

The Counterfeit Gift of Tongues

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Bible Text: 1 Corinthians 13:8

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We are turning in God's Word this evening to the book of the Acts of the Apostles chapter two. I am deliberately not trying to get very far with the subject tonight. I have been often justly accused of trying to cover too much at one time and I am deliberately trying to rectify that because the subject before us is large and important.

Tonight I am going to be dealing with part one of a message that is called "The Gift of Tongues and its Modern Counterfeits, The Gift of Tongues and its Modern Counterfeits."

As I say we will start it tonight. I will not get to the passage that is the great passage of Scripture—at least not in any detail to try to expound it—in the 14th chapter of 1 Corinthians. That will have to wait for a later time. We will not be carrying on this subject next Sunday evening, but, as the Lord wills, thereafter we will return and there are a number of aspects that we need to deal with. This is, as I say, an important subject and certainly I trust the Lord will lead us and guide us as we look into his Word because at the end of the day that is the only thing that matters on this, or indeed, on any other subject.

Acts chapter two. We are reading together from verse one through the end of the 11th verse.

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. A

And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in

Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.¹

Amen. The Lord will add his blessing to the reading of his precious Word for his name's sake.

If I have a text tonight—I have a subject rather than a text—for a preacher there is a vast difference—but if I have a text it would be the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 13 and verse eight, “Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail.”² The Greek text would mean simply in modern English, “The will be done away with.” “Whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge...”³ And in this context it is the supernatural gift of knowledge, not all knowledge. Otherwise we would all have to be mindless morons. “...it shall vanish away.”⁴ “...whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease.”⁵

Ever since a young woman by the name of Agnes Ozman spoke in tongues in Topeka, Kansas in the year 1901 there has been a veritable explosion of tongues speaking. Now you must understand that Miss Ozman was not the first one to speak in tongues; very, very far from it. But in modern times she was the first to speak in tongues as the result of a teaching that tongues should be the sign of the baptism in, of or by—you take your pick as to preposition, for different people use different expressions here—the Holy Spirit.

As I say that was 1901. And after that things began to explode really. First Pentecostal churches were founded. 1906 was the famous Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles. And that was a place that was visited very much the way Toronto airport was visited during the so called Toronto blessing. People from around the country and people from around the world visited Azusa Street in Los Angeles and what they found there they took back to wherever they came from with the result that Pentecostal churches were founded all across America. The Pentecostals were no better than the Presbyterians and the Baptists because they began to split up into umpteen little groups and so there were Pentecostal churches of many kinds here and then across Europe.

Then came what is known as the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship. They had the very important task of taking a movement—Pentecostalism, with its tongues speaking that was looked upon with grave suspicion by the rest of the religious world, certainly in Protestantism and that was looked upon as some sort of back woods craziness by the mainstream of society—but this Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship had the job of making this new movement respectable. And, of course, in a country that worships mammon you certainly could not go better or higher than the real American aristocracy and they happened to be the people who have made it big in business. So if you can con-

¹ Acts 2:1-11

² 1 Corinthians 13:8

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

vince the businessmen and spread the movement through them, you are gaining a great deal of respectability. And that is precisely what happened. They went much wider than America and they introduced this to a wide swathe of people through the world.

And, finally, there came what we know as the charismatic movement, a movement that started half inside and half outside Pentecostalism. A church or an Episcopal Church priest was brought under the influence of some Pentecostal friends. He experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the gift of tongues, as he claimed, he took it to his church and the rest is history. And the charismatic movement took off and today spans the entire world.

And I would have to say, though I disagree vehemently with almost all of the theology of the charismatic movement, I have to say that one stands in wonder at a movement that started in 1960 and within 40 years was probably the biggest and the most dynamic movement in all of world wide professed Christianity.

Today you can find the baptism in the Spirit and speaking in tongues in almost every denomination. The mark of the charismatic movement that contrary to the doctrine of old line Pentecostalism—and I am not preaching on Pentecostalism tonight, so if I leave gaps in the history and theology you will have to excuse me for if I didn't we would be here all night—but contrary to their doctrine and practice, which was something that grew out of the holiness movement, while I disagree with much of the theology of the early Pentecostals I do have this great respect for them, that they were a people who had a burning desire for holiness. In many ways they went about it the wrong way. For many years they adopted a wrong theology of sanctification. But nonetheless, they had this burning, blazing desire for holiness. When they got what they believed was the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the speaking in tongues, they formed separate churches. They separated from a religious world that, to them, was largely worldly and unholy. So the old line Pentecostal churches were churches in which the tongues speaking took place. The charismatic movement took that experience and they transferred it into denominations of every kind so that people no longer left their denominations to become Pentecostals. They took their Pentecostal beliefs into the various denominations. And then the next step was they began to form churches—usually nondenominational fellowships, sometimes groups of churches—and they were specifically charismatic churches.

As I say you can find this in almost every denomination. You find it in Presbyterianism. You find it in Lutheranism. You find it in Baptist churches. You find it in Episcopal churches and you find it in some that call themselves Bible churches, interdenominational churches and fellowships and, finally, in the Roman Catholic Church and even in other such churches, Orthodox, et cetera. So it has spanned the world.

I have to say that many people in the Pentecostal/Charismatic movements make some extravagant claims for their experience. I am using the terminology that they use. They call it the gift of the Holy Spirit. And they say this experience is the fulfillment of the promise of the Lord Jesus Christ when he said to his disciples that they were to wait for the gift of the Father, which, saith he, "ye have received of me." The Pentecostal claim

is, “This is that gift. That is the baptism by the Spirit that is of the Spirit that is in the Spirit.”

Then they go further and while there is some divergence of opinion now among even old line Pentecostals and certainly some among modern charismatics, yet you would have to say that historically the dominant view has been that the special mark of having received this baptism in the Holy Spirit is speaking in tongues.

Now some Pentecostals and charismatics will say it is not the essential mark, that you may have this baptism without speaking in tongues. But that is a minority view. And, historically, those who launched this new movement upon the modern Church have taken the view very, very vehemently that this is the proof that a person has received the baptism in the Holy Ghost and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Their argument is very simple and, I have to say, on the surface it is very persuasive like many another argument. If you lift a few things here and there and you give them your interpretation quite apart from the historical and biblical context in which they are set, they may sound persuasive. They say the early Christians spoke in tongues. They had the gift of tongues. They say, “Hebrews 13:8 tells us, ‘Jesus Christ [is] the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.’⁶ He doesn’t change and therefore his promise doesn’t change. And if the promise then was to be filled with the Holy Spirit so as to speak with tongues, then we should expect to speak with tongues today.” They would say that the reason we haven’t spoken with tongues—according to some is—that because of unbelief. There hasn’t been sufficient faith. According to others it is because it is resurrected now because we are getting so near to the coming of the Lord. “But we should expect to speak with tongues.” That is the claim. The explanation goes on, “Millions of people have, in fact, received this gift and do speak with tongues.”

Now to most of them—and, again, there is a difference of opinion among Pentecostals and even among some charismatics here—but to most of them the tongues with which they speak are prayer tongues. In old line Pentecostal churches it was not unusual for church services to be interrupted as people spoke in tongues. I have been to such services. But in the charismatic movement, at least that part of it which deals or stays in other churches they do not normally interrupt the service with the speaking of tongues. I mean I think common sense would tell you it would be difficult to see the liturgy of the Church of England being suddenly disrupted as somebody stood up and spoke in tongues. And so they would normally keep these for private prayers and devotions—in the eyes or the claims of some—so that the very humblest believer may be taken up into a close and supernatural communication with God using a language that no man can know and that even no devil can know so that supernaturally there is this one on one contact with God without the use of known language, but a supernaturally spiritual prayer tongue that deepens love and fellowship with God.

The claim is that wherever this gift has come there is a vast increase in power. They point to Pentecostal growth. And, again, I very honestly say that that growth has been phenomenal for a movement that started around the beginning of the 20th century until

⁶ Hebrews 13:8

today when, according to Pentecostal sources, there are approaching 400 million Pentecostal or charismatic people in the world. There has been phenomenal growth. They point to the spread of the charismatic movement, knocking down denominational barriers. They point, even, to the Roman Catholic charismatic renewal. I have spoken on that at other time and I am not going to go over that area again tonight. But starting in Duquesne University with a bunch of Roman Catholics who got the very same gift, only according to their report they had it not bigger in the sense, to start with, at least, of numbers, but bigger and better in quality. The stories that come out of those meetings are something that most Pentecostal folk would die for.

For the old line Pentecostals, of course, that raised a real problem because they had been raised to believe that Rome was anti Christian. And they were right. They had been raised to believe that Rome denied the gospel and justification by faith. And they were right. But now they are faced with this situation that people who have got this baptism and who say, “The result of it is I love Mary more than ever before. I love the mass more than ever before.” But they have got the same baptism and they are speaking with this same gift of tongues. That put them in a real bind with the result that many have had to confess, “This is of God. Now Rome is Christianized.”

Pentecostals will point out that where the tongues movement has gone you have got the world’s largest churches. Most of the largest churches in the world are either Pentecostal or charismatic. The largest church in the world is in South Korea. I think it is nominally Presbyterian. It is a mixture of Pentecostalism, Charismatism and—believe it or not—a whole lot of Buddhist elements where the preachers there found how to visualize things. And from them that has come in to a lot of the modern charismatic movement as if that were a part of faith, another side of the story.

Pentecostals say this is the fastest growing sector in the Christian world. And, again, one has to say that is true.

Just to clear the decks before anybody gets a misconception, I will be opposing many of these claims. But not for a moment am I to be understood as denying that in some of these Pentecostal churches God did a work of lasting and eternal significance. That is not my position. I have come to prayer meeting here before and I will quote from the articles of the Assemblies of God, the largest Pentecostal group in the world. And I will be disagreeing with it. But I have come to prayer meeting here in the past to challenge our people that in parts of South American and, in fact, over South America the Assemblies of God were seeing a million people a year come to Christ, not just getting into the idiosyncratic experiences of the denomination, but reaching people for Christ. These are not their figures. These are the figures I was getting from secular sources. And as I watched and read what they were doing I applauded what they were doing. I applauded the message they were preaching. I applauded the methods they were employing. They would go on to the streets. They would preach the gospel. They would stand in the marketplaces, the street corners of South American cities and they would preach the gospel no matter what the cost to them would be. When people got saved they went to the places where

they worked and they started witnessing and then they started bringing their work mates under the sound of the gospel.

Now I want to tell you all that is entirely praise worthy. And it is about time that the rest of us caught on. I remember saying to my wife when I was reading these reports at first, I said, “Joan, you know, this is exactly how the Free Presbyterian Church took off in Northern Ireland.” This is exactly what we did, the same methodology. You went out and you preached the gospel. You went everywhere taking every opportunity. But the key to it was that the people in our churches they were saved and they were separated and they were happy to be so. And wherever they went they went witnessing and they went inviting and they went pleading and God blessed it as he always will. When you add in what I said a little earlier that many of the early Pentecostals had burning passion for holiness and though some of my Reformed brethren will find great fault with me in saying this I will say it anyway. I find in Scripture that while God does not promote unorthodox theology, yet there is many a time when he overlooks the lack of orthodoxy—not on vital issues, mind you—and he blesses a warm heart.

There is a lot that John Wesley said I find abominable, but God used John Wesley to change the course of English history and world history as a man whose heart was on fire for God. And I find that in some of the early Pentecostals; a burning, burning zeal for holiness. You put that together with a burning zeal for evangelism. Is it any wonder that while the rest of Christendom became moribund, worldly, more interested in dollars than they were in souls, is it any wonder that while the rest of the so called churches sat dying this dynamic bunch of people took the world by storm? No big secret in it.

But that does not validate all their claims. When you think of all the things that I am saying positively it may seem irresponsible to speak against such a movement and its central belief. Indeed, some within Pentecostal/Charismatic churches tell us that to criticize this movement is either the sin against the Holy Ghost or it is very close to it. Of course, that is nonsense. There is no movement on earth that can be held above Scripture, not this church, not any church. “To the law and to the testimony...”⁷ That is the appeal of Isaiah chapter eight, “To the law and to the testimony...”⁸ John says in 1 John four verse one we are “to try [or test] the spirits.”⁹ And the only way to do that is by the standard of the Word of God. And that is what I want to do tonight.

Now there are two ways of doing this and one would be what is called the inductive method and that would probably be the most scholarly, but for you it would be the most difficult where I would simply go through a—from Scripture to Scripture and build up a case at the end of which say, “This all leads to this conclusion.” You can do that. I have done it. So what I am going to do is turn it right around. What you normally have to do in preaching, people have to know what you are saying before they can understand what you are saying about what you are saying. Are you with me?

⁷ Isaiah 8:20

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ 1 John 4:1

You have got to know what you are talking about before they can understand what you are saying you are talking about. If every preacher would understand that, it would help him in his presentation. So I am going to tell you what I am talking about tonight and then I am going to expound that part by part.

As we put this to the test this is what we are going to find. The gift of tongues was a sign miracle given to the apostolic Church for a particular purpose and—notice this—for a limited time. That is vital. The gift of tongues was a sign miracle given to the apostolic Church for a particular purpose and for a limited time so that what is claimed to be New Testament gift of tongues today is not the authentic New Testament gift at all, but a counterfeit thereof.

Now let's think, first, of the biblical gift of tongues. I'll tell you what we are going to do here. We are going to think of the biblical gift. Then we are going to look at the modern professed gift. Then I am going to ask you the question: Does it really matter.

Let's think of the biblical gift of tongues to start with. According to Scripture the gift of tongues was the miraculous ability to speak a foreign language without having to go and learn it. We have been reading in Acts chapter two. Now this is the great chapter...actually it may surprise you there are very, very few chapters in the Bible to which the Pentecostal charismatic tongues speakers appeal for support: Mark 16—though they edit it very heavily—Mark 16, Acts two, Acts eight, Acts 10-11—10 being the history, 11 being the report in Jerusalem of the same thing—Acts 19. That's it. In the epistles, 1 Corinthians 12, 1 Corinthians 14 and nowhere else.

You would think, you know, to hear some people that the Bible was full of this. It's not. So when I turn to Acts two, I am turning to the pivotal chapter. This is the day of Pentecost. Where does Pentecostalism get its name? From Acts two. By its very name the claim is, "This is the continuation, the modern expression of what we have in Acts chapter two." Acts two, then, we have this miraculous gift.

Now some people have posited the idea that the miracle really was that Peter and the others got up and spoke in Aramaic and all these other people heard in their own languages. But that would not be a gift of tongues. That would be a gift of ears. We are told specifically that they spoke with other tongues, not that they heard with other ears. So we can wipe that out right away.

Undoubtedly, on the day of Pentecost, they were filled with the Holy Spirit. This was the day that God fulfilled the promise that the Lord Jesus had foreseen and had guaranteed when he breathed on the disciples and said, "Receive the Holy Ghost,"¹⁰ looking forward to this very day when the Spirit would come in great effusion in an unrepeatable manner. This was, if you want, the birthday of the New Testament Church.

Now on that day they were gathered not in the upper room, by the way. I grew up—I don't know where on earth I got the notion—but I grew up thinking that they had this all

¹⁰ John 20:22

happening in the upper room and there in the upper room they were in a prayer meeting and there as the Holy Spirit came upon them they all began to speak in tongues. No. You read the context and you find they were not in the upper room. They were in the temple area so that others heard and others came flocking in that temple area.

Why did they come running? Because they were speaking. And this was a miracle. Unlearned, unlettered Galileans speaking in this list of languages that we have read. But they were foreign languages.

Notice this carefully. In verse four, “They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues.”¹¹ The Greek word for tongue is γλωσσα (glossa). So if you look up my Theological Dictionary you will find this section dealt with under the title, the technical title, Glossalalia from two words γλωσσα (glossa) and the Greek verb “to speak,” speaking with tongues, γλωσσα (glossa).

Now this word can mean this little lump of flesh that is in your mouth. It can mean your tongue, just as it does in English. But most frequently it speaks of a language. It’s a figure of speech we all understand. We use the tongue for speaking and so the tongue is used...the word tongue is used to speak of a language. If I talk to you about the French tongue you are not looking for a lump of flesh. You understand I mean the French language.

That is the word that is used in verse four. You see it again in verse eight. “How hear we every man in our own tongue?”¹²

That was a great miracle. But here is a more minute miracle. Look...sorry, I said verse eight. It should it been verse 11. They heard in their own “tongue the wonderful works of God.”¹³

Here is the more minute miracle in verse number six.”Shen this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own...”¹⁴ Now the word is different. This is the Greek word that gives us the English word “dialect.” I misspoke a moment ago. I said, γλωσσα (glossa). It was verse 11. Verse eight is “in our own dialect.”

Now you are getting pretty minute there. And I introduce that to tell you these were actual foreign languages of which there were various regional dialects and yet when these men got up to speak without ever having learned a word of those foreign languages or dialects, they spoke in them the wonderful works of God. Now that was pure, absolute, undeniable, miracle. There is no way you can explain it except that God did this. That was the gift of tongues on the day of Pentecost.

¹¹ Acts 2:4

¹² Acts 2:8

¹³ Acts 2:11

¹⁴ Acts 2:6

Now I am not looking at 1 Corinthians 14 in any detail tonight. There is a great discussion among Pentecostal and charismatic theologians and thinkers as to whether in 1 Corinthians 14 it is the same gift or whether it is not. I am not going to anticipate my explanation of 1 Corinthians, but I am going to say this much. Paul is dealing with different things in 1 Corinthians 14. He is dealing with the true gift of tongues. He is dealing with look-alikes and he is dealing with down right diabolical counterfeits all at work in the same churning mass that was the Church at Corinth. When Paul is dealing with the true gift of tongues it is always a foreign language. And when you go down 1 Corinthians 14 there are multiplied evidences that he was talking, when he talked about the true gift of tongues, of a foreign language. That is the only biblical meaning of the gift of tongues.

Second, the gift of tongues was a sign miracle. Now, you don't need to take my word for that. Mark 16 verse 17 Jesus said, "These signs..."¹⁵ At times this word would be translated "miracle." "These signs [these sign miracles] shall follow them that believe."¹⁶ And part of the text says, "In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues."¹⁷ It is a sign miracle. 1 Corinthians 14 verse 22. "Tongues are for a sign."¹⁸ They are deliberately given as sign miracles.

That leads me to the third statement. Sign miracles appear in Scripture only infrequently and briefly to authenticate a new era of revelation. Now if you take your Bible you would think at first...people have this notion that the Bible is just full of hundreds and thousands of miracles right through. It is not. There is the evidence of the supernatural right through—there is no doubt of that—and especially in the early days of the Old Testament where you had revelation directly from God. When the angels appeared—and one of them was a preincarnate appearance of the Lord Jesus—when they appeared to Abraham that was a miracle. That was not a vision. That was not something that could be explained in any naturalistic way. That was a miracle. So you do have miracles, but always—always and there is no exception to this—always, not just as a raw demonstration of what God can do, but always in connection with divine revelation. But there are three specific times in the Bible when there was a new era of revelation and that introduction of a new era of revelation was attended by multitudes of miracles, one piled on top of the other.

The first was in the days of Moses and of Joshua. I don't need to tell you the history of Israel where they were, beaten down. There comes a man who had run away to escape a murder charge and an execution. After 40 years in the wilderness he comes back and he says, "The Lord sent me." Now put yourself in that position. You are an Israelite. You are a slave. You are under the lash of the cruel Egyptians. And here comes this fellow who in the past has done nothing but make your cause worse and he says, "God sent me." Why on earth would I believe you? So God gave him power, signs and wonders to convince the Israelites, to convince the Egyptians and to lead them out. And that continued

¹⁵ Mark 16:17

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ 1 Corinthians 14:22

for a fairly brief period through the life of Moses and his immediate successor. Then things changed. The great stream...I am not saying the supernatural departed from Israel. It couldn't while the cloudy fiery pillar and the presence of God was there. But I am saying that the great multitude, the flood of miracles marked the beginning of that new era.

The next new era was in the time of Elijah and Elisha. The kingdom had been divided. The northern kingdom had fallen further and further and further into sin and darkness, worldliness and apostasy. Along comes Elijah. Every commentator of the Bible remarks that this man seems to come out of nowhere. The best of scholars still do not understand the title "Elijah the Tishbite." They reckon it comes from a place called Tishbe. Where on earth is that? Nobody knows anything about it. What was his background? How did he get to where he was? What was the preparation? We know nothing. He explodes out of nowhere with a word from God, but with the power to prove to an unbelieving nation that a new era had come. God was revealing himself again. And that continued through the ministry of Elisha.

The only other new era marked by a flood of the supernatural was in the life of Christ and his apostles.

Sign miracles, therefore, appear rather infrequently. Again, understand what I am saying. There is a difference between God intervening, doing something, say, in answer to prayer, healing a Hezekiah, whatever and sign miracles. Sign miracles appear to authenticate new revelation. They have a definite purpose. They authenticate the messenger so that the people would receive his message.

We have been reading in Acts two. In chapter two verse 22 or Acts we have the words of Peter. "Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you..."¹⁹ How? "...by miracles and wonders and signs."²⁰ God attested him. God put his hand upon him and he did that with the apostles. Turn over to Romans chapter 15, if you will, and here is what the apostle Paul says about the purpose of his miracles. Romans chapter 15 verse 15.

Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God, that I should be the minister of Jesus Christ [now notice this] to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.

I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God. For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the

¹⁹ Acts 2:22

²⁰ Ibid.

[Holy Ghost]; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.²¹

Now what is Paul saying? He says, “I have a ministry. My ministry is to bring in the Gentiles.” Now stop and think. For a Jew to say that was explosive. For a...when Paul mentioned the word “Gentiles” when he was trial before the Jewish leaders, they were listening intently until he said that the Lord Jesus had commissioned him to go to the Gentiles. And as soon as he mentioned the word they just burst out in fury and they said, “This fellow is not fit to live.” This was explosive what Paul was claiming. Jews could not believe this. To them this was blasphemy. So how could Paul ever establish to the Church, “This is God doing this?” By signs and wonders; a new era of revelation with the definite purpose of authenticating the messenger and the message so that people would believe it.

There is a very important passage in this whole debate in Hebrews chapter two. Unfortunately there is a great text right in the middle of this little passage and people always get hung up great texts and they forget what lies around them. I have often given you the example of John 3:16. Almost everybody knows John 3:16. There is not one in 100 that knows John 3:17. Most Christians know Revelation 3:20. I have met very few Christians who have a clue what Revelation 3:21 says and yet I have often said in the big scheme of things it is so vastly greater than anything else in the context. You just wonder why do we ignore it?

Here in Hebrews two you have a great text. “How shall we escape... so great salvation?”²² Verse three. That is a wonderful text. It is a text that every person needs to pay attention to. How will we escape what? What Jesus called the damnation of hell. How will we escape the wrath of God? How will we escape the just reward of our sins if we neglect so great salvation? A great text. It demands an answer.

But why is it a great text? “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.”²³ How was it confirmed? “...signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost.”²⁴

In other words, we are being told—and I believe the writer here is the apostle Paul—so that now even before the apostolic age comes to a close you have an apostle looking back saying, “We got this message first from the lips of those who heard the Savior. The Lord confirmed the message by signs and wonders.” They are already looking back on a time when there were signs and wonders in abundance, but the purpose of them was to authenticate the message and the messenger.

²¹ Romans 15:15-19

²² Hebrews 2:3

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Hebrews 2:4

And here is the key point. These sign miracles—and specifically the gift of tongues—were intended for a limited time to be used in the Church.

We read tonight in 1 Corinthians 13 verse eight and notice the difference in the wording. I pointed out that the verb that is used of prophecies failing, they shall be done away. In grammar it is called a passive voice. You all know the difference between the active and the passive voice. I say to you, “I punch your nose.” I am doing the acting. That is the emphasis. I am doing the acting. I am a vicious, bad tempered character. I am doing the acting. “Your nose is punched by me.” Your nose now becomes the subject and it is acted upon. The whole idea there is focusing on what you are receiving. This is a passive voice. These prophecies will be brought to an end by something else. I am not going to expound what that something else is tonight. But they will be brought to an end.

But watch this carefully. “Where there be tongues...”²⁵ That is the miraculous gift of tongues. “They shall cease.”²⁶ I really should sit down and let Dr. Barrett come here for he is the Greek scholar, not I. I have hard enough job talking English that Americans can understand me. So...but ask him and he will confirm what I am saying. This is what is called...it is not an active voice. It is not a passive voice. It is what is called a middle voice. And the force of that middle voice is: These tongues shall cease of themselves. Of themselves they will come to an end.

Now that is very important for various reasons. I have said there is something that will bring to an end the prophecies and the miraculous knowledge. There is some dispute as to what that thing is. But whatever it is, that is not what is said will bring tongues to an end. It may, but it is not what it said. It said, “The will cease of themselves.” That was what Paul said would happen.

Now that is the biblical gift of tongues.

Now lets come to the modern counterfeit. Will you notice in all this that there is nothing at all said about how to receive this gift? Early Pentecostals believed that you had to have entire sanctification to get this gift. Entire sanctification means that you are delivered totally from all indwelling sin in one instantaneous experience of sanctifying grace and you live sinlessly thereafter. Many have given that up—and I would say today most charismatics have given that up, that it is an ongoing struggle with sin, but the second blessing, more or less, as they would think of it in terms of a second blessing—the second work of grace is being filled with the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues.

I have to say when you come to this speaking in tongues, not only is it surrounded now by rules and regulations, how you get it that you find nothing of in the New Testament. This comes as a shock. And if you are of a Pentecostal background I am not here to insult you or shock you, but I have to tell the truth. There is nothing particularly modern about speaking in tongues. It is very interesting that in the earliest days of Christ history there is no speaking in tongues. It comes up with the rise of a group called the Montanists who

²⁵ 1 Corinthians 13:8

²⁶ Ibid.

were the heretics of their day. And then you have various other groups through Church history. Some of the Anabaptists in the Reformation period, they fell into this. If you ever go to see the town and the remains of the town that was set up by the Shakers—I remember Joan and I got to see that. Is that in Kentucky? I think it is in Kentucky. You go in there and you look at that. Mother Lee...Steven? She wasn't Korean so there is absolutely no family relationship. Thank God. Mother Lee. I will not describe publicly the futile follies, stupidities and downright wickedness that they got into in order to promote holiness. She was a tongues speaker.

So there is nothing particular modern about it. What is modern about this is this notion that this is the mark of the baptism in the Holy Spirit as the early Pentecostals believed received after you have got entire sanctification. That was what marked Agnes Ozman as different.

What comes as a shock is there is nothing distinctively Christian about speaking in tongues. Muslims can speak in tongues. I am sure many of you have heard about the whirling dervishes. Have you ever heard of the dervishes? I see some nodding. You have been to school. The dervishes were Muslims, clear records of their speaking in tongues. Buddhist have recorded tongues speaking. Spiritists have recorded speaking in tongues. Ancient pagans—we will deal with this when we get to deal with 1 Corinthians 14—spoke in tongues. Modern pagans speak in tongues. And as many Pentecostal writers will admit even the demon possessed have spoken in tongues. So there is nothing distinctively Christian about speaking in tongues.

Now don't misunderstand what I am saying here. The only point I am making here at the moment is the fact that somebody speaks in tongues—and to an onlooker it appears supernatural—therefore it must be of God is a totally false deduction because this is a wide spread phenomenon and is no proof of the working of the Holy Spirit.

What I will give you is the clearest possible indication that the modern professed gift of tongues speaking is not the biblical gift. And I will say this, that when you look at the modern gift it lacks every mark of the biblical gift. For the most part—and, again, there is a difference in Pentecostal thinking here—but for the most part what is practiced today is not the use of foreign languages.

Now I am aware that some Pentecostal theologians insist that it is the gift of foreign languages and that anything else is a corruption of the Pentecostal gift. I wish they were right, but I feel they are wrong. It is very interesting that these people who say, "Here is an evidence of somebody speaking what was a foreign language." They pick out this instance or that instance or the other instance. But listen. If this were the gift of the New Testament this would be the overwhelming experience. You wouldn't have to pick looking for a needle in a haystack to try and find some evidence somewhere of somebody speaking in a foreign language. It would be abounding at every hand as it was in the New Testament.

I know one Pentecostal writer who does say that non Pentecostals have witnessed this. I am going to take that under advisement—which is a nice way of saying I don't really believe it. I am not very convinced of it. And I will tell you why. The only independent linguists that I have known of or who have read of who have gone in to these meetings and identified a tongue have identified something vile, filthy, sexually immoral or demonic from some tribe that they have, say, been witnessing or working in and language that was unfit for God.

Others, some of the world's greatest linguists have come to the conclusion there is no human language being spoken here. What we have is gibberish. What Pentecostals, charismatics would say is a prayer language, an angel tongue which sounds very holy...but read your Bible and you will find that every time an angel spoke he used a human language. There is never a record of an angel speaking in any other tongue, but a language knowable by man.

I said I would refer to the Assemblies of God. This is what they say in Article VIII of their Statement of Fundamental Truths, "The baptism of believers in the Holy Ghost is witnessed by the initial sign of speaking with other tongues as the Spirit of God gives them utterance (Acts two verse four)." Notice the claim to Acts two. "The speaking in tongues in this instance is the same in essence as the gift of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:4-10 and 28), but different in purpose and use." So that even the people who are promoting the speaking in tongues admit there is a vital difference.

Now the Assemblies of God are saying that they are the same in essence. That means they are foreign languages. Now anybody can make a claim. I could tell you I was born on Mars. Does that make it true? I can claim anything. So can you. And you can come to me and say, "But I have had this experience."

Listen, your experience proves nothing but that you have had that experience. Where it came from, what it means... you can convince me by nothing but God's Word and by plain fact.

Now here is the fact. I think it was 1976, there was one—and there have been many of these, but I will take this one—there was a huge Pentecostal gathering in Jerusalem. I think it was Jerusalem. They had this huge gathering. And they had it set up. And I have to say from all the reports it was magnificently choreographed. Everything was done well. But do you know what they had to have? A bank of translators. Pentecostals from around the world, all of whom spoke with tongues had to have a translator. They had to speak their own language. They couldn't use their gift of tongues. How can that be the same as Acts chapter two? It's not.

Fact number two, when Pentecostal missionaries go across the world—and, again, I say to their credit, they are going across the world and I say to the honor of Pentecostal brethren and sisters that they are selling out everything to go and take the gospel to the world while many others who claim a superior theology are rooted to doing nothing. They are going, but when they go they go to language school the same as the Baptists and the

Presbyterians and the Lutherans and the Anglicans and everybody else. They have got to go to language school. They have the gift of tongues, but not of foreign languages.

I remember my good friend John Douglas was best man at my wedding. Well, he was. He was only called the best man. I was the best man there. But anyway, just below our church on the Ravenhill Road in Belfast there is a large Elam Pentecostal Church. Some wonderful people go there. John had friends who went there and they were always trying to convince him that he needed to speak with tongues. John would go down and he would meet them coming out of their prayer meeting where they had just been speaking in tongues and he would say, "Did you speak in tongues? Yeah, you have got this gift?"

They would say, "Come one. Let's get down."

Belfast, in those days, was one of Europe's busiest ports. And he would say, "There is a big ship in from Russia. I can't give them the gospel. I would love to be down and preach to those Russians. Come on down. You have got the gift of tongues. You preach to them and I will stand with you."

"Oh, no, no. But I can't do that."

"Well, why not? Why not? Don't you have the gift of tongues?"

"I'm not that kind of tongue."

Well, if it is not that kind of tongue, then it is not the biblical kind of tongue. That's the only kind of tongues known in the Bible that God recommends. As I say 1 Corinthians 14 there are other tongues that he does not recommend.

Again, the tongues movement claims permanence for what the Word of God specifically says was intended to be temporary.

Third, every claim they make is unsupported by Scripture. It is not supported by Acts two. And if time permitted I can go through Acts eight, Acts 10, Acts 19. It is not supported there either and even in 1 Corinthians 14 the great text cited. Understood in its context it is not supported by 1 Corinthians 14. The conditions set, as I have indicated, are often not of God. In fact—and this is a grieving thing and I realize this hasn't been true of everybody who has come into this experience in Pentecostalism or Charismaticism, but it has been true of many—it is a learned experience. I was reading one renowned linguist and he was saying that there is a similarity in all these sounds that are supposed to be tongues. You see, if you start speaking...inventing a language is not easy. You start speaking gibberish and somebody starts speaking gibberish and somebody else...there is really a fairly small amount of sounds that you can make. And so there is a sameness. And that is why there is a learned procedure going on here.

By the way, let me throw in something else. There is...in Pentecostal tongues every word must have about 40,000 meanings if they are words at all. I remember on our honey-

moon we went to al Elam Pentecostal service and some woman...there was no tongues at all until some woman decided she had to break in with tongues. And she kept on saying—and I have never forgotten what she said. She kept on saying, “Raba cacaca, raba cacaca, raba cacaca, raba cacaca.”

I thought, well, “Raba, cacaca, raba cacaca...” That is all she said.

The preacher decided he was going to interpret. Raba cacaca. And if he had one word in his vocabulary when he interpreted, he had a hundred different words. And I said I remember doing Latin when one word could have a whole host of meanings. I am glad Latin was simple compared to this stuff.

Worst then that, and this gets almost blasphemous. There are many young people and many sincere Christians who are seeking the gift and seeking to have the sign of the gift that they have believed is the only thing that will prove that God has really answered them and come and filled them to lead them into close communion with God. And they are taught how to produce it. In many cases, “Learn these sounds. Repeat them. Keep repeating. And from the repetition, before you know it, you will break into tongues.” That is demonic at worst. At best it is a vicious human invention meant to simulate a divine reality. That’s wicked.

Many of you know a young man who used to come to this church. He is now a Baptist pastor. Training for the Roman Catholic priesthood he was saved and he was at the end of himself. And somehow not knowing where to turn he ended up in a charismatic meeting. They asked him if he had been baptized since he was saved. No. Take you out and baptize you. When he got there to be baptized—and this afflicted his conscience for years—when he got there to be baptized he found that every person who went down into the water came up speaking in tongues. He said, “I am in trouble here. I don’t speak in tongues.”

But you have to speak in tongues. This was the mark.

And he did an awful thing. Coming up out of the water he deliberately made similar sounds to those he heard and what proved to him forever that this was not of God was somebody said they had the gift of interpretation and they interpreted the gibberish that he had just invented.

That is learned behavior that has nothing to do with the divine gift. And they are certainly not attendance of any authentic new revelation.

So at every point the modern gift, so called, is vitally different from the New Testament gift. My time is gone, but you ask: Doe sit mater? Does it matter? Well, surely it matters. Tongues can be divine. They can be human or they can be demonic in origin. Would anybody suggest it doesn’t really matter whether we have things in the church that are of the devil and we welcome them as if they were of God, things that are of the flesh, but we welcome as if they were of God? Certainly it matters.

The fact is that the modern practice perverts the truth. They have become a vehicle for extra biblical revelation and most people will believe what is said in a tongue—if they are in that movement—what is said in a tongue, because it is coming directly from God.

And then they corrupt true godliness. I have paid tribute to the early Pentecostals and I do so honestly for their zeal for holiness. But the truth is that as time went on it didn't take too long. The pursuit of the experience diverted Christians from true holiness and the pursuit of it and true spiritual power. To many it led to frustration because if tongues means spiritual power and I don't have tongues I don't have spiritual power. So what do I do? I am either frustrated and defeated or, as many people do, they somehow work themselves to such a state that they get something.

It is very dangerous.

I want to tell you tonight there is such a thing as spiritual power. There is such a thing as being filled with the Holy Ghost. There is such a thing as ministering in the power of God and an individual or a church knowing God coming in the fulness of his presence to demonstrate his gospel power for the glory of his name, the extension of his cause among men. He is able to do it. And we ought never to rest until we are living in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Jesus Christ. But make sure you are not diverted from the real thing. And speaking in tongues has absolutely nothing to do with that.

We will, as God leads, look at this from a different angle in the future. But for the moment the thesis, I think, is clear. The gift of tongues was a gift of the Holy Spirit to the apostolic Church for a particular purpose for a limited time which has now passed and that what parades itself as the true gift is not the gift of the Spirit or the mark thereof.

Let's bow together in prayer.