

Tongues

Part 1

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[00:00:00] 2 Timothy chapter 4, and we'll read from verse 1, I charge thee therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ who shall judge the quick and the dead as his appearing and his kingdom.

Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears, and they shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned unto fables." And then, if we could read, I think we'll leave it there, but we'll read in Acts 17.

[00:01:13] And just one verse there, verse 11, these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind and searched the scriptures daily whether these things were so.

Those two portions of scripture are by way of introduction, because I have an exercise tonight on a particular subject, and these verses, I feel, introduce the conditions of things which we find ourselves in today.

And we look around us and we see many who sadly have turned away, turned their ears to fables, and sad to say we're not immune from such things.

[00:02:05] But rather, let us be like the Bereans, of whom we have just read in Acts 17, that they search the scriptures to see whether these things were so. This, of course, is the test.

We don't need to be concerned with fables, but rather with the word of God. That's why I chose our first hymn, Lord to our souls, thy light is ever pure.

You know, the light that shines from our God, from our Lord Jesus Christ, is pure. We don't need to be occupied with that which is impure. Sadly, many today are led away with these things, and the reason for it is that we have turned away from the scriptures. We've turned away from a simple reading and understanding of God's word. And really, the scriptures are very simple. With faith and with an earnest desire to know the truth, these things can be discovered [00:03:02] quite simply by reading God's word. Sadly, if we neglect God's word and we turn our ears to fables, then yes, we will be misled. Well, I have an exercise tonight, particularly to say a word which might be of help to those of us who are younger, because I feel there is that in the world today, and sadly amongst believers, where there are teachings held and there are influences abroad which perhaps are more prevalent

today than in the past. And so it's particularly our young people who need help in this area. And I trust what I say will be very simple, that we might understand, and I hope to make remarks which are simply from the word, and to encourage us to go away and to study these things in greater detail. [00:04:01] So as we read the word together, let's read it simply, and I don't wish to add to it my own thoughts. Simply to bring out the simplicity of scripture with a desire that we might be like the Bereans and search the scriptures daily to see whether these things are so.

Second Corinthians and chapter 14, sorry, 1 Corinthians 14, I wish to speak on a subject tonight in particular, which I have never heard ministry on myself.

And I'm not that young, I'm over 30 now, and I think it says something for me to admit that I've never heard anyone speak on this subject. [00:05:04] Maybe I've been in the wrong place at the wrong time, but maybe we can correct that in measure tonight. I wish to speak specifically about tongues, and to make some general remarks that might be of use to us all.

Tongues are mentioned in scripture in five places.

Three situations are spoken of in Acts, and we'll look at those shortly. The other mention of tongues is in this epistle to the Corinthians, and this is the only place where there is a specific statement as to the purpose of tongues.

And this is why I read my opening verses, because there's much spoken about this subject today, and it's prevalent even in the media. Recent weeks, that so-called Toronto blessing, it's something which is well known among so-called Christians.

And yet, if we listen, if we incline our ears to these fables, we will undoubtedly be misled. [00:06:07] So let's look and see what scripture says on the matter, and we can leave it there. I don't, hopefully I won't need to say anything other than what is simply stated in scripture. 1 Corinthians 14 and verse 21.

In the law it is written, with men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people, and yet for all that they will not hear me, saith the Lord.

Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not.

Now that, as I understand it, is the only verse of scripture which speaks specifically on the purpose of tongues.

And before we go any further, I want us to study this very carefully, so that we're not [00:07:02] misled with any thoughts of our own.

Verse 22, verse 21 refers to a portion of scripture in Isaiah.

With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people. This people. Who are this people?

Well, clearly the context tells us that this people is the Jewish nation. It's interesting, isn't it?

The Jewish nation are mentioned specifically here, and we read that it is by other tongues that the Lord will speak to this people. And then we're told explicitly that tongues are a sign, and they're a sign to unbelievers.

And so we can see from these two verses, very simply, without extrapolating this, without having to add any thoughts of our own, we can see that the simple scriptural lesson [00:08:03] is that tongues are a sign for unbelieving people, and primarily unbelieving Jews. And if we have that in our minds, when we look at these other scriptures, I believe we won't be misled.

Now then, there's a very important principle in scripture, which I wish I had learned earlier. And the young people can, I want them to remember this because it's important. A principle of first mention.

You know, the Bible, although written physically by many people, we believe it's inspired by God and is therefore consistent with itself.

Now in any other book, which had a number of different people writing it, one would expect there to be a great divergence amongst the contents of the book. We wouldn't expect naturally for men to be clever enough to make sure that everything [00:09:01] fitted in neatly. But with God, of course, nothing is impossible. And so we find that although various people have written the scriptures, they were all inspired by the Holy Spirit.

And so scripture is consistent with itself, whether we are looking at the Old Testament or the New.

Whether we're looking in a book of historical character, or a book of prophetic character, or a book dealing with New Testament teaching, we find that scripture is consistent. And the principle of first mention is this, that when something is first mentioned in scripture, it establishes a principle, it establishes the meaning.

And if we look at the context of the first time something is mentioned, we will understand what it means. And we will find that that word, that picture, whatever it is, will have the same meaning throughout scripture. It might be built upon, it might be added to, but we find that the picture, the word, [00:10:06] the sign, whatever it might be, is used consistently throughout scripture. There are exceptions to this, of course, but the exceptions are always clearly stated. And scripture always brings in a clear reason why something is reversed. And an example of this is in the Old Testament scheme of things, if a Jew married a foreigner, we're told that their children would be unclean. But in the New Testament, this is reversed. We're told quite explicitly that the children of a mixed marriage, and this would be where one partner has been converted after marriage, we're told explicitly that believers and unbelievers should not marry. They should not be unequally yoked. But in grace, one husband or wife may be converted. And we're told explicitly that the children of such a marriage are sanctified. [00:11:02] You see, so there is a principle which is overturned to some respect, but scripture explains carefully that this is the case. So unless we find an explicit scripture overturning a principle, we can be certain that the principle of first mention pertains.

So if we want to find out what something means, look up for the first time it was mentioned. Okay, now then, the first time tongues are mentioned is in Acts, and Acts chapter 2.

Just realize what I've said, of course, isn't strictly true. The first time tongues is mentioned is in relation to the Tower of Babel.

[00:12:03] You remember, they were to build a great tower. They wanted to make a name for themselves. And God came down in judgment, and he confounded their language. He gave them different languages. Suddenly, the people that had up to that time been speaking in one language were speaking in different languages. Tongues, you see, was a sign of judgment.

Acts 2.

We'll read from verse 1. Acts 2 and verse 1.

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. [00:13:02] And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together and were confounded because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marveled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak, Galileans?

And how hear we every man in our own tongue wherein we were born, Parthians and Medes and Elamites and the dwellers in Mesopotamia and in Judea and Cappadocia and Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Phanphilia and Egypt and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes.

Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our own tongues the wonderful works of God. [00:14:01] And they were all amazed and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others, mocking, said, These men are full of new wine.

Verse 3, There appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. It's a curious picture to imagine in our minds, isn't it? Tongues of fire on each of them.

But this is where our first mention principle comes in, because in itself the mention of fire is linked with judgment.

The first time we read of fire is when Adam and Eve are forced to leave the Garden of Eden and their way of return is blocked by a flaming sword.

[00:15:01] Flames, fire, speak of judgment. I don't think any of us would have any difficulty with this. Every time we speak of fire in the Bible, it speaks of judgment, of cleansing that which is unclean.

Fire and judgment. It's a very clear picture.

And so when we read of tongues of fire appearing to be over each of those that spoke in tongues, we can be certain that judgment is being thought of.

Now let's remind ourselves of that verse which explicitly told us what tongues are for. They are for a sign.

They are for a sign to this people, the Jews.

Now, in Isaiah, where Peter was quoting from, through tongues of, strange tongues will I speak to this people. It spoke of judgment. And if you look it up in context, you will find that the Jews were occupied by a foreign [00:16:02] power.

And when they heard foreign tongues being spoken, when they heard a foreign language being spoken, they knew that they were experiencing the judgment of God. God had allowed a foreign power to occupy them, to rule them. It spoke of judgment.

So we have here a principle. Scripture is consistent with itself, whether we're looking back at the Tower of Babel, to Isaiah, or to here in Acts 2, we find Scripture is consistent.

Men from all over the world were in Jerusalem. They were Jews. We're told this. Now, the thing about Jews is that they speak Hebrew.

Or perhaps at this time they spoke Aramaic. But Jews being Jews are very concerned about their traditions. Jews even today, the boys particularly, are taught Hebrew so they can read the Scriptures. So whether a Jew is a Russian, or an American, or in any country, a Jew will understand a [00:17:04] measure of Hebrew. And certainly the Jews in this day would have understood a common tongue. But they were from various places, and we read of them in verses 10 and 11. So we had here a gathering of Jews listening to the apostles speaking in their own language.

And what do we read?

In verse 12, And they were all amazed and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Verse 11, Now, this is a sign, a sign of judgment.

In what way was it a sign of judgment?

Well, I think it's clear. The Jews had rejected the Messiah. They had crucified the Lord Jesus Christ. [00:18:01] They had crucified the very one who had come for them. The one they were supposed to be looking to, they had crucified. Here, the apostles were bringing them the message of good news.

The tongues were a sign to them of judgment. It was a sign to them that the message the apostles had was of God.

The judgment that had come upon the Jews was of God. They would have recognized very clearly in the cloven tongues of fire that God was speaking to them in judgment.

They heard in their own language the wonderful works of God, we're told.

Now, I dare say there were some there who spoke only Aramaic. They didn't come from these parts of the country. To them, the tongues sounded merely of a foreign language.

[00:19:05] This was the first time they'd experienced such a thing. Their reaction was, these men are full of new wine.

But, verse 14, For these are not drunken, as you suppose, seeing it is but the third hour. And then he goes on to speak to them. And it is my belief that he would have spoken to them in Aramaic, a language which they understood. He preached to them the ways of God.

But the tongues were a sign to them. It was a sign that spoke to them of the proof that the apostles were of God. And it was a sign to them, they who had rejected the Messiah, it was a sign of the judgment to come. It was a sign to them that they ought to believe in the message [00:20:03] that these apostles were bringing to them.

Well, now let's look at the second occasion that tongues are spoken of in Acts 10.

Acts 10, we'll read from verse 34.

Then Peter opened his mouth and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him. The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ, he is Lord of all. That word, I say, ye know which was published throughout all Judea [00:21:04] and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached. And how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power, who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with him.

And we are witnesses of all things which he did, both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they slew and hanged on a tree.

Him God raised up the third day and showed him openly, not to all the people but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead. To him gave all the prophets witness that through his name what whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins. And while Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. [00:22:03] And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God.

Here we have the second group of people.

The first in Acts 2 was a group of Jews. Here we have Cornelius and other Gentiles.

They received the gospel.

They were converted. They were brought into the church.

Now, to a Jew, the concept that a Gentile had any part in the things of God along with a Jew was a terrible thought. But Peter, they didn't of course have the Ephesian truth at this time that in Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Gentile. It was a thing which they had to accept. [00:23:02] It was a thing of great difficulty to them. But we get in verse 46, For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. When the Gentiles received the Holy Spirit and spoke with tongues, it was a sign to the Jews that the Gentiles also were to be accepted.

They could receive the gospel just as any Jew.

What a thing of judgment for the Jews. What a sign to them.

There couldn't have been a clearer sign to them that the Gentiles were part of the gospel, that they could be part of the church. This then is the second account in the scriptures of those who spoke in other languages, who spoke in tongues. And once more we find that just as we are told explicitly in Corinthians, it was a sign, and it was a sign to unbelieving Jews.

Very simple, isn't it? [00:24:01] When we simply take scripture at its word, without adding any other curious meaning to it, we can see how scripture comes out very clearly. The third mention of tongues in Acts is in Acts chapter 19.

Acts chapter 19, verse 1.

And it came to pass that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul, having passed through the upper coasts, came to Ephesus and finding certain disciples. He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.

Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people that they should believe on him which should come after him, [00:25:02] that is, on Jesus Christ. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them, and they spake with tongues and prophesied. And all the men were about twelve. And he went into the synagogue and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. But when divers were hardened and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.

And this continued by the space of two years, so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

Here we have another group of Jews. [00:26:01] We know this because they are described as disciples of John.

They had been baptized by John. They were clearly Jews. And yet, they were in this place.

They were in this place, which was a center of pagan worship. There was quite a mixture. There were pagans, Gentiles, and Jews in one place.

These Jews also spoke with tongues.

Verse 8 says that he went into the synagogue. In other words, he went in to the place where Jews met. He explained to them the things of God. And yet we read in verse 9 that some were hardened, they believed not, they spoke evil of that way, and so he left them.

Clearly, in this place there were unbelieving Jews. The tongues were a sign to those unbelieving

Jews.

[00:27:03] We find then that these three accounts of speaking in tongues, in each one of them there are unbelieving Jews, who were no doubt affected. Some believed, just as we read in Acts 2. Some responded, some didn't.

Such is the way of a sign.

It affects some, it doesn't affect others.

We see here that Scripture has been consistent with itself. Of the Scripture to speak for itself.

Well, we don't hear of tongues again until the 14th chapter of 1 Corinthians, where we started.

[00:28:01] Chapter 12, actually, that we read of it again. Now, my exercise particularly tonight is one of concern for those of us who might be misled by a very common misunderstanding.

I have been in meetings of a different character, you understand, where someone has tried to explain away the goings-on, and very persuasive it was, because verses were taken out of context. A verse here, a verse there, a little twist, and the result was very confusing in a way, but in a persuasive talk as well.

What was failed to mention was that the Corinthians was no model church. [00:29:01] If you read the letter to the Corinthians, you find all manner of things going on.

They didn't lack any gift, but there was a lack of love. There was strife.

We read of the poor missing out in the love feasts, in fellowship meals. The rich would come early and would eat all the food. There was gluttony.

There was excess. We read even of sexual immorality. There was pride. There was boasting.

There was every form of human weakness.

Corinth was no model town.

What we read of in the letter to the Corinthians was corrective ministry, how needful it was.

Paul needed to speak to the Corinthians. Nearly everything they did was wrong in some measure. They took things to extremes. They didn't take things far enough. They brought in their own thoughts. [00:30:02] They copied the ways of the world. Chapters 1, 2, and 3, and so on.

There's something which Paul has to speak to them about. If we realize that, we will be very careful before using a verse in Corinthians to explain why we do something.

Because if we're not careful, we can be looking at a verse which Paul is actually condemning.

We can be talking about a practice which Paul is condemning. We need to be very careful and look at

the context of the Scriptures, particularly in the letter to the Corinthians.

Chapter 12.

Paul writes, now concerning spiritual gifts, now, if you have the King James Version, you will notice that gifts is in italics.

In Mr. Darby, you have the word manifestations in brackets. [00:31:02] There is no word there in the original. What Paul is saying is concerning spiritual things, he's emphasizing spiritual in contrast to what is natural and physical. Obviously, what was going on in Corinth wasn't spiritual. But Paul introduces this chapter with this. Now, about spiritual things, 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, I'm going to make a statement here which some may not agree with.

Why would Paul say, no one speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed? No one says, anathema, Jesus, by the Spirit of God. [00:32:03] Is it possible that such a thing had been said in a meeting of believers? Is it conceivable that someone actually said, Jesus be cursed, in a meeting?

I believe in the context of this portion that it was.

And this is why Paul had to say, no one says such a thing by the Spirit of God. Now, it hardly is conceivable that such a thing would be said, knowingly, by a believer on the Lord Jesus Christ. But it is possible, in Corinth, where all around there were pagan gods, there was pagan worship, it is possible that they copied some of the practices around them. And it's a well-known fact. You can look in the Encyclopedia Britannica and find accounts of what is known as speaking in tongues.

[00:33:03] The word is glossa.

And you look up that phrase, glossolalia, in the Encyclopedia Britannica and you'll get quite an interesting account. Many false religions, many religions of this world, have such things as speaking in tongues.

Now, I should be careful. I don't want us to confuse this with what we've just been studying. But this ecstatic speech is the speech which sounds unintelligible.

It's mumbo-jumbo, if you like. It's a nonsense speech. And it's a very common thing all over the world, and has been for many years. It was a common thing in the pagan religions of the day. And I think that it's clear from this portion that believers, having come out of these pagan religions, having been converted, somehow confused the things that they had learnt in paganism. [00:34:04] They were using this ecstatic speech in the meetings, thinking that it was one and the same thing as the spiritual gift of speaking in tongues.

In such a circumstance, when you say something in a language which is, to all intents and purposes, nonsense to the ordinary hearer, it's possible to say such a thing as, Jesus, be cursed.

I was told of a sister in Holland, who was a missionary, I think in China.

And I forget the details of the story, but she heard somebody speaking, praying, as they thought, in a so-called tongue.

This person was a believer. He or she, I can't remember now which, thought that they were praying to God using a gifted language.

But this sister recognised it as a dialect [00:35:03] where she had served as a missionary, and what was being said was actually in praise of the devil. I believe it is possible, therefore, for much of what we hear today as being described as so-called tongue speaking is an example of what went on here. There were those that spoke in an ecstatic language, and it's possible that they were, rather than praising God, were cursing the Lord Jesus.

Such is the character of the Corinthian epistles. Paul has to correct what goes on.

I want to mention before we finish, because time is going on, I want to cover one or two verses which are often used out of context. I trust it will be of help, particularly to our young people, [00:36:01] when confronted with other believers who are misled on this matter. We need to see what the context of these things are. Chapter 13 and verse 1.

Firstly, can I go back to verse 30 of chapter 12?

Verse 29.

Are all apostles, are all prophets, are all teachers, are all workers of miracles, have all the gifts of healing, do all speak with tongues, do all interpret?

Clearly, the answer to that question is no. No, not all are apostles, not all are prophets, not all are teachers, and so on. Very clearly, Scripture teaches here that not all speak with tongues. That's a common thing nowadays, that we're told, unless we speak with tongues, we don't have the Holy Spirit. We're not a true believer. This Scripture clearly disproves that.

[00:37:02] There's another matter to mention which I trust I'll remember before we close. Verse 1 of chapter 13.

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profit me nothing.

Clearly here, Paul is using hyperbole. He's using extreme exaggeration to make a point.

Paul didn't have all knowledge.

He couldn't remove mountains. He didn't give his body to be burned. He didn't bestow all his goods to feed the poor. I'm sure he did much which was praiseworthy. We read of it. But he was using

exaggeration. He was saying, even if I do all these things, [00:38:01] and if I don't have love, I am nothing. So when we look at this phrase, even though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, he's using exaggeration. He's saying, even if I did this and I don't, and I have not love, it's nothing. And we need to realize this, that this is Paul using exaggeration to make a point about the importance of love. Many use this verse and say, well, Paul says that he speaks with the tongues of men and of angels, and so they explain what goes on today as being the tongues of angels.

We read clearly in Acts that the tongues that were spoken were human languages, understood by those that heard them.

But there is a teaching today that says, well, tongues are angelic language. It doesn't necessarily have to be a language which can be interpreted or understood.

This is man's imagination.

[00:39:02] This is fable. This is the sort of thing which we might be led away with. Paul says, even if I spoke with the tongues of men and of angels, I don't believe that the angels have diverse tongues. What is the need?

Why do we have so many different languages in the world? The reason is the Tower of Babel. God judged man and gave him different languages. The angels have had no such judgment. We don't read of it. There is no need for the angels to have different languages. We read of angels coming to men and speaking in whatever language they spoke.

Clearly, an idea that there are numerous angelic languages is purely fiction. It's man's imagination. It's man's wanting to have a verse to explain what they do.

We must move on.

Verse 8.

This is very important. [00:40:02] Verse 8 of chapter 13.

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. This verse speaks of gifts being replaced.

We read of when that which is perfect coming, that which is in part shall be done away. That speaks of specific things which will be replaced by something coming in. But of tongues, we read that they shall cease.

Now, what scripture do we have explaining what tongues is for? The only verse we have is 1 Corinthians 14, the verse we read, 22 I think. Tongues therefore are a sign, not to them that believe, [00:41:01] but to them that believe not. Tongues are a sign.

We understand that. If we get that in our minds, we will understand something about them. When the

sign is unnecessary, then the sign can be done away with. Tongues, we're told in this verse, shall cease. We're not told when, but we don't read of tongues after the Corinthian epistle. If they were so important, as we're told by other believers in this day and age, if they're so essential, if it's proof that we don't have the Holy Spirit, why do we not get teaching on it in the later epistles?

The reason is that they ceased. They came in an axe, they were misused in Corinth, and soon after, they ceased.

The sign to the Jews was only good for as long as the judgment was imminent. In A.D. 70, Jerusalem was overtaken.

[00:42:05] It was demolished.

Judgment fell upon the Jewish nation in A.D. 70.

I believe personally that it was at that time that the gift of tongues ceased. There was no longer any need for the gift of tongues. Now, I don't wish to press the point from Scripture, but what I will say is what is clear here. The gift of tongues shall cease. The word suggests that they will simply fizzle out. They'll come to an end by themselves. Verse 14.

Chapter 14, rather, verse 2.

For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God.

For no man understandeth him, howbeit in the Spirit he speaketh mysteries. [00:43:02] But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification and exaltation.

But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification and exaltation and comfort. He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself, but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.

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. Paul is saying to the Corinthians who were obviously using or misusing the gift of tongues that if you speak, verse 4, he that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifies himself.

He doesn't edify those around him. Everything that's done in the assembly should be for the edification of the assembly. [00:44:02] It has no value unless it edifies the assembly. Of course, the exception of that is what is due to God, but this is clearly a different emphasis.

Paul was not saying that the true gift shouldn't be used, but he was rather correcting the misuse of the gift in the assembly. Verse 13.

Wherefore, let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret. For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.

Now, we have a potential confusion here.

Verse 14 says that if you pray in a tongue, the spirit prays, but the understanding is unfruitful.

[00:45:03] Some have suggested that that means that the speaker didn't understand. Well, that's not exactly what's said, is it? The understanding is unfruitful. There's no fruit from it. There's no growth.

Everything that's done in the assembly should be done with the intention of producing fruit, fruit for God. Build up those in the church. Encourage them. Correct that which is wrong. Praying in a tongue benefits nobody in the assembly, unless it's interpreted as part of its sign. So, time is going, and I want to speak very quickly about another matter which is often connected.

I hope that if there are those who are likely to be misled on this subject, and I should say that, as I've said, I believe the true gift of tongues has ceased. [00:46:03] What is apparent today is false.

I do not want to go further than Scripture goes and condemn it as being satanic, although I believe it is in some circumstances. There is evidence.

If you research this in the Encyclopædia Britannica, it's clear that it's something which is quite common. Certainly, evil spirits can produce this effect, but it's something that can be learned. It's something that is perhaps psychological. And so, I don't want to make any generalizations. If anyone is concerned about it, study it for yourself, but study the Scriptures.

See what the context of the mention of this particular thing is, and you'll see that there is no justification for the frantic behavior that we see around us, and things which even get into the newspapers. [00:47:01] Dear brethren, this is not of God. It is not what the Spirit of God would have us do. We read through this letter to the Corinthians, we see that what God wants is order and decency. What was going on at Corinth wasn't to do with that at all. Well, before we run out of time completely, I want to speak very briefly about an associated matter, and that is the gift of healing. We read that the apostles had the gift of healing. I believe this also was a gift, a sign gift.

It was a gift to underline the importance of the apostles, to show people that they were really of God, and that their message was authentic.

They came, they brought the Word of God. We have it now in the Scriptures. We don't have apostles who speak to us with the authority of God. We have the Scriptures to do that. The gifts of the apostles ceased because they had a particular purpose.

[00:48:05] They were to authenticate the apostles. We read of the apostles healing many people. The letter to the Philippians. If you turn to the second chapter and verse 25.

Philippians chapter 2, verse 25.

Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labor, and fellow soldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants. For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. For indeed he was sick, nigh unto death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. 2 Timothy chapter 4 and verse 20.

[00:49:05] Erastus abode at Corinth, but Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick.

We read also that Paul had a thorn in the flesh. He prayed to God that it might be removed, but God's answer after much prayer was, My grace is sufficient for thee.

The apostles healed.

We even read that they took handkerchiefs that were delivered to the sick, healed them. And yet the apostle Paul left a brother at Miletus sick.

He spoke of another who was sick unto death, and yet he didn't heal him. Why? Because the gift of healing wasn't needed.

I think the evidence of scripture is that even this gift was beginning to cease. The signs and the wonders that we see in the early part of the dispensation didn't continue. [00:50:04] These gifts, they fizzled out.

This I think speaks for itself. You know, there was in London a year or two ago a rally, a meeting of an American healer, promising great things, great miracles.

This year in a Christian magazine there was an advertisement for a further meeting, and there was evidence of what had happened in the previous occasion. There were supposed to be many people healed. They had one person photographed. This man was healed of his blindness.

Well, you think, well, it says it here. This is proof. Surely it must have happened. Then you read the small print. The so-called healing occurred in Brazil in 1968.

Another little boy photographed being prayed over. The caption said, [00:51:01] This boy's hearing defect improved significantly after being prayed for.

Did the Lord Jesus ever heal imperfectly? Do we read of a healing which was merely an improvement? No. The woman who had an issue of blood was healed. The paralyzed man, he took up his bed and he leaped and he walked and he praised God. He didn't have a slight improvement. If a nationally advertised healing occasion, such as what went on in London two years ago, had to refer back to one incident in 1968 of a supposed healing of blindness, what does it prove? It proves that there was no work of healing through the gift of healing. Now, don't get me wrong. I believe God can heal. But the way God heals is hinted at in what we've read. By the grace of God, through prayer. There's no gift.

Now, I know some of us here know of the value of prayer. [00:52:03] We can bring to God those who are in desperate need of healing. And if it's the Lord's will, He can. And sometimes He does.

This, beloved, is the resource that we have.

Now, our time has gone. And I apologize, perhaps, that what I've said is rather disjointed and perhaps may seem irrelevant to some. But I believe there's great danger in these last days. And we need to be like the Bereans, searching the scriptures, not to be carried away with fables. These so-called miraculous things, they may have a great appeal. They may have a great attraction. Don't let us be convinced that we're missing out if we're not involved in it. We have a resourceful God. We have one, a God to whom we can go in prayer. We see His gracious hand in healing those who are

sick. If it doesn't happen, it's in the Lord's will. Well, I trust that we will be challenged [00:53:01] to return to the scriptures in all these things. If we're likely to be misled, go back to the scriptures, dear friends, and search them out. Look back.

Find the first mention. Look at it in context.

Pray about it. Speak to those who have experience in these things. Please incline our ears to fables.