Overview Of The Gift Of Tongues

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Introduction

The Bible Gift Of Tongues Is Different From Many Denominational Teaching And Practice Of Tongues

The next day when I was in my room praying, I could tell that a heavenly language was bubbling up inside me. I opened my mouth and the words spilled out. Ilia skiridan tola do skantama. Or something like that. I had no clue what I was saying. It sounded like gibberish. Yet when I

prayed in tongues I felt close to God. (J. Lee Grady, The Holy Spirit Is Not for Sale (Grand Rapids: Chosen Books, 2010), 184.).

"“You never know what a tongue is going to sound like. I had an acquaintance who sounded like ‘rub-a- dubdub’ when he spoke in tongues, but he got a great blessing out of doing it.” (Dennis Bennett, How to Pray for the Release of the Holy Spirit (Alachua, FL: Bridge- Logos, 2008), 106.)

Pentecost

Acts 2:4-11-And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to

speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. 5 And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. 6 And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. 7 Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? 8 And how *is it that* we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? 9 Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from

Rome, both Jews and proselytes,
11 Cretans and Arabs—we hear them
speaking in our own tongues the
wonderful works of God."[1]

Corinth

1 Corinthians 12:29-30-Are all
apostles? Are all prophets? Are all
teachers? Are all workers of miracles?
-Do all have gifts of healings? Do all
speak with tongues? Do all interpret?
31. But earnestly desire the best gifts.
And yet I show you a more excellent
way. [2]

1 Corinthians 12:29-30 (NLT)-Are we
all apostles? Are we all prophets? Are
we all teachers? Do we all have the

power to do miracles? **30** Do we all have the gift of healing? Do we all have the ability to speak in unknown languages? Do we all have the ability to interpret unknown languages? Of course not! **31** So you should earnestly desire the most helpful gifts. But now let me show you a way of life that is best of all.

1 Corinthians 14:23, 28, 32, 33, 40- Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in *those who are* uninformed or unbelievers,[3] will they not say that you are out of your mind?...But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself

and to God....And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.For God is not *the author* of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.[4] [5]

1 Corinthians 13:8-13-Love never fails. But whether *there are* prophecies, they will fail; whether *there are* tongues, they will cease; whether *there is* knowledge, it will vanish away. **9** For we know in part and we prophesy in part. **10** But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.[6] **11** When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish

things. 12 For now we see in a mirror, dimly,[7] but then face to face.[8] Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.
13 And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these *is* love.

Rome?

Romans 8:26-Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself[9] makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.[10]

Romans 8:26 (BBE)-And in the same way the Spirit is a help to our feeble

hearts: for we are not able to make prayer to God in the right way; but the Spirit puts our desires into words which are not in our power to say;

Romans 8:26 (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.

Romans 8:26 (ERV)-Also, the Spirit helps us. We are very weak, but the Spirit helps us with our weakness. We don't know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit himself speaks to God for us. He begs God for us, speaking

to him with feelings too deep for words.

Romans 8:26 (Amplified)-So too the [*Holy*] Spirit comes to our aid *and* bears us up in our weakness; for we do not know what prayer to offer *nor* how to offer it worthily as we ought, but the Spirit Himself goes to meet our supplication *and* pleads in our behalf with unspeakable yearnings *and* groanings too deep for utterance.

[1] "Tongue The Greek word here is the same as what is found in verse 6—dialectos, the common Greek word for “language.” So it definitely should be translated “language” here. In the Greek we have glōssais, “tongues,” in verses 4 and 11, and dialectō, “language,” in verses 6 and 8. This proves conclusively that the speaking in tongues (v. 4) was not ecstatic utterance but speaking in known, intelligent languages of that day (see v. 11)." (Ralph Earl, *Word Meanings In The New Testament,* 4107 (Kindle Edition); Kansas City, Kansas; Beacon Hill Press).

[2] A list of rhetorical questions strongly asserts the one fact that not everyone has the same gift. Not all do the same things in the community. The questions begin with the word “not” (μή), which requires a negative response. This Greek is best translated with an affirmative question, since in English it is this that requires a negative response. In order to keep the Greek negative form, the questions would have to be phrased like this: “All are not apostles, are they?” As we have noted on a number of occasions, rhetorical questions like this are not functioning properly as real questions but as definite statements. The fact is that no one does all these things because no one is given all the necessary gifts by the Spirit. (Paul Gardner, Exegetical Commentary On The New Testament: 1 Corinthians, 550 (Kindle Edition); Grand Rapids, Michigan; Zondervan)

[3]. One sees the man’s body forcibly shaking in spasms, with the hands trembling, the voice quivering in such staccato mumblings as: Je- Je- Je- Jee- sus . . . Jeee- sus . . . Je- Je- Je- Jee- sus . . . aassh . . . aassh . . . ah . . . aassh Jee- sus. Then follows some stuttering tongues- speaking: shlabababababa— Jah- Jeey- balika— a syndrome which an American psychologist Peter Brent calls “a born- again fixation,” and an observer brands as “a Pentecostal anthem.” Only recently a reverend minister of an orthodox church queried, “If the possessed voodoo priest says: ‘shiri- bo- bo- bo- boh’ in a staccato stammer over his black whisk he holds, and the possessed born- again Christian rattles: ‘shlaba- ba- bah- shlabalika’ over his Bible, what can be the difference?” (Apostle Kwamena Ahinful, “Modern- Day Pentecostalism: Some Funny Oddities Which Must Be Stopped,” Modern Ghana , September 3, 2011, http://www.modernghana.com/newsthread1/348777/1/153509; ellipses in original)

[4] Tongues of a sort have been manifested in pagan cults which existed before Christ came to earth, and in others which have not been influenced by Christianity. Virgil (70-19 B.C.) tells of one who inquired of the Priestess of Phoebus, at the cavern of the oracle of Sibyl.' 'They had gained the threshold, when the maid exclaims: Tis time to ask the oracles; lo! The god, the god! Before the doors thus speaking, suddenly nor countenance, nor hue, nor braided locks Stayed in one fashion; but her bosom heaves, her heart swells wild with frenzy; and more vast she seems, nor mortal rings her voice, when now touched by the nearer breath of deity. He made an end of speaking. But the seer, not yet patient of Phoebus, I the cavern storms Immeasurably, if haply from her breast she make shake off the mighty God; but he so much the rather plies her raving mouth, tames her wild heart, and moulds her to his might. In such words from the shrine doth Cumae's Sibyl chant her awful riddles, and echo through the cave, in darkness shrouding truth; so shakes the reins Apollo in her raving mouth, and plies deep in her breast the goad. Soon as had ebbed her frenzy, and the frantic lips were still.' 'Oracular possession of the kind above described is also common among savages and people of lower culture; and Dr. Tylor, in his *Primitive Culture,* ii. 14 gives examples of ecstatic utterance interpreted by the sane. Thus in the Sandwich Islands the god Oro gave his oracles through a priest who 'ceased to act or speak as a voluntary agent, but with his limbs convulsed, his features distorted and terrific, his eyes wild and strained, he would roll on the ground foaming at the mouth, and reveal the will of the God in shrill cries sounds violent and in distinct, which the attending priests duly interpreted to the people' (Encyclopedia Britannica). L.C. May wrote: 'As a rule, speaking-in-tongues and kindred phenomena are confined to those areas where there is spirit possession and where inspirational shamans hold forth. Glossolalia can be and often is the result of spirit-induced ecstasy making it possible for the inspirational shaman to cure, exorcise, and prophesy...speaking-in-tongues is widespread and very ancient. Indeed, it is probable that as long as man has had divination, curing sorcery, and propitiation of spirits, he has had glossolalia.' (As quoted by Pattinson, 74). These were manifestations of what these people called 'spirit-possession,' and these spirits which possessed them were not viewed as the Holy Spirit, for of the Holy Spirit they either knew nothing; or if they had heard anything about the Spirit they had not accepted Him. Concerning the Shango cult in Trinidad, George J. Jennings pointed out that 'The induction of possession is at religious feasts or sacrifices where the combination of crowd excitement, singing, darkness, candles, circular rhythmic dancing, and other ceremonial phases are intensified by incessant drumming. The expected and common result is possession by the spirit or 'Powers' with a dramatic physical transformation including body vibrations, rhythmic bending of the body forward and backward, dilation of the eyes, and a fixed stare...The spirit then speaks through the he possessed individual in a mixture of genuine language and nonsense syllables-in short, a form of glossolalia.' (10). This certainly reminds one of some of the meetings in which people get the gift of 'tongues.' There are others, of course, that are not so visible in their display of emotional involvement, but even in these cases we find the testimonies, prayers, and the repetition of certain words such as the name of Jesus. Other examples of tongues in pagan religion can be found in the worship of Amon around 1100 B.C., the writings of Plato who died around 347, Pythoness of Delphi, in some of the mystery religions, in Islam, and among Eskimos in Greenland. (Gromacki, 6-9). (Dr. James D. Bales, *Pat Boone And The Gift Of Tongues,* 61-63 (Searcy, Arkansas).

[5] While living with the Native Americans in New Mexico, I witnessed a similar ritual several times. The Indians would eat the hallucinogenic peyote, then sit in a circle and chant and pound drums for hours. Before long, several were spasmodically muttering as they experienced their tormenting visions. Today the charismatic churches are by far the most popular among the Native Americans because it is such an easy and natural transition from their old religions. Among many heathen African tribes, in order to invoke the blessing of their gods, the people would sacrifice a chicken or goat and then dance around a fire for long hours, chanting songs to the hypnotic rhythm of a pounding drum. Eventually some of the people would become possessed by their gods and begin speaking the eerie languages of the spirit world. Then the local witch doctor or priest would translate the messages. This ritual is still practiced today among the Voodoo Catholics in the West Indies. This pagan practice first found its way into the North American Christian churches in the early 1800s. Many of the African slaves who were brought to America and forced to accept Christianity were unable to read the Bible for themselves. Even though they came from a variety of tribes in Africa, one practice most tribes held in common was the "Spirit Dances" with the "spirit-possessed" person muttering. The slaves mistakenly associated this with the Christian "gift of tongues" and began to incorporate a modified version into their meetings. These frantic services, which were accompanied by heavy rhythmic music, began to spread at first only in the South and the participants were mocked by the mainline denominations as "Holy Rollers." Some even went so far as to grab venomous serpents during their possessed trances as a means of proving that they had the "spirit."...The national expansion of the Pentecostal movement among Caucasians began in Los Angeles at the Apostolic Faith Gospel Mission on Azusa Street in 1906. The leader was a black former holiness preacher named William Seymour. From there, leaders continued to refine the doctrines and make them more attractive and palatable to other mainline Christians. (Doug Batchelor, *Understanding Tongues,* 248-279 (Kindle Edition); Roseville, CA; Amazing Facts, Inc.).

[6]Chrysostom-"[Commenting on 1 Corinthians 12:] “This whole place is very obscure: but the obscurity is produced by our ignorance of the facts referred to and by their cessation, being such as then used to occur but now no longer take place.” (John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians , 36.7)

Chrysostom (Commenting On 2 Thessalonians 2:7)-"One may naturally inquire what is that which restrains the man of lawlessness, and in addition, why Paul expresses it so obscurely. What then is it that holds back, that is, that hinders the revealing of, the Antichrist? Some indeed say, the grace of the Spirit, but others the Roman Empire. I agree with the latter position. Why? Because if Paul meant to say the Spirit, he would not have spoken obscurely but plainly, that even now the grace of the Spirit, that is the gifts, hold back the Antichrist. If not, he should have come by now, if his coming was to occur with the cessation of the gifts of the Spirit; for they have long since ceased....(Homilies on 2 Thessalonians 4. [NPNF 1 13:388-89*.])

Theodoret of Cyril-"In former times those who accepted the divine preaching and who were baptized for their salvation were given visible signs of the grace of the Holy Spirit at work in them. Some spoke in tongues which they did not know and which nobody had taught them, while others performed miracles or prophesied. The Corinthians also did these things, but they did not use the gifts as they should have done. They were more interested in showing off than in using them for the edification of the church." (Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians 240. [PG 82:319])

Augustine-"“In the earliest times, the Holy Spirit fell upon them that believe and they spoke with tongues, which they had not learned, as the Spirit gave them utterance. These were signs adapted to the time. For there was this betokening of the Holy Spirit in all tongues to show that the gospel of God was to run through all tongues over the whole earth. That thing was done for a sign, and it passed away.” (Augustine, Homilies on the First Epistle of John , 6.10. Cited from Philip Schaff, Nicene and Post- Nicene Fathers , 1st series (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2012), 7:497–98)

[7] Numbers 12:8-I speak with him face to face, Even plainly, and not in dark sayings (*en ainigmati);* And he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid To speak against My servant Moses?"

The key to this understanding is the Greek phrase en ainigmati, translated "dimly." Literally it means "in a riddle."…When we follow the trail of the word ainigma, it leads us to the Greek Septuagint translation of the Old Testament (the LXX), in Numbers 12: 8. Here Yahweh is explaining to Aaron and Miriam the difference between the way He usually spoke to Moses, in contrast with the way He spoke to most prophets….The phrase "mouth to mouth" is equivalent to "face to face" in 1 Corinthians 13: 12; and "in riddles" is the same as "dimly" in 13: 12. What we see here is that the apostle Paul is using the language of Numbers 12: 8 to contrast the partial and the complete in 1 Corinthians 13. And the contrast in both cases is between two kinds of revelation: the less clear, and the more clear. It has nothing to do with an alleged heavenly form of speaking as distinct from a this-age revelation…Also, 2 Corinthians 4: 6 refers to seeing the face of Christ in the gospel. The comparison with 1 Corinthians 13: 12 is obvious. The piece-meal revelations (tongues, prophecy) are to the completed New Testament what the Old Testament is to the New Testament. Here is an extended paraphrase of the first part of 1 Corinthians 13: 12–"For now, while we depend on occasional revelations through prophecy or interpreted tongues, it is like trying to see yourself in a scratched and cloudy mirror. But then, when the completed New Testament has been given, it will be like seeing a sharp, clear image of yourself in a bright new mirror. (Jack Cottrell, Spirits: Holy and Unholy (The Collected Writings), 2241-2294 (Kindle Edition); Mason, OH; The Christian Restoration Association)

[8] Exodus 33:11-So the LORD spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. And he would return to the camp, but his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tabernacle.

Numbers 12:8-I speak with him face to face, Even plainly, and not in dark sayings, And he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid To speak against My servant Moses?

Deuteronomy 5:4-The LORD talked with you face to face on the mountain from the midst of the fire.

Deuteronomy 34:10-But since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face,

[9] If Paul had meant to identify the groanings as believers', we would perhaps have expected a ἡμῶν ("ours") after the phrase to make this clear; without it, we are led to expect that the groanings are to be attributed to the one who is interceding—the Spirit. To be sure, Paul could identify the groans as the Spirit's and still view them as coming to expression through the believer—for the divine/human interplay in such matters escapes logical precision (Leenhardt); but v. 27 makes even this degree of involvement of the Christian difficult. For in this continuation of the thought of v. 26, all attention is focused on the Spirit; it is his "mind" that God understands and responds to, and it is he who intercedes "on our behalf" (see esp. Niederwimmer, "Das Gebet des Geistes," pp. 263–64; Hendriksen). (Douglas Moo, The Epistle To The Romans, (940, footnote 95 (Kindle Edition); Grand Rapids, Michigan; William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company)

[10]. "Some have suggested that Paul is referring to believers' prayers in tongues inspired by the Spirit, 377 but this seems unlikely because: (i) the apostle is speaking of the Spirit's intercession for us, 378 not his inspiration of prayer in tongues by us; (ii) Paul says that the Spirit's intercession is 'through wordless groans' (lit. 'unspoken groans'), 379 which suggests that the intercession is silent and not oral as is speaking in tongues. 380". (Colin G. Kruse, Paul's Letter to the Romans (The Pillar New Testament Commentary (PNTC), 352 (Kindle Edition): Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company)