

The Gift of Tongues: Facing the Facts

1 Corinthians 14

Introduction:

1. The tongues movement of today is a very emotion based movement.
2. Did God give us emotions? Absolutely, but God never intended for emotions to dictate and rule our lives. Our emotions can lead us astray and lie to us.
 - **Example:** Did you ever fear something as a child, but then realized as you got older that the fear was irrational.
 - **Example:** Have you ever watched a movie and cried? Your emotions tell you it's real, but reality is that these are paid actors that are reciting a script with cameramen and a host of directors and workers a few steps away.
3. For the Bible believing Christian, our emotions and emotional experiences are always to be tested and brought under the authority of God's written, infallible Word.
 - Feelings are just that - feelings. They are subjective and can be wrong.
 - The most dangerous thing you can do is live your Christian life based on your feelings. It is God's Word (not your feelings) that thoroughly furnished you to all good works. **2 Timothy 3:16-17**
4. If the charismatic movement of today simply practiced the Biblical facts concerning tongues in 1 Corinthians 14, the movement would dry up over night.
5. Tonight, let's put our emotional feelings aside and let's examine the **facts** about the gift of tongues.

Fact # 1 - Paul does not allow the speaking of an unknown tongue in the local assembly.

1. For somebody to speak in a language (or made up words) that nobody understands in the local assembly is a direct violation of God's Word.
2. Verses 6-11 could not make this any clearer. If a person is speaking in a tongue that nobody understands there is no profit for the church (vs. 6), the speaker is speaking into the air (vs. 9), and you are as a barbarian to each other (vs. 11).
 - Paul gives an illustration of music in verse 7. If instruments give no heed to the rules of music (notes, melody, harmony, etc), and if they don't give a distinct sound that you can understand, it's no longer music, it's just noise.
 - Paul gives another illustration in verse 8. In past times, the trumpet was used as a means of quick communication with the people of a town or city. Different series of notes would communicate different messages to the people. One of these would be a call to battle. If the trumpeter gave an uncertain sound and wasn't **clear**, it could lead to the destruction of the city.
3. Paul is emphasizing the issue of clarity and understanding. He applies these illustrations in verses 9-10 to the tongue. Notice in verse 10 that we are dealing in this chapter with definite languages of signification in the world, not non-intelligible babbling.
4. But if the church does not know the meaning of that language, then we are as barbarians to each other (vs. 11), and there is no edification (vs. 12). cf. vs. 23-26

5. If somebody gets up in an assembly and begins to speak in a language that people don't understand, they have violated God's Word, and you can know that God is **not** in it.

Fact # 2 - Tongues were a sign to unbelieving Israel.

1. It cannot be any clearer than verses 21-22 and when you cross-reference 1:22, it seals the issue.
2. Signs were a part of Israel's national birthright (**Exodus 4:1-9**). They were an unbelieving skeptical people by nature and required God's Word to be confirmed by miraculous signs. **John 4:48**
3. Tongues were given for the purpose of convincing unbelieving Israel throughout the book of Acts. Paul spoke in tongues more than anybody (vs. 18), so Paul should have known why the gift was given.
4. Paul would constantly go into Gentile regions where there were surely language barriers, and he would first witness to Israel and then to the Gentiles. As the Gentiles received Paul's message and Israel saw her sign gifts on display, Paul's hope was that this would provoke Israel to come to Christ.
5. It is interesting that Paul had the supernatural gift to speak in languages that he did not know (vs. 18), yet there is not one record of it in the book of Acts or anywhere else.
 - The Holy Spirit never led Luke to record one example of it. Obviously God did not want undue emphasis placed on a gift that would soon pass.

Fact # 3 - Tongues were never to be spoken unless there was an interpreter.

1. This is very clear in verses 27-28. If somebody gets up and claims to be communicating for God, but nobody can understand them and there is nobody to interpret the language they are speaking, they are to sit down and keep silent.
 - **Example:** what if I had a native missionary from the Mid-east come into our assembly and preach in Arabic, and had nobody to interpret into English? This would be wrong. Why? - There is no edification for anybody. There is no profit.
2. Paul was not against the use of tongues. This was a legitimate, operative gift during the book of Acts (vs. 39). But there had to be an interpreter so that there would be edification, understanding, and profit (vs. 5-6, 19).

Fact # 4 - Tongues were never to be spoken by more than three people in one service.

1. This is reiterated in verse 27 and in verse 29.
2. Again, this direct commandment is ignored so often in charismatic churches. God's Word makes this very clear. There are no exceptions.

Fact # 5 - Tongues were never to be spoken by two people at the same time.

1. Paul says that there was to be no more than three in a service and it was always to be "*by course.*" vs. 27, 30-31
2. I have personally been in charismatic services that were like a three ring circus. People were talking over each other, speaking in tongues left and right. It was chaos.
3. This makes for emotional hype, but it violates God's Word. We don't go to church to feel good. We go to church to understand God's Word and learn. You cannot learn in an environment where everybody is jabbering at once. This is the issue Paul is dealing with. Notice closely verses 31, 33, and 40.

Fact # 6 - Only men were allowed to speak in tongues.

1. Notice the words "man" and "him" in verses 27 and 28. Notice also verses 34 and 35. This is not saying that a woman can't talk inside the church building, but the context is clearly referring to women getting up in the public assembly and teaching the congregation, whether it is through tongues or prophesy.
2. It is referring to a woman getting up in church and teaching God's Word.
3. Who does most of the tongue talking in churches you have been in? Most likely, it was the ladies. Isn't this amazing? It appears it had become an issue in Corinth also.

Fact # 7 - The commandments in 1 Corinthians 14 are binding upon all local churches.

1. These are not suggestions in this chapter. Paul says in verse 37 that they are "*the commandments of the Lord.*"
2. There is only one chapter in the entire Bible that deals with the rules that govern the gift of tongues, and this is it.
3. There are many who have chosen to ignore these very clear and plain rules. What is Paul's attitude towards those who do this? Verse 38 declares, "*But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant.*"
4. Those who ignore these rules show themselves to be woefully ignorant of God's Word.
5. In the book of Acts we have three examples of the gift of tongues being exercised, but this is the chapter of God's Word that reveals the purpose and the place of tongues in the local church, as well as the governing principles by which it was to function.
6. The Corinthians were fascinated with this sign gift as a child with a new toy so Paul encourages them to grow up and come to an adult understanding of this issue. vs. 20
7. Paul desired to see these people grow up and be edified (built up in the faith). How does edification come? It comes through the understanding of sound doctrine.

1 Timothy 1:3-4

- Israel had always worked with types and shadows (childish things). They were taught like children. The early church was this way until gradually more and more doctrine was given to the church through Paul.

- Children are first taught by experimental things (actions and activities). The younger the kids, the more activities you have. As they get older you begin to put principles in with the activities little by little.
- When you graduate into adulthood, your thinking process changes and you are able to be instructed didactically with teaching and doctrine. A teacher gives you the information you need to know and then you take that information and apply it to a myriad of areas in your life.
- In Paul's epistles, you have reached adulthood. Instead of story fashion (Genesis - Acts), he gives you doctrine and principles and then you are responsible to apply it to the details of your life. **Ephesians 4:11-15**

In Conclusion:

1. These were seven facts that Paul gave the church when the gift of tongues was operative. Seven rules to govern the use of the gift of tongues. Why is this?
2. It was so that people could examine it based on an objective standard and know whether or not it was from God. Paul is saying in this chapter, "When God does this gift, here's how it operates, and if it isn't happening **this way**, it isn't **God** doing it."
3. This chapter is very important because when God begins dealing with Israel again during a seven year period known as Daniel's 70th Week, the gift of tongues could once again be a tool by which the 144,000 Jews in Revelation 7 evangelize the world.
4. Satan loves to counterfeit what God does. Christian, you can trust God's Word. It gives you the ability to know the facts and discern properly!