

<b>Topic</b>	Speaking in Tongues in Worship
<b>Reference</b>	1 Corinthians 14:1-25
<b>Date</b>	11 August 2019
<b>Speaker</b>	Dr Peter Ng

We are going to deal with a very controversial topic today called **Speaking in Tongues**. If you look at the Book of Corinthians, in this section from chapter 7 onwards, we deal with various controversies that are besetting the Corinthian church. So Paul deals with the problem between sexes, food offered to idols, women praying in public, Lord's Supper abuse. He comes to this section, just before resurrection on spiritual gifts, which actually starts in chapter 12 and you can see next week I will be speaking on prophecy as well. So chapter 14 is about Paul weighing tongues versus prophecy.

In the background, we need to understand the issue of over-realized eschatology. It means that when we have actually been saved from sin and death, we are destined when Jesus comes again for the full consummation of the kingdom of God. When God comes we will get complete healing altogether, but in between there is a tension where we are not quite there yet, we still struggle with sin, we have healing to a certain extent but not complete, so therefore it is just in-between balance. You either tip over to this side, becomes over-realized, over emphasis on this or we don't believe in the victory of Christ and we fall back into sin and death. So that's the issue here.

**ISSUE AT HAND:**

So Paul starts off in chapter 12

*1 Corinthians 12:1 (ESV) Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed.*

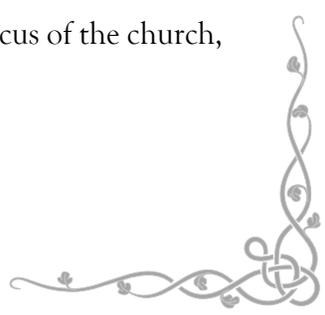
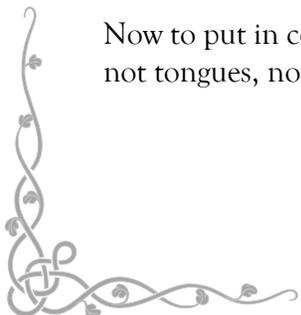
The word spiritual gift here is actually called 'pneumatikon', which is ambiguously translated either as spiritual people or spiritual gifts and the Corinthian church had a problem. Their problem is that they use spiritual gifts as the marker of personal piety and spirituality. So if you've got a lot of spiritual gifts, especially those which are miraculous or sensational in nature, it means you are closer to God, you got more authority. So that's the issue here. So you have got spiritual people or spiritual gifts, Paul is dealing with that.

There are three questions I want to address today.

1. What is the gift of tongues?
2. What is the purpose of the gift of tongues?
3. How do we use the gift of tongues?

**1. WHAT IS THE GIFT OF TONGUES?**

Now to put in context, Samuel preached two weeks ago on love. Love is the overriding focus of the church, not tongues, not spiritual gifts and basically Paul says,



1 Corinthians 14:1-2 (ESV) Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy. 2 For one who speaks in a tongue **speaks not to men but to God**, for **no one understands him**, but **he utters mysteries in the Spirit**.

So speaking in tongues is basically a gift where you don't speak to each other but to God, it is between you and God and it is unintelligible, people don't really understand you.

1 Corinthians 14:3-5 (ESV) 3 On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. 4 The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies builds up the church. 5 Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. The one **who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets**, so that the church may be built up.

So tongues can be prophetic when they are accompanied by someone who is interpreting, but if they remain uninterpreted it becomes just speaking of tongues where you build yourself up, so therefore Paul says that the one who prophesize is greater than the one who is speaking in tongues unless someone interprets. So he is not graded in terms of greater in stature but greater in his ability to effect communication and transformation within the church.

It is a language if you look in verse 9-11

1 Corinthians 14:9-11 (ESV) So with yourselves, if with your tongue you **utter speech** that is not intelligible, how will anyone know what is said? For you will be speaking into the air. 10 There are doubtless many **different languages** in the world, and none is without meaning, 11 but if I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be a foreigner to the speaker and the speaker a foreigner to me.

So it implies that it is actually a language but it is a language which is unintelligible to the one who speaks it.

1 Corinthians 14:13-15 (ESV) Therefore, one who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret. 14 For if **I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful**. 15 What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also.

So there is a disconnect. When you are actually speaking in tongues, your mind is basically on neutral, doesn't quite work there but the spirit is praying. So there is a disconnect between the two, not all have this gift. If you look in chapter 12,

1 Corinthians 12:29-31 (ESV) Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30 Do all possess gifts of healing? **Do all speak with tongues?** Do all interpret? 31 But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

So obviously when Paul says this, not everybody has this gift. The gift of tongues, originally, if you look in Mark 16 is a sign and is a gift in 1-Corinthians chapter 12-14. In Mark 16, this is a bit of scripture that has been a little bit controversial. There are many churches who don't consider this part of the original scripture. It says

*Mark 16:15-18 (ESV) And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. 16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. 17 And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; **they will speak in new tongues**; 18 they will pick up serpents with their hands; and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover."*

This doesn't apply to everybody because otherwise you have a pastor like James Coots. Regularly in his service he will pick up snakes and incidentally he was killed by a snake some years ago. So it is not something that everybody can do, it just happens to be at a time a historical issue. The word tongue comes from the Greek word 'genos glossa'. Genos means different, is a family, race or nations. Glossa means language. So it is language of different nations or ethnic groups.

What is it? Is it the language of angels? In chapter 13 it says,

*1 Cor 13:1 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love*

The word there is 'if I', it doesn't mean that the speaking of tongues is a language of angels and if it were the language of angels, why would you have that tongue ceased when you get to heaven and you are full of angels there. So it doesn't quite make sense. The other one is that, is this gift, the gift of languages. Now if you look here in Acts chapter 2. This is the first-time tongues came upon the scene

*Acts 2:4-8 (ESV) And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. 5 Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. 6 And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. 7 And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 **And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language?**"*

It is obvious that the gift in Acts chapter 2 is of a language which is interpretable, recognizable by the people who speak that particular language. Paul describes this also as language in chapter 14

*1 Corinthians 14:9-11 (ESV) So with yourselves, if with your tongue you **utter speech** that is not intelligible, how will anyone know what is said? For you will be speaking into the air. 10 There are doubtless many **different languages** in the world, and none is without meaning, 11 but if I do not know the **meaning of the language**, I will be a foreigner to the speaker and the speaker a foreigner to me.*

Obviously, he is meaning that this is also a language. Early church fathers; Gregory, John Chrysostom, Augustine, these are the early church fathers. They believe it was languages. John Calvin of the reformation believe it was languages. The puritans, Jonathan Edwards, Charles Spurgeon, Charles Hodge believe that it was a language and here you actually have the history of speaking in tongues. It is basically the phenomenon that started that Pentecostal movement was in the 1900s in Los Angeles. It is called the Azusa Street Revival. Then the three waves in 1960s, it affected the catholic movement as well as the protestants which is the Anglicans, Methodists, even the Baptist. In the 1980s, the third wave is by John Wimber and basically Wayne Grudem at the forefront will talk about this historical presence later on.

Other religions also have speaking in tongues. It is not a phenomenon which is distinctive only to Christians. You've got the Greek religions; Oracle of Delphi, Goddess of Juno, The Shamans of African tribes, Buddhist and Shinto priests as well, associated with speaking in tongues.

Let's look back. In the early 1900s, Charles Parham believed in resurrecting these gifts of tongues, started that movement and he said

*"The Lord will give us the power of speech to talk to the people of the various nations without having to study them in schools."*  
*Topeka State Journal, January 7, 1901*

That's really cool. You don't have to go to school and learn a language, you just get the gift of tongues and you will be able to speak a different language. He further wrote,

*"A part of our labor will be to teach the church the uselessness of spending years of time preparing missionaries for work in foreign lands when all they have to do is ask God for power."*  
*Hawaiian Gazette, May 31, 1901:*

He actually believed this that all missionaries do not need to learn a special tongue or language of the host country they will be going to. They just have to pray. One of the first few person he describe getting the gift was Agnes Ozman from LA.

*"I laid my hands upon her and prayed. I had scarcely repeated three dozen sentences when a glory fell upon her, a halo seemed to surround her head and face, and she began speaking in the Chinese language and was unable to speak English for three days. When she tried to write in English to tell us of her experience, she wrote Chinese copies of which we still have in newspapers printed at the time*

The writing that she wrote, a Chinaman even cannot see even one word of Mandarin in it. Obviously the people at that time, the Americans wouldn't speak Chinese, so they wouldn't understand that she was speaking something else other than Chinese.

Assemblies of God Malaysia Statement of Beliefs says,

*The baptism of believers in the Holy Spirit is witnessed by the initial physical sign of speaking with other tongues as the Spirit of God gives them utterance (Acts 2:4). The speaking in tongues in this instance is the same in essence as the gift of tongues (1Cor 12:4-10, 28), but different in purpose and use.*

So the Pentecostal position is that it is a language, which is discernable. Here is some work by the University of Toronto, Department of Linguistics, Professor William Samarin who actually did a lot of work with people who speak in tongues and looking at linguistic studies he concluded

*Glossolalia consists of strings of meaningless syllables made up of sounds taken from those familiar to the speaker and put together more or less haphazardly. The speaker controls the rhythm, volume, speed and inflection of his speech so that the sounds emerge as pseudolanguage—in the form of words and sentences ... glossolalia fundamentally is not language.*

So if you look at it linguistically it is not a language. If it is not a language then what is it, could it be ecstatic speech like Greek cults where people are filled with that kind of spirits, they speak uncontrollably but if you EEG studies those tongues are not ecstatic, you actually can perform other functions at the same time. There is nothing that takes over your brain. Another interesting possibility is that, tongues is basically coded language by Vernon Poythress. He writes,

Suppose you actually have this word, 'praise the Lord for His mercy endures forever' and what if you took out all the vowels then you will get this, then you remove the spaces and beginning with the first letter rewrite the sequence using every third letter repeatedly going through the sequence until all the letters are used up, you will get this. Then you add an 'A' after every consonant and then you get

PaTaRa RaMa Na SaVaRaHa DaHaRa DaFaRaSaLa FaSa CaRaRa

It sounds very much like how people speak in tongues, but the useful of this is, because it is coded language, if you know the code you can work backwards and interpret who basically has the gift of interpretation will be able to say, 'praise the Lord for his mercy endures forever'. So that's possible.

Could it be verbal idiom, sighs or groans, we don't really know. So even in Charismatic circles there is no agreement on what this actually is even today. Now that's the gift of tongues.

## 2. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE GIFT OF TONGUES?

*1 Corinthians 14:3-5 (ESV) 3 On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. 4 The one who speaks in a tongue **builds up himself**, but the one who prophesies builds up the church. 5 Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built up.*

So here you actually have a situation where the tongues function to build you up. Now, all of you have the piece of paper which I've given to you in your handout about volunteering for church service. Now if you tick, I speak in tongues we've no use for you because it doesn't really do anything. If you cut fish or serve pork noodles outside, I think we can use you. But if you speak in tongues alone, I mean, there is no benefit to the church as it were on a whole. Speaking in tongues is useful for yourself, it builds up you. If you look at Romans chapter 8, you can see

*Romans 8:26-27 (ESV) Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with **groanings too deep for words**. 27 And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.*

Praying in the spirit is like this, when your soul is pressured with anxiety and fear and you don't have the words to articulate your fears and what happens is that the spirit comes in and in groanings or maybe tongues that are too deep to be understood, it expresses what your heart feels to God. So that's a possibility. The wrong application of this has caused a lot of split in the church in the last 100 years. If you apply it wrongly then you say, it is essential evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. And that actually started the

denominational splits between the churches. I remember I was a young man, I think barely 16 years of age when I came to know Christ in a church called Life Chapel in Section 17. And it was then when this controversy came up, one half of the church said they have the gift of tongues and they made them super spiritual, you who didn't have the gift of tongues well you are like second class, don't fly to heaven second class you go first class. So that made people who didn't have the gift feel very-very much devalued.

And their idea is that this is a gift that you get after you become a Christian. You speak in tongues and that gives you power to be able to live and glorify God. But there is a difference between the acts of speaking in tongues and the Corinthian church. If you look at it, there are subtle differences. Number one, in the book of Acts when the people spoke in tongues, it was a specific place in redemptive history. You see, the Holy Spirit doesn't come on people in the Old Testament unless you are a prophet, priest or king and you can see for example Saul the king. Once he was inaugurated as King, the spirit comes on him and he prophesize. And then it comes on David and the priest as well. In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit is past. It is democratized. Every person who is a Christian has the Holy Spirit. So therefore the time when that occurred was in Acts chapter 2. It is a specific place in redemptive history. It signifies the new age beginning, the spirit outpouring and the new covenant. In the Corinthian church, it is not specific place in redemptive history. It is given for self-edification. In Acts chapter 2, when they actually had the gift that they wait for it, not only that there was rushing wind and tongues of fire appeared on the heads on the people. I don't see that locally nowadays. No tongues of fire. If you look at the Corinthian church, no rushing wind, no fire. If you look at Acts chapter 2, there was a recognizable language where non-Christian from other dialects could actually recognize it. In the Corinthian church, it has to be interpreted. So it is unknown languages. Here in Acts chapter 2, it was a corporate application, every disciple had it without question. Where else in the Corinthian church, not everybody received it. It is for individual edification and in Acts chapter 2, it was like external attestation, which means non-Christians who heard it were so touched by this movement of the spirit that 3000 actually accepted Christ on that day. Where else in the Corinthian church, there is no external attestation. In fact, the non-Christians who come to church, they hear you speaking in tongues and they get freaked out and think you are mad. So these two are completely different.

So here we have the statement of AOG Malaysia,

*The baptism of believers in the Holy Spirit is witnessed by the **initial physical sign of speaking with other tongues** as the Spirit of God gives them utterance (Acts 2:4). The speaking in tongues in this instance is the same in essence as the gift of tongues (1Cor 12:4-10, 28), but different in purpose and use*

So however if you look in scripture. Scripture says,

*1 Corinthians 12:13 (ESV) 13 For in one Spirit we **were all baptized into one body**—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and **all were made to drink of one Spirit***

The word is very inclusive, every single person who is a Christian is baptized into the Holy Spirit. Chapter 12 says,

*1 Corinthians 12:29-31 (ESV) Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30 Do all possess gifts of healing? **Do all speak with tongues?** Do all interpret? 31 But earnestly **desire the higher gifts.***

It is obvious that not everybody has the gift of tongues but everybody is baptized in the Holy Spirit. So everyone is baptized in the spirit but not everybody speaks in tongues. If you look at Acts chapter 2

*Acts 2:37-38 (ESV) Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" 38 And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

*Acts 2:41 (ESV) So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls*

There is no mention of the gift of tongues. If you look at all these instances in the Book of Acts, they all tell you about individuals full of the Holy Spirit with no reference to them speaking in tongues at all. And yet on the other hand, there are references in Acts 2, Acts 10 and Acts 19 where there are individuals who have been filled with the spirit, who are also speaking in tongues. So you have a varied picture. So how can you take three instances in Acts and make it normative for every single Christian. It is not right. If you look at the heroes of our faith, the ones that have made tremendous difference to the Christian faith; Augustine, John and Charles Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, Charles Spurgeon, Count Von Zinzendorf and George Whitfield, these are giants of the faith. That has moved the Christian faith for years. There is one thing that binds them in common, none of them spoke in tongues. So are you saying, all these people have no Holy Spirit? They were never baptized in the Holy Spirit.

So the Pentecostal position is that, when you first become a Christian, you have new birth, you have the spirit, they don't deny that, but you get a second blessing. You get baptism of Holy Spirit and that gives you power to serve and you speak in tongues. The conservative position which is our position is that, you have the new birth, the spirit and then you get instead of second blessing, we got third, fourth, fifth and sixth blessings, because you are open to the filling of the Holy Spirit and you have gifts, but they are not necessarily the gifts in tongues. So there is not very much difference. It is a terminology, they call it baptism of Holy Spirit, we call filling of the Holy Spirit. They call it second blessing, we call multiple blessing. So they call baptism of the Holy Spirit here, we put it over there. So they say, all of them will speak in tongues. We say some of the people will speak in tongues because not all have the gift of the spirit. So essentially there are some minor differences.

Historically, the third wave of the Charismatic movement has already rejected the insistence of the baptism of Holy Spirit as a distinctive experience separate from conversion. They have also rejected that the speaking in tongues is a initial physical evidence of the baptism in the spirit. So the two branches are coming together as we can see, how the lord is uniting his people again.

### 3. HOW DO WE USE THE GIFT OF TONGUES

I am sure some of you will have this gift in the church. We cannot use it for public worship without interpretation. Now, why. Tongues alone do not build up the church.

1 Corinthians 14:4 The one who speaks in a **tongue builds up himself**, but the one who **prophesies builds up the church**. 5 Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the **church may be built up**.

Now unintelligible tongues is basically useless to its hearers.

1 Corinthians 14:7-8(ESV) *If even lifeless instruments, such as the flute or the harp, do not give distinct notes, how will anyone know what is played? 8 And if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle? 9 So with yourselves, if with your tongue you utter speech that is not intelligible, how will anyone know what is said? For you will be speaking into the air.*

So basically in church we need to be able to communicate in such a way that everybody understands.

1 Corinthians 14:10-12 (ESV) *There are doubtless many different languages in the world, and none is without meaning, 11 but if I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be a foreigner to the speaker and the speaker a foreigner to me. 12 So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church.*

So you come to the church where everybody is speaking in different languages, you are not going to be able to encourage each other. That's Paul's point.

Last year I went to Japan and I am a great ramen fan. I went to a good shop. I went inside there and lo and behold, no waiter, no waitress, nothing, just a bunch of numbers and Japanese words and I didn't know what to do. It was very-very difficult. So I left and went to another shop where they have pictures that got interpretations, so now I know what to order and that's the same thing in church. You come to church and you don't have a bunch of Japanese things up there and you don't have any idea at all. So speaking in tongues in public without understanding is really not productive. So therefore

1 Corinthians 14:13 (ESV) *Therefore, one who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret.*

Tongues need interpretation. Here Paul says,

1 Corinthians 14:14 For if I pray in a tongue, **my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful**. 15 What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will **sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also**.

He is saying, don't put your brain on neutral. When you are speaking in tongues, pray for the gift of interpretation as well. He wants both. Andrew Newsberg of University of Pennsylvania actually did functional MRI studies and show that, if you are actually singing or preaching part of your brain, the frontal lobe lights up, a lot of blood flow. When you are actually speaking in tongues, you switch off. Because the spirit takes over. What you want to have is basically both.

Anthony Thistleton, who wrote one of the largest commentaries on Corinthians to date, writes these words,

*If only the mind is active everything remains at a theoretical level; if only the heart is active the door lies open to self deception and credulity. If both are open to the HS the result can build up the community and bear the fruit of love for the other*

So the other point which Paul doesn't want us to have tongues in corporate worship is that, it inhibits corporate worship.

*1 Corinthians 14:16-17 (ESV) Otherwise, if you give thanks with your spirit, how can anyone in the position of an outsider say "Amen" to your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying? 17 For you may be giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not being built up.*

So imagine you are standing here and you are raising your hands and you are all speaking in tongues and then can you say amen. You may be saying something that I don't agree with but if you actually said,

*Psalms 136:1 (ESV) Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever*

Everybody can say amen. So basically that is quite logical. Now the Pauline Preference is not to speak in tongues. I am the wrong person to preach to you on this because I don't have the gift of tongues. Some people say, 'sour grapes'. I remember I wanted the gift of tongues and I was about 18 years of age, I was in Sydney when I heard the second time about the gift of tongues. We had a big meeting and those who wanted the gift of tongues line up. So I lined up being a Chinaman, anything free I will take it. So I lined up, they pray, pray and pray and they came to me and my best friend, Vincent. We didn't get it. The Lord decided that I get other gifts. So I am the last person to be preaching to you about it because I am sour grapes, but Paul is different. Paul says,

*1 Corinthians 14:18-19 (ESV) I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. 19 Nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue.*

So don't take my word for it but take Paul's words. He is a man who can speak in tongues, can prophecy and he choose to speak five words that is intelligible.

Tongues exacerbate unbelief. The whole problem is that, in church you've got non-Christians coming to your church, what is the affect on them. Now here you look at the passage

*1 Corinthians 14:20-22 (ESV) Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature. 21 In the Law it is written, "By people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners will I speak to this people, and even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord." 22 Thus tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is a sign not for unbelievers but for believers. 23. If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your minds?*

He is asking them to be matured because the immature Corinthian Christians are thinking that if I spoke in tongues, I am prancing around with all these fancy words which nobody understands, it means I am so spiritual that I've got this authority, I've got this aura, everybody will admire me, my self-esteem, my stock

price will go up. But Paul is saying, you've got to be mature in your thinking. When you are speaking in tongues, it is actually not a good thing. If you actually have signs that show that God is pleased with you or God is not pleased, speaking in tongues is actually a negative sign. He says

Isaiah 28:11-12

*For by people of strange lips and with a foreign tongue the Lord will speak to this people, 12 to whom he has said, "This is rest; give rest to the weary; and this is repose"; yet they would not hear*

So the tongues are a sign

1-Cor14:22 ***Thus tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers,*** while prophecy is a sign not for unbelievers but for believers. 23. *If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, **will they not say that you are out of your minds?***

This passage is taken from Isaiah and is addressed to the leaders of Judah. At that time, they were under the threat of invasion by the Assyrians hordes from the North. Terribly cruel people will come and basically flay you alive and they were afraid and yet they were supposed to trust God, have faith in him. They refused to do that and so therefore God said to them,

Isaiah 28:11-12

*For by people of strange lips and with a foreign tongue the Lord will speak to this people, 12 to whom he has said, "This is rest; give rest to the weary; and this is repose"; yet they would not hear*

So these people refuse to believe in God, so God says alright I am going to give you a sign, the sign of judgment. So therefore they wake up one day because they didn't trust God, the Assyrians are all around them. And that tells them that they have been unfaithful.

Some years ago, Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore tells of a time in his life. He woke up one day, his father Lee Hoon Leong had great faith in the British Army. British Army is double in size the Japanese Army. They are twice as tall and they says the Japanese will never take Singapore. So he was full of faith in the British but no faith in the Japanese and one day they woke up in bed with a huge horde of totally unshaven, smelly, rude, horrible and wicked Japanese, which tortured them for three days at home. He will never forget the three days and all the time they are speaking in Japanese and expect you to understand. And for his grandfather or basically Lee Kuan Yew's father, the Japanese language was a sign of misplace faith. Every time he heard the language he will remember, yes I was mistaken, I trusted the British, I had lack of faith.

I mean if you look at our local situation, this is written by a member of parliament. He writes,

*Enough damage has been done in ethnic and religious relations something not really expected from the Pakatan Harapan government that promised good governance and a new era for Malaysians. The government rather than reviewing the policies of the BN sought to mechanically impose them with little or no regard for Malaysians particularly the non-Malays, the majority of whom are Harapan supporters. Malaysiakini 9/8/19*

For years from now when the Harapan's supporter son opens up his book and see three pages of cut they will remember their misplace trust, that they trusted the Harapan government that led them down. So that's what Paul means. So Paul says, when a non-Christian comes in and all of you are filled by the spirit and you are speaking in tongues, it is a good thing but he thinks you are mad because he is a non-Christian. And the fact that he thinks you are mad actually is a bad sign, but instead if he comes into your place and if you are speaking in tongues and if there is interpretation or there is a prophecy and you call him out of the deepest darkest sin in his life and he is wondering, how did you know about this, he will be so convicted that he will actually fall on his knees, he will repent and he will glorify God and that will be a sign for believers. So he actually says that

*1 Corinthians 14:24-25 (ESV) 24 But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, 25 the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you.*

So speaking in tongues in a group like this where there are non-Christians in our midst, if you are a non-Christian, you will think we are mad and it will solidify the fact that you have no faith. So it is actually a bad sign. It is a sign for unbelievers. For believers, if there is prophesy that will actually explain the deepest secret of his heart, it is a good sign as it were. Now if you look in Acts chapter 2 and the Corinthian church and look at this effect on non-Christians. In Acts 2,

*Acts 2:6-8 (ESV) And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. 7 And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language?"*

People saw it was amazing and 3000 people came to Christ. In the Corinthian church, they think you are mad, it is crazy and this is a sign of God's judgment. The difference is interpretation. It is useless speaking in a tongue which nobody understands. The difference in both situations is interpretation.

Now how do we apply this in our lives?

*1 Corinthians 14:1 (ESV) **Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts,** especially that you may prophesy.*

So if you really want to have the gift of tongues, you can ask God for it. The Lord can either say, yes or to me 'no', but Paul says rather you ask for a higher spiritual gift, especially that you may prophesize because when you prophesize you are able to edify the rest of the people.

Gary Smalley wrote a book, the 5 Love Languages. How in a couple we communicate with each other with different languages and in church we do the same thing. The language of communication is gifts of the Holy Spirit. We use the gifts of the Holy Spirit in order to love each other and the gift of tongues have been a contradiction of that love. John Mark Corner of the Bridgetown Church writes.

There are three major errors in speaking in tongues:

1. Unless you speak in tongues, you are not filled with the Spirit.
2. Unless you speak in tongues, you are not even saved.

3. Speaking in tongues is not important or possible for believers today.

This is really unloving and the reason why my church split when I was a young man in this country was that you have got people telling you, you are not really genuine and you are missing something and they come to realize that this is an error. On the other side, you have got the anti-Charismatic who says, speaking in tongues is not important or possible for today's believers, equally wrong and unloving. And some people over elevate the gift of tongues. Dr Bill Hamon writes, 70 reasons for speaking in tongues. I can only see one in the book in chapter 12. He can see 70 and these are some of his reasons:

- A spirit language is the greatest gift the Holy Spirit can give a believer
- Praying in tongues activates the fruit of the Spirit
- Praying in our spirit language is the main way we fulfil the scriptural admonition to "pray without ceasing."
- Praying in tongues builds and increases our faith
- Speaking with tongues is the doorway into all the other spiritual gifts

None of this are seen in chapter 12 to chapter 14, you don't see any of this. It is a solution to all your problems. We have a prominent TV evangelist tell a lady who has got full of problems, who stood up and be prayed for and you speak in tongues. If you speak in tongues all your problems will go away. This is a wrong point.

Or an abuse of authority. People who speak in tongues think they are more spiritual than others, so therefore they have all the ears of God. So you give them a piece of scripture, instead of interpreting it in context or grammar, they say the Lord told me as I speak in tongues. Again an abuse of authority. Speaking in tongues also has problems. It is a sensational gift. We love sensationalism and the charismatics are obsessed with it. It is unbiblical and unhealthy focus. On the other hand, the anti-charismatic reject it, which is basically rejecting what Paul says and rejecting what Jesus says. There is a wrong emphasis. Instead of emphasizing righteousness, holiness, love, truth, mercy, justice, the gospel, you are focusing on promises to end personal problems, healing is a right, triumphalism, sensationalism. This is the wrong focus.

Look at the tongues in perspective. You see, it is the only church, the Corinthian where the gift of tongues speaking is mentioned as an issue. Look at all the Pauline epistles, look at everything in the New Testament, there is none and yet we make it to a big deal, we start a whole denominations based on it. It is not even a qualification for elder. When we have elders or deacons in the First Baptist Church, we don't have a thing that ticks speaking in tongues, we don't even have it.

In the list of gifts in 1-Cor 12, it is deliberately mentioned last. Condition of using this gift is to have interpretation. Tongues were never given as evidence for spiritual transformation. In the last day when you stand before God on his great white throne to judge you, he is not going to say, hey did you speak in tongues. He is going to say

*Matthew 25:42-43 (ESV) For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.*

Matthew 6:14-15 (ESV) For if you ***forgive others*** their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, 15 but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Forgiveness is a function of love. Love is what you will be judged on because you are transformed by the love of Christ and you too are able to exhibit the fruit of love in your life, not speaking in tongues. So therefore be careful. There are some churches that focus on speaking in tongues as a technique. Look at this manual

*“Often people can be helped to yield to tongues rather easily. . . . After praying with a person to be baptized in the Spirit, the team member should lean over or kneel down and ask the person if he would like to pray in tongues. When he says yes, he should encourage him to speak out, making sounds that are not English. . . . He should then pray with him again. When the person begins to speak in tongues, he should encourage him. . . . After you ask to be baptized in the Holy Spirit and ask for the gift of tongues, then yield to it. Begin by speaking out, if necessary beginning by just making meaningless sounds. The Holy Spirit will form them.”*

Very interesting isn't it. But you see the Holy Spirit gives you the gift. You look in chapter 12

1 Corinthians 12:8-11 (ESV) For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who ***apportions to each one individually as he wills.***

I was taking to Susan Key and I have permission to share with you. As a young Christian, she came to know Christ in a charismatic church and they started telling her, you have got to speak in tongues, so they taught her exactly the technique, roll your tongue, say something as long as it is not your native tongue, it is okay and she tried that for a while, it didn't quite get there and one day she was in the car with her daughter and a robber came into the car with a knife and she was terrified and you know what, she started speaking in tongues and the robber didn't recognize this is Mandarin or anything else, he freaked out, he ran screaming out of the car. He ran away and that tongue automatically came and we know that's the gift of the spirit because it just came out of the blue and without having to practice or do anything to get it.

I mean there is the gift of tongues and it will come, you don't have to do it and our problem is that we take the worst accesses of the charismatic movement and we compare it with the best of conservative movement and we condemn them. Now what they do is that they take the best out of the charismatic movement and take the worst of all the dead non-charismatic churches and then they condemn us. Isn't that typically human.

D.A. Carson writes these words which are basically are very real today.

*But when all the caveats are in, there is no biblical warrant for ruling out all manifestations of contemporary tongues, on the ground that the gift was withdrawn in the subapostolic period. And it is the charismatic movement that has stimulated the church to rethink these issues and to study afresh the biblical passages on which so many of these issues turn”*

*Showing the Spirit (p. 240). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.*

So it is accepted. We should accept tongues. In fact, Paul ends with chapter by saying, do not forbid tongues. So if you've got somebody else in the side who is worshipping and he is under his breath and speaking in tongues, do not take him up and tie, because Paul says you are not suppose to forbid the speaking of tongue, but if you speak in tongue in public up here then you need interpretation. And I think it doesn't happen because some of you here don't even dare put your hands up. Putting your hands up, people look at you, oh my God this is a Charismatic, we will mark him down, which is actually so stupid. Pursue love, love brings the church together. It is about time charismatic and non-charismatic churches come together on the firm unyielding foundation of the word of God and the motive of love.

I will end with a very staunch conservative. His name is JI Packer. He actually talks about all the positives we can learn from the charismatic movement.

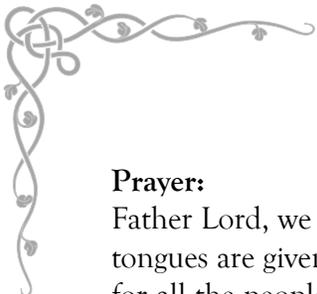
- Spirit Empowered living
- Emotions finding expression.

Many of our worships in traditional churches are basically dead. There is no emotion. There is a room for emotion. Some so are filled with liturgy that liturgy becomes tradition and it doesn't reach your heart.

- Prayerfulness
- Every heart involvement in worship
- Missionary zeal
- Small group ministry
- Communal living
- Joyfulness
- Belief in Satan and demonic
- Real belief in the miraculous

All of these have come because of the charismatic movement in the last 100 years, like it or not. So it is about time that the church recognize that this is a movement which God is actually empowering because we see the fruit of the people's life. I remember Kevin Connor, I had dinner with him. He is a pastor of a very big church in Melbourne called City Life and we were talking about slain in the spirit. I don't agree with it and I was talking to him, he was total opposite to me and he said to me, Peter I don't care how many times you get slain as long as when you get up you walk straight, which means the life. It doesn't matter what gift you have, it doesn't matter how many experiences you have, when you walk, you walk integrity. When you are full of the Holy Spirit, you are full of holiness, you are full of what God would be doing in your life, you are full of love, you don't go around condemning other people or looking down on people because they don't have the same gift as you, neither do you deny the gifts of other people as well.

So let me end, pursue the higher gifts simply because the higher gifts allow you to edify the church and pursue love.

**Prayer:**

Father Lord, we just thank you for your word. Your word is clear. You have given us gifts and the gifts of tongues are given to edify us, so that we may pray and have greater intimacy with you. We praise you Lord for all the people in this church who have the gift of tongues and we welcome them within our midst, for we do not forbid the gift of tongues and yet father we ask for higher spiritual gifts, especially that we may prophesy or we preach or teach and bring your word, so that everybody who hears it will be built up in their faith will be strong. We ask most for all that you bind us all in love. We ask for Jesus sake. Amen.

**End of Sermon**