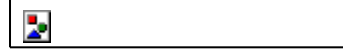


Should We Pray in Tongues?

The Holy Spirit Today

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You know, if you wanted to think about the coming of Christ and think about true salvation, there are a lot of different ways that we could think about these things, I supposed, but one of the reasons that Christ saved us was that he saved us out of darkness so that we could be true worshipers of God. The idea is that God seeks those who would worship him in spirit and in truth, and so when we want to worship the true God, when we want to know the true Christ, when we want to serve him truly, then the way that we respond to him must be informed by truth and that truth is found in his word. As I said earlier as I was getting ready to introduce the Scripture reading, we cannot worship God according to our own opinions. Our experience is not a reliable guide of what is true or not. Your emotions will trick you. Your emotions will deceive you and make you think something is true when it is actually not and we know from Scripture that this is a very real and eternal danger because Jesus said there will be many on the last day who say to me, "Lord, Lord, and I will say, 'Depart from Me, I never knew you.'"

So we need to take worship seriously. We cannot simply go by our opinions, we cannot simply go by what feels good, we can't simply go by what we've always known or what we've always been taught, even, we have to come to God's word to find what is true. We have to let it speak for itself. God has the prerogative, God has the right to declare how he is to be worshiped, how he is to be approached. He has established for us that no one will come to the Father except through his Son Jesus Christ. There is salvation in no one else. It is only through faith in Christ that a man or a woman, a boy or a girl, can find forgiveness of their sins and find reconciliation with God that God, himself, accepts. We're not free to make up our own path to God. If we do, we're simply digging our own spiritual grave when we do that. When we come to him, we must respond according to what he has revealed, not according to anything else. That concern, that primary preeminent truth has undergirded our reason for the series that we've been doing for the past several weeks titled "The Holy Spirit Today." We want to worship God in spirit and in truth. That is the only worship that God accepts is the worship that he, himself, has appointed, the means by which we are to approach him, and it doesn't surprise us, therefore, that God has given us very specific instructions on how we are to pray, how we are to worship, and all of those matters, and that's what we've been considering over the past several weeks.

Inevitably when you deal with these issues earnestly, it is going to lead you into some matters of controversy; it is going to lead you into areas where there are different opinions of thought that are irreconcilable, that are mutually exclusive. You can't say on the one hand that the Bible is the final revelation from God, for example, and believe that there is ongoing revelation that God gives outside of his word. You can't have it both ways. You can't say Scripture is final and also that revelation is continuing and that's a very fundamental concern, beloved, because it goes to the whole matter of what is the authority for what we believe and what is true? What is the standard by which we are to discern things? How are we to know where God has really spoken? And we've addressed these things over the past several weeks and as you address them, you also move into the even more controversial areas of what do we do with miraculous gifts today, the so-called miraculous gifts: about healing, about tongues and about prophecy. What do we do with those things? So we're trying to lay a foundation for our church going forward in these matters.

Last week, I addressed the matter of tongues from a biblical perspective. We looked at the biblical gift of tongues and we saw that in the Bible in the book of Acts 2, 10, 19, we see that the gift of tongues were people speaking in real human languages that they had not previously learned. That's a miraculous gift. That is something that cannot be imitated. To speak in the grammar and the vocabulary and the syntax of a language that you have never studied is not something that you just get up and do as if you're going to walk across the street. Someone who has never studied French doesn't get up and say, "Oh, I'm going to speak in French today. Oui. Oui, that's what I will do." You don't do that. You do not speak a language fluently that you have not studied so the fact that the biblical people at Pentecost were speaking in languages that they had never spoken in before and recognized and affirmed by those who knew the language, was a mark that God had done something supernatural that authenticated the true coming of the Holy Spirit. This is something that there is no counterfeit for and the idea of counterfeits is very crucial as we continue our consideration.

So what we've done, what we're trying to do here, is we've addressed the matter of the Holy Spirit in terms of what he really does in salvation, those were our first couple of messages as we looked at his work in regeneration and sanctification, illumination, other things like that, we set a groundwork so that it would be clear to everyone and clear to us within the room here today, that we believe in the Holy Spirit. We believe in the work of the Holy Spirit and that we are fully committed to the real working of the third person of the Triune Godhead. Scripture defines that in ways that are different than what it's often defined today, however. We looked at that. We went through that, and then we wanted to say, "Well, what are we to think, then, about the nature of miraculous gifts?" And to really understand that issue, you must deal with the exclusive role, the exclusive gift that Christ gave to the church in the apostles. The apostles were a one-time gift from Christ to the church who became agents of his revelation that is now inscripturated in the word of God. Their ministries were validated by miraculous signs that could not be counterfeited so that men knew that God was truly speaking through them; God had intervened from outside the natural realm and was working through these men in order to make his

revelation known so that Christ could be truly known for who he really is, and you have to deal with that matter carefully.

As you look at the matter of signs, this is by way of review, as you look at the matter of signs, you see that even during biblical days, even as revelation was going on, you see that they were starting to die out. You see that Paul left his ministry associates unhealed, they were sick. "Trophimus I left sick in Miletus," it says in 2 Timothy 4. Epaphroditus was near death in Philippians 2. We saw other examples as well. We realize that when we let the Bible speak first, when we let the Bible have primacy in our thinking, we start to have an expectation that is much different from those who say and promise and demand that God wants everybody to be healed physically from all of their affliction. Scripture does not support that at all.

So we've come to grips with that and then a couple of weeks ago we dealt with the pastoral question, "Well, what then are we to think when the healing doesn't come?" And all that the health-and-wealth people have to offer you when the healing doesn't come is to say that the problem is your fault. You lack faith. There is something wrong with you if God's will isn't being manifested in your life, somehow there's a defect in you that makes you the problem, and that's a very cruel, destructive and unbiblical thing to say. Jesus often healed people that had no manifestation of faith. Think about it, you know, Lazarus was dead in the tomb, he didn't wait for Lazarus to have faith before he called him out. He healed 10 lepers and they went away and only one of them came back to give thanks. They weren't showing faith at that point, the other nine weren't. And so healing was not conditioned on or limited by man's faith as if it were within the power of man himself to provoke healing from God, and as we said, even within their own broad experience, it's obviously not true because every one of them dies in the end, right? They all succumb to their own death. Oral Roberts is dead. Kathryn Kuhlman is dead. Others are dead and they didn't have healing at the end.

So you see that, you see that there is just a built-in fallacy to the very premises on which they claim that everyone can be healed, and so it is not that your loved ones are missing out on healing necessarily because there's something wrong with their faith, God uses sickness, God uses adversity in order to refine us, in order to change us, in order to sanctify us. He has a lot of purposes that go beyond giving us physical comfort and healing when illness and difficulty come. So Scripture calls us to view these things from a completely different perspective than what I believe you generally get from the common realm in charismatic circles.

Now, that brings us to another issue. By the way, just one last little thing about that is that as difficult as it may be to get your mind around all of these things, it's important for us to look at these things comprehensively, not to look at one issue in isolation but to look at them in the broad scope, the broad perspective of everything that we've been talking about because context is crucial to these things. You can't talk about healing without talking about the exclusive role of the apostles. You can't talk about healing without looking at the biblical examples of those who were not healed and all of the things of that sort. So we do that and that's really critical but it presents a challenge, it presents a bit of

a dilemma for us week by week here as we gather together in worship these past several weeks, because we can only deal with one issue at a time. So we're trying to lay things out in a way that individually makes sense but always remembering that it's part of a bigger picture that we're trying to paint about the nature of God and his work in the present age.

So with all of that background and preliminaries out of the way, I want to answer this question for you this morning, answer the question: should we pray in tongues? Should we pray in tongues because this is one of the primary ways that this issue comes up with those who claim to be Christians in the charismatic realm. They claim that they have a gift that God has given to them, a gift that they exercise in private, and they speak in a so-called language that they don't understand but it's how, in part, that they pray and communicate with God, and we want to look at that, we want to see what they say about it and we want to give some perspective on whether that is the case or not.

You know, when you come from a church like ours, maybe you're new to the Christian faith and you haven't had opportunity to consider these things, I spoke with someone last week who came out of that and said, "I was so frightened in the midst of these things. Things were happening that were strange and weird and I didn't understand and it frightened me." There's an element of that that we would like to dispel and help people with. Also, if you encounter it for the first time and people seem joyful, they seem energetic, they seem emphatic about what they're saying, you're tempted to think, "Maybe I'm missing something. Maybe I haven't been told everything. Maybe there's more to it that I should be having," and you start to go in a different direction. We want to help with that. We want to address that as best as we can.

When we took a look at tongues last week, one of the things that we saw in addition to the fact that the real gift was a real human language that the speaker had not previously learned, we saw something really fascinating, we saw that there are many limitations on tongues that are placed by Scripture. We saw that they are not widely discussed in the New Testament, it's only in the book of Acts and 1 Corinthians where you see this matter even addressed in any meaningful way. They're not widely discussed in the New Testament. We saw plainly from 1 Corinthians 12 that tongues were never intended for every believer, contrary to Pentecostal claims that say it's the sure mark of the indwelling Holy Spirit. That's just not true. Scripture explicitly rejects that in the plainest of terms.

We saw something else that was really important, sometimes lost in the discussion, we saw that God gives spiritual gifts for the sake that we would use them to minister to others, not for self. That's why the love chapter at 1 Corinthians 13 is placed in the middle of the discussion of the gifts in chapter 12 and chapter 14. The point is that these gifts are to be exercised in love for the sake of others, not for the sake of myself; not so that I could be puffed up; not so that I could have some private practice of my own that benefits no one but me. If you think about it, beloved, that's contrary to the whole spirit in the way that Christ himself acted. Why did he come down from heaven in order to manifest himself on earth? Why did he go to the cross? What was in it for him? He was obeying the will of his Father. He was giving himself up for us. Everything about his life

was an act of self-sacrifice, of self-giving, not doing something for himself, and Christ, Christ of all people, had the prerogative to do something for himself, he was God. We're not. He was holy, sinless. We're not. So we just need to look at these things from the perspective of who Christ is and what he has done.

So our spiritual gifts are given to us for the benefit of others. We may benefit from them in a side way, as a side benefit, but you've been gifted in a way, if you're a Christian you have been gifted in a way that is intended for you to be a blessing to others in the body of Christ; to be of service to the body of Christ. That's part of the reason why church membership and church participation is so important and critical. We're not meant to sit on the sidelines. God places us in the body so that we would be instruments, vessels of his grace to others who need the giftedness that somehow we have, and we need them to minister to us.

Well, we looked at all of that and we finished with this recognition as we considered the gift of tongues last week, we realized that Scripture explicitly says that they were going to be limited in duration. 1 Corinthians 13:8 says, "if there are tongues, they will cease," and Paul is contrasting that with the enduring eternal value of love and he says love is the crucial aspect here, love is the key element, love is the key virtue. Tongues were incidental even as he was writing 1 Corinthians in the time and he makes that very very plain.

Now, let me pivot here and say this, recognizing that this content will probably find its way eventually into the hands of those who practice speaking in tongues in one way or another, realizing that you may speak to people who speak in tongues and how we need to think and understand and address that. We realize that for them, tongues are a cherished part of their spiritual practice, their spiritual experience. We realize that in the day and age in which we live, we are supposed to automatically defer to and tolerate everything that happens around us. That's the expectation and the demand of the age in which we live. College campuses are run by that principle. So what are we to do? How are we to think about it? And what is it, anyway, that they are saying? Well, some of them will say that, as I said earlier, tongues is their private prayer language, even if it's not interpreted, even if they are speaking in these string of syllables that they don't understand, the idea is that God understands and they say that the gift of tongues bypasses their mind and thereby becomes the way that they pray and it edifies them and so on.

Sam Storms, who is a theologian and a very influential continuationist, says this about his practice of private tongues, he said and I quote, "I have found this gift to be profoundly helpful in my prayer life. It has served only to deepen my intimacy with the Lord Jesus Christ and to enhance my zeal and joy in worship. I don't understand what I'm saying but it benefits me. It's a spiritually beneficial practice. I feel so much better after I do. It strengthens me with joy as I go out and seek to serve Christ."

Sam Storms is an intelligent man, he is a gifted writer and so, you know, what are we to say about that? More broadly speaking, as you interact with charismatics or deal with this

question, we ask this question: who are we, who are you, who am I to question the sincere beliefs of someone else, the sincere practice of someone else that they say helps them? Who am I to even question that, let alone say that it is wrong and misguided? Well, let's go back to where we started, beloved. Let's go back and start with what God's word says and we realize that God's word in the New Testament, Jesus said, "Don't believe everything that you hear." 1 John 4: 1 says, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God." In 1 Thessalonians 5:21 it says, "examine everything carefully." We are commanded to exercise discernment. We are commanded to test truth claims to see whether they align with Scripture or not, and we are not simply supposed to just casually accept whatever somebody says they do and assume that it is true. God distinguishes between true and false worship. We need to know what the truth is so that we can walk with discernment, so that we could be true worshipers, so that we could interact rightly with those around us and that we could interact and give God that which he has appointed as the means by which we are to pray to him.

So today we're going to address the question should we pray in tongues or not, and I have three parts that I want to give to you to answer that question for you. And I realize, let me just say this, that there are entire books written about this topic and there are books that have multiple chapters devoted to this topic. I'm not trying to be comprehensive here, I'm just trying to give you three different things to kind of hang your thoughts on to give you a sense of discernment and discretion that would help you find your way through this sometimes difficult topic to know how to find your way through. And for those of you, let me just say this, for those of you that are not even tempted in that direction, you say, "I don't want tongues. I'm not interested in it. I don't believe that's true." I want to add one other thing here in the purpose that I'm trying to accomplish, it's very important for us to know why we believe what we believe. It's important for us to be able to articulate reasons why we reject such a prevalent practice. We recognize that in the big scheme of things and certainly in the sense of influence, that we're holding a minority position here and that we're okay with that, we don't mind that at all as long as we feel like we're being faithful to Scripture in what we're choosing to do. The world can pass me by, you know, lots of people can sell lots of books and good for them, I don't really care about that. That's not what I want. That's not what I'm concerned about. I'm not trying to be with in the "in" crowd here and our church isn't trying to be part of the "in" crowd in anything that we do. We have one goal, we want to be faithful to this book and we want to be faithful to the Lord of this book in the best that we know how. That's what we care about and if that means that we stand with a few others while the crowd goes another direction, we're okay with that, it's just important for us to understand why we believe what we believe.

Now, so with that said, let's look at point 1 and just state it very simply: a private prayer language is not the biblical gift. A private prayer language is not the biblical gift. Remember, the premise of this idea of a private prayer language is that I have a language that I don't understand but it's the means by which, at least one of the means by which I communicate with God, and we look at the Bible and we say that's not the gift. The biblical gift of tongues was a known human language. Many of these teachers don't even

pretend to claim that for their practice, but they call it tongues and here's where a lot of confusion comes in, beloved, they use the same word to describe a different practice. We have to know what do we mean when we say tongues. Biblically speaking, we see that it's a known human language. You're using the same word to describe something else and we have to realize that the same terminology doesn't mean that the Bible is describing their practice just because they use the same word. Simply using the same word to describe a different practice does not suddenly make it into the biblical gift of tongues.

If you were at a zoo, for example, and there was a giraffe in front of you, the big long spindly legs and the big long neck and the gold and brown spots and all of that, and it's a giraffe, that giraffe is a giraffe even if you call it a dog. It doesn't turn into a dog simply because you say, "By my opinion I'm going to call that a dog," and it becomes a dog just because you've attached the wrong label to it. It hasn't changed in essence simply because you're using, you're choosing a word to describe something that has nothing to do with the reality of being a giraffe. Well, it doesn't change incoherent non-language vocalizations into the biblical gift of tongues simply by calling it tongues. These are basic elements of truth and language and communication that we're talking about here.

Now, but they have a biblical case that they want to make and a lot of times they'll point you to 1 Corinthians 14. Let me invite you to turn there with me. 1 Corinthians 14:1-4 and they'll focus on this passage and say, "Here you'll find in the Bible what I'm describing as I use my private prayer language." Now chapter 14, verse 1 says this, "Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries. But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation. One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church."

Now let's make a very important preliminary observation about this passage and its context. Paul here in verses 1 through 4 is not commending private prayer languages for the private devotional use of his readers. That's not the purpose of what he's speaking here. Here in this passage he is showing that prophecy is superior to tongues because it results in edification and exhortation and consolation to the body.

Look at verse 1 with me again, he says, "Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy." So he's speaking corporately to the local church here at Corinth and he says, "Desire this spiritual gift for your body. Desire the fact that God in this transitional time has appointed New Testament prophets that can give you his revelation in a way that results in your upbuilding." He's not saying that that's going to continue after the close of the canon, this was a transitional use of prophetic revelation so that the church in its infancy could be built up and know what it needed to know. So Paul says, "You need that gift to bring you to maturity." Then he contrasts it with a lesser gift, the gift of tongues, "For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries." Nothing here suggests that there's been a change in the previously established history of the church, that tongues were known human languages. Paul doesn't distinguish this from what we see elsewhere

in Scripture. He's simply describing a reality that if someone is speaking in tongues, speaking in language that no one understands, he's not edifying them, he's not helping them, he's not producing anything of any value to the church because no one can understand what is being said.

So tongues in that way if they're not interpreted, are inferior to prophecy, but by contrast, going back to the point that he's making, "But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation." A man who is speaking God's word in that context, direct revelation, a man who explains God's word to you is speaking, you know, in the present age, is speaking in a way, in a language that you can understand so that you can be edified, so that you can be encouraged, so that you can be called to greater Christ-likeness in your walk and there's value in that because you know, you understand, your mind can grasp it and there's a cognitive understanding that accompanies men speaking the word of God in the language that you can understand. When you speak in a language that no one understands, none of that is going on and there is no purpose in it. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13:1, look at it with me, he speaks here in hyperbole and he says, "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels," he's not saying that angels have their own unique language, he's just speaking in hyperbole, "If I could speak in all the tongues that existed, even if I spoke like angels spoke," his point is, "If I wasn't doing that in love for the sake of others, it would just be noise. There would be no value to it. There would be no contribution to it because the economy of God operates on the virtue of love, not on something that makes me have unique elevated spiritual experiences."

So the spiritual gifts are to be done for the edification of others and Paul says the purpose of, I should say Paul's purpose here in these first four verses of chapter 14 is to show that prophecy was superior to tongues because people could be edified by it. Then he goes on and explains that if tongues are going to be exercised, there must be interpretation. There must be interpretation. Look at verse 13, 1 Corinthians 14:13. You have to read what Paul said at the beginning of the chapter and read it all the way through and read it for everything that he says not simply to highlight one or two verses that you can take, twist a little bit and make it sound like what you're doing. That's not how we handle Scripture. Verse 13 he says, "Therefore let one who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret." The idea is that if there is a tongue going on, there should automatically simultaneously be an interpretation that is going on, and if the interpretation is not there, the exercise of tongues is not the biblical gift.

He goes on and he says that further in verse 27, he says, "If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and one must interpret; but if there is no interpreter, he must keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God." What's he saying here and what's the point of this and how does it relate to the question should we pray privately in tongues? Well, as we saw last time, the gifts are given to be used in edification of others. If you're alone doing this, no one is being edified by it. The motive, the purpose of the gift is being violated. If the biblical demand is for tongues to be accompanied by interpretation and you're speaking in a tongue, a so-called tongue that you don't understand, you're violating the principle of interpretation. Interpretation is being violated, love is being violated by this practice.

Mark Snowberger, the excellent professor at Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, said this, he said, "Paul's concern for the mutual edification is not furthered by untranslated tongues. He thus instructs tongue-speakers to be quiet and engage in private communion with God." The idea is not keep speaking in tongues to God, that's not his point because he's requiring interpretation, rather he's saying if there's no interpreter, you be quiet in the church and you commune with God with your mind, as we'll see here in a moment. It's not an invitation, it is not a door for hundreds of millions of people to be babbling things that they don't understand and calling it prayer, and we'll see more justification for that assertion in just a little bit.

But again, here within the context, here right in 1 Corinthians 14 Paul had done this, do you know what Paul had done by the time he got to those final verses that I just read in verses 27 and 28? Do you know what he's done already? He's already denied, rejected, refused the idea of praying without understanding. He's already rejected that idea in verse 14. He says in verse 14, chapter 14, verse 14, he says and remember at verse 13 he said, "let one who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret," there must be interpretation here so that we understand what's happening, he says in verse 14, "if I pray in a tongue," a tongue that's not being translated, "my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. What is the outcome then?" What shall we conclude from that reality? What do we do with that? He says in verse 15, "I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also." He says, "My mind if I'm going to pray, I'm going to pray in a way that my mind understands and I won't pray unless that's happening. I'll pray with my spirit and I'll pray with my mind also." He prays with his mind so that he understands what is transpiring as he speaks.

Now, that's so much different than what is offered up as so-called private prayer in some charismatic circles. Their private tongues are not a known language, they do not convey truth, they do not edify others when they're done alone, and you start to realize all of the characteristics of the biblical gift of tongues from the book of Acts and through a thorough consideration of 1 Corinthians are not satisfied, are not met by this practice that is so common in some circles today. Not a known language. Not done for the purpose of edification. Not conveying truth. Not engaging the mind. Wow.

Now you might ask me, "Well then, what are they doing, then? What is happening when they do that?" I'll address that in a moment but I want you to see this, what are these people doing when they're praying in their private prayer tongues? Look, that's not my problem. That's not my question that I have to answer. That's their problem. When what you're doing and what you're describing and what you're advocating does not line up with the reality, the purpose, or the outcome of what the biblical gift is, you tell me what you're doing. It's not what's in the Bible and I come back, then, beloved, to the very starting premise that we made, is that God demands that we worship him according to his truth; that we worship him according to truth. We can't just make something up on our own and go off on our own realm. As our friend, John MacArthur, taught when he was here Tuesday on October 10th, that didn't go too well for the two priests in Leviticus 10

who offered up unauthorized fire. God slew them for not taking his holiness seriously and for offering him worship that was not authorized.

This is very serious and part of the reason that this kind of thing can flourish is that just collectively in the so-called evangelical world, we've just developed far too casual of an acquaintance with God and we don't take his holiness seriously, we don't take his commands seriously, and that's what gives us the sense of freedom to do things other than what Scripture has prescribed for us, and that's not a good thing to be celebrated, it's something from which to repent and to return to God's word and say, "God, I'm so sorry that I strayed like that."

So what are they doing? It's not my problem. I'm not the one violating Scripture. The burden of proof isn't on me to answer that question. But being the kind of guy I am, I'm happy to give you some perspective anyway to give you a sense of how to understand that. I do not believe that everybody that's doing that is giving voice to demonic spirits. I don't believe that for reasons that will become obvious in what I have to say here. I don't believe that they're necessarily giving voice to demonic spirits and I also don't believe that they're necessarily intentionally trying to deceive themselves. The nature of deception is that you don't realize that you're deceived, right? If you knew you were deceived, you'd get out of it.

So I don't think that but I do want to give you some perspective here and, again, beloved, when you only see this thing being discussed or even practiced in its own context, it can seem a little bit intimidating, it can seem a little bit overwhelming. "What is going on there? Maybe it is from God," and you know, your mind starts to go down that way, but when you put it into a broader context, you say, "Oh, that ain't what's going on at all. There's something else that explains what's going on here." The critical context that you plug into is the biblical one that we've tried to give you over the past week and a half. That's the start but there's also another perspective here that I want to add and just give you some information to justify what I'm about to say right now. What's going on with that private prayer language? It is not supernatural. It is not even uniquely Christian. It is not supernatural, it is not even uniquely Christian.

There is a very valuable resource that I have in my library that has since been updated with a new edition that I don't have access to at the moment, but the original book published by Zondervan is titled "The Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements." It is a 911 page reference book on all things charismatic and Pentecostal. It has discussions of histories and different movements and all of that. It's a good resource to describe what's happening within the charismatic movement. This resource has a lengthy section using the Greek word glossolalia, which is the Greek word for tongues, it has a lengthy section describing speaking in tongues, several pages worth. Interesting read. Kind of hard to follow what they're saying sometimes but you can sort your way through it. In the midst of this lengthy section in this reference book describing speaking in tongues, you find an extended passage – this is sad to me, this saddens me to tell you this – it has a lengthy section describing speaking in tongues taking place in many non-Christian settings. You might not know that. You might not realize that. And it lists

setting after setting of these things. This is not a cessationist reference book, it's not intending to defend the cessationist position, it's just trying to be honest and give you full information.

What does it say? It says that tongues are found among spiritual mediums. Tongues can occur due to causes such as organic neurological damage, drugs, psychotic disorders. In the 20th century, tongues have been found in non-Christian areas, non-Christian parts of the world in Malaysia, Siberia, Indonesia, China, Japan and Korea, among other areas that I'm not choosing to recite here. The sounds of these so-called tongues range from mumbles and grunts through esoteric languages and imitations of animal speech. Beloved, these people doing this and these things that they are doing are not even Christian. They don't even pretend to be Christian and yet it models, it follows exactly the kind of thing, the dynamics that you see going on in charismatic circles today.

Beloved, remember what we said about the nature of true signs, biblical signs. They were real miracles. They were real things like real organize healings of men with withered hands being healed visibly in the presence of witnesses in an undeniable way; that men were raised from the dead in real and visible and undeniable ways; that tongues were languages that native speakers recognized and affirmed, "We hear them speaking the word of God in our own language." And these are things that are supernatural, belonging to the true omnipotence of God and God is able to give and did give signs like that to his church to certainly authenticate his revelation in a way that was incontestable to the unbiased mind. Incontestable to the unbiased mind.

Are we to believe, then, that God's gift to a church today is a private prayer language that violates everything his word says about what real tongues were? Are we to believe that these private prayer languages supposedly from God mirror the very thing that pagans throughout the world are doing? Where's the distinguishing mark? Where is the thing that says this is something that only the real God could do? Why would he give that which is counterfeit to his people if it doesn't distinguish true Christianity from pagan practices? Where is the distinguishing mark that says, "Oh, this is where I can go. This is what I can follow." If you're just going to follow the signs, you could run right into spiritual mediums. If that's what you want to do, if tongues are the gateway drug to true spirituality, you have no promise whatsoever that you're going to end up in the truth. Why would God do that? Why would God put his church at such vulnerability to deception by giving them that which is mirrored in false religion? Why would he do that? Here's a clue: he wouldn't and he didn't.

So what is happening? Well, another theologian that I really like, Anthony Hoekema, shows in his book "What About Tongue Speaking?" shows that simple psychology, simple psychology, simple operation of the human mind, can account for much of the tongues activity that you see in other circles. He says and I quote, "When one belongs to a group in which it is expected that those most advanced spiritually will speak with tongues, when much emotional pressure is being applied in the pursuit of the gift of tongues," have you spoken in tongues? Why haven't you? Have you been seeking it? Is there sin in your life? Why aren't you speaking in tongues? Great pressure put on

vulnerable people. "When seekers of the gift are even told to loosen the tongue by saying, 'Abba. Abba. Beta. Beta,' and the like, if all of those things are true, it would be strange indeed if no one began to do what everyone was expecting." The power of suggestion, group dynamics, the capacity of the human mind to act upon the human body and produce results explains so much, and if you're in a context where it's being affirmed, encouraged, told to seek and you're not being told the other side of the story, then it's very easy to just get swept away with it all and assume that it's true and it's just the ramblings of a human mind having no true value of worship to God. It's very sad. It's very sad.

So what we see is this, normally I'd give the point before I explain it, this time I forgot and I'll give you the point now so that you can go back and fill it in in your notes, the point is this, is that this private prayer language idea is not supernatural. It's not supernatural. It has perfectly human explanations to show why it is happening and that is verified by the fact that it happens in many non-Christian circles. We underestimate the power of suggestion. We underestimate the capacity of the human mind to produce effects that might otherwise seem inexplicable.

Now I've got a few minutes left here, let's go to point 3, that I think is the most compelling of them all personally. Point 3, and just to be clear, point 2 was a private prayer language is not supernatural. It is not supernatural. Now that brings us to point 3. Thirdly is this: a private prayer language is not biblical prayer. A private prayer language is not biblical prayer. Whatever else you think about the passages in 1 Corinthians, whatever else you think about the social phenomenon in other places, we have to come back to this preeminent point, who is Lord to us? Jesus Christ, right? And what he says to us is law for us. It is the final authority for us about who he is, about the purpose of his death, about what we are to do as his disciples. Need I remind you that Jesus instructed us very specifically in how he wanted his disciples to pray?

Look at Matthew 6. Look at Matthew 6, Matthew 6 and this won't take long, and as you've found Matthew 6, put your finger there for just a moment and look at the end of chapter 7 because I want you to see something here, to remind you that Christ taught with authority. Christ taught with the intrinsic power to enforce and call for and demand obedience. At the end of Matthew 7 in verse 28, "When Jesus had finished these words," these words in the Sermon on the Mount, "the crowds were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes." Jesus meant what he was saying. This is it right from the lips of the Lord. And what did Jesus do, what did he say about prayer to his disciples? He said to them in verse 9, he said using an imperative, he said, "Pray, then, in this way," pray like this. "When you speak to God, here is how I command you as my disciple to speak to him, to address him." And what follows? You know it, don't you? You know it as the Lord's Prayer, "Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."

What has he just told us to do? He is telling us and he gives us themes and says, "You pray in intelligent language to God. You think about what you're saying and you pray according to these themes, understanding informed by revealed truth. Our Father which is in heaven, I address You as my God. I know that You are beyond this realm. Hallowed be Your name. I worship You. I praise You according to the fullness of Your revealed character." This is the mind. This is not something senseless, mindless that you don't understand. This calls forth the engagement of your intellect, the engagement of your brain so that you are thinking about what you are saying to God that your worship would be real and informed by truth. It's intelligent language.

You say, "Well, okay, I'll concede to that point but you haven't said anything, there's nothing here that forbids the idea of a private prayer language, of saying things that I don't understand. Why can't it be both/and instead of either/or?" Well, it's like Jesus anticipated the discussion. Look at verse 7 of chapter 6. He says, "And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words." Should you pray when you don't understand what you're saying? Should you pray in a way that is meaningless that you can't articulate the meaning of it? Jesus forbids it and says, "Don't use meaningless words." The idea is, the word has the idea of babble; to speak without thinking; idle talk; movement of the lips without meaning, without engagement of the heart, soul and mind. "Don't do that," he says, and some of our charismatic friends say, "I've got a language I pray and I have no idea what I'm saying." And I say that's so sad. You're missing Prayer 101 from the lips of Jesus himself. The positive side, pray in this way; the negative side, don't pray like that.

Besides, whatever happened to the greatest commandment? Whatever happened to the greatest commandment in this discussion? You know what Jesus said is the greatest commandment, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." You do not turn off your mind in your love for God. You do not turn off your mind when you pray to him. You are to pray in dependence with understanding.

So should we pray in tongues? No. No. Not at all. You say, "But it says in 1 Corinthians 14, it says don't forbid speaking in tongues." To which I say, that's right. In that time with the real biblical gift of known human language, Paul said don't forbid it when it's properly practiced in the church. That has nothing to do with you calling your giraffe of prayer a dog. It has nothing to do with that.

I agree with the friend of Truth Community Church, John MacArthur, on tongues who said this and I quote, he said, "The modern charismatic version of tongues consists of non-miraculous, nonsensical gibberish that cannot be translated. It is a learned behavior that does not conform to any authentic human language. Rather than being used as a tool to edify the church, contemporary charismatics use the fabrication as a private prayer language for the purpose of self-gratification. Though they justify their practice because it makes them feel closer to God, there is no biblical warrant for such unintelligent babble. It is a false spiritual high with no sanctifying value. The fact that modern

speaking in tongues parallels pagan religious rites should serve as a dire warning of the spiritual dangers that can be introduced by this unbiblical practice."

Beloved, if your charismatic friends, your charismatic maybe some open but cautious guys that you follow in their teaching, they talk to you about their tongues, please understand something, I beg you, please understand that you're not missing anything; that there's nothing real there; there is no "there" there. Please understand and remember that experience will deceive you. Please understand and remember that experience does not determine divine truth. Period. End of sentence. End of paragraph. End of story.

Beloved, let the word of God guide you in life and prayer. It will never deceive you. It is your only and sure guide.

Let's pray together.

Father, bless us and help us as we seek to be faithful to your word. Strengthen us in our understanding, in our faith, and in our practice. For those who still wrestle with the idea, who are unconvinced, Father, help us to be gracious in our interactions and, Father, confirm and perfect them according to your will revealed in your word. We bless your name. We thank you that you have not left us without guidance, you have told us exactly how to pray and how not to pray, and so, Father, we close this time in prayer with all of our heart, with all of our soul, and with all of our mind saying we believe and submit to your revealed word, we accept its guidance, and we never want to stray from it or violate it. Help us greatly individually and corporately to that end, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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