

Spiritual Gifts Series

Key verse:

**1 Corinthians 12:10 & Chapter
14**

2nd July 2006

**Session 7: The Gift of Speaking
in Tongues & The Gift of
Interpretation of Tongues**

Speaker: Adam Voke

Mark Stibbe: 'One of the things which causes most tension in a church entering into renewal is the pressure for people to embrace a spirituality focused on the exceptional and the extraordinary. This not only alienates those who feel that their gifts are more ordinary and invisible; it also creates an unhealthy pressure to conform to a way of life which is permanently miraculous. This in turn causes a two-tiered Christianity in which the 'spiritual' ones are speaking in tongues and healing the sick, and the unspiritual ones are merely setting out the chairs and serving the coffee. That is the error made in Corinth, and it is sad to have to report that history has often repeated itself on that score.'

1. What is the gift of tongues?

Mark Stibbe: 'A charismatic anointing in which a person speaks an unlearned and unintelligible language'

Greek: 'Glossolalia'. Glossa = 'Language/Tongue'. Lalia = 'To speak'

1 Cor 13 – 'If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels' – Paul differentiates between tongues of men and angels.

a. Unlearned human languages

In Acts 2:1-12 – the day of Pentecost.

b. Unlearned angelic languages

More likely to be referred to in 1 Cor 12-14. As this is something that needs translation (1 Cor 14:13) and is not understood by the hearers

c. Primarily languages directed to God not Man

1 Cor 14:2 'For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Indeed, no-one understands him; he utters mysteries with his spirit'

Read: 1 Cor 14:13-17 – Words & phrases that indicate a Godward direction: Pray, praising God, say Amen to thanksgiving, giving thanks.

2. What are the benefits and results of speaking in tongues?

a. Personal edification

1 Cor 14:4 'He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church'

Produces spiritual and psychological health. Many testify to both of these things.

David Du Plessis 'Often times.....I have to get my nights sleep sitting up in a Greyhound bus or a jet plane.....The minute I close my eyes I begin to pray in the Spirit. I pray all night that way, waking up and drifting back to sleep, always praying. I don't get much sleep but I get a lot of rest. The next morning I'm fresh and strong and ready for a full day's work'

Paul's comment: *1 Cor 14:18 'I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you'*

b. Public edification

1 Cor 14:5 'He who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues unless he interprets, so that the church may be edified'

c. A way to pray and worship when human vocabulary is not enough

- when you don't know what to pray
- when you are in a crisis situation
- when your heart feels cold
- when you are worshipping and need new ways to express yourself

3. Can all speak in tongues?

1 Cor 12:10 – it's a different named gift distributed to some and not others

1 Cor 12:30 'Do all speak in tongues?' – No!

Wayne Grudem: 'There is nothing in scripture that says only a few will receive the gift of speaking in tongues, and since it is a gift which Paul views as edifying and useful in prayer and worship (on a personal level even if not in church), it would not be surprising if the Holy Spirit gave a very wide distribution of this gift and many Christians in fact received it'

Experiential evidence: Many do speak in tongues, it is widespread enough that it is linked by many to baptism in the Spirit, such as the Pentecostal movement.

Matt 7:7 – Ask, seek and knock and you will receive.

4. Can it be made up or counterfeit?

Counterfeit was not Paul's main concern, it could have been in the city of Corinth where pagan temple worship and demonic activity was present – 1 Cor 10:20. He gives them no warning about this – or any of the other gifts!

1 Cor 12:3 'no-one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says "Jesus be cursed" and no-one can say "Jesus is Lord", except by the Holy Spirit.'

-Paul was perhaps setting at ease the fear that other spirits were at work through the gifts?

5. What does it mean that tongues are a sign? (verse 22)

Tongues are a sign to unbelievers of judgement. A sign that demonstrates the fact that they cannot and will not listen to God. They will think that believers are mad! As per the prophecy in verse 21 and the teaching in verse 22.

Prophecy is a sign to believers of God's favour and blessing upon them. As they hear God speaking to them and as unbelievers hear God speaking to them they repent. This causes worship in the church and is a sign of God's blessing working through them.

6. How should the gift of tongues operate?

a. Publically

With faith (to bring it)

-a willingness in faith to stir up the gift and step out to use it. (*we pray for the sick, prophesy, encourage, show mercy, teach – why not these two gifts?*)

Always with Interpretation

1 Cor 14:28 'If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and God.'

Without interpretation it is as useful as a music group with no melody. – 1 Cor 14:7-8.

- This is a gift which is often overlooked, but some specifically have it
- The interpretation may already be on your heart
- Willingness to bring the interpretation in faith
- A number of interpretations for the general gist

The 'Valuable Content' is expressed.

With order

- It should leave us with clarity that helps in the worship, not confusion- 1 Cor 14:16-18. It should be intelligible and leave us to say 'Amen'.
- 2 or 3 at a time and then interpretation (vs27), waiting for others. Clarity in interpretation
- Controlled, not frenzied, Paul's instruction is to 'keep quiet' (vs 28) and to do it in order which is not possible if it simply overcomes you.

Confusion with prophesy and interpretation

- sometimes someone already has a prophetic word that is brought instead of the interpretation
- sometimes tongues triggers off the other gifts
- sometimes the gist is right but the phrasing is not, it's spoken as a prophesy when it could be prayed

Singing in the Spirit – 1 Cor 14:15-16 – only solo's need interpretation, whereas all singing together is an expression of corporate praise and is impractical and unnecessary for interpretation.

b. Privately

With faith

- In the face of doubts about whether it's true.*
- When your mind is elsewhere! 'my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful' – vs 14*

Interpret for yourself

Seek after development of gift in vocabulary.