

THE FACT OF TONGUES

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"Whom shall He teach knowledge? and whom shall He make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little: For with stammering lips and another tongue will He speak to this people. To whom He said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear" - Isaiah 28:9-12.

There are many voices in the world today, crying for this and that, in many different languages. There are many tongues in the world, but we are going to talk about spiritual tongues. There is much talk pro and con about the experience of charisma, as it is called, or the gift of speaking in tongues. This gives rise to two questions. First: Why speak in tongues? Second: What purpose does it serve, or what value is it to speak in tongues? So we feel led by the Spirit of God to answer these questions; not necessarily from our reservoir of knowledge and experience, but from the Bible which is God's divine record for humanity and from which we receive the experience of tongues.

The first point in answering the first question - "Why speak in tongues?" - is this: It is God's ordained way. It was prophesied by Isaiah - the most beloved, the most well-known, the most expressive prophet of the Old Testament. He is called, "The prophet that is beloved" - the one that gave out the golden prophecy; and he is quoted more times in the New Testament than any other except Moses. He is a well-respected man; and God said through him that He (God) would speak to His people with stammering lips and other tongues. Now there are some commentators in Christendom who reject this experience of tongues that say, "Well, He meant that the nation of Assyria that spoke another language was going to come in and take Israel captive and lead them away, and they would be speaking a foreign tongue to them." But how does that answer the next verse which says, "This is the REST wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the REFRESHING"? It is not refreshing to be a captive. No. It is refreshing to be free. There is only one way to be free, and that is to be in Christ Jesus. We say these people have not answered that question. Why not just simply believe the Word of God? Paul the Apostle, who is the teacher for the Church for this age, quotes that very same verse in the fourteenth chapter of First Corinthians in his symposium on tongues. "In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear Me, saith the Lord" - 14:21. Christendom has always presumed to speak for God instead of letting God speak. God speaks through people - that is the way He has ordained it. That is the way He does it, and that is the way He is going to continue to do it. He is not going to change His plan. He is going to see it through. His plan is that men would speak in tongues. It has always been God's purpose for people in the Church to speak in another language. First, because we have the witness from Isaiah. He prophesied it, and Paul confirmed it. Now this man Paul wrote over half of the New Testament; and if we cannot take his word on that, then how can we take his word on anything. Paul corresponds to Isaiah of the Old Testament. He is the most well-known prophet of the New Testament next to Christ. He confirms what the most well-known prophet of the Old Testament said. He quoted this very verse to show that we were to

speak in heavenly, spiritual, God-given languages, inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Now, if that is not enough witness, let us consider the infallible witness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us read from the sixteenth chapter of the book of Mark - "And these signs shall follow them that believe ... they shall speak with new tongues." These are Jesus' last words to His disciples. You know, we reverence the last words of our friends and our loved ones. Jesus was the well-beloved Son of God, to His Father and to His disciples. He said, "These signs shall follow them that believe" - not those that do not believe. Some may say, "Well, we have never had this experience in our churches, and we do not feel that it is necessary." That is because they do not believe. The signs are to follow the believers. Here is one secret about everyone of those signs. There are five things there, and everyone of them borders on the supernatural if it is not literally supernatural. We are shut up to God to believe His Word. No one in the natural can cast out demons. It surprised the disciples when the Lord gave them that authority. They were surprised that the demons were subject to them, because they did not know that it was possible. But Jesus gave them that authority. He said, "Ye shall receive power (authority), after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you" - Acts 1:8. Even before, they had authority, but especially afterward.

"They shall speak with new tongues." That does not mean that people would not understand the languages; but it means that they were new in the sense that they were of the new creation. A new life they received from the Lord Jesus Christ - a new hope, a new destiny, a new Father, a new Friend, a new language. Everything is new in Christ. Nothing ever grows old in Christ.

So we have the witness of the greatest prophet of the Old Testament. We have the witness of the greatest Church prophet of the New Testament. We have the witness of the Son of God Himself. That should be sufficient for anyone who believes the Bible and wants more truth. If you want added truth, if your heart is reaching out for something new from God, you have already said, "I believe that"; and your heart is beating with anticipation now of the experience of speaking in a new language. Isn't that wonderful! That is the faith that God gives. Faith counts those things that be not, as though they were; and momentarily they become so in our lives and in our experience. There was a man named Balaam one time that rode an ass that spoke a language. If the ass had said these words, we might not believe them. But, when Jesus says them, we believe Him.

The second point is: The mouth is the means of communication. Let us read from the third chapter of the book of James. Notice where we are getting our references - out of the Bible. You do not have to believe anything anyone says, unless it comes from the Bible. This is God's Word. There are plenty of voices in the world today that deny the Bible, but God's Word is true. Notice verse three - "Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body."

What we want to emphasize is that the tongue affects the whole body. That is one reason the Lord wants us to speak in tongues, because it affects our whole body. Our body enjoys that; it reaps the benefits from speaking in another language. Maybe you have never given that any thought before, but it is so. We are sure people who have spoken in tongues will testify to that. God wants us to be happy. He wants us to benefit from spiritual things. He

has redeemed us - spirit, soul, and body. He wants every part of our being to partake of this wonderful spiritual thing He has brought to pass through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ; and it is wonderful.

Notice James 3:8 - "But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." The tongue is the most unruly member of our being. We may yield our spirit to the Lord, and we may yield our soul to the Lord; but there are many, many thousands of Christians the world over who have yet to yield their tongue in full surrender to the Lord. Now Jesus Christ in Luke 6:45 says, "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh." In the natural, our tongue is connected to our throat; but, in the spiritual, our tongue is connected to our heart. What we think in our heart, eventually comes out of our mouth. When our heart has really, completely, absolutely been surrendered, then we will speak in another language. That is God' s order, and that is God' s way, and that is our experience. If we really are following God with all our heart, we will yield our tongue to the Lord. Isn' t that wonderful! Yes, it is full of wonder.

The third point is: It is one of the nine official gifts given to the Church. "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal"- I Cor. 12:7. We are not speaking about gifts, as much as we are the languages - tongues themselves - not as a gift but as an experience. Now there are nine things mentioned, which we call "the gifts of the Spirit," by which we are enabled to glorify our blessed Savior. In some meetings they dispense with the healing, in some places they leave out the tongues, and in others the inter- pretation of tongues; and they do not have them in operation in their churches. Now we would like to know - if we can take out two or three of those gifts, why not take them all out? What hinders us from taking them all out? If we have authority to take out one, then what good are the others? By the way, who is man that he can take away one of these gifts of the Spirit, when God says they are for us? They are not man' s gifts to give or take away - they are the gifts of the Spirit. One of them is speaking in tongues, and then there is the interpretation of these languages. They are given that ALL may profit - not just some. God wants ALL Christians to profit from every one of these gifts. Wherever there is a well-ordered Christian Assembly anywhere in this world, all these nine gifts should be in operation. They will be, if we believe God to the uttermost. Now that answers the question, "Why speak in tongues?" It is God' s ordained way, it is a means of communication; and it is one of the official gifts given to the Church by the Holy Spirit.

Now let us answer the other question: "What value do they have, what purpose do they serve?" In the great fourteenth chapter of First Corinthians, speaking in tongues is regulated. Some churches seem to be afraid of it; but let us go into "tongues-land" and see what it is like there. Notice verse two - "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." The same thing is found in verse twenty-eight - "Let him speak to himself, and to God." That proves that there is nothing wrong with speaking in tongues, because we speak to God. We would that more men and women were on speaking terms with God in this way. Some people never speak to God. God understands all languages, so we do not need to be afraid that God is going to have to get an interpreter. He knows what we are saying - He puts those things in our hearts. He puts those tongues in our

mouths, if we let Him.

We have three points to consider: The first point in answering this second question is: It edifies the speaker - "He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself" - I Cor. 14:4. Now who does not like to be edified? That is decent and in order. As we said, what we speak in the natural affects our whole body. What we speak in the spiritual also affects our body. It makes us feel good. When we are praying, we know how the devil comes in with many thoughts, and tries to disrupt our prayer; and we wish the top of our head could come off so he could not get into our mind. Well, when we are speaking in tongues as we pray, the devil cannot butt in. He does not understand those languages. How do you like that? Only God understands those languages, unless someone interprets them. That is right. Did you ever stop to think about that? The devil does not understand those languages; and, therefore, he does not know what we are saying and he cannot enter into our conversation. Oh, he understands the tongues of men, but not of angels - I Cor. 13:1. So let us speak in tongues more, when we pray.

"For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth" - I Cor. 14:14. Now, who would be against prayer? Is any Christian against prayer? Well, you can pray in a tongue, too. What is wrong with speaking in a tongue, if you can pray in a tongue? Sometimes we come to the end of our language, and do not know how to express ourselves. I have many times come to a place that I did not know what to say to God. I remember what David said as he was overwhelmed with the goodness of God, and he came into the temple and said, "Who am I, and what can I say, that You have blessed such a man as I?" - II Samuel 7:18-29. Sometimes we feel that way, and we have to speak in a tongue in worshiping the Lord; especially when we realize how nothing we are, and how great God is. That brings us to the end of our language. He has to enable us to speak in another language to express ourselves in worship and adoration of Him. What is wrong with that? That is in order, is it not? Paul says so. Now you believe what Paul says, do you not? He is a follower of Christ. He says, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" - I Cor. 11:1. Three times he says that. It refers to each part of our being - our spirit and our soul and our body. Follow me, as I follow Christ.

In verse fifteen he says, "I will sing with the spirit." So we can sing with the Spirit, too. You never sing off key, when you sing in the Spirit. We have known different ones that have sung in the Spirit oftentimes. Maybe we ought to sing more often in the Spirit. We knew a woman who was on a bed of affliction and she could not get out to meeting, so we took the meeting to her. As we were there worshiping and praising the Lord, she began to sing in the Spirit. She normally could not carry a tune, but she sang so beautifully. God was there in His people. God was manifesting Himself. So we speak to God, and we pray and sing, and we are edified by speaking in another language.

The second point is: It is a sign to unbelievers. This is a day when people believe in signs. There are signboards all along the highways. There are signs to direct us where to go, and signs directing us where not to go; signs to tell us what to do, and what not to do; signs telling us what to buy, and what not to buy - what a certain product will do for us, how much Brand X is not as good as this one. This is a day of signs. Well, God is a believer in signs. He has lifted up a sign for men to see, and it is the sign of speaking in tongues. It is a sign to the unbeliever, that God is among us. When we speak in tongues, they say, "Oh,

something is different here." Some people are frightened and go away; but, when people are searching for the things of the Lord, they say, "God is here." It is also a sign to the unbelieving believers. Sometimes believers are not believing God as they should, and it is a sign that there is more for them. So we enter, to coin a new word, into "tongues-land"; and it is a new experience. Everything is new. It is like a new birth of language.

Then the third and last point - and we believe this is the most important of all - is the one the devil hates most of all: Speaking in tongues is a proof of Christ' s resurrection. Christians did not speak in tongues until after Jesus was raised from the dead. Jesus said in John 16:7 - "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you." Now, notice Acts 2:1-4 - "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from Heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and BEGAN (and we continue) to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit (the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, the One that Jesus promised) gave them utterance." This was in direct answer of the Father to the prayer of His Son, that He would send the Holy Spirit upon them. Also, notice verses thirty-two and thirty-three - Peter on that day of Pentecost said, "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now SEE and HEAR" (because Jesus had been raised from the dead). Every time we speak in tongues, it glorifies Jesus Christ. Tongues is a resurrection language. It says in the face of the devil and in the face of all his followers, that Christ is his eternal Conqueror and that he is defeated and that we are resting in the Lord. Next to the Cross, the devil hates this experience most of all because it proves that Christ has defeated him forever. They say, in some circles, that God is dead. Every time we speak in tongues, we prove that God is not dead. We prove that Christ is alive. We saw a sign one time that said, "My God is alive; sorry about yours." We subscribe to this heartily.

Jesus is at the right hand of God, interceding for you and me. He is praying for you right now, that you will be filled with the Holy Spirit. If you have a need, no matter what it is, He will meet it. Have you been saved? You can accept the Lord Jesus Christ right now. If you have not experienced speaking in tongues, He will fill you with the Holy Spirit right now. That is the sign that the Holy Spirit has come. Tongues are not the Spirit; but, when you are filled, you will receive a language. That is the Bible record. If you want a refreshment, God will supply that also. If you need a deliverance in your life, God will give it to you. If you need a rededication in your life, God will give it to you. If you need a revelation about the Bible, God will give that to you. He will not withhold anything from one who comes with an open heart, and in his own tongue worships God. Then that one will speak heavenly languages.