

Message #38 of Scripture Beneath The Surface
“A Deeper Perspective of Tongues”

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Hello! Thanks for being with us. Today I'd like to talk about tongues. I mean the gift of the Holy Spirit that is specifically mentioned in 1 Corinthians, and of course in chapter 2 of the book of Acts. What I would like to do is to take a look at tongues from both a Pentecostal perspective as well as a non-Pentecostal perspective. I'm sure there are people listening to me who do not believe in speaking in tongues. I'm sure there are people listening also who do believe in speaking in tongues. But my point today is not to convince you to speak in tongues, but I thought that maybe I could try to explain the concept of this particular gift of the Holy Spirit from a perspective which both non-Pentecostal people could comprehend it, as well as some Pentecostal people who still don't understand it.

Just to let you know, I believe in speaking in tongues. However, after you hear my explanation of this gift of the Holy Spirit, you may see it from a different perspective. I know this is one of the many difficult areas for Christians from different denominations, and I've always thought that I would like to explain my own viewpoint of what tongues means for a Christian. I can tell you right up front that my views do not coincide with most of the Pentecostal doctrine. However, I thought that maybe you non-Pentecostal listeners might find it interesting to hear what a Pentecostal person thinks. I know sometimes people have many questions, but may never get the opportunity to talk to someone of a different denomination about certain subjects. One reason for

this is because they are afraid to offend or be offended. I don't want offend you, for my purpose is to just give you a perspective on this subject, hoping that it will satisfy your curiosity, or at least answer some of your questions.

I guess maybe the best place to start is with the concept that God is a spirit. We know that God, as referring to the Father, is not flesh and blood. He is a spirit being. We refer to him as God the Father, and to his spirit as the Holy Spirit. Of course, Jesus is the third part of the Godhead, and is the body of God. So Jesus was the outward manifestation, the outward showing, of God. Without Jesus, physical humans cannot see God. We can only see God in one of two ways, either physically or spiritually. Physically we see God by observing Christ's body. Christ's body is the church, and it demonstrates physically who God is. At least, it should do this. We also see God spiritually. We do this by the interaction with God through his Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the liaison between God and humans. It is God's Spirit that gives us understanding and direction. God is in heaven, and we are on the earth, yet God dwells within us and communicates with us by his Holy Spirit.

The Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit searches out the mind of God and reveals God's thoughts unto men. Yes, there are instances in the Bible where God spoke audibly to people, yet that is not the principal way that God speaks. God still wants to commune with us, even though he is spirit and we are flesh and blood. Of course he can give us his laws and Commandments as he did through Moses, and we have his written word, and this was partially effective for those of the Old Testament. But when Jesus ascended into heaven, he told us that he would not leave us comfortless, but would send the Holy Spirit of God to dwell with us. He promised us that in this form he would dwell with us, and the Father would dwell with us. We also know from scripture that those who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are also promised that they will receive the Holy Spirit. This doesn't mean that the Holy Spirit comes someday down the road, or when you speak in tongues, but it means that we receive the Holy Spirit when we receive Jesus Christ. This is an important point. Because Jesus is God, and the Holy Spirit is God also, it is actually impossible to receive Jesus Christ without receiving the Holy Spirit. You can't receive the one without receiving all three parts of the Godhead. God is one God. Although he is three persons, he is only three persons in one. To truly receive one person of God is to receive all three persons of God. They cannot be separated.

Now, let's read Acts 2:38. It says, "Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." It is through repentance and acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior that salvation comes. With salvation is the promise that the Holy Spirit will also come, and as I just stated prior to this, if the Holy Spirit does not come and indwell you immediately, then the Father and the Son are not indwelling you either. The only way the Father and Son indwell you is by the Holy Spirit.

Well, let's take a look at 1 Corinthians 12:28-31. It says, "And God has set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all

teachers? Are all workers of miracles? 30 Have all the gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? 31 But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet show I unto you a more excellent way.”

It is important that we realize that these verses are telling us that it is God who sets people in a positions of authority. God authorizes certain ones in the church to fulfill the needs of the church using different methods which are determined by the different needs. If God needs a prophet, he gives a person the ability to prophesy for him. That person is then able to operate in this gift. We know quite well that not many are prophets, and the Bible also tells us that not many should be teachers because of the high level of responsibility which accompanies that gift. Of course not everyone has the gift of working miracles either, and contrary to some opinion, neither can everyone operate in the gift of healing. But God, through his Holy Spirit, gives gifts to men, but only according as God desires it to be. To confirm this, let's read 1 Corinthians 12:11. It says, “But all these work that one and the same Spirit, dividing to every man individually as he wills.” You see, it is God who determines how to delegate his authority. Man is the receiver of that authority, but not the one who determines who gets it.

This is a major problem in Pentecostal circles. Many denominations which practice the gift of speaking in tongues have determined that tongues are an automatic gift. But although the Bible clearly encourages the gift of tongues, the Bible also clearly explains that not all people in the church speak in tongues, as we just read in 1 Corinthians 12:30. Personally, I would encourage people to allow God to use them in this gift if it is God's will do so, but even though the apostle Paul encouraged Christians in this gift, still, it is dangerous to insinuate that everyone can do this. Nowhere in scripture does it say that everyone in the church speaks in tongues. We must realize that when Paul asks the question, “do all speak with tongues?” he is indicating that the answer is, “no,” just as with all the other gifts. The gift of tongues is to be encouraged, but must be received only when God makes the determination to give it. It is the Holy Spirit that decides the issue, not man. The danger of suggesting that we can automatically take this gift for ourselves is that there is often an attempt to operate in the gift without allowing the Holy Spirit to determine when it is given and how it is used. The result is that a great misuse of tongues occurs, and Satan is given opportunity to masquerade with his own form of tongues.

Several times, and once very recently, I've had people come to me who were almost ready to give up trying to be Christian because they could not speak in tongues. They were assuming that if they could not speak in tongues, then God had rejected them. They had been told they should be able to speak in tongues, yet they could not. Although it is usually well meaning Christians who try to coerce others into speaking in tongues, still, it is destructive. And in addition, it even causes some people to fall into the trap of counterfeit tongues, tongues that are not really the gift from God but only a form of tongues, better known as babbling.

And this is something that many Christians are unaware of. Satan can masquerade as the spirit of God by those who do not discern the true spirit. Many times people are encouraged to speak in tongues, and are actually coerced into babbling. You see, when you are a new Christian, you

want to please God so much that you sometimes give in to direction from others which, although the direction comes from good intentions, it is not truly from God. For example, I have seen established Christians encouraging new baby Christians to start making unintelligible babbling sounds so they can be more open to allowing the Holy Spirit to take over. I have seen and heard of people actually taking hold of a new Christian's chin, and moving it up and down while telling the new Christian to make unintelligible sounds. Supposedly this is to take away their self-consciousness and their doubt, and in essence, give them a "leg up" into receiving the gift.

Now, please. If you are one of these people who do this in order to help a new Christian speak in tongues, please do this. Picture the disciples in the upper room in the book of Acts, and ask yourself this simple question. "Who was there in that upper room to wiggle the chins of the apostles for them?" Well, of course, there was no need for that to happen then, and it is not necessary to do it now. Believe me. God is the author of our faith and also the finisher of it. We cannot increase another person's faith by wiggling their chin. God can take care of the problem all by himself.

Now, here's another thought. Some people do not believe that a person can prophesy, interpret tongues, speak words of wisdom or knowledge until they first speak in tongues. Of course, if they stay within their own small circle of knowledge within their own denomination, they may not be aware that there are many who operate in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, but not specifically in the gift of tongues. I myself was one of these people who was given the gift of prophecy, and used the gift for approximately six months prior to receiving the gift of tongues. This has also happened to others, and there has been ample proof of it. However, tongues are generally the initial gift of the Spirit, and this is because tongues have no resulting action or statement which can be proven to be true or false. With the gift of tongues, no one else can prove you were or weren't led by God, and it is only you yourself who can determine whether or not you are actually being led of the Holy Spirit. This means that speaking in tongues is completely dependent on your faith, completely dependent on whether or not you believe this is from God. Because no man understands you when you speak in tongues, how can anyone prove that you aren't speaking in tongues. However, all the other gifts can be judged, because they produce results which can be evaluated. Tongues, themselves, do not produce statements or actions which can be evaluated.

Now, to speak in an unintelligible fashion is not something to be entered into lightly. There is much danger in either rejecting this, or in accepting it without the necessary faith. First of all, if you try to do this, or even actually start speaking in an unintelligible manner without it truly being the Holy Spirit who is moving you, then what spirit do you think is actually moving you? A person should be very careful, and I cannot stress the importance of this enough, that they only speak in tongues when they are confident that God is working in them through his Holy Spirit.

However, on the other hand, the danger to rejecting a gift of the Holy Spirit is that you are not allowing God to have his complete way with you. It is very important to be led of the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:14 tells us that those who are led of the Spirit are the sons of God. 1 Thessalonians 5:19 tells us that we are not to quench God's Holy Spirit.

Now, there are those in some denominations which stress the point that the speaking in tongues is the complete filling of the Holy Spirit. However, it is important to realize that there is no end to what the Holy Spirit of God is able to do in man. In this sense, we can never be filled up with the Spirit. However, there is still the concept of being filled with the Spirit until such time that you bubble over and no longer keep what is happening inside of you. This is a more accurate concept of the filling of the Spirit. Speaking in tongues is a filling up in the same sense that a glass of water is filled up at the point to which it overflows. But the overflowing of the Spirit can also occur in other forms, not just with tongues. Bubbling over with the Spirit does not have to be in a foreign language or the tongues of angels.

The value of tongues is great. It not only allows you to pray to God directly through the Holy Spirit rather than in your own language, but it also is a step into the area of being led of the Holy Spirit instead of being led by your own mental logic. Speaking in tongues is a pure example of being led of the Holy Spirit, and only by the Holy Spirit. Christians should realize the value of allowing God to direct our paths, not just by logic, but by faith which surpasses logic.

Of course, most people would scream at this, and say that it is dangerous because who knows what spirit is really leading you. But refusing to be led of the Holy Spirit unless it makes logical sense to you would be like telling Elijah that he didn't really have to go to King Ahab to arrange for a showdown on Mount Carmel because it didn't make logical sense. To be a Christian is not to be one logically, for Christianity doesn't make much logical sense. God is a spirit, and wants his people to worship him in both truth and spirit. Christians may not need to speak in tongues, but Christians certainly do need to allow the Holy Spirit move them by faith, and not just by logic. However, I'm not suggesting that Christians should act stupidly. But then, God doesn't ask his children to act like idiots. He won't ask us to do things which make God look silly. But the stories of the Bible are plentiful which tell of people who followed God and shunned the common sense of the matter. It would be advantageous for Christians to consider 2 Timothy 3:5 which tells us not to have a form of religion and deny the power of God.

Now, think of this. If the person who is seeking to be led of the Holy Spirit does not have sufficient faith to speak in tongues, but is pushed into babbling by other well meaning Christians, will it be the Holy Spirit that is moving him? You see, the power of God does not come through our own abilities, but only by faith. However, it is plain to see that whenever faith is lacking, Satan is working strongly.

Acting out in an irrational emotional demonstration is not what God intends his people to do. What he intends his people to do is to follow the leading of his Holy Spirit, and that is by listening to that still small voice within you. The still small voice is the Holy Spirit moving you to speak or act in a certain manner. You can resist that still small voice, or you can allow it to direct you.

Many Christians, even those who claim to be Pentecostal, trust more in the logical expression of their religion than in being led by the Holy Spirit. Many Christians are more legalistic than they

are followers of faith. But without faith it is impossible to please God. And without allowing the Holy Spirit to move you, you end up quenching that still small voice.

Speaking in tongues is certainly a valid gift of the Holy Spirit if it truly comes from God, but because so much focus is put on this gift, many Christians have developed a fear of it. And because of their fear, they also shrink from hearing the still small voice of God at all. I might suggest that if Christians would just focus their attention on letting the Holy Spirit lead them instead of focusing so earnestly on tongues, then certainly God would have no trouble in giving the gift of tongues to them if he so desires. But if too much emphasis is placed on tongues, then God's will is circumvented. In addition, when too much emphasis is placed on this gift, there are times when baby Christians are almost forced to speak in tongues. This gives Satan opportunity to cause confusion as well as allowing him to counterfeit the actual gift of tongues itself.

And make no mistake that Satan can counterfeit tongues. Certainly it happens in the church, but I even once witnessed a movie actor speak in tongues. He did it in a secular movie, and in no way could it be considered Godly. Yet, when hearing it, it sounded no different than hearing tongues in church. At another time I witnessed a non-Christian girl speaking in tongues on a school bus. And she definitely was not suggesting that it was Godly or Christian, but said it was fun to do it. She thought it was cool because it sounded like she was talking in a foreign language. So, if you think unintelligible language is always from the Holy Spirit, think again. The bottom line is that if you push too hard to speak in tongues, or are pushed by other well meaning Christians, you may not be getting the real gift at all.

So, are you truly being led by the Holy Spirit? Is God able to move you to act and speak as he wants to? Actually, only you and God can answer that question. However, don't let Satan keep you from getting all you can get from God, or, from giving all you can give to God. Whether or not you speak in tongues is not the issue. The issue is whether or not you are being led by the Spirit of God. Remember what it says in Romans 8:14. "As many as are led by the Spirit, they are the sons of God." If you truly want to be considered a child of God, you will have to allow God to move you and guide you according to his will. And think of this. If the gift of tongues really is God's will for you, all you really have to do is allow him to have his way with you. And if it's not God's will that you speak in tongues, then it won't happen. Remember, the preachers cannot always be trusted, but you can always trust God.