

# CHANGE THE WORLD BY SPEAKING IN TONGUES

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Some time ago, I was conversing with an online friend when our discussion turned to the topic of the gift of tongues. I wanted to share my thoughts with everyone. To begin with, the true nature of speaking in tongues is clearly outlined for us in the Holy Scriptures, and it is NOT what a lot of modern Christians have erroneously been led to believe. In fact, quite a few years ago, in 2001, I wrote a three-part series entitled "Are the Gifts of the Spirit for Today?" in which I explain that the New Testament seems to speak of TWO

different forms of supernatural communication. I will now briefly describe both of them to you, as I understand them.

The PRIMARY form is supernaturally speaking in an unknown foreign tongue -- or language -- which was NOT learned by natural means, such as by attending a school. As many of my readers are probably already aware, and as I point out in the aforementioned series, this is precisely what happened on the day of Pentecost when the Apostles received the gift of the Holy Spirit, and began speaking in foreign tongues, as we can easily determine by the following group of verses:

"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 at 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 marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? 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 Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in 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 tongues the wonderful works of God. 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."

Acts 2:4-13, KJV

Of course, the Devil's own emissaries -- that is to say, the hard-hearted, unbelieving Jews who were present -- were not about to accept this very obvious manifestation of the Holy Spirit and power of Almighty God, El Shaddai. Thus, similar to certain modern-day religionists who likewise attempt to dismiss the gifts of the Spirit with their usual and rather lukewarm explanations, the Jews weakly accused the Disciples of being drunk. Even their trick of bribing the Roman guards at Jesus' tomb was a little more ingenious than this, even though that ruse also failed to smother the young flames of the nascent Christian faith.

While Luke informs us that the unbelieving Jews mocked and accused the Apostles of being drunk and babbling nonsense, was this truly the case? Were the Disciples really drunk? Were they just babbling in loud confusion, foaming at their

mouths and rolling all over the floor such as we see in the so-called Spirit-filled churches today? Definitely not! You see, while the Apostles may not have been drunk on actual wine made from grapes, they were most definitely drunk on the wine of the Holy Spirit of God! That is what those Jews simply could not understand, just as the Apostle Paul wrote in the following verses:

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

1 Corinthians 2:14, KJV

"And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know."

1Corinthians 8:2, KJV

But what is most important here is what happened next. The previous set of Scriptures clearly inform us that travelers from all around the Mediterranean Sea and North Africa -- who just so happened to be staying in Jerusalem at the time for the feast of Pentecost, which was obviously God's setup -- understood PRECISELY what the Apostles were saying! How could this possibly be? Well, quite simply, it was because the Apostles were really speaking in their NATIVE languages. Those men were NOT just uttering nonsensical gibberish like we see occurring in some of the modern churches today. In fact, the Apostle Paul provides us with a rather huge clue regarding the nature of this type of speaking in tongues when he writes the following:

"Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret . . . If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret."

1 Corinthians 14:13, 27, KJV

Please notice that twice Paul uses the word "interpret". It seems obvious then that these brethren were really speaking in a foreign language which required that an interpreter be present; either another person who was in the gathering, or maybe the very same individual who was actually speaking in tongues. The interpreter was needed in order to avoid any confusion occurring within the fellowship. As Paul likewise wrote only a few verses later "For God is not the author of confusion". Whatever the language was which was spoken, it had to be translated into either Hebrew -- or Greek -- for

the benefit of the brethren so that they could understand what was being said. It makes perfect sense, doesn't it?

So the question we need to ask ourselves is the following. Exactly why did God permit this amazing and wonderful event to even happen in Acts chapter two? What specific purpose did it really serve? Well, the Apostle Paul provides us with a very direct answer when he writes that this gift was to be a sign to the unbelievers of the wonderful power of God, as we can easily confirm by the following Bible verse which is found in the very same chapter:

"Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe."  
1 Corinthians 14:22, KJV

As we saw previously, these visitors to Jerusalem confirmed this themselves when they said "we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God". So you see, speaking in an unknown tongue -- that is to say, in a foreign language which you have never personally endeavored to learn -- is primarily to serve as a witness to the unbelievers. The Acts chapter two incident at Jerusalem makes this very clear. The people knew and understood that something very amazing and very supernatural was occurring. In fact, Luke plainly tells us that the Apostles had NO formal educational background which would have given them the ability to ever speak those foreign languages. This fact is made evident by this verse:

"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus."  
Acts 4:13, KJV

I discuss this same topic more fully in other articles such as "The Only Credentials You Need!" and "The Wisdom of God Versus the Philosophy of Men". But the main point is, this wonderful event opened the door for the Apostles to deliver the full Gospel message to the crowd that swarmed Jerusalem during those feast days. In similar fashion, if you happen to be a modern Christian who is able to speak some foreign language, then you are quite capable of reaching twice as many people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ as a person who does not speak any foreign languages, right?

In fact, as I mention in my personal bio, as well as in a few other BBB articles, many years ago, I myself studied Spanish in high school for three years. While I obviously didn't know or realize it at the time, God was ALREADY preparing me for my future. You see, I later spent six years preaching God's Word in Mexico and then three additional years on the Tex-Mex border. So the Lord most certainly knew what He was doing in my life long before I ever did. That is just the way He works.

What you may find interesting is the fact that if we were to translate all of those nationalities in Acts chapter two to their modern-day counterparts, we would quickly discover that God did that mighty miracle in order to send out a message of Salvation to people native to an area extending from Italy, to Greece, to Turkey, to Syria, to Iraq, to Iran, and all the way down to the countries of North Africa and the islands of the Mediterranean Sea. So as I mentioned earlier, this was a massive witnessing campaign. It was like a worldwide telecast of God's Spirit. In short, on that day, representatives from the entire Mediterranean area were reached with the Gospel of Jesus Christ! This great manifestation of the gift of tongues -- that is to say, miraculously speaking in unlearned foreign languages -- served as a tool to bear fruit for the Kingdom of God. This is in fact what Jesus told His Disciples they were called to do, as we see by the following sample verses:

"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, THAT YE SHOULD GO AND BRING FORTH FRUIT, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you."  
John 15:16, KJV

"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."  
Mark 16:15, KJV

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."  
Acts 1:8, KJV

"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise."  
Proverbs 11:30, KJV

"How then shall they call on him in whom they have not

believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things."  
Romans 10:14-15, KJV

Now, after the Apostle Peter and the rest of the Disciples had refuted the ridiculous accusation of being drunk which had been made by the unbelieving Jews, and after they had delivered such a powerful Salvation message to that huge crowd of foreigners who had gathered in Jerusalem, do you know what happened next? We find a clear answer towards the very end of Acts chapter two in the following two verses:

"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."  
Acts 2:41-42, KJV

Thus we see that this powerful manifestation of God's Holy Spirit bore immediate fruit. Three thousand new Disciples joined the fledgling New Testament Church on that same day! In case you are wondering what the Apostles did with all of those new converts, I invite you to read my series entitled "Where Are the First Century Churches?". It is filled with many Scriptures which explain the precise pattern of God's Early Church, which is the very same pattern which modern churches are supposed to be following, but do not for the most part.

Furthermore, I wouldn't be surprised if some of the converts in Jerusalem eventually returned to their homelands in order to share with their relatives and friends all of the amazing and wonderful things they had witnessed in Jerusalem. Maybe the Lord allowed them to remain in Jerusalem for a time so that they could acquire a firm foundation in the Word of God at the feet of the Apostles. However, in God's perfect time, -- quite possibly at the time of the great persecution which began with the martyrdom of Stephen in Acts chapter seven -- many of them were in fact forced to return to their original lands, thus carrying the seed of faith with them. This was clearly the Wisdom of God at work, as is plainly revealed by the following group of Bible verses:

"And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him."

Acts 8:1-2, KJV

"Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord."

Acts 11:19-21, KJV

This development which forced the new Disciples to return to their native lands was the far-reaching effect of the Lord's Apostles having spoken in foreign tongues in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. It is as plain as day. To reiterate this point, speaking in tongues served as an important evangelical tool to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ far beyond just the streets of Jerusalem. It changed the world forever, and that effect is still being felt today, two thousand years later!

As I stated at the beginning of this article, if we closely examine the Scriptures, we discover that there are actually two different types of tongues being described in the pages of the New Testament. While they are closely related, they are not exactly identical in nature. Furthermore, even the Apostle Paul mentions this distinction in his well-beloved love chapter -- 1 Corinthians 13 -- where he states the following:

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."

1 Corinthians 13:1, KJV

As you can obviously see, Paul mentions both the tongues of men, AND the tongues of Angels. Clearly, they are not the same exact thing. This second type of tongues appears to be a form of personal communication between our spirit and God which is for our own personal edification and inspiration. It occurs when we're in deep intimate prayer and fellowship

with our Heavenly Father. The Apostle Paul appears to be saying that there are certain times when our human words do not suffice. In such an instance, our spirit takes over and we speak in an unknown tongue. Thus Paul writes as follows:

"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."  
Romans 8:26-27, KJV

"For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful."  
1 Corinthians 14:14, KJV

So the previous verses clearly seem to be describing God's Holy Spirit within us making direct intercession to God for us by means of indecipherable tongues, or groanings, which our carnal minds do not understand. Notice that Paul writes "but my understanding is unfruitful." In short, we may not even know or understand what we are really saying, but the Lord obviously does, and that is all that matters. Exactly what are those groanings? That is a very good question, my friends, isn't it? Thayer's Greek English lexicon simply notes that the Koine Greek word which is used in the verse -- stenagmos -- means a groan or a sigh.

In contrast to everything I have just shared with you, what we see happening in some churches today -- as I mentioned to you earlier -- is absolute nonsensical gibberish. It is most certainly NOT Biblical speaking in tongues. Tragically, I've seen a few videos where church elders are supposedly trying to teach -- or even FORCE -- their congregants to supposedly speak in tongues. My friends, it is simply ridiculous! It is absolutely madness! The fact of the matter is that you CAN'T teach a person how to speak in tongues, anymore than you can teach a person how to be a prophet of God. Yet sadly, there are those churches which do that as well. All I can say is shame, shame, shame on you all!

For me personally, the bottom line is this: Either God gives a person a certain gift supernaturally for the furtherance of the Gospel of Christ, or else He does not. Such gifts are NOT something we can force to happen through human exertion, which is what I see occurring in some of those online videos.



To reiterate, either God bestows a gift, or else He doesn't. Let me also remind my readers that such spiritual gifts are NOT just to impress your friends, or to show how spiritual you are. They are NOT to get you on some kind of ridiculous pride trip, as some immature Christians seem to do. They are TOOLS to preach the Gospel of Salvation, EXACTLY as occurred on the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter two. Thus, if your gift is NOT accomplishing that purpose, then maybe you need to re-examine it and determine if it is truly of the Lord, or simply the invented product of men.

Lastly, let me also mention here that any person who falsely claims that an individual has not truly been filled with the Holy Spirit unless they can speak in tongues, is seriously deceived. To be clear, while the Apostle Paul wrote "I would that ye all spake with tongues", if we take the time to read the verses which surround that phrase, we quickly gain the FULL context of what he was actually saying. And exactly what was that? It is that Paul considered the gift of prophecy to be even MORE important than the gift of tongues. So why would the Apostle Paul adopt such a position? It's very evident in the following group of verses that it is because having the gift of prophecy edifies the whole Church, while the second type of speaking in tongues only edifies that particular individual, as we clearly see here:

"Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy. 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. But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort. He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church. I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying."  
1 Corinthians 14:1-5, KJV

In conclusion, these are my personal thoughts regarding this matter. This subject of speaking in tongues -- or at least supposedly speaking in tongues -- is very dear to my heart. I simply dislike all of the widespread deception that is now occurring in some of the modern churches. Some of you need to wake up and realize that within organized religion, each denomination coalesces or rallies around certain doctrines because it is what supposedly justifies their existence, and

gives their members meaning. For example, the Roman Catholic Church coalesces around Mary. The Baptists are adamant about the practice of water baptism. As for members of the Seventh Day Adventist church, they obviously use observance of the Sabbath as their rallying cry. And on and on it goes. But by so doing, these denominations actually fracture the body of Christ. Can you see it? It certainly isn't what we see being described in the following group of Bible verses:

"And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, THAT THEY MAY BE ONE, as we are . . . THAT THEY ALL MAY BE ONE; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be ONE IN US: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; THAT THEY MAY BE ONE, even as WE ARE ONE: I in them, and thou in me, THAT THEY MAY BE MADE PERFECT IN ONE; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me."  
John 17:11, 21-23, KJV

"And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be ONE FOLD, and ONE SHEPHERD."  
John 10:16, KJV

"That ye may with ONE MIND and ONE MOUTH glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."  
Romans 15:6, KJV

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all SPEAK THE SAME THING, and that there be NO DIVISIONS AMONG YOU; but that ye be perfectly joined together IN THE SAME MIND and IN THE SAME JUDGMENT."  
1 Corinthians 1:10, KJV

"Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of ONE MIND, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you."  
2 Corinthians 13:11, KJV

"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace . . . That we henceforth be no

more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

Ephesians 4:1-3, 14-16, KJV

"Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in ONE SPIRIT, with ONE MIND striving together for the faith of the gospel;"

Philippians 1:27, KJV

"Fulfil ye my joy, THAT YE BE LIKEMINDED, having the same love, being of ONE ACCORD, of ONE MIND."

Philippians 2:2, KJV

With these thoughts, I will bring this article to a close. It is my hope that you've found it informative and enlightening, and I pray that it has been a blessing in your life as well. If you have an account with Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr or with any other social network, I would really appreciate if you'd take the time to click or tap on the corresponding link that is found on this page. Thanks so much, and may God bless you abundantly!

For additional information and further study, you may want to refer to the list of reading resources below which were either mentioned in this article, or which contain topics which are related to this article. All of these articles are likewise located on the Bill's Bible Basics web server. To read these articles, simply click or tap on any link you see below.

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