

THE GIFT OF LANGUAGES

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Does it mean you're more spiritual than I am?

My best friend says. . .

They're all such nice people.

He was on drugs 'til he did it, and now he's cured!

Try it, you'll like it!

I didn't believe it, 'til it happened to ME.

Something's happening today.

They call it, "tongues."

And the question is not, "Is it for real?" or, "Does it really work?" or, "How many people do you know who've done it?"

The question IS, "What does the Book say about it? After all, the Word gives me all I really need for a full Christian life (II Peter 1:3). If the Bible says, "Get it," I want it, no matter how weird it is. And if the Bible knocks it, or ignores it, I've got more important things to do than fuss with it, no matter how popular it is. Let's be certain our attitude is governed by Jer. 8:20: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

These notes are an annotated outline, not a full-fledged book. That makes them light to carry around, but a bit heavy to read. I haven't written out the Scripture verses, so you should look them up and study them to see how they fit into the argument. And don't let the outline format scare you. It will actually help you follow the thought.

Ready to begin? Fine. Read Ps. 119:18, and let that be your prayer as you study.

CHAPTER ONE

WHY CHRISTIANS CAN'T SEE

Have you ever had any of these problems?

1. A "dry spell" in your spiritual life when your Bible was meaningless to you
2. Stubborn refusal on your part to obey God's Word
3. A friend who had experienced "the baptism of the Holy Spirit" or the "gift of tongues"
4. A nagging conviction that you were "pious and putrid", doing all sorts of right things, yet not feeling that it made any difference to God?

Every Christian faces some of these problems, at one time or another in his spiritual life. And, believe it or not, they're all related. The big question, of which these are all related parts, is, "What is the relationship among the Bible I believe, the life I live, and the attitude of my heart?" We're going to learn that for believers of every age, spiritual health depends on

1. a right heart-response
2. to the teachings of the Word of God
3. resulting in a godly life.

Before we start, let's avoid a danger that always pops up when we talk about the life a Christian lives. We are of course very clear that a Christian is saved, not by what he does, but because of what Christ has done for him (Eph. 2:8,9; Titus 3:5,6) The key word is GRACE, a word which denotes God's favor given where His wrath is deserved. We are saved, not because we deserve it, but in spite of the fact that we do not deserve it.

But Christians are not always so clear that even in the OT, men were saved by grace. This is very clearly taught in Deut. 7:7,8. Why did God choose Israel as His special people (Deut. 7:0)? He chose them not because they deserved it, but because He loved them. Why did God send Christ to save us? He sent Him not because we deserved it, but because (Jn. 3:16) He loved us.

At the outset, then, as we read OT passages about works, we should not be tempted to see in them invitations to earn salvation. Rather, in both OT and NT, a godly, righteous life results from our relationship with God.

I. Israel was founded on the concept of a proper response to God's revelation and gracious acts.

A. Background.

Our main OT texts will come from Deut. 6:4-15. The Book of Deuteronomy was written about 1440 BC, by Moses, after the Exodus from Egypt and before the entrance into the promised land. This is the period of time at which the Jewish people, the Hebrew nation, was born, when the numerous seed of Abraham come into the land promised to Abraham for the first time. In recent years, scholars have compared the book of Deuteronomy with treaties made between kings and their vassals, dating back to this same period of time. Amazingly, they have found that Deut. is written exactly like one of these treaties, with God in the place of the king, and with the nation Israel in the place of the vassal. (You can learn more about this treaty structure of Deut. in Kline's book, The Treaty of the Great King, or in K. A. Kitchen, Ancient Orient and Old Testament, pp. 90-102.)

Thus in Deut. we see the constitution, the charter, of the nation Israel before her divine King, Yahweh God. The heart of this covenant is in Chapter 5, the ten commandments, the decalogue. And the most important of the ten commandments is the first--so important that in Chapter 6 Moses writes a little commentary on that commandment. Thus, the passage we are studying is not tangential, but fundamental to the nation Israel's most basic theology.

B. The believer should respond to doctrine, Deut. 6:4-9.

1. The doctrine, v. 4, is a restatement of the first commandment. It says three things:

- a. Yahweh (Jehovah; in the KJV, "LORD" in all capital letters). This is the personal name of God, just as my personal name is "Van". The God of Israel is a Person Whom one can come to know and call by name.
- b. Our God. This personal God has identified Himself with Israel in a way that He has not done with the rest of the world (Deut. 7:6-8)
- c. Is One Yahweh. The central truth of the commandment: He is one, not a pantheon.

2. The response to that doctrine, vv. 5-9
 - a. v. 5, Love Yahweh. This love is shown in three areas.
 - i. Heart. Not limited to emotion alone, as it is in Indo-European languages, this metaphor to the Semite indicated the mind, the control center of the personality. Thus when Jesus Christ quoted this commandment in Mark 12:30, He could add the word "mind" without doing violence to the basic meaning. The seat of emotions to the Hebrew was the liver; where we speak of a "heart throb," he might speak of a "quiver in the liver."
 - ii. Soul. This is the essential life-principle of a man, that which makes him go. It is the "life" in him.
 - iii. Might. This is what happens when the heart (the control-center) directs the soul (the life-principle) into outward, external action. Thus every aspect of my being is to indicate that I respond in love to God.
 - b. vv. 6-9, Live for Yahweh. God's Word is to be "upon" the heart, the hand, the eyes, the house, the gate. This probably is not speaking of the physical phylacteries invented by later Jews, but means that God's Word is to rule each of these areas: my personal life, my actions, my thoughts and knowledge, my household, my business transactions.
3. The NT parallel. Likewise, the NT also teaches that the believer should respond in an appropriate way to true doctrine.
 - a. True doctrine should lead to a godly life.

Rom. 5:12-21 (the doctrine of the federal headship of Adam and Christ) demands the response of Rom. 6, "How shall we who died to sin continue any longer in it?"

I Cor. 15 (the doctrine of Resurrection) demands the responses of I Cor. 15:34, 58

Eph. 1-3 (the doctrine of our position with Christ in the heavenlies) demands the response of chapters 4-6, our walk in the world.

I Thess. 4:14-17 (the doctrine of the rapture) demands the response of I Thess. 4:13, 18.
 - b. An ungodly life is a warning sign of false doctrine.
 - i. Matt. 7:15, false prophets, can be recognized by their fruits. vv. 16-21, i.e. whether or not they do the will of God.
 - ii. II Tim. 3:1-6, the ungodly life, indicates a man with false doctrine, vv. 7, 8.
- C. The Believer should respond to God's gracious acts, Deut. 6:10-15
 1. God's gracious (undeserved) acts toward Israel, vv. 10-11. God will give the people cities, abundantly provisioned houses, rock-cut water storage cisterns, and mature orchards for which they had done no work. (These would be the booty taken from the conquered Canaanites.)
 2. The people were to respond to God's gracious acts, vv. 12-15. Note especially v. 13: they were to
 - a. Fear Yahweh. When a man recognizes how great God is and how small he is, fear is a natural reaction. As a result, a man may flee from God, or he may bow in surrender and worship. This latter reaction is the one desired here.
 - b. Serve Hayweh.
 - c. Swear by His Name. This is not speaking of profanity. In the OT society, when a man took an oath in the name of a deity, it indicated that he worshipped and served that deity rather than another one. Thus the Israelites here are told, in effect, to bear witness to their God.

3. The NT parallel. In the OT, God's great act of saving grace was the Exodus from Egypt, which was followed by the conquest and the good things God promised the people there. In the NT, God's great act of saving grace is the justification of the believer by faith in Jesus Christ dead, buried, and raised again. And this salvation, which is free and does not depend on our works, should nevertheless bring us to respond to God in love:
 - a. Eph. 2:8,9 shows our free salvation, while v. 10 indicates our response.
 - b. Titus 3:5-7 is free salvation, while v. 8 is our response of good works.

II. Israel failed, due to improper response to God's doctrine and gracious acts.

A. Background.

As Deut. gave us the story of the founding of the Hebrew nation, so Isaiah records the failure of that nation. Civil war had split the nation after the death of Solomon, its greatest king, into a northern and southern faction. The Northern kingdom, called "Israel," was first to betray the faith of Abraham. So God punished them by taking them into captivity under Assyria in 721. But the Southern kingdom, called "Judah," was not far behind, and in 587 Babylon was sent by God to chastise the people of the south with exile and captivity.

Isaiah's ministry began in 739, "the year that King Uzziah died" (Isa. 6:1), before the fall of Israel, and extended into the days of Hezekiah, past 695 BC. He warned the people of the coming captivities, and pointed to the coming Messiah Who alone would be able to build, successfully, the Kingdom of God on earth (Isa. 11), where the OT Hebrews had so miserably failed.

B. The criticism of the people, Isa. 1:10-15

1. In v. 10, Israel and Judah are addressed as Sodom and Gomorrah. God had destroyed these two wicked cities sometime between 2000 and 1800 BC (see Gen. 19 for the whole scoop). That the chosen people of God could be called by such names shows how very far they had fallen.
2. In vv. 11-14, God rejects the very offerings, assemblies, and ordinances which He had required in the Pentateuch.
3. In vv. 16-17, He gives the reason for rejecting them. Though outwardly they are performing all the right actions, their heart attitude is not that which He requires of His people. And without the right heart attitude, all the pious actions in the world are a stench in God's nostrils.
4. But v. 15 lists the most startling result of all. The people are cut off from communication with God.

C. The condemnation of the people.

1. In Isa. 6:8-10, Isaiah is given his assignment as God's prophet. It is a rather startling one. He is to blind the people, to hinder their understanding of God. (We will find out that this happens as they fail to respond to the revelation from God which he is giving them.) This is the consequence of their sin, as in Ch. 1. Our failure to respond to God will result in His failure to communicate with us.
2. Some other passages which say the same thing:
 - a. Isa. 59:1,2
 - b. Psa. 35:15;16

3. The NT parallel: fellowship (which is maintained through the medium of the indwelling Holy Spirit) is lost as a result of sin: Eph. 4:30; I Thess. 5:19; grieving, quenching the HS. I John 1:5,6
- D. Isaiah's summary of the principle, Isa. 29:9-14.
1. The effect of the problem, vv. 9-12.
 - a. The prophets and seers, the ones through whom God spoke with His people before Scripture was complete, are asleep, drunk, vv. 9, 10. To use the metaphor of radio communication between God and His people, the receivers are broken.
 - b. The vision is sealed up, vv. 11, 12. The radio transmitter is shut down.
 - c. In other words, communication between God and His people has come to a stop. Why?
 2. The cause of the problem, vv. 13-14.
 - a. v. 13: Because the people obey only externally (remember Ch. 17), and not as a heart response to God, but only as Pavlov's dogs.
 - b. v. 14: therefore they will lose their privilege of communication with God.
 3. The NT parallel. Rom. 1:18-32 shows that God rejects those who improperly respond to His Revelation. 1:18 is the summary: God's wrath is revealed (there's the Rejection) against those who unrighteously hinder (there's the Response of man) His truth (and there's the Revelation).
 - a. The Revelation, vv. 19, 20. God's power and deity can be known just from the created universe.
 - b. The Response, vv. 21-23. Instead of being thankful to God, man becomes "vain in his imagination," thinking up ways to explain creation without using God. But he still has an inborn hunger for God, so he sets up his own idols.
 - c. The Rejection, vv. 24-32. God allows man to go his own way, unhindered, first to sexual uncleanness, then to homosexuality, then to every kind of evil.

Let's park here for a few moments and examine a few of the problems with which we introduced this study.

Spiritual "dry spells" are often characterized by inability to understand Scripture. And at the same time, we find ourselves unable to pray. In other words, our communication channels with God are cut off. Scripture suggests that this is because we have, somewhere along the line, failed to respond properly to the revelation that God has already given us. The solution is clear. Seek out that failure, confess it as sin (I John 1:9), and make the proper response. Not every variety of spiritual dryness can be handled this way. But the most common types can. Try it on for size the next time you're wiped out.

When I find myself confronting a teaching of God's Word and refusing to obey it, I need to warn myself what the consequences of my action may be. I may very well find myself cut off from communication, from fellowship with God. And that's a deadly situation for a soldier in occupied enemy territory to be in!

This also explains why I can be doing all the right things (having a quiet time, witnessing for Christ, obeying my parents and the government, respecting my date, honoring my body as the Holy Spirit's temple) and still have an inadequate spiritual life. For spirituality is not a list of "do's" and "don'ts." It is an attitude of love toward God, in response to the great truths which He has taught me and the wonderful gracious actions which He has done for me.

(A side note. If what counts is the attitude, then why has God put so many specific instructions, "laws," into both testaments? An illustration may help. Now that I'm not living at home, I am often perplexed when I want to give my parents a Christmas or birthday gift. Frequently I have asked them, "What do you want for your birthday?" I do not give them gifts simply because it is the expected duty of a good son. The gifts are expressions of love. They are the outward way that I show my parents my love response for them. But because my knowledge of my parents' needs and desires is not perfect, I must ask them to discover what would be an appropriate expression of my love.

As a Christian with a deep love for God, and a desire to demonstrate my love-response to Him, I am in a dilemma. God is so much greater, and so different, from me. It seems that I must tear my hair out in searching my brain for appropriate actions of response toward Him. But no . . . God, recognizing my dilemma, has told me what the appropriate responses would be, in His Word. Now I do not see His law as the senseless imposition of a tyrant, but the gracious and understanding revelation of what would be suitable ways for me to express my love. My love cries out so for Him, that I will eagerly devour His Book, seeking out every detail that I can possibly find, that through it I might express what I feel for Him. His law is like a birthday "hint" or a Christmas list, given, not to frustrate me but to ease my frustration; not to restrict me, but to liberate me. Now I know how to express a love which I otherwise could not express. And His commandments are not undesirable necessities, on which I walk as near the edge as I can and still satisfy the letter of the law. They are gifts, graciously given, and I eagerly plunge into their very midst, obeying not only the letter, but seeking out the spirit, the principle that lies at the heart of each law, and keeping it too).

We've dealt with the problems of spiritual dryness, rebellion against Scripture, and the "pious and putrid" syndrome. But what in the world does the doctrine of spiritual blindness have to do with the gift of languages, often called the "gift of tongues?" Actually, a great deal. For tongues resulted from Israel's rejection of God's greatest revelation of all time. Let's study that rejection in more detail.

CHAPTER TWO

GOD'S REST REJECTED

God's judicial blindness comes into operation when His people fail to respond properly to His doctrine and gracious acts. Let's examine one of God's great gracious acts, and Israel's response to it, as the Bible records it both historically and prophetically.

I. God offered Israel "Rest."

- A. A study of the passages where "rest" is promised to the children of Israel (Ex. 33:14; Dt. 3:20; 25:19; and especially 12:9,10) shows that three features were incorporated in this ancient hope:

1. Israel (not some other nation or people)
 2. would inhabit the land of Canaan, anciently promised to Abraham (cf. Gen. 12:7; no other land would do, as the attitudes of the Jews even today show)
 3. in a state of peace with her neighbors (and how remote that seems today!)
- B. The Scriptures record that from time to time, Israel did enjoy this rest, under Joshua (21:44; 22:4; 23:1), Solomon (I Kings 5:4; 8:56), David (II Sam. 7:1), Asa (II Chron. 14:6,7; 15:15), and Jehoshaphat (II Chron. 20:30). Although the last four of these men were kings of the nation, their reigns account for only 143 years of the total 457 year monarchy period, or about one-third of the time that Israel was under a king. Clearly, this "rest" was temporary, and far from the ideal which God had promised.
- C. The ultimate "rest" would be enjoyed by the people during the coming earthly reign of the Messiah, according to Isa. 11:10.
- D. With this background, we can understand how Christ's famous offer of "rest" in Matt. 11:28-30 goes far beyond the "rest" enjoyed under the kings of Israel. The structure of Matthew's gospel shows that with these words, our Lord was actually offering the people of Israel the Millennium.
1. Mt. 1-4 records the preparation of the Lord Jesus, the promised king.
 2. Mt. 5-11 records the presentation of the kingdom.
 - a. In the Sermon on the Mount, Mt. 5-7, Christ outlined the platform for the kingdom, the principles by which He will govern the world as King.
 - b. In Mt. 8-10, He demonstrated the Edenic nature of the kingdom by numerous miracles.
 - c. In Mt. 11, John the Baptist verbalized the question that everybody should have been asking (11:3): "Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" Christ answered John by referring him to the miracles prophesied of the Messiah (11:4,5; cf. Isa. 35:5,6; 61:1-2a), and claiming to fulfill those prophecies by His miracles. Christ was indeed the coming king. The message proclaimed by John the Baptist, Christ, and the disciples, "the Kingdom of God is at hand," was indeed true. If the Jews had only received Him, the kingdom of God on earth would have begun. It is at this point that Christ offered, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you REST"--the rest promised before Israel entered the land, the rest infrequently and imperfectly achieved under the kings of Israel, the rest of God's chosen people in their promised land and at peace with all their enemies. How did the Jews respond to this offer?

II. Israel rejected her "Rest."

Mt. 12 shows how the Pharisees, acting as the representatives of the Jews, rejected Christ and His offer of the kingdom. They accused Him and His disciples of violating the Sabbath (12:2,10). They plotted to kill Him (12:14), and accused Him of being in league with Satan (12:24), thus committing the unpardonable sin of conscious rejection of Christ (12:31). And when they did seek a sign of Him, He unveiled their attitude by calling them "an evil and adulterous generation" (12:39)

The Pharisees acting as the representatives of the Jews, rejected Christ and His kingdom. But the preaching of the apostles during the first century showed that the Jews everywhere endorsed what the Pharisees had done. Paul's practice, even as the "apostle to the circumcision" (cf. Gal. 2:7), was to bring the gospel first to the Jew in each city which he visited (Rom. 1:16; Acts, passim). This was not, we believe, a pattern for the church age in general, in which there is no difference between Jew

and Gentile (Gal. 3:28), as far as salvation is concerned. Rather, God was giving the Jews dispersed throughout the Mediterranean world opportunity to show by their own rejection that they agreed with the Pharisees--and the record stands that they did agree (cf. Acts 13:46-47; 18:5-7; 19:8,9; 28:23-28).

III. God prophesied both Israel's rejection, and her subsequent blinding.

We have established that rejection of God's revelation brings His judgment of blinding to further revelation. Israel's rejection of her Messiah and His kingdom is so central in the biblical record that both the rejection and the judgment were prophesied in Isaiah, seven hundred years before Christ was born.

- A. Isa. 28:11. What would God do to Israel? He will speak to her "with stammering lips and another tongue", a reference to the gift of languages (as 1 Cor. 14:21 shows).
- B. Isa. 28:12. Who would be subject to this judgment? The tongues will be addressed to those who rejected the offer of rest. We have seen that the Scripture clearly identifies these individuals as Jews (not Gentiles) of the generation of Christ. That was the generation to whom Christ made the offer. In that generation, but only in that generation, the gospel was "first to the Jew." A Jew today certainly may receive Christ. But his reception does not bring in the "rest", the kingdom, as a nationwide turning to Christ by the Jews of His generation would have.
- C. Isa. 28:13. What would be the result of the languages? They will convey very simple doctrinal truths, "line upon line, precept upon precept." Yet cause Israel to "go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken." They will serve to blind Israel even further to the gospel which she has rejected.

How could a language do this? We must remember the intense nationalism which has characterized the Jews throughout history. Even while they were dispersed throughout the ancient world after the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities, devout Jews would come to Israel for the sacred feasts in Jerusalem, as they were commanded in the Law (Dt. 16:16). No other land would do. And though they might speak the languages of every heathen nation, their Scriptures had been given in Hebrew. As far as they were concerned, God spoke Hebrew. If He were ever to give further revelation, it would come in Hebrew.

How would a man with such a cultural pride respond to men speaking "the wonderful works of God" (Acts 2:11) in every major language of the known world--except for Hebrew (Acts 2:9-11)? How readily would he believe the news that the Messiah had come, if that news were delivered in a tongue other than Hebrew? He would probably reject it, and thus be blinded to belief in that good news. And indeed the New Testament teaching on "tongues" shows that is exactly what happened.

CHAPTER THREE

TONGUES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

- I. What does the word "tongues" mean? The Greek word is "glossa," and has two basic meanings:
- A. An organ of the mouth (Don't bite your glossa; stick out your glossa and say "Ahhhh.") or something shaped like a glossa. Acts 2:3
 - B. A language, as Phil. 2:11; Rev. 5:9; 10:11; Acts 2:11. (This book is written in the French glossa; how many glossas can you speak?)
- Stop and think for a moment. This thing we call "Tongues:" Does it fit best under meaning (A), or meaning (B)?
- II. In Mark 16:17, our Lord promised His disciples that they would be given the gift of languages. This is the only reference to the gift of languages in the New Testament, outside of Acts and I Corinthians.
- III. Acts is a historical book. In it we will find God's DESCRIPTION of Tongues.
- A. Acts 2 gives us the most comprehensive DESCRIPTION of the "tongues" anywhere in the Bible.
 1. They were clearly known languages, representing many different lands, but not including Hebrew: 2:9-11. The language of Judea and of the Jews is indeed mentioned, but in the time of our Lord this was Aramanic, not Hebrew.
 2. The gift was one of speaking, not of hearing, as 2:4 shows. It was a supernatural enabling by the Holy Spirit, Who had just performed His baptizing ministry for the first time, giving birth to the church, the body of Christ (1:5; 11:15,16; I Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:22,23).
 3. Some have thought that the languages were used to evangelize people at this time. But the evangelistic highlight of the day was Peter's sermon. It is recorded as being in Greek, which was a common trade language, widely known throughout the Mediterranean, and not among the languages which the "tongues"speakers are said to have used (2:9-11). What was the response to the "tongues?" Men understood what was said as "the wonderful works of God" (2:11). Their response was not belief, though, but rather amazement, reflected in doubt and mocking (2:12,13). Peter's preaching saved men. But the exercise of "tngues" blinded them--just as Isaiah had prophesied it would.
 - B. Acts 19:6 does not tell us much about the circumstances surrounding the "tongues". We do read that Paul's ministry among the Jews met with rejection (19:8,9), suggesting that some unsaved Jews had witnessed the baptismal ceremony of 19:5,6, and were hardened by the languages, just as their countrymen on the day of Pentecost were.
 - C. Acts 10:46 is the only other mention of "tongues" in Acts. And it seems to violate the pattern we have found elsewhere. There are no unsaved Jews there to hear the "tongues" and be hardened. But the incident is unique in another way, too. It is the first Gentile salvation in the church age. The distinction between Jew and Gentile had been imprinted in the minds of God's people throughout the Old Testament period. There was a danger that even in the

church, born-again Jews would look down on born-again Gentiles as second-rate Christians. Thus God seems to have given the gift of languages to Cornelius and his household to insure that their initiation into the body of Christ would be the same in every detail as that experienced by the Jewish disciples on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:1-4.

Is this simply a fanciful interpretation? Not at all. For when Peter returned to Jerusalem with the news that Gentiles had trusted in Christ, he had to defend his unorthodox breach of the centuries-old barrier between Jew and non-Jew. And his defense was just what we have suggested. "The Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. . . . God gave them the like gift as he did unto us." (Acts 11:15, 17). This one time, the gift was used purely as an outward sign, demonstrating once and for all that "God (hath) also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" (11:18).

IV. I Corinthians is a Doctrinal Book. In it we will find God's DIRECTIONS for Tongues.

A. What were the Christians of Corinth like?

1. Do you remember Crabby Appleton? That was Corinth--rotten to the core. And it rubbed off onto the Christians. Just look!

- a. 1:11-13, they were split by cliques.
- b. 5:1, one Christian (5:5) was living in adultery with his stepmother
- c. 6:5-8, the Christians were suing each other.
- d. 11:20-21, when they celebrated the Lord's Supper, they were greedy and often got drunk.
- e. 4:7, 18, 19, some of them were on real ego=trips.
- f. Etc., ad infinitum, ad nauseum!

2. What does the Holy Spirit have to do with a mob like this? Lots!

- a. ALL of the Christians, EVEN THE CARNAL ONES, were indwelt by the Holy Spirit (3:16; 6:19), baptized in the Holy Spirit (12:13).
- b. In fact, Paul elsewhere teaches that if a man does not have the Holy Spirit, he isn't a Christian at all! Rom. 8:9; Eph. 1:13, 14.

B. Paul's Seminar on Spiritual Gifts, I Cor. 12-14.

1. Chapter 12: What are they?

- a. They are a DIVERSITY, verses 4-11.
 - i. 12:4,5,6: They are not all the same.
 - ii. 12:7-10: Every Christian gets something.
 - iii. 12:11; The Spirit decides who gets what.
- b. They are a UNITY, 12:12-31. Each of us, with his distinctive gift, is like an organ of the body, doing something essential that no other part can do.
 - i. 12:12-13: When I was saved, I was made a member of the Body of Christ by the Holy Spirit, Who gave me gifts with which to function in the Body. There is a very simple name for what He did. We say, "I was BAPTIZED INTO" the Body of Christ, "BAPTIZED IN" the Holy Spirit.

- ii. 12:14-27. The individual gifts because they are diverse, enable the body to function as one unified organism.
- iii. Vv. 28-31: God gives out the gifts as He pleases. And no gift is common to everyone. This includes the gift of languages!

(NOTE on v. 30: The Greek grammar which Paul used in the phrase, "Do all speak with tongues.", demands a negative answer. A better translation would be, "All don't speak with tongues, do they?")

2. Chapter 13: How should they be used? The answer is a general principle: IN LOVE.

3. Chapter 14: How should they not be used? Paul directs a few choice comments against the misuse of a particular gift, the gift of languages.

a. 14: 1-19: The PRIORITY of "Tongues": They come last.

- i. It is better to prophesy than to speak with languages, 14: 1,5,18, 19. The present-day parallel to "prophecy" is preaching.
- ii. Note the list of gifts in 12:28. The top one, apostleship, was limited to those who had seen the risen Christ. Number Two is prophecy, the one that Paul here urges the Corinthians to seek. Which gift is last in that list?

b. 14:20-25: the PURPOSE of "Tongues."

- i. Paul bases his argument in 14:21, on Isa. 28:11,12. "This people" in that context is Jews, so that "tongues" are related to the Jewish people.

Some ask what Jews would be doing in Corinth. The city was a major mercantile city in the ancient world, lying on a narrow isthmus separating the Ionian Sea and the Aegean Sea. The New Testament bears witness to the activity of the Jews in the business world (James 4:13, cf. 1:1), and records that when Paul came to Corinth, he found a sizable Jewish community there (Acts 18:1-6). In fact, the new church in Corinth met next door to the synagogue (Acts 18: 7,8), and no doubt frequently had Jews in the services, whether through curiosity or sincere searching. In such a setting, the gift of languages would certainly be in order, in its basic use of blinding unbelieving Jews. Since what would be said would be the "wonderful works of God", the utterances would be helpful to Christians as well, but only secondarily (I Cor. 14:22), and only if translated (14:28).

- ii. 14:22 makes it clear that tongues are for a special kind of Jew-- unbelieving Jews.

Our study in Isa. 28:11-13 has showed us that the gift of languages was intended for use in blinding the generation of Jews which rejected Christ. Thus Paul is simply explaining the context of the verse which he has quoted.

- iii. At first, 14:22 sounds strange. Wouldn't one want to preach to an unbeliever in a language which he understood, that he might be saved? And yet Paul even points out, in 14:23-25, that an unbeliever who hears "tongues" will be turned off, while one who hears prophecy may well be saved. Yet still he insists, in 14:22, that the purpose of "tongues" has to do not with saved people, but with the unsaved.

This concept, that a gift which serves to confuse rather than to enlighten, should be reserved for and directed toward application to the unbeliever, is so strange that J. P. Phillips, in his paraphrase of the NT, has rendered 14:22 just opposite to what the Greek (and every reputable translation) has. Though he has no evidence at all to support his change, he has let his reason decide at this point that some scribe or copyist must have made an error.

It is, of course, extremely dangerous to "fudge" God's Word in this way, when out of the thousands of manuscripts which exist of the NT, not one is cited as supporting his view. And it is totally unnecessary. Our study of Isa. 28 has verified that Paul has stuck right with what Isaiah was teaching. The primary purpose of the gift of languages was never revelation, but rather blinding. Thus I Cor. 14:20-25 agrees completely with Isa. 28:11-13, and Mr. Phillips is seen to be in error.

- c. 14:26-40: The PRINCIPLES of "tongues." Each time the word "let" occurs, it introduces a principle. Sometimes, Paul also gives one without a "let" Here are a few rules for using "Tongues."
- i. 14:27. Only two or three are to speak at one meeting, and then only one at a time.
 - ii. 14:28. Someone must interpret
 - iii. 14:34. Women are not allowed to do it.
 - iv. 14:40. The speakers must be decent and orderly about it.
 - v. How many more can you find?

- V. What have we seen in our survey of "tongues" in the Bible? The basic purpose of the gift may be summarized briefly: The gift of languages was given by God to judge unbelieving Jews, of the generation which rejected Christ, with spiritual blindness. Of course, the gift might serve other purposes on occasion, as in Acts 10. But such occasions were the exception, rather than the rule, in the New Testament.

Should we practice "tongues" today? If we are to be biblical, we must use them primarily among Jews, as God's means of blinding them to the gospel. But that's not all. We must use "tongues" among Jews of the generation which rejected Christ's offer of millennial rest. And those Jews are all dead. It is physically impossible to use the gift of languages for the biblical purpose. Thus we must conclude that it is wrong to claim for some practice today the authority of the biblical gift.

CHAPTER FOUR

HOW ABOUT TONGUES IN DEVOTIONS?

Many people who use "tongues" never use them in public at all. Of course, this is a "must" for a girl or woman who wants to be scriptural (I Cor. 14:34). These people do, however, use their ability for personal devotions, in prayer, and claim I Cor. 14:2, 4, 28 as justification. So we need to ask, "What do the Scriptures say about the Christian's prayer life, with relation to 'tongues'?"

I. Let's notice, to start with, that "tongues" are basically a public, not a private phenomenon, both in Acts and in I Cor. Their primary purpose, as a means of causing spiritual blindness, demands that they be used before others! Now, of course, a man who has a spiritual gift has some control over how and when he uses his gift (I Cor. 14:32; Rom. 12:6-8; II Tim. 1:6). In fact, it would be senseless for Paul to give instructions to the Corinthians concerning "tongues" if those with the gift were not able to control and vary the use of it. Thus a person who had the gift, primarily for use in confusing Jews, might use it on occasion for other purposes, such as devotions. For instance, sterling silver teaspoons are made for stirring tea, not banging on glasses. Yet very often at a formal dinner, the MC gets people's attention by banging on a glass with his spoon! All is well and good, as long as the spoon is still used for its primary purpose. But let's pretend that people stopped using teaspoons (for instance, if we were invaded by China and all started using chopsticks). How likely is it that we would keep teaspoons around, just to bang on glasses?

Let's now look on the positive side. Prayer, as described in Scripture, is always something that involves the mind. For instance:

- A. The very concept of answers to prayer presumes that we know what we are praying for--and that is impossible if "the understanding is unfruitful" (I Cor. 14:14).
- B. The believer is commanded to pray for certain things. For instance, here is a partial list. (Some are for certain people only, but you get the idea.)

I Tim. 2:1-2	civic leaders, so that we may have peace to preach
Eph. 6:18-20	for missionaries to have utterance and boldness of speech (Note v. 18, that this is prayer "in the Spirit.")
Psa. 122:6	the peace of Jerusalem
Matt. 9:38	workers in the harvest field of evangelism
Matt. 26:41	not to enter into temptation (cf. Matt. 6:13)
Phil. 4:6	offer thanks and make requests
Eph. 5:20	offer thanks
Matt. 7:7	ask for our needs
I John 1:9	confess

Furthermore, certain conditions for effective prayer are laid down in Scripture:

I Pet. 3:7	proper husband-wife relationship
Psa. 66:18	no unconfessed sin

How can a believer responsibly obey these commands if he does not know what he is praying? Among all the instructions for prayer in Scripture, never once is "tongues" required, or even recommended, for anyone who does not use it in public ministry as well!

- C. The careful structure and beautiful wording of the prayers of godly men and women throughout Scripture show that these individuals often spent much time planning their prayers. This is quite at odds with a philosophy of prayer which puts the mind out of gear!
- D. We have noted in another study that while we think of the "heart" as the seat of the emotions, the Hebrew thought of it as the center of the entire personality--intellect, emotion, and will. Consider in this light such references as Psa. 9:1; 86:12; 111:1; 138:1, which speak of praising and thanking God "with my whole heart;" that is, with my intellect and will as well as my emotions. True prayer involves not just feeling, but thinking--and choosing, too, to obey God. Compare Deut. 6:5, which likewise describes our whole love-relationship with God as loving Him "with all your heart, and soul, and strength," to which Luke 10:27 adds explicitly, "all your mind." The basic Scriptural picture of prayer involves all of the personality, and gives no warrant for detaching the mind and running on emotions or "spirit" alone.

III. At this point some people get practical. "All right," they say, "I realize that my 'tongues' are not scriptural. But my prayer life is so drab. What does the Bible suggest?"

- A. Every pray that I've ever found in the Bible can be placed under one of four categories. Try matching your daily prayer life with these. Maybe you're leaving one out, or putting too much emphasis on another. They're easy to recall--just remember, prayer ACTS.

Adoration (I Chron. 29:11-13)

Confession (I John 1:9)

Thanksgiving (Eph. 5:20)

Supplication (Matt. 7:7) (that means asking for things)

- B. Try keeping a prayer notebook. Not only is it a good place to list your requests and God's answers, but in it you should have a special section for listing scriptural commands for prayer. As you come across these in your regular devotional study, note them down--and start to use them in your prayer life! You can start with the list under II B.
- C. Another section of your prayer notebook could contain principles for prayer which are not expressly commanded in Scripture, but which are illustrated in the prayers of godly men and women in the Bible. Here are some prayers which you can study, for starters. You'll collect lots of others as you go along!

Eph. 3:14-21

I Chron. 29:11-30

Matt. 26:39

John 17

II Chron. 20:6-12

II Sam. 7:18-29

Eph. 1:15-23