carnality of that church led them to all the abuses that we have today. Therefore, the passages that we’ve been looking at in 1 Corinthians 12 through 14 are an excellent presentation and an analysis of what is going on today and the guidelines in how we are to meet these things.

We have been trying to show that the Bible has some principles relative to the subject of a Christian service, and that these are expressed through the spiritual gifts. We have sought to show that some of these spiritual gifts were temporary in nature. They were for the infancy stage of the church in the New Testament only.

We have been pointing to satanic counterfeits of these temporary spiritual gifts in our own day. We have been pointing to these counterfeits without apology and in spite of the fact that some very dignified personalities and some very prominent personalities in our day throw a weight of aura of dignity across the Pentecostal movement and its practices. Healers and tongue devotees are now becoming prominent TV personalities. Maybe you don’t like to hear them mentioned by name, but there are some of you who might just inadvertently be hurt if you don’t have some identifying marks.

One of the great things about the Lord Jesus Christ was that He got indignant when the people of God were made fools of in spiritual things. So He stormed into the temple itself and made a tremendous scene in casting out the moneychangers. He pointed His finger at the religious leaders of His day, all of whom did the right thing relative to the law right down the line. They could not be faulted on that, but they were fakes and frauds, and they condoned evil, and they played ball. Jesus Christ called them down for playing ball with evil.

So we are not saying that these people are all bad or that they’re not sincere. We’re not even saying that they’re not believers; that they’re not born again. We’re just saying that they are distorted on an area of doctrine that can destroy your spiritual reward in heaven if you follow their course. Healers and the tongues devotees are all the same ball of wax today. It is a satanic delusion that broods upon the Christian church that we cannot shake off, and which in fact will increasingly become worse. Healers build vast reputations and people flock to them. They promote the tongues movement and people feel they have come in touch with God.

Now of course before you’re going to be a healer, and if some of you here are thinking this morning of getting into the healing racket, I’ll tell you one of the first places you’ll have to begin. You’ll have to have a great experience of healing yourself. In a little volume called The Modern Tongues and Healing Movement by Carroll Stegall Jr., there is an interesting quote. Mr. Stegall says, “Invented stories and fabrications of healings which are passed off as real: Into this category fall the ridiculous tales invented by the healers themselves. Before any healer can go far, he must be able to tell how he himself was healed. They vie with one another in inventing more fantastic stories. Oral Roberts has not much to boast of. He was only dying of tuberculosis. Jaggers, of course, who was a great west coast healer, does best. He died and was restored to life. Resistance to Jaggers who some years ago when I was a Dallas seminary student was turning Dallas upside down with his great healing meetings in Fair Park auditorium in which the man had a heart attack right in the middle of the service. Mrs. Danish went forward and told Mr. Jaggers that if he didn’t do something, he would have the opportunity of his lifetime to raise somebody from the dead. And Mr. Jaggers jumped to the platform, called the meeting to attention, had a word of prayer, and dismissed it just like that. The offering had already been taken so there wasn’t much more to hold on to, and the meeting broke up. Then I chased the man who had the heart attack, and Mr. Jaggers went there as he sat bleeding at the mouth in his car. Jaggers put his hand on his chest and said, “Now in the name of Jesus I command this heart to be healed.” And he looked at the man and said, “I believe your heart is now whole and healed.” And the man looked at him and smiled, and they took him away. By morning he may have been dead for all I know. I’d like to know what happened.

Now this is fraudulent. This is blasphemy, and this is bigtime. And the healers begin with something great that happened to themselves. They promote stories. I know you don’ know about this because you don’t move in these circles. You don’t go to Pentecostal meetings. You don’t sit there and listen to people who will get up and for an hour relate their healing experiences. People sit there shouting, “Hallelujah. Praise God. Isn’t this great?”

So these testimonies go—some pathetic, some obviously fraudulent, some ridiculous, but always dignified by the healers. That’s what we’re dealing with—healings and tongues, the whole Pentecostal bit, dignified, and because people now have famous names, it is hard to say, “Now wait a minute. That much money. That much building. That much TV time. That much radio time. That much publicity. That many famous movie personalities surrounding you must indicate that God is in all of this working. This can’t be Satan pulling a big con fraud.”

So the healers seek to dignify and confirm themselves. Mr. Stegall goes on and says, “In his March, 1952 issue of Healing Waters, Oral Roberts printed a cover picture that showed three men, the caption reading, ‘Three great medical doctors congratulate Oral Roberts for his ministry of faith to suffering humanity during the Roberts’ campaign in Phoenix.’ The names of the doctors are given and another photograph in the magazine shows Dr. J. H. Miller, outstanding medical doctor, president of a medical society of over 20,000 physicians.

Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse, who many of you will know, the nationally known pastor of the 10th Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and editor of the magazine of Christian truth Eternity, took the time to do a little research into these doctors. An inquiry to the American Medical Association brought the answer to their bureau of investigation that not one of the men mentioned in the captions could be identified as doctors of medicine or licensed to practice medicine in Arizona. One of the three men was tracked down through a telephone directory in Phoenix and was found to be operating as a naturopathic physician, that is to say, a quack doctor. No organization headed by Dr. Miller was discovered. A north town clinic supposedly operated by one of the men was nonexistent also. Yet this so-called man of God has the temerity to claim support from three great medical doctors.”

Now after that wonderful testimony to the healing prowess of Mr. Roberts, Mr. Stegall notes another interesting incident relative to Mr. Roberts. On one occasion when he was having a campaign in Amarillo, Texas: “When a Texas windstorm blew up and a tent collapsed. Sixteen people required hospitalization and many more were injured. Could not Roberts have restored them all to health instantly with a word? Alas not a miracle was worked. And all the broken bones had to heal via the time-honored sling-and-cast method. But was Oral Roberts discredited? Not at all. He reappeared in Atlanta with a new and finer tent and held his campaign there during which one I. M. Fowler, retired businessman from West Blocton, Alabama, suffered a stroke and was carried to the prayer tent. And while Roberts healed people in the big tent, Mr. Fowler died in the little tent. But still the people flocked to them, proving that Barnum was underestimating the fact when he suggested that a sucker is born every minute.”

Now let’s get it straight. Healing and tongues are frauds of the worst satanic kind of delusion and disease upon Christendom today. If you want to run around because it has now entered the established old line denominations, and because you know educated college professors, lawyers, doctors, etc. who now pursue this practice, as putting upon it a dignity, you better start attending a few meetings. You better get yourself into the swing of the Pentecostal movement and find out what’s really going on before you commit yourself and the circle of people that you influence into this thing that is a blasphemy against the living God. There is lots of money in healing.

Mr. Stegall points out many of the techniques. Some of these are very tempting. Here’s one I’ve been thinking about myself. He says, “In Birmingham, Oral Roberts had a clothesline strung up around the inside perimeter of the tent, an announced one night that he didn’t want anybody to leave until $1,700 was pinned to it.” I’ve got the rope and clothespins at the back. I just haven’t got the nerve up to now, but I’m thinking about it.

I’ve sat in these meetings where I’ve seen these men walk up and down the aisle and say, “Now I’m going to take an offering.” They walk down and say, “Now I want you to hold the money up. Hold the money up high. I just want a rustling offering, just a rustling offering.” Now who’s going to sit there and hold up a dollar bill and look like a cheapskate? He walked up and down the aisles and every bill he would take he would say, “Five dollars for the Lord. Twenty dollars for the Lord. Three dollars for the Lord.” Up and down the aisles.

Now some of you have been ringing the phone and calling my attention to Life magazine this week which has a big article entitled The Confessions of Marjoe. Marjoe is a movie of a semi-documentary type. It is actually the presentation of a young man. I think he’s about 28 now. Since about the age of three he was used by his Pentecostal parents on the revival circuit. He was presented as being the child wonder. His mother would carefully school him in sermons that he would preach. She would give him certain queue words. She would sit there and she would yell, “Hallelujah,” and that would signal that he was to do something. “Praise the Lord.” That would mean something else. Slow down. You’re talking too fast. Then some other phrase like “Blessed Jesus” might mean take up the offering.

He would run up and down the aisle. If some sweet old lady gave him $20 she would get to kiss him, this little four-year-old. It was an expose’ of the whole Pentecostal revival circuit. That’s fantastic. But in the article I found one statement that I thought was very interesting. Marjoe happens to be the combination of the names Mary and Joseph. Marjoe drifted out in his adult years, out of the revival circuit. He went to California and fell into the hippie culture. He became deeply involved in the whole hippie bit, and then he came out of it. When he came out of it he decided to go back to the preaching circuit that he was so capable at since the days of his childhood. But this time he came with certain specific sermons on subjects that he thought were relevant to our society, involving Jesus, Bob Dylan, and social justice. He felt he had something to say. He had been through some experience where he had something to say.

So he set up a series of meetings. He had 400 people in San Antonio the first night; 30 the second night; and, the meeting closed in a week. He had another meeting then in another place, in New Orleans. That was equally disastrous. When he got to Indiana there was a third flop. Then, the article says, Marjoe learned something he never understood as a child. The Pentecostal congregations were getting precisely the religious experience they wanted—very incisive. They were getting exactly the religious experience they wanted. And you and I run exactly the same danger.

The article goes on and says, “The realization made Marjoe angry and contemptuous. If they wanted a show, he decided nobody could give him a better one than he. Soon he was back on hellfire and damnation, and his reputation soared. If you and I subject the Word of God to our human values, we are going to get exactly what we want.

Let me show you something. Here is the triune God. This wonderful God has given to you and me divine viewpoint. He has made it available. This divine viewpoint is conveyed through what the Bible calls teachings or doctrine. There is no other way to receive divine viewpoint except through doctrine.

Now let’s say for just a moment, if this is true… And you may want to challenge this. You may think that you can get divine viewpoint through a dream. You think you may get divine viewpoint through a vision. That you can get divine viewpoint through a feeling. That you can get divine viewpoint through the advice of Christian friends. That you can get divine viewpoint through your reason. Maybe even through your senses.

But suppose for the moment that it is true that the only way you can get God’s point of view on feelings and plans and movements of your will is through doctrine; and that this doctrine will give you God’s plan for your life, and that’s the only way you’ll get it then. And that this plan will provide divine good production. That’s the only way you’ll produce it, when you’re in God’s plan as a result of doctrine. And that this will give you eternal rewards in heaven. And every reward you get is to the destruction of Satan and his cause. At what point in this chain here that I’ve drawn do you think Satan would begin to bring pressure to bear? Right there, dear friends—against doctrine. He will start striking against doctrine because everything else underneath here collapses without this. If you can only get divine viewpoint through knowing doctrinal principles, then this is what he is going to hit, and this is exactly what he does.

Satan comes along and he has various little cute ways of expressing this. He’ll come to you and say, “I’m going to start teaching this group that I’ve got with practical things, where they live.” The minute you hear somebody say, “I’m going to start teaching people where they live, practical things that apply to them,” you had better see red flags going up all around you. Because what you are doing is listening to a person who is saying, “Doctrine will not function in a life. What we need to do is come up with some little gimmick.” Christian education tends to do this. Christian education tends to take the position and operate on the theory that if people out here are not responding to the Word of God, you’ve got to figure out some little device to get them to respond. You start looking in the New Testament and you show me where the devices are that the apostle Paul used to get people to respond.

Now once people get doctrine, they can go positive or they can go negative. When anybody knows the Word of truth and you have done a good job under the capacity of influence and guidance of the filling of the Holy Spirit through the gift of teaching and you have conveyed the truth so that it is understood, and a person does not respond, don’t you kid yourself for one moment with the delusion that all you have to do is figure out a new technique and a new approach and he’ll come running to be responsive. If you’ve got a group you’re teaching and they’re turned off and you have taught under the power of the spirit of God and got your facts straight, it is not because of what you have given them. It’s because of an internal negative volition attitude toward the truth. You and I can treat the Word of God in just that way. Satan in the most subtle ways will make us start putting pressure against the sources of doctrine. So we can create things, what Satan prefers us to operate on—little emotional kicks. So emotions begin dominating like a woman who runs her husband. Instead of responding to her husband, she dominates and runs the show.

Now this is what tongues is all about. This is what this whole Pentecostal racket is all about. Somebody who got to doctrine. And once this was destroyed, Satan has been able to create every counterfeit fraud he wants.

Now we have come to 1 Corinthians 14 this morning. This chapter has one fine point to it, and that is that prophecy is infinitely superior to tongues. 1 Corinthians 13 has pointed out that tongues is for the infancy stage of the church. 1 Corinthians 14 says that doctrine is for the mature stage of the church. I’ll show you how people dislike doctrine. I had a lady one time who grieved to me over the condition of her husband. He was way out of it spiritually. He had never been taught. He was not informed. She managed to have him come to church for a few weeks, and then she said, “We’ve decided to go to another little place” that she mentioned in town, and I happened to know that that was a nice jumping place. She said, “Berean is a place for mature Christians.” And the poor woman did not realize what she was saying. The very thing she wanted for her husband, to come to spiritual maturity, she was denying him by taking him off to someplace where he could listen to rinky-dink inspirational sermons, rather than somebody who was saying, “Now God has given you this. Here’s what it means. Here’s the explanation. Here’s the understanding. Now you’ve got the equipment and you can go on with it.” And Satan had gotten to her. She didn’t realize that the very thing her husband needed was to stay right here where, in time, he would become stabilized as a godly man.

**1 Corinthians 14**

1 Corinthians 14 says that tongues is nothing, but doctrine is everything. Paul begins, having come to the end of chapter 13. Chapter 13 is a great chapter on being filled with the spirit. So Paul says in verse 1 of chapter 14, “Follow after love. Desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.” “Follow after love.” The word “follow” in the Greek is this word “dioko,” and “dioko” means “to pursue” or “to chase after.” “To chase after love.” The grammar here is very informative. It is in the present tense which means it’s a constant priority of our lives, that of everything we are to chase it is to be after love (which as you know means the filling of the spirit). It’s an imperative. It’s a command. We are to seek the filling of the spirit. It is active. We are to meet the condition for filling of the spirit with the confession of known sins. It is in the second person plural which means that this is the congregation that is to desire this status of spirituality for the church as a whole. We as a whole should be constantly concerned that everybody among us is a devotee of being filled with the spirit. That everybody in this assembly is devoted to be a spirit-filled Christian and not letting unconfessed sin lie around dirtying up the floor under his feet. This is because if every believer is spirit-filled, this congregation can never go astray. Gamaliel’s advice will always come in. If you think something is moving in the wrong direction, just take care and wait upon God because you may be fighting the very thing that God wants done. Unless you are filled with the spirit and you are operating on that by faith resting in Him to unravel, to close doors, and to open doors, you may find yourself like Gamaliel said—beating against the very thing that God wants done, opposing God, and that will destroy you.

You as a congregation, Paul says, follow and pursue after love. “Love” is that Greek word “agape,” which is a relaxed mental attitude of a mind free of the root of bitterness that Hebrews 12:15 speaks of. It warns us against this root of bitterness. This root of bitterness is self-destructive. It destroys our mental attitude and it brings in mental attitude sins. Now the word “love” is the primary manifestation of the fruit of the spirit in Galatians 5:22. You cannot have that “agape” divine love, which is a mental attitude, without being filled with the spirit. Therefore when he says pursue (chase after) love, it’s the same thing as if you were saying “pursue after being filled with the spirit,” because you cannot have this mental attitude free of bitterness unless you are filled with the spirit. That’s why 1 Corinthians 13 is the great spirituality chapter of the Bible, the great chapter on being filled with the spirit. And “love” is equivalent as a word with the concept of being filled with the spirit.

Now he says this congregation should desire certain spiritual gifts for its assembly. The word “desire” is the Greek word “zeloo.” “Zeloo” means to have a zeal for. You can see where we get our English word “zeal.” This again is present. It’s a matter of constant concern. It’s a command. We are to esteem spiritual gifts. It’s active. We are to be actively engaged in asking for God the Holy Spirit to provide Berean Memorial Church, as they were in Corinth, with specific gifts of edification. The whole congregation (it’s second plural again) is to act in this.

Now the purpose of filling and the purpose of seeking these gifts is then given in the last part of the verse, “but rather that ye may prophesy.” The word “rather” expresses a purpose: in order that ye may keep on prophesying. Remember that the key point here in 1 Corinthians 14 is that the greatest value to the local church is edification. That’s done through the spiritual gifts, and prophesying was the primary way that a person was edified because prophesying was bringing doctrine. Prophesying was bringing revelations of truth from God directly through the person who had the gift of prophecy.

So edification here: rather that ye may prophesy. Edification throughout this chapter becomes the big thing. You see it again and again in verses 3, 4, 5, 12, 17, 26, and so on. Paul does not urge us to seek the gift of tongues, but he does urge us to seek the gift of prophesying.

In verses 2 through 5 he says that tongues has limited value for edification. He says, “For he that speaketh in a tongue.” And take your pencil and if you have the word “unknown” which the interpreter slipped in there, get rid of it. This is the most deceptive thing. It throws more people off. “For he that speaketh in a tongue.” That means a foreign language. The word for “tongue” in the book of 1 Corinthians is the same as used in the book of Acts where it meant foreign language. This word “unknown” is not in the Greek text. That’s why it’s in italics.

“He that speaketh in a tongue speaketh not unto men but unto God, for no man understandeth him. However in the spirit he speaketh mystery.” Some of you have translations that use the word “ecstasy,” which is a very bad word here. Some of these modern translations say, “For he that speaketh in an ecstasy.” That is completely false. The idea is “he that speaketh in a foreign language.” It has nothing to do with gibberish or ecstasy.

Now the tongues advocate uses this verse as proof that the use of tongues is speaking to God. When somebody comes and says, “Well, you’re just talking gibberish,” the Pentecostalist will say, “Oh, yeah, I know I am. But I’m talking to God and He understands me.” When you say, “Where do you get that idea?” he will take you to 1 Corinthians 14:2, “He that speaketh in a tongue speaketh not unto men but unto God.” But Paul’s point is this: That speaking in tongues in a local church where people don’t understand the language is bad because it does not produce edification. It does not give you doctrinal information to stabilize and structure your life on. What Paul is saying is that tongues is a bad thing that only God can understand because God is omniscient.

So here you get up and you start speaking in a foreign language in some congregation, and it’s a genuine foreign language. That’s what it was here in Corinth. And there is nobody to translate. What good is it to the congregation? If the main point of a spiritual gift is edification of the believers, how can anybody be edified by something they don’t understand? So Paul says, “All you’re doing is standing there in that congregation and only God can understand because He knows everything. Nobody else in the place can understand a thing.” He is not saying that you are speaking to God. No matter what mysteries you may be delivering of spiritual truth from God, it doesn’t do anyone any good in a language he can’t understand.

So an interpreter was always necessary. This thing is constantly violated in Pentecostal churches—the interpretation practice. Actually sometimes there may be two or three people who will stand up and they’ll interpret one supposedly prophetic declaration that somebody gets up and claims to have received from God.

Verse 3 says, “But he that prophesies speaketh unto men to edification (he that teaches doctrine is the idea) and exhortation and comfort.” With intelligible language we produce spiritual edification that gives guidance and blessing. In the New Testament church the gift of prophecy was the primary means of instructing the believers in doctrine. How do we do it today? Through the New Testament Scripture, the completed canon of Scripture.

Verse 4 says, “He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself, but he that prophesieth edifieth the church. The tongue speaker can only hope to edify himself while prophecy will build up the entire congregation. I must emphasize to you again that self-edification is not the purpose of any spiritual gift. Tongues people like to come along and say, “Well, the bible tells me that when I speak in a tongue I edify myself, and that’s why I do it. It’s a great edification to me.” But that is not the purpose of spiritual gifts. Those who have the gift on tongues were no doubt edified and blessed as they exercised this gift, but that’s true of any gift. Just because you have the gift of evangelism and you are edified and blessed as you exercise the gift of evangelism, are you saying that the purpose of the gift of evangelism is self-edification? No, you wouldn’t say that because that isn’t the purpose, nor was it of tongues.

The Pentecostalist in their doctrinal confusion turn tongues into a selfish thing and it’s a false premise. 1 Corinthians 13:5 says that the filling of the spirit does not seek to use tongues for self-edification. 1 Corinthians 13:5 says, “It seeketh not its own.” The Greek means, “It doesn’t seek for itself.” It does not use tongues for its self-personal edification.

Verse 5 says, “I would 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. Here again the Pentecostalists take this verse, “I would that ye all speak with tongues,” and they say, “Aha, you see, Paul wants everybody in the church to speak with tongues,” even though we have seen already that in chapter 12 in verse 30, where he says, “Do all speak with tongues?” that the Greek indicates that the answer is negative. No, they do not all speak with tongues.

So Paul is saying here in verse 5 that he’d be happy if all the Corinthian Christians did speak in tongues though they don’t all. He’d have no objection to the gift as such. What he objects to is that the gift is used, nobody interprets, and some of the people who were speaking in tongues were speaking gibberish in Corinth, and consequently nobody was benefitted or edified. Paul says, “I would rather everybody in this church stood up and was prophesying, delivering doctrine. No that will do us some good. Unless an interpreter is present tongues is useless.

Verse 6 says, “Now brethren, if I come unto you speaking in tongues what shall I profit you except I shall speak either by revelation or by knowledge or by prophesying or by doctrine?” Paul is saying that the gift of interpretation gave practical value to tongues. Then tongues became a vehicle for revelation. It brought knowledge. It brought prophesy. It brought doctrine.

Verse 7 says, “And even things without life, having sound, whether flute or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is pipe or harp?” Now around this place we certainly know that musical instruments have to give distinct sounds so that you will recognize the musical selection. Frequently when our band plays and we’re not quite sure of ourselves, I give them a little encouraging remark before we begin like, “Now let’s try to play it so they recognize the melody.”

That’s what Paul is saying. Unless an instrument plays the right tones in the right sequence and the right order, who’s going to know what’s being played, let alone to recognize that that’s a flute playing or that’s a harp playing.

Verse 8 says, “For if the trumpet giveth and uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to battle?” Now in summer camp we use trumpets. We use a bugler. He runs everything. He runs our program. Sometimes we’re not sure what he blew, especially when he gets up in the morning and his lips are all fat and puffed, and we hear him walking around the cabin flapping his lips trying to get himself relaxed a little bit so he can make a sound. And then the worst kind of reveille comes out and everybody listens and says, “Now what did that mean?” Now if it’s calling to battle and the bugler can’t blow the thing so people understand that that was a charge attack bugle call, they’ll be milling around doing something else. Obviously everywhere in life, unless things are distinct and understandable, there is no direction from what we hear.

So verse 9 says, “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?” If you stand up in a church assembly and you speak in a foreign language that nobody understands, you’re talking into the air, and that’s it. Have you ever been in a prayer meeting with people who were bilingual and they were not too good in English, and it came their time to pray, and so they prayed in their own native language that they had a facility in, and you sat there as you listened to them pray? Could you enter into their prayer? Not at all. You sat there and just waited for them to get done with their praying in their language because at that point the prayer meeting had come to an end for you. That’s what Paul is saying. When people stand up and speak in tongues, let along gibberish, it is absolutely nothing for edification, and that’s all that a church service and a preaching service is all about to begin with.

In verses 10 and 11 Paul points out that the world is full of languages. There may be so many kinds of voices or languages in the world and none of them is without signification. “Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice (the language) I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian (a foreigner), and he that speaketh shall be a foreigner unto me.” If a language is not understood between two people they’re foreigners to each other.

Verse 12 says, “Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous for spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.” Here’s our clue. Here’s our guide to spiritual gifts. Whatever you do in exercising your gift, who is it to edify? It is to edify the church, not yourself. You find no indication in Scripture that the exercise of spiritual gifts is designed for self-edification. That may happen incidentally. But the main point is that the body of believers to whom you minister through that gift through you are to be edified.

Verses 13 through 19 tell us that tongues are an inferior method of worship, prayer, and praise. Verse 13 says, “Wherefore let him that speaketh in a foreign tongue pray that he may interpret.” If you’re going to speak or pray, have somebody interpret. Ask for an interpreter. “For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prayeth but my understanding is unfruitful.” Now here again the Pentecostalists come and say, “Now there you are. I’m praying in the spirit. This is spirit praying. When I sit in my private room and I babble to God, this is spirit praying that I’m engaged in.” But this speaking about our human spirits. Any time you open your mouth in prayer it is because you are praying from your human spirit. It is your human spirit that is the point of contact with God the Holy Spirit. It is your human spirit that has the reservoir of doctrinal understanding through which God the Holy Spirit guides you in your praying. It doesn’t matter whether you pray in one language or another. You are always praying through your spirit. It doesn’t matter if you pray in your native tongue or some language that you have because of the gift and the ability of tongues. You always pray from your human spirit. The Christian is contacted in the things of the Holy Spirit through the agency of his human spirit.

You remember in 1 Corinthians chapter 2 verses 11 and 12, that’s the point. “For what man knoweth the things of man except the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man but the spirit of God. Now we have not received the spirit of the world,” and “the spirit of the world” here is a Greek expression for reasoning capacity, the ability to reason; “but the spirit,” (and that should be a small “s” not a capital “S”. This is not God the Holy Spirit. This is our human spirit.) “but the spirit who is from God” (not “of God”), it is the spirit that God gives us. The Greek is entirely different here. It is “ek,” “out of God.” We have not received merely the reasoning capacities of the human mind, but we have received a human spirit from God. For what purpose? “That we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.” Do you know why you can enter into spiritual things? Because at the moment that you were born again, one of the wonderful things that happened to you was that you came alive spiritually. You received a human spirit as a warehouse in which to store divine concepts. At that point the Holy Spirit deals with you and your life.

So Paul says in verse 14, “If I pray in a tongue, my spirit prayeth but my understanding is unfruitful.” It says, “If I speak in a foreign language, I may be speaking under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. I may be praying out of my spirit but I don’t know what I’m saying.” Paul says in verse 15, “What is it then? I’ll pray with the spirit, but I’ll pray with the understanding with my mentality also. I will sing with the spirit and I’ll sing with the understanding also. I’m going to pray. I’m going to sing. I’m going to worship God with what I understand and not just with what I do not understand.”

This is the travesty so long in Roman Catholicism of using a foreign language that people did not understand as an attempt to worship God. Paul is saying he will not pray without his mind understanding what comes from his human spirit. He will only pray and sing in a language he understands, both privately and publicly.

Verses 16 and 17 say, “Else when thou shall bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the place of the unlearned say ‘Amen’ at the giving of thanks; seeing he understandeth not what thou sayeth, for thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified.” Paul says, “How is someone going to join in with your prayer if they don’t understand?”

Verse 18 says, “I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all.” Paul often used this in his missionary word. “Yet in the church I’d rather speak five words with my understanding (with my mind) that by my voice I might teach others also than ten thousand words in a foreign tongue that nobody understands.” Paul preferred a few intelligible words to all kinds of foreign words.

He goes on and says, “Brethren, be ye not children in understanding, however, in malice be ye children, but in understanding be ye men.” When the New Testament canon was completed, the gift of prophecy became unnecessary. Paul in verse 20 solemnly warns these people not to be childish about tongues. They’re not to be immature in their minds about tongues. They’re to not have these mental attitude sins such as malice which destroy their spiritual life. In understanding they are to be mature.

Remember that Paul uses this same comparison in 1 Corinthians 13. He illustrates the temporary nature of tongues and prophecy and knowledge, and he says that’s for the child stage. Then he goes on and he says, “But we’re going to come to that which is perfect” (or complete), which is the New Testament Scriptures, and he says that’s for adulthood. And he uses the same precise word “telios,” the word for perfect mature when he says become men, that we should be men in understanding.

Finally this section closes with verses 21 and 22 which again remind us, Paul quoting Isaiah 28:11, that God had warned the Jews at the time that they were faced with the Assyrian conquest, that if they did not turn to Him, He would bring an invader in who would speak to them in a non-Hebrew foreign language, and that this signaled divine judgment upon the nation. They did not listen to Him. The Assyrians came in. They were taken into dispersed captivity and they had to listen to God speaking to them through the sounds of a foreign language.

The same thing happened on the day of Pentecost. Paul connects it with that, that this was God’s warning to them though the languages of the Greco-Roman world, hearing the marvelous things of god spoken to them, not in their Jewish languages, but as a warning that God was going to bring national dispersion and discipline upon the nation. For 1500 years the Mosaic had been their way of life. Now God was saying, “That has all changed, and if you do not listen to me, you will pay the price, and I’m warning you by speaking to you in Gentile languages here on the day of Pentecost.” And they did not listen. For 40 years God gave them grace. For 40 years He gave them opportunity. Finally in 70 A.D., the nation fell.

Verse 21 says, “In the law it is written (that is, in Isaiah 28:11), with men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people (that is, the Jews), and yet for all that they will not hear me saith the Lord. Wherefore (here’s the only verse in the Bible that tells what the purpose of the gift of tongues is), tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not.” Tongues were not for believing people, Jew or Gentile, but for unbelieving Jews specifically. “But prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for those that believe.” Doctrine is for all believers, Jew and Gentile alike. This is God’s purpose. This is God’s estimate of the comparative value of tongues and the gift of brining doctrinal understanding. Do not be children in this matter. Get with maturity. If you are opposed to doctrine, if you are finding yourself fighting this little chain here and striking at doctrine, you are exactly what these Corinthians Christians did, and what Paul said, “Be careful. Grow up. Get mature.” This is where it’s at, right here at doctrine. Everything else, the plan of God for your life, the divine good you could produce, the rewards of heaven, everything is hazarded and destroyed when you let Satan say, “Well, let’s get more practical. Let’s get more realistic. Let’s get where the kids live. Let’s get where these adults are so they understand.” What you are saying is, “Let’s cover up some way the fact that this person is negative in his heart toward the understanding that God has graciously brought to him. It all hinges on your understanding that doctrine is the greatest virtue in the Christian life.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1971