

The sign gift of tongues and it's real purpose in the Church

By Wm Tipton

Assertions/Conclusions of this Article

1. That tongues was mainly for the early church as a sign to the Jews, and also that the Holy Spirit had come.
2. That even though tongues was for the early church for a purpose, that scripture shows that it technically will exist in the church until we see Him face to face.
3. That there are absolute, enforceable rules pertaining to tongues to keep it from getting out of control as seems to have been a problem in the church at Corinth.

Supporting Evidence

As I work on this article I will add more and more, but firstly Im going to present relevant scripture as it pertains to each point above. Please be patient over the next week as I get this study together.

#1

Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.

In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord. Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe. (1Co 14:20-22)

#2

Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. (1Co 13:8-12)

Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order. (1Co 14:39-40)

#3

If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God. (1Co 14:27-28)

Paul very clearly shows that he would RATHER we prophecy and even says that he who prophecies is GREATER than he who speaks in tongues

I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.

(1Co 14:5)

2.0

Here we see that the gifts are distributed by the Holy Spirit and each person receives different gifts. It is also made very clear that not all will speak in tongues any more than all are apostles.

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led. Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom;
to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;
To another faith by the same Spirit;
to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;
To another the working of miracles;
to another prophecy;
to another discerning of spirits;
to another divers kinds of tongues;
to another the interpretation of tongues:

But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

For the body is not one member, but many.

If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?

But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body.

And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

And God hath set some in the church,

first apostles,
secondarily prophets,
thirdly teachers,
after that miracles,

then gifts of healings,
helps,
governments,
diversities of tongues.

Are all apostles?
are all prophets?
are all teachers?
are all workers of miracles?
Have all the gifts of healing?
do all speak with tongues?
do all interpret?
But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.
(1Co 12:1-31)

3.0

Did the gift of tongues cease?

1 Corinthians 13:8 -

Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

The rest of this passage shows that this is when we see 'face to face' which has not happened yet.

Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. (1Co 13:8-12)

WHEN tongues vanishes, so shall prophecies...

Paul also says that we arent to forbid speaking in tongues,

Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order. (1Co 14:39-40)

so I dont see evidence that they have ceased, but they clearly were and ARE for a sign for those who need to SEE evidence of some sort.

In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord. Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe. (1Co 14:20-22)

They were a sign to the Jews, to Peter and to others, but thats all tongues really are...a sign gift for those who NEED to SEE to BELIEVE.

Paul also says this just prior to that last quote;

Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.
(1Co 14:20)

So my guess is that Paul would be telling a LOT of tongues pushers today to stop being children/immature but to be mature in their understanding as to what tongues was/is for.

4.0

Some who push tongues say that tongues is for the spiritually mature, but *IF* tongues is for the mature in Christ why is it that the ONLY group in the New Testament is said that they are fleshly and babes in Christ and not able to bear the solid food ?

And I, brothers, could not speak to you as to spiritual ones, but as to fleshly, as to babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk and not with solid food, for you were not yet able to bear it; nor are you able even now.

(1Co 3:1-2)

Seems sort of contradictory that these would be spiritually mature to have so great a fellowship with the Holy Spirit to receive such a great gift only to be accused in such an inflammatory way by Paul. He calls them carnal children and we are to believe they were mature ? Very unlikely.