

Spiritual Gifts □ The Spiritual Gift of Tongues

Spiritual Gift Series

Spiritual Gifts: The Gift of Tongues

Category of Gift: Revelation

1 Corinthians 12:10

**“to another various kinds of tongues,
. . . .”**

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Section One

Pentecost and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit

1.1 Words from the Holy Spirit. Before Pentecost in Acts 2, Jesus died and was raised from the dead. Before Jesus died, He predicted His death and the later arrest of His disciples. Jesus promised His disciples that they would be arrested, but He also promised that the Holy Spirit would provide the words for them to speak, so that they should not worry beforehand what they are to say

("λαλήσητε λαλεῖτε"). The Holy Spirit would give them the words to say in that hour and so they speak ("λαλεῖτε"). Indeed, it is not the disciples who speak in that hour, but the the Holy Spirit Himself would be speaking ("λαλοῦντες") through them (Mark 13:11, page 1584). Therefore, we know that the Holy Spirit may produce well-reasoned, coherent speech in disciples at the appropriate time, even before the Spiritual Gift of Tongues was given at Pentecost.

1.2 Tongues of Fire. After the Jesus ascended into heaven, His disciples were gathered together in Jerusalem, waiting for the Holy Spirit to come upon them, just as Jesus had prophesied (Acts 1:8, page 1699). Suddenly, a noise like a violent wind from heaven filled the whole house where the disciples were gathered. Tongues as of fire appeared to them, and rested upon each one of them. The disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit began and they began to speak with other tongues ("λαλεῖν ἑτέραις γλώσσαις"), as the Holy Spirit gave them utterance ("ἀποφθέγγεσθαι")(Acts 2:4, page 1700). So God bestowed the New Testament Spiritual Gift of Tongues for the first time.

1.2 Foreign Languages. As the apostles first spoke in tongues, men from various countries heard them speaking in their own language. In passing, the text may indicate that twelve different dialects were spoken. Those men said: "And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born?" (Acts 2:8, page 1701). Therefore, we learn that the first instance of the use of the Spiritual Gift of Tongues resulted in unbelieving men hearing of the mighty deeds of God spoken by Galilean disciples under the influence of the Holy Spirit in foreign languages in a foreign language

("διαλέκτω"). In this case, the foreigners heard their own language distinctly. The disciples were not speaking in an unintelligible, ecstatic nonsense manner. We also learn that speaking with other tongues ("λαλεῖν ἑτέραις γλώσσαις") produces a hearing and understanding in the birth-language of the intended recipients ("τῇ ἰδίᾳ διαλέκτῳ ἡμῶν ἐν ἣ ἔγεννήθημεν"). Apparently, some in the audience, consisting in part of Jews and proselytes, heard an audible language they understood, and others heard language they did not understand. The people who did not understand attributed the language to drunkenness in the speakers. Because the Spiritual Gift of Tongues acts as a sign to unbelievers (1 Corinthians 14:22, page 1799), we know that God was speaking through tongues to unbelievers. Again in passing, Peter may have been the interpreter of the those tongues as he preached his message. Peter seized the moment in time to preach a wonderful sermon and explain the events.

1.4 Pouring Forth the Holy Spirit. Peter preached and linked the speaking in tongues with the prophecy of Joel, who revealed that God would in the last days pour forth His Spirit upon all mankind, and grant wonders in the sky above and signs on earth below. All of those wonders and signs would take place before the great and glorious day of the LORD shall come. Yet, an invitation and promise remains from Joel: everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved (Acts 2:14-21). So, Peter linked speaking in tongues with the inauguration of the last days specified by the prophet Joel, and specifically the pouring forth of the Holy Spirit upon believers. For Peter, today is the day of salvation.

Section Two

Foreign Language and The Spiritual Gift of Tongues

2.1 Unknown Languages or Ecstatic Utterances? Some people claim that 1 Corinthians 14:2, 4, 13, 14, 19 and 27 people were speaking in tongues and producing “unknown tongues” or ecstatic speech. We can review those claims in more detail.

2.1.1 Unknown Languages? At the outset, the King James Version has added the word “unknown” before the word “tongues” in 1 Corinthians 14:2, 4, 13, 14, 19 and 27. All of those verses have the same root word for “tongues” (“γλῶσσα”). In the original Greek manuscripts, the original text does not have the word “unknown” and the King James Version only inserts the word “unknown” because of the human editors of the King James Version added the word “unknown.” That word “unknown” misleads readers into thinking the original text distinguished this word for “tongues” from other uses of the same term. It is the same root word for “tongues” and has the same uniform meaning in all those verses: known human language.

2.1.2 Other Tongues. The Greek term for “tongues” (“γλῶσση”) in 1 Corinthians 14:2 is the same root word for tongues used in Acts 2 for known languages. In Acts 2:4, page 1700, we read that the apostles began “to speak with “other tongues” (“λαλεῖν ἑτέραις γλώσσαις”). The word “other” (“ἑτέραις”) means a different kind of known language, such as the language of the Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Mosopotamians, Judeans, Cappadocians, Pontians, and Asians (Acts 2:6-13, page 1701). Therefore, we know

the first instance of the Spiritual Gift of Tongues started as the Holy Spirit gave “utterance” (“ἀποφθέγγεσθαι”) to the apostles to speak in foreign, known languages.

2.1.3 Language and Tongues. Based upon the Pentecost experience in Acts 2, we would expect, then, that the word “tongues” in 1 Corinthians would also refer to foreign, known languages. So, let us examine the evidence in the text.

2.1.3.1 No Church Profit from Tongues. In 1 Corinthians 14:6, page 198, Paul explained the relationship between his personal ministry at Corinth and spiritual gifts. Paul observed that if he spoke to the Corinthians in tongues, it would not profit them. In contrast, if he spoke to them either by way of revelation or of knowledge or of prophecy or of teaching, then they would be edified (1 Corinthians 14:6, page 1798). We should learn from Paul about the need to edify one another when we gather together, and not focus upon selfish interests of displaying a spiritual gift that will not benefit other believers gathered together.

2.1.3.2 Knowledge and Tongues. Paul then developed the relationship between knowledge and tongues. While the speaker using the Spiritual Gift of Tongues may speak to another person, the listener will not understand the foreign language being spoken without an interpreter. Paul used the analogy of tongues to make his points about edification and tongues.

2.1.4 The Analogy of Tongues. In fact, in 1 Corinthians 14:10-11, page 1799, Paul immediately turned to discussing known languages as an illustration of what he meant about tongues

producing known sounds, but unless you know the language spoken, you cannot understand the sounds.

2.1.4.1 **Flute and Harp**. Paul began the analogy of tongues by likening tongues to a flute or a harp, but the sound (“φωνήν”) of the musical instrument must be different in tone (“διαστολήν τοῖς φθόγγοις”) to produce pleasing music (1 Corinthians 14:7, page 1798). Without those different tones, how will it be known (“πῶς γνωσθήσεται”) what is played on the flute or harp? As we think about tongues, we see that knowledge plays a critical role in understanding the message conveyed by the tongue; mysteries remain unknown to the listeners when spoken in tongues without interpretation. Through knowledge of the message conveyed through the Spiritual Gift of Tongues believers gain knowledge about all things pertaining to life and Godliness (2 Peter 2:1, page 1900).

2.1.4.2 **Bugle**. in 1 Corinthians 14:8, pages 1798-1799, Paul continued the analogy of tongues with the illustration of the bugle. If the bugle produces an “indistinct” (“ἄδηλον”) “sound” (“φωνήν”), no one will prepare himself for battle. So, if a believer does not utter (“δῶτε”) by the tongue speech (“λόγον”) that is clear (“εὔσημον”), how will it be known what is spoken (“λαλούμενον”)? Paul meant that tongues produce sounds that the hearer cannot understand. He then continued the analogy of tongues to make his point.

2.1.4.3 **Language and Tongues**. Some people point out that in 1 Corinthians 14:8-10, Paul used a different Greek term for “sound” or “language” (“φωνῶν”), and not the term used for “in tongues” (“γλώσση”) in the same context. They suggest that different Greek words must mean different kinds of tongues (known

language versus unintelligible sounds). In the New Testament, every time the root word for “language” (“φωνῶν”) is used to describe sounds made by a human being, it always refers to known language, with the possible exception of Jesus crying out on the cross, but even then it appears in a parallel passage that He uttered words in a human language. So, any claim that “sound” or “language” in this context when associated with the root word of those words (“φωνῶν”) must overcome the uniform New Testament use of those forms to refer exclusively to known human language when used in connection with humans. Even so, we can further study 1 Corinthians 14:10, page 1799, to appreciate the points Paul made by using the different words in the analogy of tongues. We must first understand the context to grasp Paul’s revelation of the analogy of tongues.

2.1.4.4 The Comparison of Two Things. Some people argue that an analogy is not usually between the same two things. They mean that Paul would not use an analogy to compare the same thing, because analogies are used to compare and explain different things.

2.1.4.4.1 The Two Things Explained. What are the two things compared and contrasted in the analogy of tongues? To answer that question, we must keep in mind the context here. Paul’s analogy actually began with the flute, harp, and bugle illustrations.

2.1.4.4.1.1 The First Thing. The first thing Paul mentioned is the sound of musical instruments (flute, harp and bugle). Please notice that Paul used the term (“φωνῆν”) in 1 Corinthians 14:7 to describe the lifeless things (“ἄψυχα φωνῆν”) (the flute and harp) producing “sound.” In 1 Corinthians 14:8, pages 1798-1799, Paul used the term

“sound” (“φωνήν”) again. Therefore, the first thing is the sound (“φωνήν”) produced by musical instruments to convey distinct music and the bugle to prepare for battle. These things show that the sound (“φωνήν”) must be understood to be effective. Without understanding of distinct tones, then the sound (“φωνήν”) has not achieved the intended result. Notice this connection between the player, the instrument, and the hearer. The same relationship applies between God, the speaker in tongues, and the hearer who understands the intention of God in playing the instrument. God intends to communicate a revelation of a particular mystery. God then selects the instrument to convey the revelation (the person possessing The Spiritual Gift of Tongues). God then communicates the mystery through speaking in tongues. The audience (the people listening to the music) does not understand the message of God until the message is interpreted. God uses spiritually gifted people to play His revelation to the congregation, but God intends for people to understand the revelation, and not merely hear a foreign language they do not understand.

2.1.4.1.2 **The Second Thing**. Paul used the analogy of tongues to illustrate the problem when listeners do not understand the words of the speaker, or in this case, the language of the speaker. As we have seen with the examples of the flute, harp and bugle, God intends to use lifeless objects, musical instruments to convey music and meaning to the hearers. Therefore, the second thing in the analogy of tongues means that none of the tongues (“φωνῶν”) in the world lack meaning (“ἄφωνον”). In 1 Corinthians 14:10, page 1799, please notice the use of the term “language” (“φωνῶν”) follows the same word for “sound” (“φωνήν”) in the previous verses referring

to musical instruments. Therefore, the use of different Greek words for language in this context does not refer to the Spiritual Gift of Tongues producing known languages and unknown sounds, but, precisely because of the context, the gift always produces known languages. The analogy does not contrast known languages with unknown languages, but rather musical instruments provide the analogy to understand how God uses the Spiritual Gift of Tongues to convey revelations to the congregation, using known tongues which have meaning. Just as people use musical instruments to communicate, so also God used the Spiritual Gift of Tongues to communicate mysteries. Those tongues, however, must be interpreted through the Spiritual Gift of Interpretation of Tongues.

2.6. **Pray That He May Interpret**. In the context of using the Spiritual Gift of Tongues within the congregation, Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 10:13, page 1799, that the tongues speaker must pray that he may interpret. Notice the command here. The entire point of using the gift in the congregation is for the interpretation to follow. Without that interpretation, no edification would result. Because of the command to pray, it seems that the prayer offered would be intelligible. Paul commanded people speaking in tongues to pray that he may interpret. Paul warned the Corinthians that speaking in a foreign tongue, using the Spiritual Gift of Tongues, only makes the speaker and the listener appear to other as a barbarian (1 Corinthians 12:11, page 1709).

Section Three

The Mind, the Spirit and the

Spiritual Gift of Tongues

3.1 The Mind and Tongue. Normally, believers must exercise great care over what they say with their tongue, because it can cause great blessing or great harm (Ephesians 4:29, page 1831; James 3:1-18, pages 1890-1891). Paul described the relationship between the tongue and the mind. He indicated that when he prayed in a tongue, his spirit (“πνεῦμά”) prays, but his mind (“νοῦς”) was unfruitful (“ἄκαρπός”). His prayer in tongues resulted in giving thanks to God well enough (“καλῶς”), but the listeners were not edified (1 Corinthians 14:13-17, page 1799).

3.1 Praying in Tongues and the Spirit. Paul disclosed that he prayed in tongues. He explained that when he prays in a tongue, then his spirit prays, but his mind is unfruitful. In the congregation, Paul desired to pray with his mind and his spirit, to sing with the spirit and with the mind, so that the other believers present would be able to say “Amen” when he finished his prayer giving thanks. While he prayed in tongues, he was giving thanks well enough, but the other persons in the congregation were not edified. Indeed, whenever Paul used the Spiritual Gift of Tongues, he was always concerned with the edification of other believers (1 Corinthians 14:13-17, page 1799). Therefore, praying in tongues among other believers does not edify the listeners and they cannot join in the prayer. Paul did not pray in tongues in the congregation and explained why no one should pray in tongues during a meeting of believers.

3.2 Paul’s Personal Experience with Tongues. Paul thanked God that he spoke in tongues more than all of the Corinthian believers. Therefore, Paul was not speaking in jealousy about the practice of the

Corinthians with the Spiritual Gift of Tongues. The apostle himself had more personal experience with tongues than the Corinthians. Even so, Paul reiterated that he desired to speak five words with his mind so that he may instruct other others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue (1 Corinthians 14:18-19, page 1799). Anyone displaying the Spiritual Gift of Tongues must be careful to use it, even when praying in the congregation, to be sure that another can interpret the tongue and so edify other people.

3.3 Praying in Tongues. Many people have various thoughts about praying in tongues. In order to evaluate the concept of praying in tongues, we must review the Scriptures, as always. Four passages receive frequent attention regarding praying in tongues.

3.3.1 Romans 8:26. In Romans 8:26, page 1769, Paul wrote that the Holy Spirit helps our weakness, because we do not know how to pray as we should. Because of our spiritual inability regarding prayer, the Holy Spirit intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. In this verse, the Holy Spirit does the groaning and interceding, not the believer uttering something amounting to groaning. The essence of [The Spiritual Gift of Tongues](#) starts with utterances in a foreign tongue. Likewise, God searches the hearts and knows what the mind of the Holy Spirit is, so that the Holy Spirit perfectly presents our prayers and supplications to God, according to the will of God (Romans 8:27, page 1769). [The Spiritual Gift of Tongues](#) concerns revelation, and not prayer and petition directly. [The Spiritual Gift of Tongues](#) only edifies other believes if it is interpreted.

3.3.2 **1 Corinthians 14:1-19**. In 1 Corinthians 14, Paul provided a lengthy explanation of [The Spiritual Gift of Tongues](#), and then declared that the Corinthians should seek [The Spiritual Gift of Prophecy](#), because it provided immediate blessing and edification to everyone who heard the prophecy. Paul himself indicated that he prayed in tongues (the Greek text indicates a present general condition; indeed, Paul spoke in tongues more than all the Corinthians 1 Corinthians 14:18, page 1799). So, if some people argue that tongues can be a private prayer language for edification of the believer, can that interpretation be true? Probably not. First, praying in tongues also requires interpretation to edify other believers, and the edification of all believers is the primary goal of all the spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 14:26, page 1799; 1 Corinthians 14:4, page 1798; 1 Corinthians 12:7, page 1796). Second, The Spiritual Gift of Tongues was given for a sign to unbelievers (1 Corinthians 14:22, page 1799). Finally, all believers are led by the Holy Spirit in prayer, and the Holy Spirit intercedes for all believers, without respect to any gift. Likewise, Jesus Christ Himself directs us to pray in His name and intercedes in prayer for believers (Luke 22:31-32, pages 1645-1646; John 17:9, page 1689; John 17:13-21, page 1690; Hebrews 7:25, page 1876; 1 John 2:1, page 1904).

3.3.3 **Ephesians 6:18**. In Ephesians 6:18, page 1834, Paul commanded the Ephesians to pray and make supplication at all times in the Spirit. Notice that all believers were to pray in the Holy Spirit. Yet, not every believer possesses The Spiritual Gift of Tongues, and so Paul could not have commanded every believer to use a special prayer language of praying in tongues. Unless all the Ephesians possessed [The](#)

[Spiritual Gift of Tongues](#), then Paul was not commanding them to pray in tongues. Therefore, the passage means that Paul commanded believers to pray in the Holy Spirit, using their minds to pray for all the saints and to make special petitions for Paul to be bold in his witness for the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 6:18-20, page 1834). Furthermore, because the Ephesians controlled the content of the prayer subjects, they were not receiving revelation from God, as would be the case if they were using [The Spiritual Gift of Tongues](#), which always involved the revelation of mysteries (1 Corinthians 14:2, page 1798).

3.3.4 **Jude 1:20**. As noted above in Ephesians 6:18, believers can and must pray in the Holy Spirit, and such prayers have nothing to do with [The Spiritual Gift of Praying in Tongues](#). In Jude 1:20, page 1913, Jude commanded believers to “build themselves up” (“ἐποικοδομοῦντες”) on your most holy faith (“τῇ ἀγιωτάτῃ ὑμῶν πίστει”) by praying in the Holy Spirit (“ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ προσευχόμενοι”). Interestingly, the Greek phrase “in the Holy Spirit” (“ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ”) is never used in the New Testament in relationship to speaking in tongues. The Holy Spirit intercedes for believers, and leads believers in prayer (Romans 8:26, page 1769). Not every believer has The Spiritual Gift of Tongues, but every believer must pray in the Holy Spirit. Therefore, because of the general command to pray in the Holy Spirit, we know that Jude refers to something other than praying in tongues, because the Holy Spirit does not bestow The Spiritual Gift of Tongues upon everyone. Notice that reverse reasoning does not work here concerning praying in tongues. Some people argue that since we are commanded to pray in the Spirit, it must mean that a prayer

language in tongues exists apart from The Spiritual Gift of Tongues. Yet, Jude 1:20 provides no support for that claim, because it does not mention tongues anywhere in the Book of Jude. Likewise, some people try to identify a special prayer language, distinct from The Spiritual Gift of Tongues, in 1 Corinthians 14. The burden of proof would be upon the proponents to show from the text that The Spiritual Gift of Tongues is not at issue, because the entire chapter focuses upon the proper use of spiritual gifts, and gives special attention to the superiority of [The Spiritual Gift of Prophecy](#) over the Spiritual Gift of Tongues. Therefore, every believer must pray in the Holy Spirit, but not all believers possess The Spiritual Gift of Tongues. Praying in the Holy Spirit never means you must pray in tongues.

Section Four

The Purpose of the Spiritual Gift of Tongues

4.1 **Edification the Church**. Paul emphasized that God gave spiritual gifts to His children for the common good (“συμφέρον”) (1 Corinthians 12:7, page 1796).

Through the ministry of each spiritual gift, believers perform the work of ministry, so that they build up the body of Christ, attain to the unity of the full stature of Christ, grow in the knowledge of the Son of God, progress toward spiritual maturity, avoid being tossed about by every wind of doctrine, and do not fall prey to the trickery and deceitful schemes of men (Ephesians 4:12-14, page 1831). In 1 Corinthians, Paul proclaimed that the primary purpose of The Spiritual Gift of Tongues is the edification of believers, when interpreted through the Spiritual Gift of the

Interpretation of Tongues (1 Corinthians 14:13-19, page 1799). Paul declared that all things must be done for edification when the believers assemble together (1 Corinthians 14:26, page 1799).

4.2 Sign to Unbelievers. As we have seen in Acts 2, the initial outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples at Pentecost functioned, in part, as a sign to unbelievers. Peter preached a great sermon starting from the manifestation of tongues and proclaimed the Gospel of Jesus Christ. About three thousand souls were added to the church that day (Acts 2:3, pages 1702-1703).

4.2 Speaking Mysteries. In 1 Corinthians, Paul gave corrective teaching for the problems with the use of spiritual gifts at Corinth. In particular, Paul taught the Corinthians how to use the Spiritual Gift of Tongues. He first noted that the one who speaks in tongues speaks to God, and not to men (1 Corinthians 14:2, page 1798). No one understands (“ἀκούει”) what he says, except God. As believers speak in tongues, they speak “mysteries” (“μυστήρια”). This term “mysteries” has a very important meaning in the New Testament and refers to specific revelations from God. A “mystery” means God revealed in the New Testament through the Apostles and Prophets things that were hidden from previous generations (Romans 16:25-27, page 1781; Ephesians 3:1-7, page 1829). For a fuller discussion of mysteries, see [The Spiritual Gift of the Word of Wisdom](#).

4.3 Personal Edification of the Gifted Person. The Spiritual Gift of Tongues edifies himself and not other others because they do not know what he is saying (1 Corinthians 14:4, page 1798). The believer exercising the Spiritual Gift of Tongues speaks to

God and to men (1 Corinthians 14:2, page 1798).

4.4 The Superiority of The Spiritual Gift of Prophecy. Paul taught that the one who exercises the Spiritual Gift of Prophecy speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation. In contrast, the believer exercising the Spiritual Gift of Tongues edifies only himself, and not the church at large (1 Corinthians 14:34, page 1798). Greater is the one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless one arises to interpret the tongues (1 Corinthians 14:5, page 1798).

4.5 The Desire for Tongues. Paul wished that everyone at Corinth would speak in tongues. But even more, Paul wished that they would all prophesy. While the Holy Spirit distributes the individual spiritual gifts as He desires (1 Corinthians 12:7, page 1796), Paul commanded the Corinthians to desire earnestly the spiritual gifts, especially that they may prophesy. Paul personally both prophesied and spoke in tongues, and spoke in tongues more than all of the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 14:18, page 1799) and found it personally edifying. Yet, the New Testament contains no obvious records that Paul or anyone else used The Spiritual Gift of Tongues for the purpose of speaking to foreigners in their own language to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Peter spoke in Hebrew to the crowd questioning how they each heard their own language. The Spiritual Gift of Tongues provides building up of the individual believer as its primary target. Tongues remain a sign to unbelievers, as we saw at Pentecost (Acts 2). With Paul, we should always desire to display the greater gifts in the church. According to Paul, The Spiritual Gift of Tongues, without interpretation, has no place in the life of the

church at its meetings.

Section Five

The Proper Use of the

Spiritual Gift of Tongues

5.1 Mature Thinking about The Spiritual Gift of Tongues. God testified that believers must not be children (“παιδιά”) in their thinking (“φρεσίν”). Believers, however, must be infants (“νηπιάζετε”) regarding evil (“κακία”), but they must be mature in their thinking (“φρεσίν”). Paul meant that we must be completely without experience when it comes to evil. But when it comes to thinking, we must be mature people (“τέλειοι”) in our thinking and analysis, especially when it comes to understanding evil people and evil things. Paul then applied this admonition to understand the Spiritual Gift of Tongues.

5.2 The Law and Foreign Tongues. Paul cited the Old Testament (“the Law”) to prove that tongues are for a sign to unbelievers. Paul quoted Isaiah the prophet who wrote that God would speak to rebellious Israel through “strange tongues” (“ἑτερογλώσσοις”) from the lips of strangers (“ἑτέρων”), but the people of Israel still would not listen (1 Corinthians 14:20, page 1799). Paul meant that God intended The Spiritual Gift of Tongues as a sign to unbelievers, and not believers. God used various means to reach unbelievers, including disclosing His revelations to Israel through foreigners speaking foreign languages. In this context, Paul wanted the Corinthians to understand that God gave tongues for the purpose of communicating His revelation to people, and using foreign tongues to emphasize the

special nature of the revelation from God. The Corinthians needed to be mature in their thinking to understand the revelations of God, and no longer indulge themselves as infants in their disorderly use of the Spiritual Gift of Tongues in their meetings of believers.

5.3 **Church Assemblies**. When the entire church at Corinth assembled together, the ungifted and unbelievers would have considered the church mad if everyone spoke in tongues (1 Corinthians 14:23, page 1799). Therefore, if all the church prophesied instead, then the ungifted or unbeliever would have been convicted (“ἐλέγχεται”) by all, and he would have been called to account by all; the secrets of his heart would have been disclosed; and so he would have fallen on his face and worshiped God, declaring that God was certainly among them (1 Corinthians 14:24-26, page 1799). Paul repeatedly emphasized the superiority of [The Spiritual Gift of Prophecy](#) to The Spiritual Gift of Tongues without interpretation.

Section Six

The Improper Use of the Spiritual Gift of Tongues

6.1 **Confusion and Disorder**. Paul warned the Corinthians that even spiritual gifts can be used improperly. The Corinthians had numerous problems when they came together to worship. Confusion and disorder characterized their meetings, at times.

6.2 **Two or Three**. In contrast to church services today, the New Testament assembly had opportunities for many male speakers to participate. Yet, they must each take turns and be careful to follow the spiritual rules for congregational practice and use

of the spiritual gifts.

6.3 The Silence of Women. In this context of the proper use of spiritual gifts, God commanded the women in the congregation to remain silent during the congregational meetings. Just as the believer wishing to use The Spiritual Gift of Tongues in the assembly must remain silent (“σιγάτω”) unless an interpreter is present to interpret and bless the congregation, so also the women were not permitted to speak. Likewise, the believer wishing to use The Spiritual Gift of Prophecy must remain silent (“σιγάτω”) while another prophet speaks. At all times, during the meeting of the assembly, the women were to remain silent (“σιγάτωσαν”), for God did not permit them to speak (1 Corinthians 14:34, page 1800). Similarly, God did not permit them to teach or exercise authority over a man, but they must remain quiet. God explained that women must remain silent because of the order of creation (Adam was created first) and the woman is more easily deceived (1 Timothy 2:12-15, page 1856). Women certainly possess vital spiritual gifts, but those gifts must be exercised outside of the assembly of believers. Outside the congregational meeting of males and females, they may teach children and other females, prophecy, heal the sick, and do all the things their gifts may allow them to do, but not during the meeting of the saints. In the entire New Testament, the uniform teaching of God stands against women speaking in the meetings of the church where males and females are present. So, the next time you see Paula White, Joyce Meyer, or other popular female speakers talking to audiences of both males and females, you know that those speakers ignore the clear teaching of Scripture and promote the improper use of spiritual gifts. Although the crowds may be

large to hear them, and they have best-selling books, you should always recall and follow the Scripture, that women must remain silent in the congregation when men and women are present. Also, please recall that in the last days, congregations will not endure sound doctrine, but wanting to have their ears tickled, will accumulate teachers for themselves in accordance with their own desires, and will turn their ears away from the truth and will turn aside to myths (2 Timothy 4:3-4, page 1864). Although you may love hearing women preach, no woman should teach a man or exercise any form of authority over a man. Never let the crowds or your own emotions fool you. Remain faithful to the Word of God.

6.4 Errors concerning Speaking in Tongues. People today teach many errors concerning The Spiritual Gift of Tongues. Using the Scriptures, we can distinguish the truth of God from doctrinal errors.

6.4.1 Error: Speaking in Tongues Always Accompanies Baptism with the Holy Spirit. Every born again believer has received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and it occurs at the moment of salvation. Consider 1 Corinthians 12:13, page 1797: "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit." So, we know at the moment of salvation every believer receives baptism with the Holy Spirit, and Jesus does the baptizing (Matthew 3:11, page 1504). Likewise, not every believer speaks in tongues (1 Corinthians 12:30, page 1797; 1 Corinthians 14:5, page 1798). Therefore, people err when they teach that speaking in tongues always accompanies baptism with the Holy Spirit.

6.4.2 Error: Speaking in Tongues Always Accompanies Being Filled with the Holy Spirit. While not all believers speak in tongues, all believers may be filled with the Holy Spirit. In fact, God commands all believers to be filled with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18, page 1832). As we have seen above, not all believers speak in tongues. Likewise, some people teach that the fruit of the Holy Spirit includes speaking in tongues. In fact, Galatians 5:22, 23, page 1825 never mentions any spiritual gift in that list (except faith “πίστις,” and that probably refers to the quality rather than the spiritual gift), but lists the fruit every believer must have in their lives as they are commanded to walk in the Holy Spirit. Therefore, people err when they teach that speaking in tongues always accompanies being filled with the Holy Spirit.

6.4.3 Error: Speaking in Tongues Always Accompanies True Salvation. People err when they teach that speaking in tongues always accompanies true salvation. Consider again that not every believer speaks in tongues (1 Corinthians 12:30, page 1797; 1 Corinthians 14:5, page 1798). If people point to the Book of Acts as proof that people always spoke in tongues when they believed, they overlook that the Book of Acts only mentions speaking in tongues three times: (1) at the Jerusalem Pentecost in Acts 2; (2) at Caesarea after Peter received the Sheet Vision (God welcomes men in every nation who turn to Him) in Acts 10; and (3) at Ephesus when the disciples of John received the Gospel of Jesus Christ in Acts 19. Outside of those three passages, many people from all over the Mediterranean world hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ and believe. We hear nothing about them speaking in tongues. Please remember that speaking in tongues serves as a sign to unbelievers (1

Corinthians 14:22, page 1799). Today, some people try to teach other people how to speak in tongues. They try to get all believers to speak in tongues by letting the Holy Spirit flow with them. Such practices contradict the Word of God because speaking in tongues is always a spiritual gift bestowed upon some believers, but never upon all believers. Therefore, try as they might, some believers will never speak in tongues, and only rebellious people will tell people that all believers may speak in tongues. The Bible flatly contradicts such teaching and practice (1 Corinthians 12:30, page 1797; 1 Corinthians 12:11, page 1796). So, people err when they claim that speaking in tongues always accompanies true salvation.

Section Seven

Do Not Forbid the Use of the Spiritual Gift of Tongues

7.1 **Disagreement**. Strong disagreements remain about the presence of miraculous spiritual gifts today, and the presence of the spiritual gifts of tongues and the interpretation of tongues. Some claim all of these gifts have ceased, while others proclaim and practice their continuation today, while others remain open and cautious.

7.2. **Scriptural Consensus**. No matter what position you hold regarding The Spiritual Gift of Tongues, Scripture must control both the content of the gift and the expression of the gift. We have studied the Scripture above, and for every instance of someone claiming to exercise The Spiritual Gift of Tongues, we must remember that all things must be done

properly and in an orderly manner (1 Corinthians 14:39, page 1809). Finally, we must remember that God said that we must not forbid speaking in tongues (1 Corinthians 14:39, page 1809).

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