

**SUMMARY of a STUDY  
Of the GIFT  
Of  
TONGUES**

A Series of Questions and Answers on the Gift of Tongues

## 1 Corinthians 14:20-22

“Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be babes, but in your thinking be mature. In the Law it is written, ‘By men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers I will speak to this people, and even so they will not listen to Me,’ says the Lord. So then tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe, but to unbelievers; but prophecy is for a sign, not to unbelievers, but to those who believe.”

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“...for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.”

1 Corinthians 14:33

“... let all things be done properly and in an orderly manner.”

1 Corinthians 14:39

### **Various Problems Occurring in the Church at Corinth**

Essential to properly interpreting the book of 1 Corinthians is an acute understanding of the fact that the letter was written to address and correct a host of problems occurring within the church at Corinth. Interestingly enough, failure to acknowledge this fact and keep it readily available to the mind as one studies the book continues to spawn doctrinal error among individuals as well as among various evangelical churches of our day.

This is particularly true when it comes to the subject of gifts. For what ever reason, many who propagate the errors of the church at Corinth related to gifts are actually guilty of twisting into doctrine some of Paul’s comments regarding the behavior of the members of the body. Instead of noticing that at times he merely stated what the people at Corinth were doing, they interpret the statements as if to mean what should be done. Consequently, spreading false doctrine.

**The following composes a summary of the problems that plagued the church at Corinth:**

- Quarreling (1:11)
- Divisions (1:12-13)
- Carnality (3:1)
- Immaturity (3:1)
- Immorality (5:1)
- Boasting of the immorality (5:2, 6)
- Failure to deal with open sin (5:9-13)
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- Ignorance regarding marriage and divorce (7:1-40)
- Abuse of liberty (8:1-10:33)
- Confusion of the roles between men and women (11:1-16; 14:34-36)
- Confusion between doctrine tradition and culture (11:1-16)
- Drunkenness (11:21)

- Selfishness (11:21)
- Abuse of the Lord's Supper (11:20-34)
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- Lack of godly love (13)
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### **Overview of Chapters 12-14 Spiritual**

#### **1. Spiritual gifts are assigned by God Chapter 12**

God has given each Christian the manifestation of the Spirit- gift/s (v. 7). God distributes the gifts to each one just as He wills (v. 11), just as He desires (v. 18). Therefore, God is the composer of the body (v. 24), appointing the members as He sees fit (v. 28).

#### **2. Spiritual gifts are accompanied by love Chapter 13**

The believers at Corinth were failing to practice love. They were selfish with regard to the exercise of their gifts. Therefore, into the middle of the subject of the gifts the Spirit speaks of love (ch. 13). This Chapter on love actually links the 12th and 14th chapters (See 12:31 and 14:1) providing a holy standard. Thus, it exposed the sin of selfishness (12:31) and erected a standard to pursue (14:1). As a holy standard the description of love in Chapter 13 provided objective criteria whereby the Christians at Corinth could measure all they did (16:14).

#### **3. Spiritual gifts are administered in order Chapter 14**

God is not the author of confusion (14:33). Therefore, in regard to Believers administering the gifts for the edification of the body, order was to be maintained.

##### Order of Priority 14:1-5, 12

- Pursue love (14:1)
- Edify the body (12:3-5, 17 12, 26; 12:7)

##### Order of Perception 14:6-25

For the church body to be edified there must be an understanding (perception) of what is spoken.

- The one speaking must have understanding (14:14-15)
- Those listening must have understanding (14:6-9, 16)

Therefore, when the gift of tongues was exercised it was necessary that it be followed by an interpretation (14:13, 26-28).

Order of Practice 14:23, 26-35, 40

- Avoid Confusion (14:32-33)
  - Each person's spirit is to be under control (14:32)
  - Two, or at the most three were permitted to speak in a tongue (14:27).
  - Each, speaking one at a time (14:27)
  - One must be able to interpret (14:27)
  - Tongues not to be exercised without the presence of an interpreter (14:28)

### **Questions and Answers Related to the Gift of Tongues**

**1. What is the difference between the gift of tongues and the gift of the interpretation of tongues?**

The gift of **tongues** is the God given gift whereby a Christian is enabled to speak a known language without having naturally learned that language.

The gift of the **interpretation of tongues** is the God given gift whereby a Christian is enabled to understand and translate a known language (gift of tongues) without having naturally learned that language.

While these two gifts were distinct from each other, they were to never be administered separately (1 Corinthians 14:27-28). Tongues were not to be spoken without an interpreter. An interpretation could not be given without a tongue spoken. The fact that an interpretation exists for each instance of the exercise of the gift of tongues demonstrates that the gift of tongues was indeed a known language of men as opposed to just being gibberish. For gibberish has no interpretation. Obviously, those possessing the gift of tongues were to determine if one known to have the gift of interpretation was present before they exercised the gift of tongues. See questions [4](#), [5](#).

**2. Was the gift of tongues a personal prayer language, which was to be practiced privately as well as in church?**

No. There are no biblical references in 1 Corinthians 14 that teach the gift of tongues was a personal prayer language of which one was to partake privately. To conclude otherwise is to nullify the entire teaching of the 14th Chapter of 1 Corinthians, which teaches:

- Tongues were for a sign to unbelievers (1 Corinthians 14:22). Generally this required at least the presence of a Christian to exercise the gift and a non-Christian to witness it.
- Tongues were not to be exercised without the presence of an interpreter (1 Corinthians 14:26-28).
- The interpretation of tongues was to edify the church body (1 Corinthians 14:7, 12).

However, verses from this chapter have been lifted from their context and then twisted to imply that speaking in tongues is acceptable in one's own private prayer life.

No place in 1 Corinthians 14 or for that matter the entire Bible is there any exhortation to or reference of anyone ever praying in tongues while alone. The context of 1 Corinthians 14 is dealing with actions that are either: 1) taking place or should take place in a local church or 2) should not take place in the church. Paul's use of the phrase "In the church..." in verses 19 and 28 means only that. There is no reason to assume Paul was implying in verse 19 that he spoke in tongues as a private form of prayer. The phrase is simply referring to where tongues are spoken. Verse 28 means tongues were not to be spoken in the church without the presence of an interpreter.

Verse 2 which speaks of one praying in tongues and edifying himself is a reference to someone who while in church is exercising the gift without an interpreter. Exercise of the gifts for self-edification is wrong for it is self-serving. The gifts were given for the common good (1 Corinthians 12:7) for the edification of the body (1 Corinthians 14:4, 5, 12, 26) for serving one another (1 Peter 4:10). Each of these references implies that the gifts were not to be practiced in solitude but in the presence of others in the body.

While there are several New Testament references to prayer in general, there are no references to or exhortations for anyone while alone to pray in tongues. If tongues was a special kind of prayer language which was to be exercised privately one would expect to see specific references exemplifying individuals praying in tongues while alone or at least specific exhortations to do so, such as in the case of prayer in general.

**3. Does 1 Corinthians 13:1 refer to an angelic language?**

Nowhere does the Bible record angels speaking any language other than that which is or has been a known language of men. The phrase "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angles..." does not provide a sufficient basis for claiming that angels possess a unique language. The apostle is simply referring to eloquent speech and/or perfect speech. Good angels have not sinned. Therefore, unlike sinful men, they do not offend in word consequently their speech is perfect (See context of James 3:2). See question [4](#).

**4. When the Bible refers to the genuine gift of tongues is it referring to a known language?**

Yes. When Scripture refers to the true gift of tongues it is always with reference to a known language. When the gift of tongues was exercised the words spoken were to always be interpreted (1 Corinthians 14:27-28, See question [5](#)). Gibberish or babble are not languages and therefore have no interpretation. Therefore gibberish was never the true gift of tongues. Regarding whether or not the gift of tongues was the ability to speak an angelic language see question [3](#). When the gift was first demonstrated in Acts 2 it is clear from the context that the words spoken were indeed known languages. Peter, in Acts 11 when referring to the incident of tongues spoken by the Gentiles of the house of Cornelius, equated that occurrence to the one in Acts 2. There is no reason to assume that the incidences of tongues mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament which consist only of Mark 16:17 (Not actually spoken in this reference); Acts 8:18 (implied); 19:6 and 1 Corinthians 12-14, were anything different than known human languages such as those spoken in Acts 2.

The fact that tongues was a sign to unbelieving Israel required that it be a known language among mankind. This would make it consistent with the Old Testament context to which Paul referred in 1 Corinthians 14:21. Also see questions [1](#), [4](#), [9](#), [10](#).

In the Church at Corinth it appears that there were two categories of tongues. Between these two categories there were four kinds of tongues experienced. The instructions of 1 Corinthians 12-14 cover both categories as they address each kind forbidding all but one (1 Corinthians 14:37-38).

### **The Legitimate**

This refers to the true gift of tongues as given by the Spirit. The church at Corinth was not lacking in any of the gifts (1:4-7), therefore at times, the true gift of tongues must have been legitimately present (12:10-11; 14:17, 26). This legitimate gift of tongues when exercised properly was the only one of the four kinds of tongues mentioned that was not to be forbidden (14:39).

Another aspect of the legitimate gift appears to have been that of truly speaking in tongues, but with the wrong motivation and purpose- that of self-edification (14:2-4). This would have been similar to preaching the true Gospel but with wrong motives such as Paul referred to in Philippians 1:15-18. In the case of tongues the gift was genuine but the intent of the hearts of some in Corinth when they exercised the gift was wrong. Although a known language was spoken it was not to be exercised for self-edification. The presence of an interpreter was required in order that the body might be edified (1 Corinthians 14:27-28).

### **The Illegitimate**

There were those at the church in Corinth who spoke in tongues using a known language for it was interpreted (Gibberish is not a language and therefore has no interpretation), however the interpretation revealed that the words spoken were blasphemous (12:3). It is possible that this might have been the work of the flesh as one attempted to draw attention to self and thereby inadvertently as well as ignorantly spoke words of another language, but most likely it was demonic influence in the carnal lives of these immature and undiscerning believers. See questions [5](#), [6](#), and [8](#).

Finally, for which ever reason (fleshly or demonically) it is strongly implied that there was meaningless gibberish that was masquerading as the gift of tongues at the Corinthian church (14:7-9). Those exercising such behavior spoke “into the air” meaning that no one understood what was spoken.

## **5. Was the presence of an interpreter required before the gift of tongues could be exercised?**

Yes, for at least four reasons:

1. Scripture required the presence of an interpreter (1 Corinthians 14:27-28).
2. Edification of the body was one of the reasons the gifts were to be exercised. Without an interpreter no one would know what was said and therefore the body would not be edified.
3. Testing of spirits (1 John 4:1). Apparently at times the devil did indeed influence the speech of some (1 Corinthians 12:2-3). Without an interpreter it would be difficult, if not impossible to determine whether or not the devil’s influence was present. See questions [4](#), [6](#), and [8](#).
4. Clarity. The members of the Church of Corinth were warned of the danger of confusion (14:6-11) which was promoted by the absence of an interpreter. Confusion is antithetical to the very nature of God (14:33), His truth (Psalm



119:105), and His Church, which is His witness to an already confused world (Matthew 5:13-16).

In the early stages of the Church the book of Acts records two instances where it is explicitly stated that tongues was experienced in small groups of people not necessarily in a local church at the time of the experience (Acts 10:44-46; 19:6) and one implicit instance (Acts 8:18). In each case there was more than one person present. In these situations there was always an apostle present. It stands to reason that either the apostle or someone else present had the gift of interpretation or someone present recognized the language and could provide interpretation. Otherwise it would have been impossible to verify the validity of the experience.

**6. Was the person who spoke in tongues to be in complete control of his spirit?**

Yes (1 Corinthians 14:32-33, 40). Just as the fruit of the Spirit does not preempt the Saint's control, the gifts of the Spirit do not preempt the Saint's control. As a matter of fact, one aspect of the fruit of the Spirit is self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). Not to be in control of one's spirit would indicate an absence of this aspect of the fruit of the Spirit. Such a condition can only be explained as a work of the flesh. Prior to their salvation it was the characteristic of some at the church of Corinth to be carried away to serve idols (1 Corinthians 12:2). The idea of being carried away implies that they were under the control of another force, which was obviously non-Christian. At times this apparently happened at the Church of Corinth. Whether they were in control or not, it seems that some were actually speaking blasphemies (1 Corinthians 12:3). Obviously then, they were influenced. See questions [4](#), [5](#), and [8](#).

**7. Was it biblical for women to speak in tongues?**

No. According to 1 Corinthians 14:34 women were not permitted to speak in the church. The word *speak* as used in this verse must be understood in the same sense as the majority of the other times it is used in 1 Corinthians 14. Therefore, keeping silent did not mean that they were not permitted to talk at all in church, rather that they were not to prophesy to the general body, cross examine leaders, or speak in tongues. By abstaining from these the women properly exemplified their biblical role within the church body.

**8. Can the devil mimic the gift of tongues?**

Yes. Since the devil can transform himself into an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14), what would prevent him from influencing someone's speech? 1 Corinthians 12:2-3 indicates that the devil and/or his demons did influence the speech of some and this to the point of blaspheme. See questions [5](#) and [6](#). Demons have the ability of speech and certainly influence people to speak lies, as well as actually speaking through people (Mark 5:1-13; Acts 16:16-18). Therefore, it stands to reason that they could certainly imitate the gift of tongues.

**9. What was the purpose of the gift of tongues?**

The gift of tongues was given as a sign to unbelieving Israel (1 Corinthians 14:20-22) as an indication of God's rejection of their empty worship and impending judgment on them for rejecting God's Word and killing the Messiah. For a detailed explanation of this purpose see question [10](#).

## 10. Will the gift of tongues cease?

The Bible clearly teaches the gift of tongues will cease "...if there are tongues, they will cease..." (1 Corinthians 13:8). Therefore, what should be pursued is biblical evidence that indicates the time in which tongues will cease. To understand this evidence it is essential to understand God's intended purpose for the gift. Once the purpose is understood it then becomes necessary to determine whether or not that purpose has been accomplished. Finally, after determining if the purpose of tongues has been achieved one can draw a sound conclusion as to whether or not the gift has ceased.

Before attempting to understand the purpose of the gift of tongues it is necessary to examine a particular fact regarding Israel as God's chosen nation. Understanding of this biblical truth regarding Israel will provide a backdrop against which the purpose of the gift of tongues will become more profound and therefore more readily grasped.

While many are aware of this truth, they miss the significance of its role in the lives of the people of the Old Testament as well as those of the New, including those of the Church and its members. Missing the significance of Israel as God's chosen nation severely hinders their comprehension of the weight of the events that transpired in the beginning stages of the church as recorded in the New Testament.

### **Israel- God's Chosen Nation**

The following verses are a few that clearly depict Israel as God's chosen nation.

Exodus 6:7; 19:4-6; Leviticus 20:24, 26 Deuteronomy 14:2; 26:18; 28:9-10; 29:13; 1 Kings 8:52; 1 Chronicles 16:13; 17:22; Psalm 105:6; 106:5; 135:4; 149:2; Isaiah 43:3-4; 44:1; Amos 3:2; Acts 13:17; Romans 9:4-5.

### **Salvation is from the Jews**

An essential aspect of accurately worshipping God was being part of the nation of Israel, either as a Jew or a non-Jew believing in God participating with Israel in accord with God's Word revealed to Israel, for God had chosen to reveal Himself through Israel.

Exodus 12:48-49; Leviticus 17:10; 19:34; 24:22; Numbers 9:14; 15-16, 29; Joshua 8:33; John 4:23-24; Acts 13:16, 23, 43; 18:12-13; Romans 9:4-5; Ephesians 2:12.

### **Purpose**

Paul clearly stated the purpose of the gift of tongues when in 1 Corinthians 14:22, he wrote "So then tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe, but to unbelievers...." It does not get much clearer than this; tongues are for a sign. A sign is something that calls one's attention to a particular person, place, or thing. When in the Bible God gave a sign it was usually a call for the people to be aware of something significant that He was either doing, about to do, or would eventually do. The importance of the event was not to be missed or underestimated and God provided a sign in order that those to whom it pertained would be informed in advance and hopefully be prepared.

Notice that Paul not only told the Corinthian believers that tongues was for a sign, but he also informed them as to whom the sign did not pertain as well as to whom it did pertain. The sign was not for believers who would be edified by the interpretation of the gift (another gift; see question [1](#)), but the gift of tongues itself when administered by believers was specifically to unbelievers.

Paul was very specific in addressing the gift of tongues. He clearly stated the purpose- a sign, and he informed the Corinthians as to whom the sign pertained- unbelievers. He even defined a particular group of unbelievers. Unfortunately, many conclude, with reference to specifics that the Apostle was finished once he designated unbelievers as those to whom the sign pertained. Then, they wrongly assume that the verse pertains to all unbelievers in general. However, a close examination of the context reveals that the apostle was not referring to unbelievers in general in verse 22, but a select group of unbelievers.

### **A Sign to Unbelieving Israel**

A mature believer is careful to practice discernment in the light of Scripture as opposed to experience. The Corinthians lacked maturity in their thinking (3:1-3). Instead of reasoning in the light of God's truth they had succumbed to the error of reasoning in the light of their experiences and/or personal feelings. Therefore in 14:20 Paul exhorted them to not be children in their thinking but mature. Immediately following this he quoted the Old Testament passage of Isaiah 28:11-

*"In the Law it is written, 'By men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers I will speak to this people, and even so they will not listen to Me,' says the Lord." 1 Corinthians 14:21 NAS*

Notice that the quote is preceded by the statement "In the Law it is written..." and followed by "...says the Lord." Both demonstrate the authority of the Word of God and call the immature minds of the believers at Corinth to the true basis upon which the decisions and activities of their lives must rest- the Word of God. Notice also that the use of the phrase "this people" refers to a specific group of people. A study of the context of Isaiah 28 to which Paul referred reveals that the people to whom the reference is made were the **unbelievers** of the southern kingdom of Israel- Judah.

These unbelievers mocked God's Word to them (Isaiah 28:9-10) by saying that God spoke to them as if they were babies. Isaiah's response as he keyed in on their mockery was, "Indeed, He will speak to this people through stammering lips and a foreign tongue..." God was indicating to the unbelievers of Israel that He would speak to them as if they were worse than babies. He would address them as if they were barbarians.

### **The Message of the Sign**

As already stated, when God gave a sign it was usually a call for the people to be aware of something significant that He was either doing, about to do, or would eventually do. The importance of the event was not to be missed or underestimated and God provided a sign in order that those to whom the sign pertained would be informed. In the case of tongues the message was one of God's rejection of Judah's empty worship and His impending judgment on them. God would raise up an instrument of judgment against Judah. This instrument was a foreign nation whose language being different from their own would seem to the Jews to be stammering. That nation would destroy their city and take their people captive. Verses 12-13 demonstrate God's rejection of Judah's empty worship as well as a pronouncement of judgment.

One hundred years later the prophet Jeremiah, as he addressed the house of Israel said that God was bringing from afar a nation against them. The nation was a nation whose language the Jews did not understand (Jeremiah 5:15). Jeremiah was referring to the

Babylonians who, starting within 20 years of this prophecy, in three stages spanning a time of about 20 years, carried out in Jeremiah's time a complete destruction of Judah and took those remaining alive as captives for 70 years. So within 150 years of Isaiah's prophecy God had fulfilled His Word to unbelieving Judah by using a nation speaking a strange tongue.

Interestingly, the use of a nation speaking a foreign language to indicate God's rejection of and judgment on Judah for disobedience was something that God warned Israel of several hundred years before Isaiah's prophecy. See Deuteronomy 28:48-57 and compare this warning to Jeremiah's description of the Babylonian assault in Lamentations 4. In particular see Lamentations 4:9-10. Also see the reference to the swiftness of the Babylonian army mentioned in Lamentations 4:19 and prophesied of by Isaiah in 5:26.

**The Bible presents the sequence as follows:**

A Warning Deuteronomy 28:48-57

A Prophecy Isaiah. 28:9-11; Jeremiah 5:15

A Fulfillment Lamentations 4:9-10, 19

**A Historical Sign for a modern Jew**

In the light of the history of Israel regarding the sign of tongues the Holy Spirit explicitly states in 1 Corinthians 14:22 what should by now be evident, that tongues are for a sign. In particular the gift of tongues was a sign of God's rejection and pending judgment of disbelieving Israel. The significance of a foreign language being spoken would have been of little importance to unbelieving Gentiles whose pagan worship experiences already consisted of ecstatic speech. Yet, to the unbelieving Jew for whom the sign was intended, the gift of tongues miraculously spoken by orderly believers in Christ should have been of profound significance reminding them of Old Testament warnings and prophecies. Nevertheless, as the Holy Spirit said, through Isaiah (Isaiah 6:9-10), Jesus, Matthew (Matthew 13:14-15) and Paul (1 Corinthians 14:21), "Even so they will not listen to me..."

**Verses depicting the transition to the Church demonstrated by salvation being brought to the Gentiles**

Acts 2:17; 10:1-2, 44-48; 11:1-18; 13:16-48; 17:1-11; 18:1-17; 21:27-29; 26:15-24; 28:23-29; Romans 1:5, 16. Notice in some of these verses the reaction of the disbelieving Jews to salvation coming to the Gentiles.

**Prophetical and fulfilled verses depicting the Jews and Gentiles as one body (The Church)**

Genesis 12:3; 22:18; Galatians 3:8, 16, 28; Ephesians 2:17-3:10; Colossians 3:11; Leviticus 23:16-17; John 10:16; 17:20-23; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, 20.

**The Purpose Accomplished**

Having established that the purpose of the gift of tongues was a sign of God's rejection and impending judgment of unbelieving Israel consider now the accomplishment of the judgment. Approximately 15 years after Paul's 1st letter to the Christians at Corinth the Roman ruler Titus, in A. D. 70 marched on Jerusalem and utterly destroyed it. In the destruction the city was surrounded and as Jesus said, the temple was razed (Matthew 24:1; Luke 19:42-44). This took place approximately 37 years after the gift of tongues was initially given to the church in Acts 2. The parallel

between those events of the Old Testament and those following the death and resurrection of Christ is astounding. God rejected the false worship of and judged the unbelieving Jews of the Old Testament who had rejected His spoken Word. The specific indication of God's rejection and judgment- the presence of a foreign language spoken by the nation which was God's instrument to display His glory as He judged the sin of Israel. God rejected the worship of and judged the unbelieving Jews of the New Testament who had rejected and crucified the Word incarnate. The sign of His rejection and impending judgment- the presence of foreign languages miraculously (unnaturally acquired) spoken by the Church, who had become His new instrument whereby He would display His glory.

By the time the events of Acts 2 took place there were many foreign languages spoken in Jerusalem, but none miraculously. Therefore, in this sense tongues were to the Church as other miraculous gifts were to Christ and the Apostles- a witness of authenticity and God's approval (Acts 2:22; 14:3; Romans 15:18-19; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Hebrews 2:4).

### **Tongues have ceased- a biblically sound and biblically consistent conclusion**

Like that of the Babylonian captivity, the destruction of the Jewish Temple in A. D. 70 was the deathblow to the empty worship of the New Testament era Jews. Having accomplished their intended purpose the gift of tongues has ceased. Scripture does not require that we pinpoint the exact time when the gift was last exercised only that we recognize that it was to cease. The completed New Testament is now sufficient evidence of:

- God's past judgment on Israel (Matthew 24:1; Luke 19:42-44).
- God's temporary rejection of Israel as a nation to bear His name (Romans 9-13).
- Future restoration (Romans 9-13).
- Spiritual Israel saved in the Church (Romans 11:1-5)
- God's acceptance of the Church as the nation that presently bears His name (Romans 9-13; 1 Peter 2:9-12).

#### **11. Was the gift of tongues given to every Believer?**

No. God gives every Christian at least one gift (1 Corinthians 12:7; 1 Peter 4:10), but He does not give all the gifts to any one Christian (1 Corinthians 12:8-11), nor do all Christians speak in tongues (1 Corinthians 12:29-30). The fact that God does not give all the gifts to any one believer is also clearly stated in 1 Corinthians 12:29-30. Consequently, not everyone who believed spoke in tongues. The fact that the gift of tongues is not given to all believers exposes the doctrinal error of those who teach that all who are baptized by the Spirit speak in tongues. For all believers have been baptized by one Spirit into one body (1 Corinthians 12:12-13), but not all have the gift of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:29-30).

#### **12. Is Ephesians 6:18 referring to speaking in tongues when it says, "...pray at all times in the Spirit..."?**

No. Ephesians 6:18 informs Christians that their prayers should be made in agreement with the Word of God. The Holy Spirit came to guide Christians into all the truth (John 16:13), enabling them to understand God's truth (1 Corinthians 2) and teaching them the truth of God's Word. Therefore, Paul's exhortation to pray at all times in the Spirit is to be understood as an exhortation for the believer to pray in agreement with the Word as

revealed by the Holy Spirit in the 66 books of the Bible. To interpret Ephesians 6:18 as an exhortation for Christians to speak or pray in tongues would be a contradiction of the Biblical instruction on prayer in general (See Matthew 26:41; Colossians 4:2; & 1 Peter 4:7 where alertness in prayer is required), as well as the context of Ephesians 6:10-20. In this context the apostle is obviously calling all believers to put on the whole armor of God in order to stand against the wiles of the devil (v. 11) and be alert (v. 18). Additionally, Ephesians 6:18 applies to all Christians, interpreting it as an exhortation to speak in tongues contradicts 1 Corinthians 12:30 which explicitly teaches that all Christians do not have the gift of tongues. See question [11](#).

**13. If tongues have ceased what are the well meaning Christians who say they speak in tongues experiencing?**

These Christians are experiencing one of two things when they speak in what they call “tongues.” Instead of manifesting the Spirit as is the true indication of the gifts (1 Corinthians 12:7) Christians who now claim to speak in tongues are actually manifesting one or the other or both of the following:

**The Flesh**

For the non-Christian, the flesh is the ruling authority. For the Christian, the flesh is no longer the ruling authority, however it is still present and therefore influential. Throughout the Bible Christians are warned of the deceitfulness of their own flesh (Proverbs 3:5; Jeremiah 17:9). Although the devil and/or demons may influence the flesh, the flesh itself is not reliant on either for its activity. All the flesh needs in order to express itself is a lapse of discernment on the part of the Christian. At which time the flesh may exhibit itself in a variety of forms, one of which is the imitation of a spiritual gift, in particular the gift of tongues. Obviously, their flesh influenced some believers at the church in Corinth. What prevents it from happening today in the lives of the undiscerning?

**Satanic and Demonic Influence on the Flesh**

While Satan and demons cannot possess a Christian, the Bible clearly indicates that they can certainly influence believers and therefore the Word of God exhorts believers not to give the devil an opportunity (Ephesians 4:27). A lapse in discernment not only provides the flesh opportunity, but such a lapse also provides the devil and/or demons an opportunity to influence believers. 1 Corinthians 12:2 could be an indication of the devil’s or demon’s influential presence in the church at Corinth. Paul, in 2 Corinthians 11 specifically warned the believers at Corinth of Satan’s ability to deceive.

The only sound resource for determining the legitimacy of the gift is the Word of God and the clear indication of the Word of God is that the gift of tongues has ceased (1 Corinthians 13:8; 14:20-22). As demonstrated in question [13](#) the experience itself is not enough to substantiate its legitimacy. Christians are called to test all things (1 Thessalonians 5:21). We have been told explicitly not to believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether or not they are of God because many false prophets are gone out into the world (1 John 4:1). In the light of Biblical truth private instances of speaking in so called tongues without an interpreter constitutes irrational behavior on the part of the person engaging in the activity since the person has no way of objectively testing the experience. Those who do practice the so-called gift accompanied with an interpretation and claim to be following biblical guidelines, ignore the weight of the biblical evidence that the gift has ceased. Therefore, they also exhibit irrational behavior sacrificing the

objective standard for the subjective experience. True Christianity, including all of its practices has always been and will always be established on the irrefutable foundation of the Word of God. Any other apparent foundation than the Word is merely shifting sand temporarily holding its structure in place for the opportunity of ruin.

**14. Since the Bible in 1 Corinthians 13:8 also says that prophecy and knowledge will be done away isn't it necessary to conclude that these two gifts should also end in the same manner and at the same time as the gift of tongues?**

No. The verb tense used to describe the gift of tongues is different from the tense used to describe both the gifts of prophecy and knowledge. The Greek verb referring to the gift of tongues translated *cease* is in the middle voice. Essentially, this means that the gift will come to an end by itself, whereas the phrase *done away* referring to prophecy and knowledge is in the passive voice meaning something (the coming of the perfect in verse 10) will cause them to cease. In his commentary on 1 Corinthians John MacArthur describes this difference in verb tenses by likening the ceasing of the gift of tongues to a battery,

"**Cease** is from the Greek word *pauō*, which means "to stop, to come to an end." Unlike *katargeō*, this verb is here used in the Greek middle voice, which, when used of persons indicates intentional, voluntary action upon oneself. Used of inanimate objects it indicates reflexive, self-causing action. The cause comes from within; it is built in. God gave the gift of **tongues** a built-in stopping place. "That gift will stop by itself," Paul says. Like a battery, it had a limited energy supply and a limited life-span. When its limits were reached, its activity automatically ended. Prophecy and knowledge will be stopped by something outside themselves, but the gift of tongues will stop by itself. This distinction in terms is unarguable."<sup>1</sup>

Therefore it is not necessary to conclude that the gifts of prophecy and knowledge should also end in the same manner and at the same time as the gift of tongues.

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<sup>1</sup>MacArthur, John F., *1 Corinthians: The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, (Chicago: Moody Press) 1984.