

THE VALUE OF OTHER TONGUES
Dreams and Visions
Part 6
Dr. George O. Wood

The theme of Dreams and Visions. To explain how we got into that we took the Day of Pentecost where Joel 2 in the book of Acts that scripture was used as a reference point to explain the phenomenon of the descent of the Spirit upon the 120. They're praising God in other languages. What is happening is seen as a fulfillment of prophecy. That in the last days God will pour out his Spirit upon all flesh, sons and daughters would prophecy, young men will dream dreams and old men will see visions. This is a mark of the fact that God in our subconscious, the non-rational side of us, wants us to experience him.

I want to do a kind of two-part message tonight.

I want to first take a quick travelogue through 1 Corinthians 14. I want to especially note how tongues are spoken of in that passage. I suppose the reason why I want to do this is I recognize that within this audience there are people who are genuinely open to experiencing God in new ways in their life. That have been exposed to teaching which would not give them the freedom and the permission from God to step into an experience they cannot yet fully trust. As a person who has gone to seminary and has set under the finest of minds of the evangelical world and heard arguments that were contrary to scriptural experience and personal experience that I had had I think there is something I could share with you as a fellow brother in looking at some passages here that have been widely misunderstood and therefore misapplied. I hope this will be a help.

Paul begins this section on spiritual gifts because there is a worship disorder in the Corinthian congregation. We can now thank God for that because it occasioned his need for writing on this. Had there not been a worship disorder at Corinth we'd never had those beautiful chapters and especially 1 Corinthians 13, the chapter on love. So God can work out of the chaotic experiences of our life. Good things are always occurring. Paul himself said this.

Chapter 12 begins with the phrase "Now about spirituals I do not want you to be ignorant." In other words a born again believer may actually be ignorant of the operation of spiritual gifts. Paul tacitly admits that this indeed is a strong possibility. Some of them who were even using the spiritual gifts were ignorant of their true operation and function.

Paul indicates that the first criteria for the exercise of any spiritual gift whether it be tongues or healing or the other gifts that he lists, the first criteria is that Jesus be Lord of the life that is exercising the gift and that the purpose of the gift be that to promote Jesus is Lord. Any gift therefore which points away from Jesus Christ, which denies the place of preeminence and centrality of Jesus Christ, any gift which simply elevates a person's stature in the spiritual community by pointing to them as "Mr. Wonderful! Look at my gift!" Any gift that has that kind of purpose doesn't find Jesus Christ as its central focus and is therefore being expressed in a false manner.

On the other hand when a person is expressing a true spiritual gift and is giving acknowledge to Jesus as the Lord we may receive that gift as functioning by the Spirit.

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Paul indicates that the purpose of these gifts which he articulates are the common good might occur. That is through the many splendored gifts of the Spirit the whole church, the body, the believing group might be built up and edified. He as we will see in succeeding weeks to come divides the gifts of the spirit into nine different expressions. They fall into three different categories. Gifts which involve the mind such as wisdom, knowledge discernment. Gifts that involve action such as faith, healing and miracles. Gifts that involves the tongue such as prophesy, tongues and interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of the same Spirit – verse 11 “He gives teach man just as he determines.”

It should be noted right off the bat that when tongues is listed as a gift of the Spirit that Paul throughout 1 Corinthians 12-14 will be distinguishing tongues from the private and personal expression of the gift of tongues. There are really in the scripture three different ways that the gift of tongues operate. One way as we see in the book of Acts where it is part and parcel of the initial Christian experience, where the person has received the baptism in the Spirit and they speak in tongues. On the day of Pentecost all 120 received the Spirit, all 120 began to speak with other tongues. It is not said in the scripture that some received the Spirit and manifested that by gifts of healing, gifts of prophecy, some began to discern, some began to do works of faith. They all spoke with other tongues. There was a common denominator. Wherever tongues occur in the book of Acts as a group experience everybody in the group is included. It was a universal outpouring.

How tongues is used in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 has to do with its operation for the common good. When tongues is in operation for the common good it is used as a gift in the congregation where someone rises and begins to speak. When that happens and everyone else is listening, the only way that tongue will be for the common good is if there comes an interpretation. The Spirit reveals to someone else or to the person who gave the utterance in tongues that there indeed a meaning for it for us. Otherwise it doesn't profit us and it is not for the common good.

Indeed in the book of Acts we find all believers speaking with other tongues as part of their initial experience of receiving the Spirit. We find in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 that this gift when it's operating, when we're all together and it's singularly being expressed – not everyone has this gift – because to different people are given different operations of the Spirit for the common good.

Paul then goes on to talk about the necessity for the gifts as they flow together. The fact that in a body there are many parts and therefore we need not get stuck in just saying the body is just one part. The body is many splendored. No part can say to the other, “We don't need you.” No person who expresses one gift can say to the other person, “My gift is everything.” We need each other. We need all the gifts.

Paul closes 1 Corinthians 12 by indicating that in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those having gifts of administration, those speaking in different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? No. Are all prophets? No. Are all teachers? No. Do all work miracles? No. Do all have gifts of healing? No. Do all speak in tongues? No. Do all interpret? No.

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The question, “Do all speak in tongues?” The ready answer is no. All do not speak in tongues. This therefore has been used sometimes by persons who do not feel this gift is universally available to every believer as a proof text for asserting that it may be God’s will for only some to speak in tongues.

But again when we look at the difference between tongues first of all being a sign of the filling of the Spirit and later in 1 Corinthians 14 as a mark of individual personal devotions Paul says “I would that you all spoke with other tongues.” So on the personal level it is a gift that is available and freely given to everyone. The promise is to you and to your children and to all those who are afar off. But in the public functioning of the gift it is indeed not for all and in fact only a very few as we can see by our own practical experience actually exercise this gift in the body.

Then Paul says what appears to be kind of a put down – it’s often taken that way by persons who look at this text but eagerly desire the greater gifts. The assumption is tongues is one of the lesser gifts so if you’re going to desire something, why not desire to be a teacher or a prophet or an apostle. If you have low ambition just desire to speak with other tongues is the way that’s commonly put.

There’s a number of problems with that particular view. First it assumes that any gift God gives would be an inferior gift, something beneath our dignity. I have a feeling that when God gives gifts to his people he don’t give junk! No gift of his is junk. There is in terms of gifts some that are of more value for the whole body when it’s in session than others. Nevertheless none of God’s gifts are beneath our dignity. If the apostle Paul experienced the gift of tongues, if all the apostles, all the early church experienced it, who am I to say this is of less value. But the more critical thing in regard to that verse is that there is another way to translate it. The other way is just as right to translate as this. Those who make it a proof text saying tongues is not one of the greater gifts so you don’t need to desire it, only read this verse from the imperative. An imperative is a command “But eagerly desire the spiritual gifts.” It’s present imperative – eagerly go on desiring the greater gifts.

But there’s another way just as permissible in the Greek language treated this. The NIV “But you are eagerly desiring the greater gifts.” In other words the way the Greek reads it can read as a command but it can also read simply as an indicative statement. It can be imperative or it can be indicative. Imperative – Seek the gifts. Indicative – But you are earnestly desiring the greater gifts.

Seems to me that later view is much more wholesome to have in this passage. Paul will immediately go on to say “But I will still yet show you a more excellent way.” You Corinthians are already desiring the greater gifts. Paul has just listed these greater gifts, all of them together are the greater gifts for the edification of the body. He’s not trying to categorize saying I’m starting with the most important gift and working down. But we can take these as a lump gift. All belonging to the phrase “greater” – you are already pursuing the greater gifts but I will still show you something more excellent than that.

And of course what is more excellent than any expression of gifts? It’s that we have love for one another. If love is not present with any spiritual function or operation that is meaningless. Paul will go on to illustrate this with his chapter on love. I can speak with tongues but if I don’t have

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love it's nothing. Prophecy, gift of knowledge, faith, be a martyr, give away everything... but if I don't have love it's nothing.

Then he comes to verse 8 again a common misunderstood and misapplied verse by those who attempt to erect a wall against people entering into the experience of speaking in other tongues. "Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease. Where there are tongues, they will be stilled. Where there is knowledge, it will pass away." Sometimes this verse is used to say here in the New Testament itself expecting that tongues are going to pass away. The assumption further being made they passed away with the apostolic age and they haven't reoccurred.

The problem with that point of view is knowledge certainly has not passed away yet. Since all three belong to the same passage – prophecy which is the speaking forth of God's word. It's not necessarily predictive. It's forth telling. Since prophecy hasn't passed away. People are still proclaiming God's word, since knowledge hasn't passed away, insight into God's truth that's what the gift of knowledge is. Since that hasn't passed away, why should we say that tongues have passed away?

So one modern anti charismatic writer goes on to a nicer point of view. He says, When you look at prophecies they will cease, knowledge that will pass away. That is in the passive mood. But if you look at "tongues will be stilled"... What his writer does is say "When the perfect comes," the perfect is the scripture. It hadn't yet come into existence when Paul was writing so Paul was saying when the scriptures come into being, the perfect will have come, tongues is going to cease by itself. The other gifts are going to cease. He doesn't admit that knowledge is going to cease – that's still going on. Further he says that the apostle knows that the apostolic age will someday close and this gift won't be needed any more.

That assumes that Paul himself looks forward to a close of the apostolic age. But if we look at the New Testament carefully we find out that Paul is never talking about someday the apostolic age is going to end. We find Paul instead talking about the return of the Lord. Everything between Paul's life and the return of the Lord is the apostolic age. It's the day of the Lord. The day of the outpouring of his Spirit on his church. What Paul is really doing here is contrasting prophecy, knowledge and tongues with love. Saying these spiritual gifts like all spiritual gifts will someday pass away. But love is not going to pass away. That's the comparison. This is not a verse therefore that teaches that tongues have passed away and are not to be found any more in the church.

Paul therefore begins chapter 14 by saying, follow the way of love. Eagerly desire spiritual gifts. That again is the repeat of line that ends chapter 12. Earnestly desire spiritual gifts.

This is important because some would again suggest that you should take toward the spiritual gifts the attitude of whatever will be will be.

Here is a clear admonition to us, encouraging us to seek spiritual gifts, consistent with what Jesus himself taught in Luke 11 about the gift of the Spirit, "If you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him."

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He goes on to talk about the difference between the utterance of tongues in a public meeting and the expression of prophecy. The scripture never uses the phrase message in tongues. I personally prefer not to use it because I don't understand tongues to be a message from God to us anyway. Tongues is an utterance from us to God. It is a speaking forth of the phrase – wonder and glory of God. It is either prayer or praise. Message you will not find in the scripture. But it's a word that has been commonly used.

“For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God.” Tongues is speaking to God. It's not speaking to men. “Indeed no one understands him. I pray in tongues and you don't understand me. He utters mysteries in the Spirit.” That is different from Acts 2. In Acts 2 when they're all speaking in other tongues everyone who is there from all over the world is hearing different languages being spoken. But mostly when it's being spoken people in the audience do not know what language is being spoken. Periodically there will be some unique phenomenon that someone will recognize a tongue being spoken. And it will be a tremendous boost of encouragement to the people.

He says someone who prophesies, that is declares the word of God in language which is learned and understood, someone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement, and comfort. He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself.” That's an important thing about the personal use of tongues. It is very personally up building. “... edifies himself. But he who prophesies edifies the church. I would like everyone of you to speak in tongues.” Let those who say Paul wasn't really turned on by everybody having the experience of speaking in other tongues. He saw it as sort of optional. Compare that to what the apostle here says. “I would that everyone of you speak in other tongues.” But he says “I would rather you prophecy.” Here he's talking now about the operation of the gift within the focus of the assembly. He who prophesies is greater than he who speaks in tongues. Unless he interprets so that the church may be edified.” Why is he greater? Because when the church is functioning in that second realm, it's not now functioning with the baptism of the Spirit, it's not functioning in the private personal prayer life, it's functioning in the body. The person who speaks in the body with out being interpreted is a lesser edifying instrument in the body. Therefore the gift is lesser in value.

“Now brothers if I come to you and speak to you in tongues what good would I be unless I bring some revelation of knowledge or prophecy or word of instruction...” Paul then goes on to say that when he comes to them, he would rather speak to them five words of understanding that he would to speak all kinds of language which they do not understand.

He says, verse 13, that for this reason that a man who speaks in tongues should pray that he may interpret what he says. When you're in an audience and you give an utterance in tongues you would begin praying that it would be interpreted. For if I pray in a tongue my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful. So what shall I do? [now he speaks on a personal level] I will pray with my spirit [I will pray with tongues] but I will also pray with my mind. I will sing with my spirit but I will also sing with my mind.”

If you're praising God with you spirit, that is in tongues, how can one who finds himself among those who do not understand to say “amen” to your thanksgiving since he doesn't know what you're saying. You may be giving thanks well enough but the other man is not edified. “I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you.” Again an incredible statement when you consider that Paul is saying in a public assembly, I'd rather speak 5 words of understanding than

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all of these unintelligible words. But on the private personal level I speak in tongues more than all of you. But in the church I'd rather speak five intelligent words than ten thousand words in a tongue.

Then there's this strange phrase, "Brothers, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be innocent but in your thinking be adults. In the law is written through men of strange tongues and through the lips of foreigners I will speak to this people and even then they will not listen to me. Says the Lord. Tongues therefore are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers. Prophecy however is for believers and not for unbelievers. So if the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues and some do not understand or some unbelievers come in will they not say that you're out of your mind. But if an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare."

There's almost an inherent paradox between verse 21 that tongues are a sign for unbelievers and prophecy is for believers. Then Paul turns right around and says "But if somebody who is unbelieving walks in and hears you speaking in other tongues they're going to be turned off. But if someone is prophesying the secrets of the heart will be open and then they'll come to God." What in the world does he mean when he says tongues are a sign to those who are not believers?

I think Paul is capable as a writer of the ironic twist. Many times he uses irony in speech. If I were understanding verse 21 I'd put in some kind of context like this. Isaiah is prophesying that God's people who are rebellious – Isaiah is prophesying that God's rebellious people Judah who did not listen to the clear word of prophecy that Isaiah had given would find a time in their life when the Babylonians would come. They would experience God's judgment and they would know that God had spoken to them because their land had been invaded by people who spoke a strange tongue. Therefore the other tongues to them would be a sign, hearing these Babylonians speaking, that they finally were beginning to open and listen to God. They'd refused to listen to the plain speech of God. Evidently what I think is happening at the church of Corinth and my understanding of these verses as they relate together is that there were many at the church of Corinth who were saying the Spirit hasn't moved unless there's been an utterance in tongues. We know that the Spirit has moved, we know that God has been present if there are a lot of tongues. Paul's saying if you are looking for tongues as an evidence of spirituality then you must realize that tongues is a sign for the unbeliever. If you're depending upon it to affirm your nearness to God for example then it's not that at all. Because you in that position, you are like Isaiah's people – a professing believer but really an unbeliever. You're looking for a sign to confirm your faith.

In most cases tongues when they occur are not indeed a sign to an unbeliever who walks in unsaved. They are a sign to an unbelieving believer – the nominal person who is saying the Spirit didn't move in that service because such and such didn't happen. They're not believing sufficiently in the power of God or his word.

Paul says speak in words that can be understood. "What they shall we say? When you come together everyone has a hymn, a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue, an interpretation. All must be done for the strengthening of the church." Then he goes on to say in verse 32 "The spirits of the prophets are subject to the control of the prophets. God is not a God of disorder but of peace." Again he's laying to rest the assumption that spiritual gifts function through people

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who are in a state of ecstasy. Ecstasy is not to be characteristic of the operation of spiritual gifts. That is, ecstasy means an out of being, out of body kind of state. They're not. The person who operates the gift is in full control and is rational and is conscious.

Paul then signs off in verse 39 with this phrase "Therefore my brothers be eager to prophesy and do not forbid speaking in tongues. But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way." Paul is saying that it is improper for a Christian body to lay down a rule that says you cannot speak in tongues. As much as I have dear friends and colleagues in ministry and pastoral positions who feel differently than I do on the subject I am under orders from an apostle that the gift of tongues is not to be forbidden in a public worship service. Paul explicitly enjoins it and says we are not to forbid speaking in tongues. I take that to be not only on a personal level but I take that to be on a public level as well.

I hope that's helpful. This message is a process of a lifetime of learning, not just picked up this week.

I'd like to present seven lines of thought for you.

One is simply – we may never fully know their value. I want to start out by being humble in the presence of God and admit that there is mystery. We do not know always fully why God does things the way he does. But we trust God that when he works we may indeed depend upon him and rely upon him because God would never do anything toward us that would be harmful toward us. There are some people who question whether or not speaking in tongues would be detrimental influence on their life. Whether it would perhaps contribute – and some have suggested who do not come from this side of spiritual experience – I heard a sermon in Newport Beach some years ago preached on this subject that linked speaking in tongues with people in mental institutions. Some people have great worry about it's going to produce schizophrenic disorder or something like that in life. But that's not the case at all. When God gives a gift to us, just like when I give a gift to my children it's a good gift. I don't give my children poison. And God doesn't give us things like that.

In terms of not knowing the value, I like what I heard years ago in the book They Speak with Other Tongues "What's the use of speaking in tongues? The only way I can answer that is by saying, what's the use of a bluebird? What is the use of a sunset? Just sheer unmitigated uplift. Joy unspeakable. And with it health and peace and rest and release from burdens and tensions." We may never fully know.

A second value in speaking with other tongues is that from a theological point of view the tongue has been affected by our fall, our sin. Therefore it stands within the scope of God's redemption. So many sins are related to the tongue. We go through scripture and we can catalogue a whole list of them. In fact, James compares the tongue to a bit in the horse's mouth. He compares it to a small rudder. He compares it to a fire that sets a forest ablaze. He compares it to a world of evil among the parts of the body, untamable, a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

Numbers of sins are associated with the tongue. Anger, losing one's temper, profanity, taking the name of the Lord in vein, lying, criticism, or destructive speech of another individual, levity which is unseemly, frivolity or silly talk or continuing to rattle on like a moron – Ephesians 5:4.

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That's not to strip us from humor. Scripture does not say we have to be sober sided and sober faced all the time. But it's to say there is a kind of speech driven that can mark us in terms of our speech as always being the fool. This kind of speaking is not good for us. It does not build us up spiritually.

A grumbling is another mark of wrongful human speech. The wrongful use of the tongue. Philippians 2:14 "Do all things without grumbling or disputing." We know from the Exodus that the people of God got in trouble because they were murmuring.

Foul talk is also a misuse of the tongue. Gutter language. Language with sexual innuendoes. Language which is defecating kind of speech. Impurity in speech. Ephesians 4:29, 5:3-4, 5:12 All kinds of speech which is foul or filthy. It soils the spirit. Our spirit. Therefore the tongue has come like all the other parts of us – under the fall. One of the things that God is doing in giving us a tongue to speak, both with praise and prayer he is at work redeeming that tongue. He is at work changing it for it's rightful purpose. The tongue was meant to communicate with God and the tongue was meant to adequately communicate to the ones who are near us. To the people we love. When we become a Christian God sets to work redeeming us, buying us back, turning us away from wrong things to the right functions for everything. The tongue has a right function. When we think of the tongue receiving the baptism in the Spirit and speaking with other tongues as being part of God's work of redemption, what he is doing is giving to the tongue a new kind of release in praise and prayer to God. Whereas our tongue formerly was used for lying, criticism, levity, filthy talk, grumbling and the like now it is used both with language we know and language we don't know to praise and glorify, magnify, exalt and bless the name of God.

A kind of third value for tongues is that the tongue gives us the ability to declare what reality will be to us. This is kind of a fine point but I think I can illustrate it from the book of Genesis where God brings before Adam all the animals and he says now you have a chance to name them. Adam names a reality for himself and reality takes on objective meaning.

Our words bring about change. I've noticed again that I've slipped in recent weeks into a speech pattern that was proving to be debilitating toward me. My tongue was declaring a reality for me that if I would simply change my speech another reality would be declared. My tongue was continually saying, "I'm tired." I've said that so many times I get tired thinking about saying I'm tired. I was quickened the other day to say, "Sufficient for the day is the strength that the Lord is going to give me. This day I'm not going to live it, with God's help, tired. I'm going to get everything done that the Spirit has planned for today. I don't need to live crunched. I don't need to feel that I'm under a pressure cooker. I don't have to name that. I don't have to say that. I don't have to accept that. I can say this day I'm going to live up to the full level of minutes God gives me and with his help I'm going to live them with strength."

I believe there's power that comes to us as we declare that reality will be to us. Again, there's some truth in the positive confession movement. Often our negative statements about things declare the way things are going to go. – "I just knew it would never turn out right." And sure enough we declare that reality and it comes into existence. It doesn't turn out right.

When we come back to the subject of tongues declaring reality, what is happening when we're speaking in tongues? Acts 2 – we are declaring the wonders of God. Magnificent, great, grand,

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sublime, beautiful. With our tongues we are expressing the reality about God. We're describing his character in language we don't understand but our spirit understands because our spirit is immensely edified as we do this. We're declaring as we speak in tongues that great sense of mystery. That sense of belongingness. That sense that can never be fully articulated.

The fourth value for other tongues is the tongue is the one part of the body most fitted to the praise God wants to bring forth from the depth of our souls. My hands are limited. My tongue can do a whole lot more. It's not surprising that when the Spirit comes God didn't choose to do something funny with my hands. He chose to do something with that part of my body which has the greatest opportunity of expressing full orb of experience, that no other member of the body quite has that capability.

Too many times in terms of bringing forth this praise from the depths of our soul we again go passive when it comes to praising God with other tongues. We simply expect that maybe sometime the Lord will allow me to do this and I'll be in a state of ecstasy. But the gift of tongues like all spiritual gifts operates on the basis of pressing forward and moving into action and declaring reality.

The fifth value for speaking in other tongues is that the tongue gives us ability to communicate readily. This is closely related to the fourth point. A tongue whether a known tongue or an unknown tongue is for that purpose.

If we try to express the character and nature of God himself in English – God is all knowing, God is all powerful, God is all present, God is unchanging, God is Spirit, God is Father, Son and Spirit yet one. God is love, God is holy, God is just, God is good, God is righteousness. We could go on attempting to describe God. After a period of time we run out of descriptive language. Like trying to describe the Grand Canyon we run out of being able to describe it and we need to step into another dimension. The dimension of visually experiencing it. It seems time that one of the things about the gift of tongues and personal operation is that it kicks us into a visual expression of God that although we are employing speech it frees up the spirit to begin declaring God's wonders in more expansive way that we can do it simply with words that we know and employ. Tongues, therefore, in other languages give us the ability to communicate rather readily with God and allow us to express wonder, awe and worship in dimensions that we cannot fully express with our mind.

Keep the biblical balance. Paul says pray with the mind and pray with the spirit. Know the value, the edification value and begin to pray only with other tongues. That's not scriptural either. We need to pray with our understanding. But there's a point in which speaking in those tongues kicks us free on the non rational side and begin thinking of God and feeling good and experiencing God in ways that are extremely powerful and expressive to us.

A sixth kind of value of speaking in other tongues is that the tongue is the shortest distance between our inner and our outer life. Therefore you will know what's going on inside me by listening long enough to my speech. Jesus himself said this in Luke 6:43-45 when he concludes by saying, "The good man brings good out of the good stored up in his heart. And the evil man brings evil out of the evil stored up in his heart for out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks." Speech is an expression of what's going on in the heart.

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That's why Paul can say for example that speaking with other tongues is edifying us within because it is a heart that is full of a river of experience with God. It's why commonly those who practice this gift seem to me have a tremendous amount of joy operating in their life. Show me a person who regularly prays to God in the spirit, that is in unknown tongues, and I will show you a common predominant characteristic of their life style is that they are a joyous person. They're at peace. They have resonance with life.

That's why praying in the spirit is so important when we feel times of depression, when we feel lonely, when we feel hurt. Because the Spirit of God is wanting to intercede for us and pray for us. He knows the shortest distance between our inward life and the outward expression of life. He wants us to be able to come to him. Joy is a characteristic of those who are exercising this gift on a continuing personal level.

A seventh value for tongues is that tongues is the shortest distance between our inner life and the inner life of someone else. If I want to tell you how I feel I best communicate that by articulating it. It's the same way when we communicate with the Lord. How best do we communicate with him? By speaking to him. We may speak to him in language that we know. We may speak to him in language we do not know. I'm intrigued with some of the psalms for example 42:7, which tells us Deep calls unto deep. It's a reference to the mystery of the communication of nature with God. Of people with God. Deep calls unto deep. We can think of that in terms of there's a depth of the moon that calls to the tides to rise and fall. We don't see that law in motion but the gravitational pull of the moon upon the water body forces of earth. There's a deep there. Deep calling unto deep.

There is a deep built within a migratory bird that calls it to fly thousands of miles, something that you cannot see but something that pulls it along. Just as real in the invisible world there is depth of God calling forth to a depth in us, inviting us to respond. The shortest distance between our inner life and the inner life of God is to go ahead and respond and let the deep in us call to the deep that is in God.

Paul says in Romans 8:26 the spirit intercedes for us with groanings inarticulate. Or the Spirit Intercedes for us with words that cannot be spoken and therefore understood. No doubt a reference to praying in the Spirit, in tongues. These groanings are longings, they're heartaches, they're aspirations, which well up within the depths of each one of us. They cannot be confined within the choice of every day words. They are a wrestling within our deep, calling unto the depths in God.

In the Old Testament, Hannah kind of represents this experience when childless she cries out to Eli who confronts her for the fact that her lips are moving but she is not speaking. "I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine. I have been pouring out my soul to the Lord."

There's a point in prayer that we move past, "We pray for our family and ask that you bless this food and we pray for our country and our president and we ask that all things be well. Amen." It is an important dimension of prayer when we remember what God has told us to pray for. But there's a moving past that sort of artificial courtesy of prayer, common greeting of prayer to moving into depths within our spirit addressing God. Psalm 62:8 says "Trust in him at all time. O people, pour out your hearts to him for God is our refuge."

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I want to encourage you in your life to open your life to God and pour out your heart to God. It seems to me that looking at this matter of tongues and operation as we summarize again the way it functions in the Christian body it functions in association with the gift of the spirit, it functions as a singular gift when we're in worship and someone stands up and utters a gift. It's meant to change an ongoing function in our prayer life, day after day, month after month, year after year where it's a habit.

There's one thing I would protest against from my own experience in Pentecostal churches is that the baptism of the Spirit was presented as a kind of once you get it you've got it. It was not seen often as a gateway to a manner of life. Many people have come to look at tongues as separate from the ministry of the Spirit, as something you do. But it's not something you've got. I don't like people to say, "I got the Spirit... I got it." The Spirit is not an it. He's a person. He's not a neuter impersonal force. He's personal. He's real. He's God coming into our lives. Moving into us. He's the comforter. Jesus was the comforter, the one called alongside to help. The Spirit is called alongside to help. We don't get it. We don't get him. He gets us. If we get him then we can manipulate him. If he gets us then he can use us. We need more of him everyday in our lives. It's not something we get. It's not something we look back to like we get an accomplishment and nail the diploma to a wall and once in a while dust it off remember once we did that.

Scripture when it talks about the filling of the Spirit doesn't address it from at some point in your life were you are filled with the Spirit. The scriptures are continuing to be concerned about the ever-present filling of the Spirit. It's not what happened then. It's what's going on now. On the day they were given the gift of the Spirit they were full. But they were only full to their capacity. They were capable of expansion. Since the Spirit is infinite he is capable of giving more of himself. There is more of us to receive the Spirit as we grow. And there is more of him to be given to us. We are wineskins. We are stretching with the life of the Spirit.

That's why the Spirit in the scripture is referred to as either air or water. If you let water sit in a container, day after day and don't replenish it, it will evaporate and grow stale. If you're looking at some moment in your life where you encounter dimension with the Holy Spirit and have not gone past that then you've got a very stale life jar that has probably about all evaporated.

The Lord is saying when the Spirit comes upon you I will cause rivers to flow forth from your life, a dimension of continual filling, dimension of wind continually blowing, a liquid, an air that comes upon us and remains with us.

We can't really afford to look at some past in our background and say, Then is when it happened and things will never be better than that day. That is the greatest moment in my life. God convicts me of attitudes I have where sometimes I say, When was the moment you felt closest to the Lord? We search our minds and think back. I'm not laying guilt or condemnation. I'll never do that. But the closest moment I feel to the Lord should be the present moment. There's more of me that needs the Lord than has ever needed the Lord before. There's more of him to be given because I have a greater capacity now to receive. It's not *one* time you had a spiritual experience. It's are you walking with the Lord? Are you filled with the Spirit? Are you growing in grace? Are you exercising the gifts? Are you praying in a way that is edifying to your heart?

THE VALUE OF OTHER TONGUES

Dreams and Visions – Part 6

Lord, we come to a close of this time together of looking at your word and trying to express as best we can in language we know what your word invites us to experience. We want to open our life to you, Lord. On behalf of everyone here I want to pray a prayer of intercession and a prayer of invitation. You know how beat down some within this audience are in living life. You know everything about us. You know the hassles we have. You know the hurts we experience. You know the help we need. You're aware of all that. You're even aware that at one point in our life we were open to you and we've been living as kind of as if that was the cosmic shove off and everything else was downhill from then. Rather than being an upward trail of experience with you, we've maybe had a great revelation of you sometime in our life. A lot of other things have come in and clouded our life. There's been a hardening of the spiritual arteries and the flow of the Spirit isn't getting through. Do a work within us. With the prophet we say, Lord in our lives, in the midst of the years, revive thy work O God. In the midst of our life revive us. Fill us. Let your Spirit come upon us. Let us not be disciples in name only. But let us be men and women youth people of fire and wind. People alive with you. People in tune with you. People in whom you can intercede. In whom you can pray. In whom you can praise. In whom you can dwell. In whom you can shine as light. Come upon us O Spirit of God and visit us ever anew with your presence that we never grow stale or depend upon yesterday's experience with you. But that we are present and current, fresh and up to date, filled with the Spirit, with joy, with faith, with power. We ask this Lord in your name. Amen.