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Subject: Speaking in Tongues...

Posted by [william](#) on Wed, 01 Feb 2006 05:23:33 GMT

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While I'm certainly no expert on the subject of tongues, I do have the benefit of having possessed this gift for 29 years.

Jesus said that those who believe would be the possessors of the gift.

Mr 16:17 And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;

This verse should not be used to prove that anyone who does not have the gift of tongues is not a believer anymore than one would say that casting out demons is necessary for every Christian believer. But it is a sign that Jesus said would follow His people.

Jesus promised the Holy Spirit to those who believe and one of the outward signs that the Holy Spirit had indeed been given to a person was the gift of tongues.

Ac 2:3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

This aspect of the account isn't widespread in most who receive the gift although there are accounts of similar occurrences-- it isn't typical.

Ac 2:4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

When they were filled with the Holy Spirit, it was the Spirit that gave the utterance, but as with all of God's gifts, they had to do the speaking. God never overrides our volition. We may find ourselves in an atmosphere where it is highly conducive for phenomena to occur, but it is never accurate to say that one was merely a passive participant that had no control over his own volition. This isn't to say that it might not seem as if one could do nothing else but act, or in this case, speak, but one thing is clear from my understanding of Scripture-God doesn't force His children to do anything. We are not robots; His Spirit gives the utterance, but we must, by an act of volition, speak. This is not so for one who has given himself over to the demonic powers of darkness. In cases of demonic possession it appears that the person has little or no control over his actions, but that is another discussion.

Ac 2:8 And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?

This verse shows that "tongues" are real languages and not merely babbling. This isn't to say that those who do not recognize or understand other languages might not conclude that those who

speak in these languages are babbling (or drunk as some supposed.)

Ac 2:11 Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.

These tongues didn't need interpretation although there were people present who understood the various languages that were being spoken.

Later, God used Peter to spread the gospel to the gentiles and when he was preaching the Word (these signs shall follow...) the Holy Spirit fell on the gentile believers and they begin to speak in tongues as well.

Ac 10:46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?

The same sort of experience had befallen the gentiles as had previously happened on the day of Pentecost with the Jewish believers.

Sometimes the Holy Spirit was imparted by the laying on of hands, again the evidence that the Holy Spirit had come was the outward expression of tongues (these signs shall follow...).

Ac 19:6 And when Paul had laid [his] hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.

To this point in the Biblical account there hasn't been an emphasis on the particular function of tongues in the experience of the believer other than to give evidence to the infilling of the Holy Spirit --and when understood, they magnified God and His works. The emphasis is only on the initial experience and no mention is made concerning the continuation of this gift in the believer's life, but as Paul later develops regulations concerning tongues in the Church, we see that this gift was not just an initial outward evidence of the Holy Spirit's infilling, but a continual experience that actually had purpose in the lives of the believers.

Next comes some specific teaching concerning the operation of the gift of tongues in the Church. Speaking of the gifts given to the Church, he mentions that there are at least 3 utterance gifts-tongues, interpretation of tongues, and prophecy.

1Co 12:10 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:

Keep in mind that Paul here is dealing not with the phenomena of tongues that occur upon receiving the Holy Spirit, but he is giving instructions on the operation of these gifts within the context of the Church. Apparently these gifts were in operation in the lives of believers long before

Paul gives these instructions. It seems as if the Corinthian believers were blessed with an abundance of gifts and the free exercise of these gifts was causing problems in the context of the assembly of believers. This is a foreign concept in most of our modern Churches, thus when he says:

1Co 14:26 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. If any man speak in an tongue, [let it be] by two, or at the most [by] three, and [that] by course; and let one interpretâ€!

and then:

1Co 14:29 Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted.

You can see there were many of the utterance gifts in operation and each utterance takes time. One can understand why he needed to regulate the gifts-- if nothing else so the pastor could have a little time for his sermon!

If your Church has this problem (multiple tongues and interpretations, multiple prophecies), then by all means limit them to Paul's suggestions, but I don't see a problem if your Church just sings a few songs, takes up a collection, prays and then has the sermon. It would seem that encouraging more of the gifts (not less) would be the better strategy for most modern day Churches. You can always put in some of the regulations later if it gets out of hand!

1Co 12:28 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. {diversities: or, kinds}

There are a lot of ministries in operation here and most of us can only wish for a Church like the one at Corinth, but nevertheless Paul, because of this abundance of gifts and ministries, had to remind them to let everything be done orderly and for the edification of all.

He goes on to say:

1Co 12:30 Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?

This verse is oftentimes used out of context in an attempt to prove that all believers are not given the gift of tongues, but the context is the context of the Church Assembly. No, not all have the gifts of healing-but all can pray for healing and be healed. No, all should not speak in tongues-or, as he points out, the Church will not be edified (unless there is an interpreter). And no, all do not interpret-but he says that if you do speak in tongues in a Church where there is no interpreter,

then you can pray for the interpretation (even if you don't have the gift for the interpretation of tongues!) Most would agree that we all teach, we all exhort, we all encourage-to a degree, but we wouldn't necessarily say that we have the gift to teach in the Church, or the gift to exhort the Church--could we do it? Yes, but it is far better to let those who excel in certain gifts be the ones who use the gifts in the Church. We can't all be the preacher, but we can all preach! We can't all be the eye but we can all see! We all can't be the ear in the Assembly, but we can all hear!

Ok, to continue:

1Co 14:4 He that speaketh in a tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.

Paul in no way diminishes the value of speaking in tongues for our own edification, but as far as the Church goes there is a need for public edification, thus he continues to focus on what is best for the public assembly.

Apparently Paul thought it was a good idea for all to speak in tongues for personal edification (I'm sure this is where the phrase "personal prayer language" comes from) but his emphasis is the edification of the whole Church in this context.

1Co 14:5 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.

It is interesting to note that speaking in tongues--with interpretation-- edifies the Church as much as prophecy.

1Co 14:6 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?

1Co 14:9 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. {easy: Gr. significant}

1Co 14:13 Wherefore let him that speaketh in a tongue pray that he may interpret.

Once again, interpretation is necessary if the Church is to benefit.

1Co 14:14 For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.

Praying in this personal prayer language edifies the believer because it is the spirit that is praying. This can be done at home, but when the assembly of believers meet together it is much better to speak with the understanding so that all can be edified.

Paul not only spoke in tongues at home but it seems he spoke everywhere but the Church!

1Co 14:18 I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all:

1Co 14:19 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 an tongue.

Ok, next he goes back to the initial reason for tongues-the outward sign of the infilling of the Holy Spirit:

1Co 14:22 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?

1Co 14:26 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.

1Co 14:27 If any man speak in an tongue, [let it be] by two, or at the most [by] three, and [that] by course; and let one interpret

1Co 14:39 Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues.

I've been in Churches that stress the no speaking in tongues without an interpreter passage to a fault, but I believe that you can not take that passage out of context and place it into the context of our modern Church without first having the same problems that prevailed at Corinth.

We really do need more of the gifts in operation in our Churches and if an atmosphere is created where these gifts are stifled we all suffer.

Think about it, you will never know if you have an interpreter unless someone speaks in tongues, and I can envision that there might be a time when someone might speak out in tongues and the person who had the gift of interpretation didn't bring it forth. It might take a few times for some people to become bold enough to stand in the assembly, so be a little patient. Sure, if there is a problem (like at Corinth) where speaking in tongues predominates the meeting, there needs to be some regulation, but lets face it, most of our Churches don't have a problem where the gifts have to be regulated.

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