

~ACTS~

Lesson 6- The Gift of Speaking in Tongues

We are continuing our study through the book of Acts, and we are in chapter 2 picking up where we left off last week in verse 4 with the disciples being filled with the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues. Today we are going to study verses 4-13, but I want to focus our attention on first on verses 3 and 4 and the filling of the Holy Spirit. The disciples are in the upper room, all 120 of them, and they are eagerly waiting and expecting the Spirit of God. And finally on the Day of Pentecost, He was poured out on them. Let's read verse 3 into verse 4 again...

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| <p>3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them.</p> <p>4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.</p> | <p>³ καὶ ὤφθησαν αὐτοῖς διαμεριζόμεναι γλῶσσαι ὡσεὶ πυρός, ἐκάθισέ τε ἐφ' ἓνα ἕκαστον αὐτῶν.</p> <p>⁴ καὶ ἐπλήσθησαν ἅπαντες Πνεύματος Ἁγίου, καὶ ἤρξαντο λαλεῖν ἑτέραις γλώσσαις, καθὼς τὸ Πνεῦμα ἐδίδου αὐτοῖς ἀποφθέγεσθαι.</p> |
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Each one in the upper room was personally filled with the Holy Spirit and with the fire of God, and the result is they **began to speak with other tongues**, but notice, not as they willed, but **as the Spirit gave them utterance**. That is a crucial key to the Spiritual gifts. It is always as He wills. In Acts 2:3 Luke says there were “divided tongues.” This word “divided” is the word, *διαμερίζω*, meaning “to thoroughly divide into portions and distribute.” That’s a much clearer understanding of what these divided tongues are. They were a sign showing that the Holy Spirit is distributing a portion of the Spiritual gift to each individual as He wills. And on the Day of Pentecost, they were filled with the Spirit, and the gift of tongues was manifested, as He gave them utterance. To give you a quick overview of how Spiritual gifts are distributed, let’s turn to **1 Corinthians 12:4-7**. There are nine Spiritual gifts, and it is the Triune God who works all in all and manifests these gifts in each individual as He wills for the purpose that the body of Christ might be profitable in its mission to bear witness of Jesus Christ.

Let’s continue reading verses **8-11**. That is the list of the nine gifts of the Spirit, and it is the same Spirit who works all these gifts and distributes them individually to each one as He wills. Does this distribution sound familiar? This is exactly what is being described in Acts 2:3 with the divided tongues. The Spirit is distributing the gifts as He wills to each one individually. This phrase “as He wills” in 1 Corinthians 12:11 is the word, *βούλομαι*. This is much more than just a desire, that would be the word *thelema*, *θέλημα*. *Βούλομαι* is described as a decision or desire based on a deliberate purpose and design. As in a leader who has laid out a plan and he has a desire that it be executed as He intends. It is also described as the royal will, as in the sense of a King setting forth His plan, and He is making known His will for how He wants His kingdom ran. The King sets up His Kingdom and He has a specific plan for how He wants His Kingdom to operate, and He has specific functions for each person according to His predetermined plan. That is what God is doing as He distributes the gifts of the Spirit. He is coordinating His plan for the Kingdom and distributing to each one personal gifts that are best suited for that person to produce the most profitable results in giving glory and magnifying the name of Jesus. Now we are going to take a slight detour from the book of Acts and talk a little bit about the gifts of the Spirit.

Many people today ask the question, “Are the gifts of the Spirit available for us today?” And my answer to that is YES! Mark 16:17 says ¹⁷ *And these signs will follow those who believe:* (will follow is an aorist future indicative. This will happen. Not that it might happen. This is a promise from Jesus that this will happen) *In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues;* ¹⁸ *they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.”*

But we always have to remember, these gifts are given and worked in and through us AS HE WILLS, and it is always for the purpose to bear witness of Jesus Christ and give Him glory. And we already read in 1 Corinthians 12 how these gifts are distributed by our Triune God according to His perfect plan, and He will continue to fill us with these gifts until He returns with our completed Salvation, **1 Corinthians 13:8-10**. There is a time when gifts will cease, but that time is not now. That time is when He has come and we will see Him face to face, **1 Corinthians 13:12**. 1 Corinthians 14 talks a lot about the gift of tongues, and if there were ever a place in Scripture where the Holy Spirit wanted to tell us that tongues had ceased it would there in chapter 14, but instead Paul says the opposite, **1 Corinthians 14:39-40**. Do not forbid to speak in tongues. That seems pretty clear to me that this gift is still valid. But just as in everything it is always as He wills and everything must be done decently and in order.

There is a common saying among us charismatics, and that is... "to be filled with the Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues." Although I agree that speaking in tongues is one of the evidences of being filled with the Holy Spirit, I don't believe it is the ONLY evidence. I believe a person can be filled with the Spirit and NOT speak in tongues, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11. Paul loves the gift of tongues, and yet in 1 Corinthians 12:29-30 he asks a rhetorical question, "*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?*" And the answer to that rhetorical question is "NO" we don't all have the same gift. And he even goes on to say in 1 Cor 14:5- "*...I wish you all spoke with tongues.*" Inferring that not all have the gift of speaking in tongues.

A person might ask the question, if speaking in tongues is not the only evidence of being filled with the Spirit, then how do I know that I have been filled with the Spirit? Remember last week I mentioned that the filling of the Spirit is in direct correlation to our walk of Sanctification. Every Christian is born of the Spirit and the Spirit is living in every believer. And then when you yield yourself to the Spirit and ask Him and allow Him to work through you, this begins the walk of Sanctification, and He will fill you with His supernatural dunamis power. And this filling is like rivers of Living water that don't just fill you once, but it is a continual life-long filling as we surrender our lives to Him and allow Him to lead and guide us in every aspect of our life with the purpose of being ambassadors for Christ. So as we humble ourselves to Him, then the Spirit will distribute His gifts upon you so that He can do His work through you. This is the manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit, and they are the evidence that you have been filled with the Spirit and that He is working in and through you, 1 Corinthians 12:4-7.

So for instance, the Spirit might give you a word of knowledge for something that's happening in your life that will accomplish His plan; or the gift of wisdom to make wise decisions for the future of your church or family; or the gift of healing; or the gift of tongues; or any of these nine gifts, because it's up to Him how He might distribute His gifts, but it will always be for the profitability of His Kingdom plans, to glorify Jesus Christ. And these manifestations don't have to be major supernatural events like raising the dead or turning water into wine. Instead, they are signs that follow you every day as you walk in Him. You might be going to Home Depot and God gives you a word to tell someone about Him, or a discerning of spirits to avoid a certain situation. These are all evidences that you are filled with the Spirit and He is leading and guiding you in His Truth for His purpose.

There are two main ways the gift of tongues can be used, publicly and privately. In the book of Acts we see the gift used publicly, but in 1 Corinthians 14 and other places in the NT we find that it can also be used in personal prayer to God. I will only just briefly mention this so that we don't get too far off the book of Acts but I thought it would be good to at least mention it because it is so powerful. This private use of tongues is known and referred to as "praying in the Spirit." This is a very powerful and edifying aspect of this gift when it's used in our personal Fellowship with God. This is what Jude describes as, "*building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit,*" Paul says in Romans 8:26- *...the*

Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. There are great advantages of praying in the Spirit because it shuts your soul off from the world and you surrender your spirit to God and speak directly to him, **1 Cor 14: 2-4**, 14-15, 18, 27-28;

The other aspect of speaking in tongues is when it is done in a public setting as we see in Acts chapter 2. And there are two purposes for this. One purpose of speaking in tongues publicly is as a sign to unbelievers. This is what is being done in Acts chapter 2 that we will spend time studying. The other purpose of speaking in tongues publicly is for the edification of other believers, but speaking in tongues alone will not edify the church. It always has to be accompanied by prophecy or some type of interpretation, **1 Cor 14:5**, 27-28.

That is just a quick overview of the gifts of the Spirit and speaking in tongues, now let's go back to our study of Acts and specifically address this idea of speaking in tongues publicly as a sign to unbelievers...

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.

⁵ Ἦσαν δὲ ἐν Ἱερουσαλὴμ κατοικοῦντες Ἰουδαῖοι, ἄνδρες εὐλαβεῖς, ἀπὸ παντὸς ἔθνους τῶν ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανόν.

⁶ γενομένης δὲ τῆς φωνῆς ταύτης, συνήλθε τὸ πλῆθος καὶ συνεχύθη, ὅτι ἤκουον εἰς ἕκαστος τῆ ἰδίᾳ διαλέκτῳ λαλούντων αὐτῶν.

Each year there were three major festivals in which every male Jew was required to return to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast. These three Feasts, according to Deut 16:16, were the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks (the Day of Pentecost) and the Feast of Tabernacles. So, on the Day of Pentecost, Jerusalem was exceptionally busy, being filled with thousands of Jews who had returned to Jerusalem from around the world to celebrate Pentecost. And while they were in Jerusalem, they heard the sound of the rushing mighty wind. And verse 6 says...

6 “**And when this sound occurred**” This was the sound of the rushing mighty wind of the Spirit. It was this loud sound that attracted the multitude, not the languages being spoken.

“**and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language**” Once they gathered around in the vicinity of the upper room, they were confused because each one heard his own language being spoken.

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.”

12 So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “Whatever could this mean?”

⁷ ἐξίσταντο δὲ πάντες καὶ ἐθαύμαζον, λέγοντες πρὸς ἀλλήλους, Οὐκ ἰδοὺ πάντες οὗτοί εἰσιν οἱ λαλοῦντες Γαλιλαῖοι;

⁸ καὶ πῶς ἡμεῖς ἀκούομεν ἕκαστος τῆ ἰδίᾳ διαλέκτῳ ἡμῶν ἐν ᾗ ἐγεννήθημεν;

⁹ Πάρθοι καὶ Μήδοι καὶ Ἑλαμίται, καὶ οἱ κατοικοῦντες τὴν Μεσοποταμίαν, Ἰουδαίαν τε καὶ Καππαδοκίαν, Πόντον καὶ τὴν Ἀσίαν, ¹⁰ Φρυγίαν τε καὶ Παμφυλίαν, Αἴγυπτον καὶ τὰ μέρη τῆς Λιβύης τῆς κατὰ Κυρήνην, καὶ οἱ ἐπιδημοῦντες Ῥωμαῖοι, Ἰουδαῖοί τε καὶ προσήλυτοι, ¹¹ Κρήτες καὶ Ἄραβες ἀκούομεν λαλούντων αὐτῶν ταῖς ἡμετέραις γλώσσαις τὰ μεγαλεῖα τοῦ Θεοῦ. ¹² ἐξίσταντο δὲ πάντες καὶ διηπόρουν, ἄλλος πρὸς ἄλλον λέγοντες, Τί ἂν θέλοι

13 Others mocking said, “They are full of new wine.” τοῦτο εἶναι; ¹³ ἕτεροι δὲ χλευάζοντες ἔλεγον ὅτι Γλεύκουσ μεμεστωμένοι εἰσί.

Luke says these Jews were **confused**, **amazed**, and they **marveled**... and in verse 12 again he says they were all **amazed** and **perplexed**. Five times Luke uses these descriptions to show their shock and amazement at the situation, but it's not just because they heard the wonderful works of God. That is something to marvel about, but that's not exactly why they were so perplexed. They were confused because they heard these praises in their own language, and on top of all that, it was coming from Galileans! Galileans were known to be ignorant and uneducated people. Remember when Philip told Nathanael they had found the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth (Nazareth was a city in Galilee), and Nathanael says, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” John 1:45-46. And in Acts 4:13 Luke says that the Jewish leaders saw the boldness of Peter and John and they were amazed because they were uneducated and untrained men. But then it says, **they realized they had been with Jesus**. This is everything! That's why Jesus chose untrained, uneducated men from Galilee because He chooses the foolish things of this world to confound the wise, 1 Cor 1:27. All so that the glory, honor and praise always goes to Him and not man.

There are Jews from all over the world that have come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Day of Pentecost. Luke gives us a list... **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**— They hear these Galileans speaking in their own language and praising God and they know that this is a miraculous sign from God and they ask a good question in verse 12, **“Whatever could this mean?”** So that's what I want to answer for you today. What does this mean that they were filled with the Spirit and they began to speak in other tongues and the people heard them in their own language? So where do we go when we need answers? The Word of God and Paul answers this for us in 1 Corinthians chapter 14. Aren't you thankful for the Apostle Paul? Turn over to **1 Corinthians 14:21-25**.

Paul begins in verse 21 by using a prophecy from Isaiah that foreshadows the use of tongues toward unbelievers, **Isaiah 28:11-12**. The rest and the refreshing that Isaiah is speaking of is the proclamation of the Messiah to come, **Isaiah 28:16**. God is speaking to the “crown of pride” (that's who Isaiah is addressing, Is 28:1, 3) and He is speaking to them in other tongues about the rest and refreshing of Jesus Christ, the precious cornerstone. But they rejected this Word, and they would not hear, **Isaiah 28:12-13**. The Word of the Lord was to them Precept upon precept... the LXX says “the Word of the Lord was to them affliction upon affliction.” They rejected the Word of God concerning the Messiah to come.

Now go back to **1 Corinthians 14:21-22**. Notice the “therefore” in verse 22. Paul is referring to these hard-hearted people that reject God's Word. He says tongues are for a sign to these hard-hearted unbelievers. Paul says, “God has spoken to these people in other tongues, but yet they will not hear Me.” On the surface that doesn't seem fair. How can God speak to someone in an unknown tongue and expect them to understand? To help explain this concept, remember that this is the exact purpose of parables, **Matthew 13:11-15, 34-35**. Parables are a type of unknown tongue. They are something spoken in a mystery, not to be understood except by those who are seeking God. Jesus didn't speak in parables to make things clearer. He spoke in parables as a sign to unbelievers that in their hard heartedness, they would not believe, but to those who have an earnest heart of belief, and want to know God, the parable was explained, and they were given life. This is what Paul goes onto explain in verse 22... read **1 Corinthians 14:22-24**...

To an unbeliever Tongues are a mystery, just as parables are a mystery, because they have a hard heart. They see the miraculous display of God, that's what a sign is a **σημεῖον**, a miracle, a wonder. They know

it is from God, but because of their unbelief and their hard heart they will not believe. But prophecy is an unveiling of the mystery because they are earnestly seeking God. It is a miraculous display to the believer, to one who has a believer's heart, and he is ready to receive the gospel. Prophecy in this context isn't saying, "next Tuesday this is going to happen..." It is a prophetic Word of edification, exhortation, and comfort, 1 Cor 14:3. A Word from God that when you hear it you say, "thanks, I needed that." It's a Word of comfort and encouragement that comes from the Lord. So, just like the parables, those who had an eagerness to know the things of God, like the disciples, the parables were explained to them. This is what Paul describes in [1 Corinthians 14:24-25](#).

But to the unbeliever, he hears the miraculous display of tongues, and because of his hard heart, he rejects it, and they mock the one speaking in tongues and say, you are mad, or you're drunk. But to the one who has a believer's heart, he may not be a Christian yet, but he hears the miraculous words of God and desires to know more. This is having ears to hear, and therefore they are given an interpretation or a prophecy, an intelligible word from God that convicts their heart unto repentance, and they are saved.

Go back to Acts chapter 2 because this is exactly what happened on the day of Pentecost. There were two types of hearts there that day. Those who had a believing heart with ears to hear, and those with a hard heart who rejected the Word. To those with a believing heart, these unknown tongues were made clear and they heard the wonderful works of God, but to the hard hearted, they heard gibberish and accused them of being drunk, Acts 2:13. Look at the text again... Notice Luke keeps using the word all, but this isn't all the people, it is all those with a believer's heart, because verse 13 says, ἔτεροι δὲ, but others of a different kind. These are the hard-hearted unbelievers. That day, tongues were spoken as a sign to the unbeliever. They saw the miraculous display of tongues, but just as Paul says, "*but yet after all that, they will not hear Me.*" So, mocking them they said, "*you are full of new wine... you are drunk.*" Just like the Corinthians unbelievers saying, "*you are mad.*" Or the unbelievers in Isaiah 28 who heard the Word of God in other tongues, but to them it was "*affliction upon affliction.*" These tongues were a sign to the unbeliever.

But to those who had a believer's heart, they heard the wonderful works of God in their own language, they yearned for more, and Peter spoke a Word of Prophecy to them by preaching the gospel, and they were convicted, they repented, and they gladly received the Word and 3,000 souls were saved that day. This is how God operates. He only reveals Himself to those who love Him. Tongues is an example of this, how Jesus spoke in parables, the Bread of Life is another example, Jn 6:61-67, and on the Road to Emmaus Jesus didn't reveal who He was until the disciples invited Him into the house, Luke 24:28-31. It is clear that God reveals Himself to those who earnestly desire Him, and it is those who earnestly desire Him that He will fill with His Spirit and use in His Kingdom plans.