

To Be Continued...
The Holy Spirit & His Gifts
First Corinthians 14:6-12

When is "five" greater than "ten thousand?"

When it comes to the words you speak in the public assembly of the church.

1 Corinthians 14:13 Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret.

The cessationist wants to read this as if it says, "therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may prophesy... or teach."

Paul nowhere in this chapter denigrates the gift of speaking in tongues. Why would he? It is, after all, a manifestation of God the Holy Spirit. To denigrate His gifts - any of them - is to denigrate Him.

The solution to the Corinthian problem of simultaneously speaking in uninterpreted tongues is to speak in tongues one-by-one and ask for a corresponding gift of interpretation for each.

Interpretation renders the tongue intelligible, and as the hearers understand it, they are built-up.

1 Corinthians 14:14 For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful.

Do you immediately read that verse as a negative? As a slam on tongues? It isn't.

Because tongues is a spiritual talk between your spirit and God's that bypasses your "understanding" some say that speaking in tongues even in private is, well, stupid. God says it builds you up to do so in private.

Let's believe God and not our own arguments. Too often the premium we place on our own intellect becomes a stumblingblock in our walk with God.

With the gift of tongues, even if I do not have it myself, I see that there is more to knowing God and loving God than my mere intellect can fathom.

1 Corinthians 14:15 What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding.

"What is the conclusion" that cessationists come to? They dismiss "pray[ing] with the spirit" and only allow "pray[ing] with the understanding." And the same for "singing."

By the way, apparently it's OK to sing in tongues.

Praying and singing "with the spirit" means praying and praising with the gift of tongues. Praying and singing "with the understanding" means praying and praising in ways that can be understood by everyone.

Whether it is spoken or sung, Paul says that he will do it both with tongues and with words that can be understood by everyone.

If you are in a public assembly, and are invited to participate, you can also do both, but with one additional rule: if you pray or praise in tongues, it needs a corresponding interpretation.

Let me pause for a moment to explain something important. A charismatic might observe us as a church and object to our Sunday morning service since we disallow speaking in tongues and other manifestations of the Spirit.

I don't think it's fair to say we disallow them, although that is the end result. It's more like we disallow interruptions because we are led by the Holy Spirit in our order of service.

I hesitate to give an example because I don't think a church service can be compared to anything else we attend. I mean, in the meetings of the church, Jesus walks in our midst seeking to minister in the power of His resurrection. Lives are changed for eternity.

That's not gonna happen when you go see *XMen: Days of Future Past*. But let's say you are at the movie and the guy in front of you, for whatever reason, gets out his iPad, opens to Netflix, and starts watching *Thor: The Dark World* with the volume turned up.

Then a drama troupe goes forward, to the floor just in front of the screen, and begins to act out a play.

Those would be interruptions because you are there to see the movie.

Similarly, we trust God the Holy Spirit to tell us what He wants us to do at our services. And we hear Him for Sunday morning telling us to emphasize uninterrupted, corporate singing, and the uninterrupted teaching and preaching of the Bible.

We hear Him telling us to do things very differently on Wednesday nights - encouraging participation and the exercise of spiritual gifts.

It's not unspiritual to have order, or to plan; it does not in any way "quench" the Holy Spirit to follow His leading.

We need to somehow get over the notion that the Spirit can only be spontaneous, and that planning is somehow inherently unSpiritlike.

1 Corinthians 14:16 Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say "Amen" at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say?

"Bless with the spirit" is a description of speaking prayer or praise to God in tongues.

The "uninformed" seems to be a blanket description of anyone who hears you speaking in tongues but cannot understand because there is no interpretation. You treat them, or make them, "uninformed" by speaking unintelligibly.

"Amen" assumes the setting of corporate worship, where this word, taken over from the Jewish synagogue, indicated wholehearted response to and endorsement of the words of another.

An utterance in tongues, either spoken or sung, cannot evoke an endorsement from others who hear it, because they have no way of knowing what you said.

There might be a slight hint in this that certain people might only seem to be speaking in tongues when, in fact, they do not have the gift at all.

How's that??? It's not uncommon in certain Pentecostal churches for the leaders to teach a person how to speak in tongues. They might give you a word or words to repeat, or some other such exercise.

Here is an example of what one group recommends:

- Get on your knees, close your eyes and bow your head in subjection and reverence to God.
- Begin praising God saying the word "Hallelujah" and repeating it over and over.
- When/if you start to stumble over this repetition of the word "Hallelujah" don't try to correct your speech to say the word accurately. It may be the Holy Spirit beginning to take control of your tongue and to change this word of praise to another language, which is what speaking in tongues is.
- Continue to do these last two steps for as long it is necessary to allow the Spirit to take control of your tongue and to speak in tongues.

Truth is, you might only think you are speaking in tongues when, in reality, you're not.

But if you speak in tongues and there is interpretation, you can be much more certain your gifting is genuine.

1 Corinthians 14:17 For you indeed give thanks well, but the other is not edified.

If your gift is genuine, it still cannot "edify" others without it being understood by them.

1 Corinthians 14:18 I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all;

Apparently his life of personal devotion was regularly given to praying and praising in tongues.

"More than you all" certainly isn't bragging. Paul wasn't one to boast.

He might be referring to the fact that, often enough, a person who has the gift of speaking in tongues rarely exercises it in private. It would be no surprise if many of the tongues-speakers in Corinth were exercising their gift a lot in public but only a little in private.

1 Corinthians 14:19 yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

I can't help but wonder if some were accusing Paul of being unspiritual, or of not being Spirit-filled, because all he did was "teach" them.

He could out-tongues them any day. The manifestation of the gift was not enough. It must be manifest in ways that could be understood so everyone might benefit.

We shouldn't want to *look* spiritual, but rather to *be* spiritual, and that by thinking of others and not ourselves.

Has God given you the gift of speaking in tongues? Then exercises it a lot by praying and praising in your devotions. Be open to exercising it here, too.

Do you desire the gift of speaking in tongues? We can't teach it; but I would encourage you, if you are prompted by the Holy Spirit, to simply start praying without speaking English.

I came across the testimony of a woman named Jackie Pullinger. She is a British Protestant Christian charismatic missionary to Hong Kong and founder of the St Stephen's Society. She has been ministering in Hong Kong since 1966. Her work has resulted in at least 500 drug addicts being saved from their drug addictions. The early years of her Hong Kong ministry are chronicled in the book *Chasing the Dragon*.

The intervention process that the drug addicts go through is very intensive. Instead of giving them medications they are put into a room for 10 days, and prayed over and cared for by a group of ex-addicts.

She was so successful in changing lives with the Gospel of Jesus Christ that the city officials gave her land to build a mission house to expand her work.

After an addict prayed to receive Jesus, Jackie and her volunteers would tell that new convert, "Now start speaking in a language not your own."

Without biases or teaching to the contrary, **they would**. And they would continue speaking in tongues, praying and praising God, and thereby get free of their addiction.

I'm not saying that every heroin addict who receives Jesus can speak in tongues; or that praying in tongues is the cure for anything.

It was God's will and His way for that mission, at that time.

The advice they gave is sound. "Start speaking in a language not your own."

I mean, if you're going to speak in tongues, at some point you're going to have to open your mouth and say something.

If it seems far-fetched to you, the Holy Spirit isn't giving you the gift. But it just might be the step of faith you need to take.

Listen: I once thought I had received a prophecy. I boldly started, "The Lord..." ***And that was all I said.!***

Needless to say, it wasn't the Spirit prompting me.

The first time I was ever asked to teach, it lasted five minutes; and it was only that long because I kept repeating myself.

But as much as I knew I did not have the gift of prophecy, I knew I was called to pastor and, therefore, teach. So I kept at it and allowed the Holy Spirit room to lead me hobbling along at first.

It's a faith-thing, discovering your gift or gifts. Step out.

