What is and What Isn’t Speaking in Tongues According to God’s Word?
Revised, edited and presented in book form

by Brent Tremain  B Min / Theol, B A Ed

Available for download from: www.gospelbibletruth.com
Contact: brent.tremain@gospelbibletruth.com
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Speaking in Tongues

What is Speaking in Tongues?

Glossolalia or speaking in tongues is practiced by an estimated 100 million Christians in the world today and the number engaging in this practice is growing at a massive rate every year. That is approximately 20% of all Christians. These statistics originally included (myself and the family of the author mentioned in the website above), so note that we have had first hand experience with tongues. But what many are wanting to know is if what is seen in the Church today is always from God or could there be other explanations. Note that speaking in tongues is also known as glossolalia, unknown tongues and ecstatic tongues.

History of Glossolalia

Throughout recorded history there have been many occasions where people have spoken in what was called ecstatic tongues. Note most of these accounts predate Pentecost and were of non-Christian origin.

*****Christians therefore can not say with confidence that every occurrence of glossolalia must be an expression of the will of God even though many do subscribe to this view.*****

Those practicing tongues today portray Pentecost as the supreme example of supernatural tongues; however, the recorded cases of glossolalia go back as far as 1100 B.C. On that occasion a young Amen worshiper attracted historical infamy when he became possessed by a god (possibly a demon)and began to make sounds in a strange ecstatic tongue.

Seven hundred years later, the Greek philosopher Plato demonstrated that he was well acquainted with the phenomenon of speaking in tongues as he referred to several families who practiced ecstatic speech, praying and utterings while supposedly possessed. He also pointed out that these practices had even brought physical healing to those who engaged in them. Plato and most of his contemporaries asserted that these occurrences were caused by divine inspiration. He suggested that God takes possession of the mind while man sleeps or is possessed and during this state, God inspires him with utterances which he can neither understand nor interpret. This does NOT mean of course that one practising speaking in tongues as seen today is possessed or not saved. That of course is just simply not true. When God confused the languages of His people who were rebelling at Babel in Genesis 11, they also spoke in “new tongues” and note this happened without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

In the last century before Christ, Virgil described the speaking of ecstatic tongues of the Sybilline priestess on the Island of Delos as the result of her being unified with the god Apollo. This happened while she meditated in a haunted cave amidst the eerie sounds of the wind playing strange music through the narrow crevices in the rocks.

Several of the mystery religions of the Greco-Roman world record the same phenomenon of speaking in tongues. Some of those most often listed are the Mithra cult of the Persians; the Osiris cult originating in the land of the Pharaohs, and the lesser known Dionysian, Eulusinian, and Orphic cults cradled in Macedonia, Thrace and Greece. Another indication comes from Lucian of Samosata (A.D. 120-198) who in De Dea Syria describes an example
of glossolalia as exhibited by a roaming believer of June, the Syrian goddess, stationed at Hierapolis in Syria. It is also interesting to note that the term glossolalia used so widely today comes from the Greek vernacular which was in existence long before the day of Pentecost. It should be frightening to all Christians that what we see now in the Church today, resembles these occurrences of ecstatic tongues that took place in these ancient cults before the day of Pentecost and that what took place at Pentecost does not in any way resemble these occurrences.

*****At Pentecost, it was undoubtedly and unarguably the speaking of foreign languages.*****

Believe it or not, speaking in tongues as seen in the Church today is a fairly recent phenomenon in Christianity. It came about in four waves. The 1st wave started around 1901 and was founded in the traditional Pentecostal movement by Charles Parham of Bethel College, Kansas. The 2nd wave, neo-Pentecostalism or the Charismatic movement entered most Churches in the early 1960's in Van Nuys, California, under Dennis Bennett, Rector of St Marks Episcopal (Anglican) Church. In ten years it spread to all major Protestant families of the world, reaching a total of 55 million people by 1990. It included the Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Lutherans, Roman Catholics and many others. The 3rd wave, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal movement started in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1967 among students and faculty of DuQuesne University, and by 1993 it touched the lives of over 100 million Catholics in over 238 nations. And the 4th wave was the Evangelicals that started in 1981 at Fuller Theological Seminary with John Wimber. By 1990, 33 million in the world were moving in signs and wonders, though they play down labels such as “Pentecostal” and “Charismatic.”

**Speaking in Tongues is not uniquely Christian**

**Tongues as we see it today did not come about as a result of studying the Bible. It just out of the blue happened. It should be of extreme concern to all Christians, because as already shown, it is not uniquely a Christian practice by any means.** Various studies have revealed that speaking in tongues is present in non-Christian religions all around the world. It is practiced in China, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia, Siberia, Arabia, Burma, and Arctic regions just to name a few. Glossolalia is found among the Eskimos, Japanese séances in Hokkaido, in a small cult led by Genji Yanagide of Moji City, the shamans in Ethiopia in the zar cult and various spirits in Haitian Voodoo and is also found extensively in African tribal religions.

Since history records that the practice of tongues goes back well before Pentecost in Acts chapter two, which was speaking in foreign languages, is speaking in tongues as we see it today from God, or as some claim from demonic sources or are there other explanations? Does what Paul speak of in regards to spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12-14 relate to what we see in Churches today? Why do Christians that practice speaking in tongues as we see it today, now call it a heavenly language or the tongues of Angels?

**What is the real Truth on Tongues?**

Many Christians believe that speaking in tongues is the fulfilment of the Latter Rain promised in Joel 2:28-29 and that it is the final manifestation of the Holy Spirit before the
Second Coming of Christ. It is also commonly taught that you have not received the Holy Spirit and are not saved unless you have demonstrated the gift of tongues and it seems to be the only sought after gift in the Church today.

So what is the real truth about tongues? Can we go by experience and feelings or do we go by the Word of God? The only way to find the truth to these questions of course has to be the Bible and the Bible alone. There is no other way. Everything we need to know for our Christian walk can be found in the Word of God and if not clearly taught in God’s Word, then we should not follow it lest we be deceived. The Bible warns us of this fact many times. In this document we will cover all aspects of speaking in tongues (glossolalia) from the Bible alone. We will not be going by experiences, feelings or so called “physical evidence.” We cannot afford to adopt an interpretation which demands a change in God’s Word. It is our interpretation that should change if necessary to fit the Bible – not the Bible changed to fit our interpretation. Since the enemy can and does counterfeit miracles of God we must follow the Bible alone.

2 Timothy 3:16 says, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:”

Many Christians that practice tongues as seen in the Church today exclaim it is not possible for this feeling not to be from God. They make this statement with absolute confidence as if it is totally impossible for them to be deceived despite the fact that Jesus Himself warns us ever so clearly that if possible, even the elect can be deceived.

Matthew 24:24 says, “For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.”

*****And hence the following warning must always be heeded and especially in regards to tongues as most commonly seen today where there can be no conclusive evidence of what one is saying. So how is this accomplished beyond all doubt, which of course means excluding personal thoughts and feelings?*****

1 John 4:1 “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God…”

The outpouring of the Latter Rain

The land of Israel had two main seasons of rain designated as the early or first rain, and the latter rain, and God promised that if Israel as a nation was faithful and obedient, these rainy seasons would never fail.

Deuteronomy 11:14 “That I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil.”

These terms early and latter rain are also used in the Bible figuratively to designate God’s blessing in His Church (Hosea 6:3; Zechariah 10:1) and in Joel 2:23-27 these terms are used in conjunction with the outpouring of God’s Spirit “before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come.” (Verses 28-32)

Joel 2:23-24 “Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month. 24 And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil.”
Joel 2:31-32 “The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come. 32 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.”

So if then the first occurrence of speaking in tongues on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 is designated as the early rain by which the seed of the Gospel was planted and germinated and commenced its vigorous growth by the gift of tongues, then “before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come” we are according to Joel 2:28-29 to expect another or latter rain.

Joel 2:28 “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:”

It was this very prophecy you will recall, that Peter quoted on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16-21) but its completed and final fulfilment still awaits us when God cuts short His work in righteousness in “a short work” (Romans 9:28) in the last days when in tremendous power the whole earth will be “lightened with his glory” and the message of God is represented as crying “m mightily with a strong voice.” (Revelation 18:1-2)

In Revelation 14:6, 14-20 God’s last message is described as going “to every nation, and kindred, and tongue and people.” Perhaps the real gift of tongues will play a significant role. The Church is now on the threshold of the most stupendous events ever witnessed. In the world; sin, degradation, misery, calamity, fear, violence, war and hatred such as the world has never seen before (Daniel 12:1; Matthew 24:7; Luke 21:25-26; 2 Timothy 3:1-5; Revelation 11:18); but in the church such power as the world has never seen before when the whole world will be “lightened with His glory” (Revelation 18:1)

Deceptions and Counterfeits of Satan

Christians should not be unmindful of the fact that Satan is a student of prophecy and can read all the above events with almost unerring accuracy. He knows better than we do, that in fulfilment of prophecy, God’s Holy Spirit is about to be poured out upon His people with the Pentecostal power of the Latter Rain.

Satan would be untrue to his nature if he did not seek to counterfeit God’s outpouring of His Spirit in the last days with his own quick and early spurious revival and utterly false manifestations such as a counterfeit version of tongues in order to deceive millions in this world. The warnings are repeated all through God’s Word.

2 Thessalonians 2:9 says, “The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders.”

For those looking for signs, evidences, miracles, wonders, manifestations and proofs such as tongues, Satan can and will supply everything to satisfy the pride of the natural human heart. Sadly, the world today does not want to have to think. Its great lust is for a titivating of the senses. Alcohol, drugs, the discotheque, loud overpowering pulsating music all cater to this desire.

Those in religious circles who are also looking for ecstasy of feeling, emotions release, uninhibited expression, and “feelings” of “being in the spirit”, Satan will also
have something to please exactly so everyone possible will be swept into his net. The common desire shared in the drug world and the natural human heart is for feelings of **power** rather than purity, **emotion** rather than duty, **ecstasy** rather than obedience, **feelings** rather than faith, **spiritual enlightenment** rather than the discipline of earnest study of God’s Word verse by verse. To all such Satan has his counterfeit and speaking in tongues is no exception.*****

2 Timothy 4:3-4 “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; 4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”

The Bible very clearly outlines its warnings of the deceptions of the last days. “Satan himself” we are told “is transformed into an angel of light” and “his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness.” (2 Corinthians 11:14-15). Matthew 24:24 foretells “false Christ's, and false prophets” showing “great signs and wonders” so clever and overpowering that “if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.”

Revelation 13:13-14 “And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, 14 And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast...”

*****And who gave power to the beast?*****

Revelation 13:4 “And they worshipped the dragon [Satan] which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who *is* like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?”

And Revelation 16:14 speaks again of “…spirits of devils, working miracles...”

*****Satan will even go as far as to make one believe they have cast out demons just to deceive, and why wouldn’t he. Many have accepted the false gift of tongues believing it is genuine by such deceptions. He is after all the great deceiver which the majority all too often under estimate. So how do we safe guard against Satan’s deceptions? The scriptures below give some excellent guidance.*****

Isaiah 8:20 “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, *it is* because there *is* no light in them.”

Matthew 22:29 “…Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.”

Acts 17:11 “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”

1 John 4:1 “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God...”

*****Satan can present a counterfeit so closely resembling the truth that it deceives those who are willing to be deceived, who desire to shun the self-denial and sacrifice demanded by the truth; but it is impossible for Satan to hold under his power one soul who honestly desires at whatever cost to know the truth. Sadly, speaking in tongues is lustfully coveted. Before Jesus returns there will be a true revival but we are warned that the counterfeit will precede it. Satan has always worked by bringing the counterfeit
ahead of the genuine because when the true comes it is much harder to accept when the counterfeit has already been accepted. All of the above are very serious warnings we cannot afford to ignore. We must be able to test the spirits to see if they are from God and we absolutely cannot go by our desires and feelings or experiences lest we fall victim to the enemy who will and does work on the desires and lusts of our hearts. I pray with all my heart that you will read on and consider these things very seriously.*****

What does the word Tongues mean?

The term tongues when used in reference to speaking just simply means “language”. The Greek word is “glossa” and means “tongue, language,” and the verb “laleo” means “to speak”, producing the word “glossolalia”.

Here is the definition from the Strong’s and Thayer dictionaries:

**Strong’s Definition:** “glossa”, pronounced “gloce'-sah” Of uncertain affinity; the tongue; by implication a language (specifically one naturally unacquired): - tongue.

**Thayer Definition:** “glossa”
1) The tongue, a member of the body, an organ of speech.
2) A tongue.
1a) the language or dialect used by a particular people distinct from that of other nations.

**References to Glossolalia in the KJV Bible**

The scriptures below are all references to the word tongues in the King James Bible. They have been grouped so one can clearly see all references to glossolalia and what they are referring to;

**The only mention of glossolalia in the Gospels**

Mark 16:17 “And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;”

**The fulfilment of Jesus words in Mark 16:17**

Acts 2:3-4 “And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

Acts 2:8 “And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?”

Acts 2:11 “Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.”

**Peter’s confirmation that the Gentiles could be baptised**

Acts 10:46 “For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,”
Paul finds disciples who had not received the Holy Spirit
Acts 19:6 “And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spoke with tongues, and prophesied.”

Paul’s references to the gifts of the spirit
1 Corinthians 12:10 “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:”

1 Corinthians 12:28 “And God has set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, (last of all) diversities of tongues.”

1 Corinthians 12:30 “Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?”

Paul’s emphasis on the value of love
1 Corinthians 13:1 “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.”

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.”

Paul’s warning and rebuke to the Corinthians
1 Corinthians 14:2 “For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.”

1 Corinthians 14:4-6 “He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church. 5 I would that you all spake with tongues, but rather that you prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying. 6 Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?”

1 Corinthians 14:9 “So likewise you, except you utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for you shall speak into the air.”

1 Corinthians 14:13-14 “Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret. 14 For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.”

1 Corinthians 14:18-19 “I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than you all: 19 Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.”

1 Corinthians 14:21-23 “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. 22 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. 23 If therefore
the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there
come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that you are mad?”

1 Corinthians 14:26-27 “How is it then, brethren? when you come together, every one of you
has a psalm, has a doctrine, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things
be done unto edifying. 27 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.”

1 Corinthians 14:39 “Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with
tongues.”

**Speaking in Tongues in the Gospels**

You will note from the previous scripture list that the only reference to tongues in the
Gospels is recorded in

Mark 16:17 “And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out
devils; they shall speak with new tongues;”

This statement made by Jesus to His Apostles on the gift of tongues is in the context of the
Great Commission, to preach the gospel to the whole world, to every creature. Jesus' disciples
were to receive the power of the gift of the Holy Spirit and they were to proclaim the Good
News of what Jesus had achieved for all mankind, first in Israel, and then to all nations,
tongues (foreign languages) and peoples. Note how the signs were to confirm the Gospel
message.

Mark 16:20 “And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them,
and confirming the word with signs following.”

*****During their previous ministry the disciples had been restricted to Israel, but now
their ministry was to go far beyond the borders of Palestine into countries where other
languages were spoken.*****

**How did the Apostles preach the Gospel to all nations?**

In Acts chapter two we have the first and most significant mention of tongues. How were the
Apostles to preach the Gospel to every nation? It was by one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit –
the gift of speaking in tongues.

*****This is the entire purpose of the gifts of the Spirit – to benefit all for the
advancement of God’s kingdom.*****

1 Corinthians 12:7 “But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of
all:”

Paul explains to the Corinthians that the gifts of the spirit are for the advancement of God’s
kingdom on Earth and are not for personal edification. So was the gift of tongues used for the
Church? This is how the passage in Acts chapter two reads from the NKJV Bible Acts 2:1-11

“When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2
And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the
whole house where they were sitting. 3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of
fire, and one sat upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began
to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. 5 And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. 6 And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. 7 Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, “Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? 8 And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? 9 Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11 Cretans and Arabs--we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.”

So was the gift of tongues for the benefit of the Church? NO! Was it a sign to unbelievers as Paul said? YES!

Paul wrote in ! Corinthians 14:22 “Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not…”

*****What Paul is saying is that tongues are a sign to unbelievers who are moved when they hear the gospel spoken in their tongue by men who had never learned or understood it. This is exactly what happened at Pentecost. They were all amazed when they heard these unlearned Galileans speaking in their own native tongue.*****

So did the gift benefit the Church? We find the answer revealed towards the end of chapter two.

Acts 2:41 “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.”

Note the word “gave” in verse Acts 2:4 denotes a gift of the Holy Spirit.

The gift of tongues is not a learned experience. This is in contrast to the common practice in Pentecostal and the Charismatic meetings where they are taught or instructed how to
receive the gift of tongues. **When the true gift of tongues is given, no prompting or teaching is required, it just happens naturally by the power of the Holy Spirit.**

Many associate the word utterance with uttering, as in quiet mutterings as seen in much of the tongue speaking today.

But the word translated “utterance” in Acts 2:4 actually means “to speak out loudly and clearly” or “to speak with emphasis.” Strong’s gives this definition: “apophtheggomai” pronounced “ap-of-theng'-om-ahee” From G575 and G5350; to enunciate plainly; that is, declare: - say, speak forth, utterance.

It is obvious from this passage in Acts chapter two, that all of these people from many different countries were hearing the Gospel in their own language for their nation. The languages in which the disciples were speaking were known foreign languages and dialects, not unintelligible mutterings. And they were amazed that these Galileans, uneducated in the “proper” schools, and all from a lower class of society, could speak these foreign languages. Luke is emphasizing to the reader that the miraculous gift of speaking in other languages at Pentecost was the ability to speak articulate, intelligible, foreign languages which had not been learned previously and were not learned at that time. The gift of tongues (languages) was instant and spontaneous and not “learned.” As Paul said in 1 Corinthians 12:7, the gifts of the spirit were for the benefit and growth of the whole Church and here we see no better demonstration on how speaking in tongues not only benefited the Church, but made it grow at a phenomenal rate and no assumptions are required.

In Acts chapter ten we have the second occurrence of speaking in tongues. Was this any different to the first occurrence? This is how the passage reads.

Acts 10:44-48 “While Peter yet spoke these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. 45 And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. 46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, 47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? 48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.”

Peter who was prejudiced against the Gentiles was reluctant to baptise them but when they began speaking in tongues he knew it was God’s will for them to be baptised in water also. This second occurrence of tongues (other foreign languages) is further shown by Peter giving an eyewitness account that it was the same situation as in Acts chapter two.

Acts 11:15 “And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, **as upon us at the beginning.**”

He affirmed that God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us (at Pentecost) when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts 11:17 “If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?”

*****Peter had no doubt that the gift of tongues (foreign languages) by the believers in Caesarea was “the same gift” of miraculously speaking foreign languages as the gift which he and the other followers of Jesus received on the day of Pentecost. In the very book we see the Church established, we also see the first use of speaking in tongues and
being used for that very purpose. Every mention is a known language for the purpose of taking the Gospel to every nation. It is never introduced as a personal communication language with God.****

Can Speaking in Tongues be the language of Angels?

Does Paul say that he speaks in the tongues of Angels? If this is what Paul is saying, then he is also saying that he understands all mysteries, has all knowledge (only God is omniscient) and has all faith that can remove mountains and that he is giving his body to be burned. That is just not possible and Paul did not give his body to be burned and so cannot be what he is teaching.

This is the passage from the King James Version Bible:

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. 2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. 3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.”

The translators of the KJV Bible have actually failed us on this occasion in the translating of the word “though” which in Greek is “ean”, pronounced eh-an’. This is the Thayer Definition: 1) if, in case.

The Greek word “ean” should have been translated to the word “if” and not as “though”. In all other places in the KJV Bible, more than 90% of the time it was translated to the word “if” and it should have translated to “if” in these verses also. The Contemporary English Version translates 1 Corinthians 13:1 as follows,

“What if I could speak all languages of humans and of angels? If I did not love others, I would be nothing more than a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.”

And the VW-Edition Bible translates it as follows:

“If I were to speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become as sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.”

Almost all other Bible translations have also use the word “if” and not “though” and as you can see it makes a large difference as to how the verse reads. For those wondering, Paul was beheaded, not burned.

Paul is saying “If” I had all knowledge, “If” I could speak in the tongues of Angels, “If” I understood all mysteries, “If” I could remove mountains, “If” I were to give my body to be burned but had not love, I might as well be like a clanging symbol. Paul is using superlatives i.e. he is giving exaggerated examples to make his point on the importance of love and how without love it profits him nothing. Speaking of love and gifts;

Paul also says, 1 Corinthians 13:8 “Charity [love] never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be [gift of] knowledge, it shall vanish away.”
Are you saved if you don’t speak in tongues?

The teaching and belief of some that you have not received the Holy Spirit if you do not speak in tongues comes from Mark 16:17-18 that we have previously discussed. It reads,

“And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;”

Some say this verse proves the apostles would be speaking in *new* tongues that never existed before but it could just as easily mean to speak in tongues that were *new to them*. 

Speaking in *new* tongues was fulfilled at Pentecost as the apostles spoke in new tongues as they spread the Gospel to all the nations and commenced God’s Church. This is the purpose for all the gifts as Paul said “to the profit of all.” Further research found that there are in fact two Greek words for “new.” One means *brand new never existed before* and the other means *to renew*. Guess which one is used here? It is not *brand new* but *renew*. Jesus is saying they would speak in tongues which were new to them but already known, i.e. recognizable languages and that is exactly what happened at Pentecost. 

Mark 16:17 says “them that believe.” Nothing is said of salvation or the Holy Spirit. The question is whether Jesus meant that all these signs will follow every single person or whether Jesus was having a private conversation with His Apostles and was only telling them that these are various signs and miracles that you will see follow those who believe as you take the Gospel to the world. Remember this statement by Jesus was made to His Apostles as He instructed them in regards to the Great Commission. 

What Jesus was saying did not stop at verse 17 as He continues to say in verse 18.

“They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.”

If we choose to take Jesus words as meaning all these things will be done by he who believes and that the person is not saved unless he does, then in order to be saved we must be able to demonstrate the following: We must be able to demonstrate speaking in tongues, casting out more than one demon, being bitten by a snake and drink poison and not get sick or die, and we must be able to lay hands on any sick person at any time and always have them recover. Hands up those who have met these requirements! My hand is definitely down. There have been various cults over the years that decided foolishly to take every word Jesus said literally and tried to perform the deadly acts and many have died as a result. 

If Jesus was referring to the things that the Apostles would see and do, did these things happen? Did they all receive the gift of tongues? A common and very much needed gift in taking the Gospel to the world back in the first century but Paul still tells us NO. But obviously most did due to the need. Did they cast out demons? Yes, the Apostles cast out many demons.
Did any get bitten by snakes and not get sick or die? Yes, Paul did and he didn’t die.

Acts 28:3-6 “And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. 4 And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he has escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live. 5 And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm. 6 Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god.”

Did they lay hands on the sick and did they all recover? Yes, example Acts 19:11-12,

“And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: 12 So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.”

I am not too sure where poison enters the equation. Jesus was most likely pointing out that if they had it would not have hurt them. But I very strongly suggest not putting God to the test on that one today as the odds are you will most surely die.

*****To claim that speaking in tongues must be a sign of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit is to say that men like Wycliffe, Huss, Jerome, Luther, Calvin and thousand of others were never baptised with the Holy Spirit and are not saved. Probably a dangerous claim.*****

In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit was for the select chosen few such as Prophets and Kings. What about the multitude of God’s other chosen people? There is not one mention of tongues by any of God’s anointed. The Bible says “by their fruits you shall know them” (Matthew 7:16, 20). Not by if they speak in tongues! The Bible frequently speaks of people filled with the Holy Ghost and no tongues are given or spoken.

Luke 3:22; 4:1,18 – Life of Jesus an example of being “full of the Holy Ghost” and no tongues ever evidenced.

Jesus is our example of all things and before He sealed the New Covenant with His blood that Friday afternoon He had given us an example in all things necessary to our salvation. Obedience, repentance, faith and Baptism are points. But He never gave us an example of speaking in tongues to indicate this was necessary.

Acts 4:31 – Believers “all filled with the Holy Ghost” no tongues.
Acts 8:14-17 – Samaritan believers “received the Holy Ghost” and no tongues.

Now if tongues had been spoken in all of the above cases, surely there would have been mention of it as tongues was a new and miraculous thing. The Bible teaches that having made our surrender to God and having asked Him in faith for the Holy Spirit, we can believe by faith He will supply what He promised.

Galatians 3:14 – “receive the promise of the Spirit through FAITH.”
Galatians 3:2 – “received ye the spirit…by the hearing of FAITH.”
Galatians 3:5 – “ministereth to you the Spirit…by the hearing of FAITH.”
Ephesians 3:16,17 – “strengthened with might by his Spirit…that Christ may dwell in your hearts by FAITH.”

Here is one of the most important aspects of the Christian life, i.e. the acceptance of salvation, forgiveness of sins, and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit – by faith. Now faith is defined as “the evidence of things not seen.” (Hebrews 11:1) But some seem to think it is necessary to demand of a debtor some security or a signed I.O.U or something tangible we can see and if necessary produce in court (i.e. speaking in tongues). This would mean that the element of complete faith is lacking. Like doubting Thomas, they will not believe unless they see and feel and have tangible evidence such as speaking in tongues. But faith toward God does not demand such things for we believe that God is and that He always speaks the truth and we require no proof from Him of the fulfilment of His word for we trust Him. It is so because He says so.

So having fulfilled the conditions of surrender to our Lord, fully and completely, and having asked Him for the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, we then by faith believe that He has fulfilled His promise and it is so and there should be NO doubt. This is where so many people go astray. They demand of their God some tangible sign or evidence. But let us carefully note again the teachings of the Bible that “we receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Galatians 3:14); and faith, as we have also noted is “the evidence of things not seen.”

We believe God has forgiven us our sins in keeping His promise of 1 John 1:9 – by FAITH. We believe He has saved us and given us everlasting life according to John 3:16 – by FAITH.
We believe He will never leave us nor forsake us according to Hebrews 13:5; Matthew 28:20 – by FAITH.
And so we believe that having asked God in keeping with His promise of Luke 11:13, “how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” We believe we have received – by FAITH.

This element of faith is so important that the Bible says “without faith it is impossible to please him.” (Hebrews 11:6) Jesus said in Matthew 16:4 “A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it…” and He also said in John 4:48 “…Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.” If we are truly God’s children we do not need signs for when God has promised we should believe He fulfils His promises. Did Paul say tongues was a sign to those who believe? No. Paul said quite the opposite. 1 Corinthians 14:22 “Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not…”

The only other issue of receiving the Holy Spirit is obedience. Acts 5:32 “…and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.” We do not have to practice glossolalia to be saved or prove we have the Holy Spirit and here is the final conclusive proof if you accept that the Bible never contradicts itself.

1 Corinthians 12:4-10 “Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. 6 And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. 7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. 8 For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; 9 To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; 10 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:"

*****As you can see, Paul tells us that we all receive different gifts from the Holy Spirit. Paul goes on to demonstrate how we all make up the body of Christ and how the body would not be complete if we all had the same gift. Note in the following passage how Paul shows we all make up a valuable part of the body of Christ no matter what gift we have been given. Every single gift from the Holy Spirit is just as valuable and important.*****

1 Corinthians 12:12-21 “For as the body is one, and has many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. 13 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. 14 For the body is not one member, but many. 15 If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? 16 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? 17 If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? 18 But now has God set the members every one of them in the body, as it has pleased him. 19 And if they were all one member, where were the body? 20 But now are they many members, yet but one body. 21 And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of you: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.”

Why is it when we receive Christ as Lord and Saviour that we don’t covet the best gifts as Paul said we should in verse 31 below? Why don’t we get told to ask for the best gift like to be an Apostle or a prophet or a teacher? Why do we always get told just to ask for the gift of tongues (languages) which Paul puts right at the bottom of the list? Where does the Bible say we should ask just and always for the gift of tongues? What good is the real gift of tongues anyway if we have nobody to witness to in that language as at Pentecost? Since the Church is established in all nations, it is by far the least important gift. By now it should be very apparent that the teaching that you are not saved or do not have the Holy Spirit unless you have the gift of tongues is faulty and there is NO valid scriptural support for it at all. Paul informs us that we could have any one of the above gifts when the Holy Spirit indwells us. NOTE: Tongues is last, it is at the bottom of the list and should be the last gift we ask for, not the first as it is in many Churches today. If we continue to make tongues first and number one gift then we are NOT following the Word of God.

1 Corinthians 12:27-31 “…you are the body of Christ, and members in particular. 28 And God has set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? 30 Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? 31 But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet show I unto you a more excellent way.”

*****Note what Paul is saying in the above verses. Do all speak in tongues? Paul’s obvious answer is No. He says to covet earnestly the best gifts.*****

Does Paul say glossolalia can be heavenly languages?

1 Corinthians 14 is the only chapter in the Bible that specifically deals with tongue speaking. If the passages in Acts were the only references to glossolalia, there would be no grounds for
controversy over speaking in tongues as we see it in the Church today. Paul’s letter to the Corinthians contains passages that have obviously given rise to serious misunderstandings. So what was the tongue speaking issue at Corinth?

Corinth was an ancient trading city re-founded by Julius Caesar as a Roman colony in 46 B.C. and so its citizens were Roman but the many other nations were also equally well represented. The city of Corinth was famous for its two international seaports and it soon became a major crossroads of Mediterranean commerce explaining why the emperor must have selected it to be the Roman capital of the province of Achaia. It soon became apparent to Paul that its Church services among other things had become chaotic and confusing. While Paul was at Philippi, the first signs of trouble among his newly created congregation in Corinth reached him. Chloe was the first one to break the distressing news to him and soon after by letter. (1 Corinthians 1:11 and 7:1) Paul had been made aware that the Church formed during his second missionary journey had fallen into a bad state of spiritual decomposition. The record of flagrant abuses of Christian living submitted to him must have indeed been very distressing. Paul must have been shocked when confronted with the reports.

There was a multitude of issues, for example, gross division among the Christians with envying and strife. Paul bluntly refers to the Corinthians as carnal babes in Christ still only capable of being fed on milk and not solid food (1 Corinthians 3:1-3); they were associating with people that were sexually immoral, idolaters, drunkards, extortioners and covetous (1 Corinthians 5:11); they were themselves fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, sodomites, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers and extortioners (1 Corinthians 6:9-10); there were many heresies among them (1 Corinthians 11:19); they were attending church intoxicated (1 Corinthians 11:20-22); there were abuses of the Lord’s Supper (1 Corinthians 11:27-30); they were ignorant of natural and spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:1); love and charity was apparently lacking among them (1 Corinthians 13). Things in the Church were being done in confusion and a disorderly manner especially in regards to the gift of tongues. (1 Corinthians 14:33, 40); Paul exhorts again and again that the gifts of the spirit are only to edify the Church (1 Corinthians 12:7) and not the individual. (1 Corinthians 14:3, 4, 5, 12, 17, 26); he had to use lengthy and detailed explanations on how speaking in a foreign language others did not understand is worthless to others, (1 Corinthians 14:2, 6-11, 14-16, 19) as only God and himself understands. (1 Corinthians 14:28); Paul rebukes them constantly not to speak unless everyone understands the language or someone interprets into the language spoken by the Church. (1 Corinthians 14:5, 13, 26, 27, 28); he also explains that if someone unlearned comes into the Church and hears one person speaking his language or someone interprets that it would be a sign to that unbeliever (1 Corinthians 14:22) but when many people are speaking different foreign languages at the same time and with no interpreter that they would think they are mad (why wouldn’t they?) (1 Corinthians 14:23); there was denial of the resurrection of the dead (1 Corinthians 15:12).

As you can see, Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians is one of constant correction and rebuke. Imagine the chaos within the Corinthian church. One group speaking different foreign languages, others trying to propagate a new doctrine, others claiming to have a revelation or to interpret tongues while perhaps a few Christians prayed in quiet meditation. Spiritual chaos like this can never be edifying and his rebuke, “let all things be done unto edifying” was very necessary. The situation confronting Paul unquestionably turned unbelievers away from the church thinking they were mad and this was to be avoided at all cost. This is why Paul continually warns that if they speak in a tongue (language) that was not known to the majority, they should remain silent unless there was someone there to interpret or translate. See verse 28 below. In other words don’t speak in a language that
your audience does not understand. Listen to Paul’s clear statements in the following verses:

1 Corinthians 14:6-9, 19, 27-28, 40 “Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine? 7 And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped? 8 For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? 9 So likewise you, except you utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for you shall speak into the air. 19 Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue. 27 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. 28 But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God. 40 Let all things be done decently and in order.”

How do Christians use this passage to explain the unintelligible babble that takes place during services today? Paul is not introducing some “new” gift of tongues in chapter 14. It is a rebuke for the misuse of the gift. Again the clear Word of God is being ignored. Paul also specifically warns us not to do this in 1 Timothy 6:20,

“O Timothy, keep that which is committed to your trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings…”

*****In other words, the very purpose for the gift of speech is to communicate your thoughts and prayers. If those present do not understand your communication, then keep silent. Why is it when those who teach speaking in tongues as we see it today go to other countries to do some form of mission work that they have to learn the language?*****

The belief of there being a heavenly prayer language comes mainly from 1 Corinthians 14:14 where Paul says,

“For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.”

This is interpreted by some to mean that when Paul prayed in the Spirit, he used a “heavenly tongue” and did not himself know what he was praying. First of all, this raises an important question. How would they ever know if their prayer was answered? What would be the point? Does God’s own Spirit just pray to Himself as some would imply?

So what is Paul really saying in this verse? The problem in understanding this verse comes largely from the issue of the awkward translation of Greek to English. Please allow me to rearticulate this verse in modern English, “If I pray in a language those around me do not know, I might be praying with the Spirit, but my thoughts would be unfruitful for those listening.” Paul is constantly putting forward the same message which is, if we pray out loud, we should either pray so others around us can understand or we should remain quiet.

The next two verses shed a lot more light and clarify the whole issue,

1 Corinthians 14:15-16 “What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also. Else when you shall bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at your giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what you sayest?”
According to these verses, who is it that has the problem with understanding? It is actually the listener and not the speaker as is commonly taught. Note carefully Paul’s words. He says he prays and sings with his spirit and he prays with understanding. He continues to explain that when you go to bless those in the room with the spirit that are unlearned (they don’t understand the language) they cannot say Amen because they don’t understand that language. Paul plainly states that he knows what he is saying. If you have ever had someone pray for you in your native language that you don’t understand, then you will know what Paul meant when he said, it is difficult for you to say “Amen” (meaning “so be it”) when you do not know what is being prayed.

Without an interpreter, you have no idea what was said and you may be saying “so be it” to a blessing from the devil as far as you know. This passage also sheds some light on 1 Corinthians 14:2,

“For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.”

*****It is obvious from the context of chapter 14 that the purpose of speaking in tongues, or foreign languages, is to communicate the Gospel and thereby edify the church. If the listeners do not understand the spoken language they cannot be edified. Consequently, if there is no interpreter, the speaker is simply speaking into the air and the only ones present who know what is being said are God and himself.*****

With the modern day version of speaking in tongues no one understands what is being said including the speaker. This is obviously not the case with Paul who has already made it clear that he understands what he is saying. Continuing on from 1 Corinthians 14:15-16, Paul says in verses 17 and 18

“For you verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified. 18 I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than you all:”

*****Did you catch that last bit? Paul says he thanks God that he speaks in more tongues than them all. If Paul did not understand what he was saying as is the phenomenon of speaking in tongues today, how does he know how many tongues (languages) he speaks?*****

See the Bible Commentaries later on for more information.

**Does Paul contradict himself on Tongues?**

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 14:22 that tongues are a sign for the unbeliever, but in the very next verse he says that if an unbeliever entered the Church where those present were speaking in tongues, he says won’t they say you are mad?

1 Corinthians 14:22 reads, “Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not… 23 If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?”

Let me give you two examples to show what Paul is saying here and that he does not contradict himself;
1) In this first example and for the purpose of demonstration let us say Paul is referring to languages not known to any man. What is the difference of one person speaking in an unknown language that he and the one or more unbelievers do not understand (verse 22) compared to a whole Church that has come together in one place speaking in unknown languages simultaneously as one or more unbelievers enter the Church? (verse 23) There is no difference as it will sound like gibberish to the unbelievers in either situation and they will think you are mad. This incorrect explanation of this passage makes verses 22 and 23 appear to contradict each other if this example and explanation were true.

2) In this second example let us say known foreign languages are spoken as it was at Pentecost. What is the difference now of one person given the gift of speaking the native tongue of unbelievers listening versus a whole Church coming together in one place all speaking different foreign languages simultaneously? The first situation resembles that at Pentecost where they spoke in the native tongues of the unbelievers which was a sign to them and 3000 people were added to the Church instantly as a result. But imagine a Church full of people given the gift of speaking foreign languages and all speaking simultaneously. When an unbeliever walks into the Church and hears many foreign languages spoken all at the same time, it will still sound like gibberish and they will say you are mad as Paul said.

*****As you can see the second example makes perfect sense when it lines up with the gift of tongues as it was given at Pentecost which was definately foreign languages.*****

Unintelligible ecstatic utterances miss the basic Scriptural logic for the gift of tongues. Tongue speaking in foreign languages was Babel reversed. Genesis 11:1-9 explains that as the human race repopulated the earth after the flood, they still spoke one language. Instead of migrating throughout the earth, mankind estranged from God came together to build the city of Babel with its tower to reach heaven. This was to be a monument to man’s united ability. But from God’s perspective, it was a monument of sinful man’s unity to perform every evil imagination. For their eternal welfare it was better that they be scattered to minimize the effect of sin upon each other. To accomplish this, God “confounded their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.” (Genesis 11:7) This was the beginning of diversified languages. The picture changed however, when the Gospel (meaning good news) was to be proclaimed throughout the world but there was a problem. There was a language barrier. God by the gift of tongues bridged the language barrier invoked at Babel so now the Gospel would reconcile His people and could be proclaimed to every nation. The apostles and other disciples evangelized the Roman World by the gift of tongues, the ability to speak in other foreign languages. The whole scriptural logic of Babel and the proclamation of the Gospel is lost if tongue speaking is unintelligible syllables. If the gift of tongue speaking today is ecstatic utterances, then what an absolute waste. Why are the tongues you see in the Church today given so freely just for your own personal use, while missionaries who truly need the gift to spread the Gospel have to almost always learn the language? Something is dreadfully wrong here!

*****1 Corinthians 14:19-20 reveals the Corinthians abused the gift of tongues. They were like little children with a new toy and wanted to show off. At their Church services they exorted in tongues (verse 23) and they prayed in tongues (verses 13-17) without any interpretation. This edified no one (verses 5, 12, 17, 26). Hence Paul’s reprimand;*****

1 Corinthians 14:19-20 “Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an
unknown tongue. 20 Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.”

Note Paul’s phrase “that by my voice I might teach others ALSO.” This shows when Paul spoke in an understandable language he taught himself and “others also”. This is not the case with ecstatic utterances today where those who speak in tongues do not comprehend what they are saying. 1 Corinthians 14:9-11 provides further proof that Paul is speaking of foreign languages and not ecstatic utterances. In dealing with the problem of tongues Paul said,

“So likewise you, except you utter by the tongue words [rational sounds] easy to be understood [a common language], how shall it be known what is spoken? for you shall speak into the air [in vain]. There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices [articulate speech] in the world, [notice Paul is not talking about so called “heavenly languages” but voices in the world, NOT heaven] and none of them is without signification [each national language has its distinct meaning]. Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian [foreigner] unto me.”

The Greek word “barbaros” means “a foreigner (that is, non Greek): - barbarian (-rous).” Paul is saying that an unknown voice or tongue would sound like a barbarian meaning the language of a foreigner. Notice how the NIV and many other Bibles translate the word “barbaros.”

1 Corinthians 14:11 “If then I do not grasp the meaning of what someone is saying, I am a foreigner to the speaker, and he is a foreigner to me.”

*****The logic of 1 Corinthians 14:9-11 is only meaningful if speaking in tongues is foreign languages and not ecstatic utterances.*****

The tongues spoken of in the early Church were always known by someone in the world. The term “unknown” in chapter 14 does not appear in the original Greek. It has been added by the translators which is why the KJV Bible has the word “unknown” printed in light grey and in italics. This is to inform the reader that these words have been added and are not in the original text. The translators of the KJV Bible are trying to give clarity to the reader by telling them that Paul is talking of an unknown language to the listeners, not a language unknown to man. Unfortunately, it appears that the translators have accomplished just the opposite!

Some who speak in tongues are also becoming involved in “holy laughter, drunk in the spirit” laughing uncontrollably, falling down on the ground, rolling around, having seizure like activity, being struck dumb, or being “slain in the spirit.” Jesus never behaved that way, nor did He heal that way. The only time you see anything that resembles that behaviour in the Bible is with demon possessed people Jesus delivered that were out of control, writhing on the ground. When Jesus cast out the demons and delivered them, they sat quietly with dignity. 1 Corinthians 14:40 says, “Let all things be done decently and in order.” The Bible never demonstrates such disorderly behaviour in the Church.

Very few people realize the tremendous forces locked within our emotional nature. Some are more susceptible than others. With the correct environment, the long hours of praying for one thing, the music, sobs, entreaties of those around, the mind becomes weary and the emotions take over. The effects can be dramatic, almost overwhelming. This can be so even when glossolalia appears outside the necessity of such emotional props.
Healing services and glossolalia have been, and possibly still are, being conducted in the Catholic University of Notre Dame (Christianity Today:, p.40, May 26, 1967.) And so it does not matter whether a person is a Catholic believing in the Pope, or a Protestant, a Christian or heathen. Living a good life or living in adultery, believing in baptism by immersion, or sprinkling, smokers or non-smokers. Drinkers or teetotallers, believing in the Virgin Birth or scoffing at the idea – it makes no difference. All speak with “Tongues!” Obviously the tongues are not self-authenticating. In many cases there is no sign of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit or of anything else.

There have been instances of real foreign languages being spoken in meetings as fun or as an experiment and invariably receiving an “interpretation” wholly at conflict with what had been said! A young Dutch person entered a Pentecostal Assembly recently and rattled off a Dutch fairy story receiving an interpretation that God was asking the assembly to pray for the poor in China! A tape recording of glossolalia will receive totally different interpretations from those purporting to have the gift of interpreting. This is all very sad. Obviously, however sincere these people are, the whole thing becomes a sham and a fraud. Many become victims of their own emotions “aided by the great deceiver.”

It is clear Pentecostals, which we once were, have no right at all to use the term “Pentecostal” for at Pentecost real recognizable languages were spoken whereas amongst so-called “Pentecostals” this rarely happens.

Pentecostals and others engaging in tongue speaking as seen today normally say any or all of the following:

1. Tongues are a sign of Baptism in the Holy Spirit – but the Bible never says that.
2. All should speak in tongues – but the Bible never says that.
3. The initial experience of tongue speaking at the Baptism is different from the later “gift of tongues” – but the Bible never says that.
4. That tongues are, or can be a heavenly language – but the Bible never says that.
5. Tongue speaking is for the benefit of believers – but the Bible never says that.
6. Tongue speaking is for the most part unintelligible – but the Bible never says that.
7. These unintelligible tongues are Christian – but the Bible and history indicate that they are heathen.

As it is not my desire to offend anyone, I would ask if you are Catholic, could you please skip the next paragraph unless you are seeking truth at any cost. If you insist on reading on I would suggest reading the Book on (Should Christians to Keep the Sabbath) to gain some understanding.

The tongue speaking movement is bringing into its arms of influence both Roman Catholics and Protestant Churches. In other words you will find the emphasis in the Catholic Church just as strong as in the Protestant and evangelical Protestant churches and the more stable Protestant Churches, i.e. Anglican Churches, Methodist churches as well as the Pentecostal type churches as Apostolic. Right through Christendom today you’ve got a cross-section all claiming the gift of tongues and the gift of healing. All these Churches, Catholic Protestant, Evangelical Protestant, and Liberal Protestant all claim the gift of tongues. Catholics say
when they have the gift of tongues it helps them to better appreciate the Virgin Mary and the infallibility of the pope. It helps them better in their confessional to the priests. Now doesn’t that immediately raise some concerning questions? Do you mean to say that the Holy Spirit when it comes into your life is going to help us believe in the Blessed Virgin Mary more, it’s going to help us believe in a counterfeit religion? Clearly there is a problem if it’s supposed to be the same spirit when all the Protestant churches believe it helps them to accept Jesus and His sacrifice more. There definitely is a gift of tongues, but who is it for? What is the purpose of it? Where is it from? Who is it from?

A Deadly Gift from the Enemy

The purpose of tongues is clearly taught in Acts 2 but where is the clear teaching for what takes place in the Church today? Those who practice what we see today, make assumptions taken from Paul’s rebuke to the Corinthians for the misuse of tongues. Paul does not condemn the basic experience but a study of this New Testament phenomenon does not furnish us with indications that the gift of tongues had undergone a modification and had been changed with God’s sanction from a manifestation of speaking real languages as in Acts 2 to an unintelligible tongue by the time the Corinthians were using it. To the contrary, it is reasonable to assume that when Paul established the church at Corinth that its members received the gift of tongues so that they would be able to reach out to the multitude of foreigners and resident aliens in their own language.

Not one single person in nineteen centuries, including all the protestant reformers of which some had the Bible memorized from cover to cover, or any theologian ever interpreted any part of the Bible as saying there was another version of tongues such as what entered the Church in 1901. It was after this practice (previously only seen in rare isolated incidences and non-Christian cults) entered the Church that people searched for scriptures they could use to justify this practice that has spread like a plague through the Church today that many just take for granted. There are so many good Christians that feel the need for such signs and wonders and cannot accept the feelings they experience are not from God and would rather find some way of justifying the practice in their own mind than let it go even though it may not be from God. Some have even experienced healing using this practice which Satan is more than capable of doing in order to deceive and draw people in.

In this World today filled with terrorism and crime, we should all be aware that a gift from an enemy can be very deadly. The underworld has successfully dispatched many human targets by beautifully wrapping a bomb as a gift with an ornate bow and paper that explodes when opened. Today the devil is using a counterfeit gift of the Spirit. A pagan form of the gift of tongues to gain access to the church of God and destroy it from within and most Christians never give this a thought. No one is ever told that what they practice in the Church today is also practiced by those who practice voodoo. If what is spoken in the Church today is and sounds identical to non-Christian religions then why are we still practicing it? As you have seen, the scriptural support for it is faulty and misunderstood. Why are Christians taking part in these non-Christian, religious pagan traditions?

Early and modern Church Speaking in Tongues

Observe from the table below the differences of tongue speaking in the early Church verses the Church today. With glossolalia today, there are just no similarities at all; in fact they are exact opposites.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Early Church Tongue Speaking</th>
<th>Modern Church Tongue Speaking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The least important gift.</td>
<td>The most important and only sought after gift.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Corinthians 14:5, 12:27-31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sign to unbelievers.</td>
<td>A Sign to believers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Corinthians 14:22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spoken in turn. 1 Corinthians 14:27</td>
<td>Spoken together in confusion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If no interpreter keep silent. 1 Corinthians 14:28</td>
<td>Rarely an interpreter and almost always proven false.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pray for interpretation. 1 Corinthians 14:13</td>
<td>Pray for speaking in tongues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only one interpretation.</td>
<td>Interpretations differ when put to the test.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To edify the Church. 1 Corinthians 14:26</td>
<td>To edify yourself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spoke a known language. Acts 2:4-11</td>
<td>Almost never a known language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accusation of madness. 1 Corinthians 14:23</td>
<td>No accusation of madness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spoken for the benefit of hearers. 1 Corinthians 14:9</td>
<td>Spoken for the benefit of the speaker.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum of 3 to speak per meeting. 1 Corinthians 14:27</td>
<td>Whole Church freely speaks with no interpretation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpret so everyone understands. 1 Corinthians 14:16</td>
<td>Interpretation almost never done today.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Are the gifts of the spirit still given today?**

The gifts of the Spirit are for the benefit and growth of God’s kingdom. Do we still need that today? Of course. So are the gifts still given today? Absolutely, they are still in need today as they were in the early Church. However, the gift of tongues today is not anywhere near as prevalent as in the early Church. God gives all the gifts of the Spirit to fill a practical need. What was the need for tongues? Why did the Lord wait until Pentecost to bestow the gift of tongues? Acts 2:5-11 sets the scene,

“Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. Utterly amazed, they asked: Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs, we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!”

The day of Pentecost was a Jewish holy day that fell fifty days after Passover. Devoted Israelites would come from all over the Roman Empire to worship in Jerusalem. God chose this timely opportunity to bestow the gift of tongue speaking upon the disciples so they could
preach to the visiting Jews in their native languages. At least 15 different language groups were represented in the crowd that day, count them in Acts 2:9-11. As a result, thousands of these visitors were converted. After Pentecost, they in turn carried their new faith home to their respective countries. This is God’s purpose for speaking in tongues. Some say genuine tongues have already ceased but I have heard of some isolated cases of legitimate tongue speaking today and the speaker always knew what they were saying as they did at Pentecost. We must not go by our thoughts and emotions. Some continue to say, “How can this amazing sensation not be from God?” But Satan can give us those same feelings and those in voodoo and other satanic cults say they experience these identical ecstatic feelings. So what does that tell you?

*****Satan is the great counterfeiter and deceiver. In order that we are not deceived, it is imperative that we follow God’s Word alone.*****

Exposition of Speaking in Tongues by Commentary

As previously stated, the main scriptures that are used to justify tongues as seen in paganism and non-Christian cults which made its way into the Church in 1901, come from 1 Corinthians 14. Below is the whole chapter minus the issue of woman speaking in the Church with commentary included in parenthesis. A close and open minded look at chapter fourteen reveals that Paul is not teaching a “new” variation of tongues but is constantly pointing out that speaking in tongues is of no value unless understood by the Church and so continually pushes the use of the better gift of prophesying instead. This is further demonstrated by what Paul said in the following verse. Note Paul places prophets 2nd after apostles and tongues last in 8th position.

1 Corinthians 12:28 “And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.”

After a careful study of the chapter below it should become very apparent that Paul constantly demonstrates that the gifts are to be used for edifying the Church. He never teaches that the gifts are for private use.

1 Corinthians 12:7 “But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all:”

Note how Paul rebukes the disorder and misuse of tongues. By continual examples he shows that tongues are valueless unless understood and would rather they prophesy so the Church is edified. The emphasis is on;

1. Edifying the Church. (highest priority) No edification in disorder.
2. Prophesy second as it is the better gift for edification of the Church.
3. Silence on tongues (foreign languages) unless understood or translated. (otherwise no edification)

Speaking in tongues after all is only the gift of speaking another foreign language. It is still the speaker giving his own personal message. Prophesy on the other hand is a message from God for the Church. How much more valuable is that!? Paul does not forbid the use of tongues from up to three people, one at a time if someone interprets, but a message from God
is far more valuable to the Church. So Paul’s constant emphasis is silence on tongues unless the Church is edified by being understood by natural means or translation.

**Unknown Tongue Speaking by Commentary**

1 Corinthians 14:1-33, 39-40 “Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy. (Prophecy edifies the Church more than the other gifts. Paul’s constant emphasis is edifying others and NOT yourself. See verses 3, 4, 5, 12, 17 and 26)

2. For he that speaketh in an **unknown** tongue (foreign language) speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries. (By your own spirit or by the power of the Holy Spirit you are only speaking mysteries to those listening if the language is not understood by the others present. Therefore only God and the speaker know what is being said. See also verse 28. The word “tongue” (glossa) is the same word as used in Acts chapter 2, 10 and 19 to describe a real intelligible foreign language. The word “unknown” in this chapter is supplied by the translators and is shown in italics to tell us that it is not in the original Greek text. The translators of the KJV Bible are trying to clarify to the reader that Paul is talking of an unknown language to the listeners, not a language unknown to man. Unfortunately, it appears that the translators have accomplished just the opposite)

3. But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort. (Again Paul emphasizes prophesying as the better gift to edify the Church)

4. He that speaketh in an **unknown** tongue (foreign language) edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church. (Paul said the gifts of the Spirit are for the “profit of all” and NOT the individual [1 Corinthians 12:7] and so points out tongues i.e. a foreign language the listeners don’t know can only edify yourself (wrong use) and not the Church but prophesying does edify and is a better gift. See verse 1, 3, 5 and 39. Paul is presenting a wrong and a right use of the gifts. One edifies the Church the other does not)

5. I would that ye all spake with tongues, (foreign languages) but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, (foreign languages) except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying. (Paul is happy for them to all speak in tongues i.e. foreign languages if the language is understood by others or it is translated but would still prefer that they prophesied because there is much greater edification from that gift)

6. Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, (foreign languages) what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine? (And again the same message. If the language is not understood there is no edification. Paul had the power of speaking many foreign languages [verse 18] but he did not use this power for ostentation or display, but merely to communicate the gospel to those who did not understand his native tongue)

7. And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped? (Paul continues to express the uselessness of tongue speaking i.e. foreign languages not understood by others. It is the same message over and over. All things are to be done to the edification of the Church)

8. For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? (The trumpet must be blown in a way that will be recognized as a call to battle and so in the same
way tongues must also be understood and recognized so people will know how to respond and be edified)

9. So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air. (And still even further emphasis that tongue speaking is of no value unless understood by the Church. Words no matter how sincere and spiritual are lost into the air if not spoken so those around understand)

10. There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification. (There are many foreign languages in the world (NOT heaven) all which are important to someone. Note Paul is not talking about so called “heavenly languages” but voices of different languages in the world)

11. Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me. (All other nations of the world were barbarians to the Hebrews and of course spoke other languages. Paul is saying that one who speaks a foreign language not known by the listener may as well be a barbarian to him)

12. Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church. (At the risk of sounding monotonous, Paul continues to emphasize edification. As much as the Corinthians desired spiritual gifts, they must excel in using them to edify the Church only. They are not for the individual)

13. Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue (foreign language) pray that he may interpret. (Therefore the person with the gift of tongue speaking must have someone interpret if the others do not understand the language so the Church is edified. See also verses 5,26,27 and 28)

14. For if I pray in an unknown tongue, (foreign language) my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. (Paul is saying if he prays in a language those around him do not know, he might be praying fervently and by his own spirit but his thoughts would be unfruitful for those listening. This of course is a violation of the purpose of the gift which is to edify others)

15. What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also. (Paul also clarifies that his prayer or song IS done with his understanding. It is the listener who does not understand)

16. Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest? (Paul continues to explain the previous two verses as to how his prayer does not edify the others and they cannot say Amen or “so be it” if the other does not know what the person prayed. Without an interpreter, you have no idea what was said and you may be saying “so be it” to a blessing from the devil for all you know)

17. For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified. (Paul still continues to give the same message of edifying others and not yourself. The prayer is useless as the other is not edified)

18. I thank my God, I speak with tongues (foreign languages) more than ye all: (Paul says he speaks more foreign languages than all the Corinthians which he could only know if he understood what he was saying. This gives more proof that his references to tongues here are known foreign languages. The context never changes)
19. Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue. (Note Paul’s phrase “that by my voice I might teach others ALSO.” This shows when Paul spoke in an understandable language he taught himself and “others also” and consequently, if he spoke in tongues (foreign languages) he only taught himself. The thought is that when speaking in tongues, he comprehended what he was saying which is unlike today where the speaker has no idea what he is speaking. Despite Paul knowing so many foreign languages, he still points out that he would rather speak five understood words than 10,000 words in a foreign language the others do not understand)

20. Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men. (Paul tells them not to behave with the understanding of children but with the thinking of mature adults)

21. In the law it is written, With men of other tongues (foreign language) and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord. (The law meaning Old Testament. The quote is from Isaiah 28:11-12 where God says to Israel, these people don’t hear Me though I speak to them in their native tongue so I will therefore speak to them in the languages of foreigners, i.e. the enemy I will send against them; [Babylonians] but even then they will not listen to Me. Paul is telling them that God’s punishment to the Israelites in making them have to listen to foreigners is what they are imposing on the Church when speaking in tongues)

22. Wherefore tongues (foreign languages) 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. (It was a sign to those at Pentecost where many nations heard unlearned Galileans speaking to them in their native tongue the wonderful things of God. And as a result of this sign, 3000 people were added to the Church instantly)

23. If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, (foreign languages) and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad? (Paul continues, but if an unbeliever or an unlearned person comes into a Church where many people are all speaking in tongues i.e. foreign languages at the same time and without interpretation, it would sound chaotic and they would say you were all mad)

24. But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: (But if all prophesy, the unbeliever or the unlearned will be convinced and so the Church will be edified)

25. And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth. (The sinner would be convinced that God alone could uncover the secrets of his heart and so would fall down on his face in worship and acknowledge that God was truly among them)

26. How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, (foreign language) hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying. (Paul now continues to talk about the spiritual chaos that took place in the Church. He says why is it when you come together, that at the same time one has a psalm, another a doctrine, another speaking in tongues i.e. an unknown foreign language, another speaking a revelation and another trying to give an interpretation? This chaos cannot edify the Church and the unlearned will say you are mad)
27. If any man speak in an unknown tongue, (foreign language) let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. (By course, meaning one person at a time and not more than three times in one meeting with someone interpreting so all are edified)

28. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God. (It does not get much clearer. All gifts are to edify the Church. If the foreign language is not known by others or there is no interpreter, then the Church is not edified, so stay SILENT)

29. Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. (Everything must be done to edifying. As speaking in an unknown tongue, if another is present who can interpret, two miraculous gifts can be exercised at once and the church edified, and the faith of the hearers confirmed at the same time. As to prophesying, two or three only should speak at one meeting, and this one after the other, not all at once. See also verse 31)

30. If anything be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. (If another person has a correction or a thought to add, let common Christian courtesy prevail and wait for the first person to finish before the other person speaks. Let everything be done in order and not confusion)

31. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. (The same rules apply to tongue speaking as prophesying. Only one person to speak at a time and no more than three people per meeting)

32. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.

33. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints. (If many are speaking in tongues and or prophesying at the same time, it will be just utter confusion)

39. Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues. (Seek after the gift of prophecy first but tongue speaking is allowed providing someone interprets)

40. Let all things be done decently and in order.” (Paul’s final comment as he ends this chapter of correction and rebuke to the Corinthians for their disorderly behaviour and confusion in the Church, especially in regards to tongue speaking i.e. foreign languages)

1 Corinthians 14 - Contemporary English Version

Many of the misunderstandings in relation to tongues comes from the awkward translations of the KJV Bible. As already discussed the term “unknown” has further added to the confusion as it does not exist in the original Greek text. Below is 1 Corinthians 14 from the more modern CEV Bible that has greatly simplified the translation and has made it much easier to interpret what Paul was saying to the Church at Corinth.

1 Corinthians 14:1-33,37-40 “Love should be your guide. Be eager to have the gifts that come from the Holy Spirit, especially the gift of prophecy. 2 If you speak languages that others don't know, God will understand what you are saying, though no one else will know what you mean. You will be talking about mysteries that only the Spirit understands. 3 But when you prophesy, you will be understood, and others will be helped. They will be encouraged and made to feel better. 4 By speaking languages that others don’t know, you help only yourself. But by prophesying you help everyone in the church. 5 I am glad for you
to speak unknown languages, although I had rather for you to prophesy. In fact, prophesying does much more good than speaking unknown languages, unless someone can help the church by explaining what you mean. 6 My friends, what good would it do, if I came and spoke unknown languages to you and didn't explain what I meant? How would I help you, unless I told you what God had shown me or gave you some knowledge or prophecy or teaching? 7 If all musical instruments sounded alike, how would you know the difference between a flute and a harp? 8 If a bugle call isn't clear, how would you know to get ready for battle? 9 That's how it is when you speak unknown languages. If no one can understand what you are talking about, you will only be talking to the wind. 10 There are many different languages in this world, and all of them make sense. 11 But if I don't understand the language that someone is using, we will be like foreigners to each other. 12 If you really want spiritual gifts, choose the ones that will be most helpful to the church. 13 When we speak languages that others don't know, we should pray for the power to explain what we mean. 14 For example, if I use an unknown language in my prayers, my spirit prays but my mind is useless. 15 Then what should I do? There are times when I should pray with my spirit, and times when I should pray with my mind. Sometimes I should sing with my spirit, and at other times I should sing with my mind. 16 Suppose some strangers are in your worship service, when you are praising God with your spirit. If they don't understand you, how will they know to say, "Amen"? 17 You may be worshiping God in a wonderful way, but no one else will be helped. 18 I thank God that I speak unknown languages more than any of you. 19 But words that make sense can help the church. That's why in church I had rather speak five words that make sense than to speak ten thousand words in a language that others don't know. 20 My friends, stop thinking like children. Think like mature people and be as innocent as tiny babies. 21 In the Scriptures the Lord says, "I will use strangers who speak unknown languages to talk to my people. They will speak to them in foreign languages, but still my people won't listen to me." 22 Languages that others don't know may mean something to unbelievers, but not to the Lord's followers. Prophecy, on the other hand, is for followers, not for unbelievers. 23 Suppose everyone in your worship service started speaking unknown languages, and some outsiders or some unbelievers come in. Won't they think you are crazy? 24 But suppose all of you are prophesying when those unbelievers and outsiders come in. They will realize that they are sinners, and they will want to change their ways because of what you are saying. 25 They will tell what is hidden in their hearts. Then they will kneel down and say to God, "We are certain that you are with these people." 26 My friends, when you meet to worship, you must do everything for the good of everyone there. That's how it should be when someone sings or teaches or tells what God has said or speaks an unknown language or explains what the language means. 27 No more than two or three of you should speak unknown languages during the meeting. You must take turns, and someone should always be there to explain what you mean. 28 If no one can explain, you must keep silent in church and speak only to yourself and to God. 29 Two or three persons may prophesy, and everyone else must listen carefully. 30 If someone sitting there receives a message from God, the speaker must stop and let the other person speak. 31 Let only one person speak at a time, then all of you will learn something and be encouraged. 32 A prophet should be willing to stop and let someone else speak. 33 God wants everything to be done peacefully and in order. When God's people meet in church, 37 If you think of yourself as a prophet or a spiritual person, you will know that I am writing only what the Lord has commanded. 38 So don't pay attention to anyone who ignores what I am writing. 39 My friends, be eager to prophesy and don't stop anyone from speaking languages that others don't know. 40 But do everything properly and in order.”
When God brought His chosen people out of the land of Egypt, He performed many miracles like turning Aaron’s rod into a serpent, changing rivers to blood and bringing up frogs to cover the land. The pharaoh’s magicians through the power of Satan were also able to counterfeit all these same miracles. (Exodus 7:10-11; 7:20-22; 8:6-7)

In Job 1:16 Satan burned up Job’s sheep and servants with “fire from heaven” and in Job 1:19, Satan used a “great wind” to bring down a house killing the occupants and in Job 2:7, Satan smote Job with “sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown.” If Satan has power to change rods to serpents, change rivers to blood, bring up frogs to cover the land, control the weather, bring down fire from the heavens (see also Revelation 13:13) and inflict illness, then he can certainly heal people. Note Satan needed God’s permission to inflict illness on Job. (Job 1:12; 2:6) So we know God heals and Satan counterfeits, God gives the gift of tongues and Satan counterfeits, God has true Prophets and Satan has counterfeit false Prophets, (Matthew 24:11) God is going to seal His people with a mark in their foreheads (Revelation 7:3) and Satan has a counterfeit mark in the forehead and hand. (Revelation 13:16)

Please allow me to ask you some thought provoking questions. If the gift of tongues which was given at Pentecost was real languages, what is Satan’s counterfeit? What type of tongue speaking would be of value to Satan? Known understood languages as at Pentecost or tongues that we don’t understand or know what we are saying? Which would Satan use? Would you be convinced that speaking in tongues as seen today was from God if you received healing while using them? Even though Satan would heal you while using his counterfeit tongue speaking just to deceive you into believing they were the real thing and from God? If you were the enemy with his incredible God given wisdom and power and had an army of fallen angels at your disposal, and you hated God and wanted to take as many people from the kingdom as possible, what would you do? So, do Satan and his demons sit around all day throwing an odd temptation or two into people’s minds or do they have strategic long term, full scale plans and are they very actively deceiving everyone who chases after “signs and wonders” while ignoring the many warnings in the Bible?

If Satan is working towards a New World Order in preparation for the mark of the beast, what common doctrine could be used to unite the many denominations and is already doing so? How can we test the spirits here as we are instructed without any doubt of being deceived? If there were two types of tongues as some are unbiblical in claiming, why would God give this gift so freely for personal use and almost never give the needed gift for spreading the Gospel? Which is God's priority and more important? If the unintelligible tongues spoken in Church today were from God, then He would be giving the needed gift even more freely to missionaries but this is not the case. This is not the nature and priority of God. In Matthew 24:5 and verse 11, Jesus says “many” will be deceived. The many spoken of here means a large number. Here is the Thayer Definition: “polus / polos” 1) many, much, large. Please don’t be part of this large number of people is my prayer for you.

Matthew 16:4 Jesus said, “A wicked and adulterous generation seek after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas.”

Speaking an Unknown Tongue by Bible Commentary.
Unknown tongue is the phrase used by the KJV Bible that has caused much confusion, yet the word *unknown* was added by the translators. Below are some of the key verses that relate to speaking in tongues i.e. an *unknown* foreign language with up to three different Bible commentaries given for each verse if available.

**Mark 16:17 was fulfilled at Pentecost.**

Mark 16:17 “And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;”

“Albert Barnes’ Notes on the Bible”

**Mark 16:7 - Shall speak with new tongues** - Shall speak other languages than their native language. This was remarkably fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, Act_2:4-11. It existed, also, in other places. See 1Co_12:10.

“Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible”

**Mark 16:7 - Speak with new tongues** - This was most literally fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2:4-19.

**The purpose of Speaking in Tongues.**

Acts 2:6 “Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.”

“Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible”

**Acts 2:6 - When this was noised abroad** - …and as various circumstances might direct their attention to the temple, having flocked thither they were farther astonished and confounded to hear the disciples of Christ addressing the mixed multitude in the languages of the different countries from which these people had come.

**Every man heard them speak in his own language** - Use may naturally suppose that, as soon as any person presented himself to one of these disciples, he, the disciple, was immediately enabled to address him in his own language, however various this had been from the Jewish or Galilean dialects. If a Roman presented himself, the disciple was immediately enabled to address him in Latin - if a Grecian, in Greek - an Arab, in Arabic, and so of the rest.

**The gifts of the spirit are NOT for private use.**

1 Corinthians 12:7 “But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.”

“Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible”

**1 Corinthians 12:7 - The manifestation of the Spirit** - Φανερωσις του Πνευματος. This is variably understood by the fathers; some of them rendering φανερωσις by illumination, others demonstration, and others operation. The apostle’s meaning seems to be this: Whatever gifts God has bestowed, or in what various ways soever the Spirit of God may have manifested himself, it is all for the common benefit of the Church. God has given no gift to
any man for his own private advantage, or exclusive profit. He has it for the benefit of others as well as for his own salvation.

"John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible"

1 Corinthians 12:7 - to profit withal; not to make gain of, as Simon Magus intended, could he have been possessed of them; nor to encourage pride or envy, or to form and foment divisions and parties; but for profit and advantage, and that not merely private, or a man's own, but public, the good of the whole community or church, to which the least grace or gift, rightly used, may contribute.

"The People's New Testament"

1 Corinthians 12:7-11 - But the manifestation of the Spirit, etc. However varied these manifestations, all are for the profit of the whole body. No gift of the Spirit is for the benefit of the recipient. This is now shown.

We don’t all have the same gifts of the Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:10 “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:”

"Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible"

1 Corinthians 12:10 - To another divers kinds of tongues - The power of speaking various languages; see Act_2:4, Act_2:7-11. This passage also seems to imply that the extraordinary endowments of the Holy Spirit were not conferred on all alike.

To another the interpretation of tongues - The power of interpreting foreign languages; or of interpreting the language which might be used by the “prophets” in their communications; see the note at 1Co_14:27. This was evidently a faculty different from the power of speaking a foreign language; and yet it might be equally useful. It would appear possible that some might have had the power of speaking foreign languages who were not themselves apprized of the meaning, and that interpreters were needful in order to express the sense to the hearers. Or it may have been that in a promiscuous assembly, or in an assembly made up of those who spoke different languages, a part might have understood what was uttered, and it was needful that an interpreter should explain it to the other portion; see the notes on 1Co_14:28.

"John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible"

1 Corinthians 12:10 - To another divers kinds of tongues; whereby such could speak all manner of languages, which they had never learned, understood, and been used to: this Christ promised his disciples, when he sent them into all the world to preach the Gospel, Mar_16:16 and so anticipates an objection they otherwise might have made, how they should be able to preach it to all, so as to be understood, when they were not acquainted with the languages of all nations; an instance of which we have in the apostles on the day of Pentecost, Act_2:4 and which continued many years after with them, and other persons in the churches; see 1Co_13:2.

To another the interpretation of tongues; one that had this gift, when a discourse was delivered in an unknown tongue, used to stand up and interpret it to the people, without which it could be of no use to them; and sometimes a person was gifted to speak in an
unknown tongue, and yet was not capable of interpreting his discourse truly and distinctly in
that the people understood: see 1Co_14:13. The rules to be observed in such cases, and by
such persons, see in 1Co_14:27.

Not all have the gift of Speaking in Tongues.
1 Corinthians 12:30 “Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all
interpret?”

“Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible”
1 Corinthians 12:29 -30 - Are all apostles?… - These questions imply, with strong
emphasis, that it could not be, and ought not to be, that there should be perfect equality of
endowment. It was not a matter of fact that all were equal, or that all were qualified for the
offices which others sustained. Whether the arrangement was approved of or not, it was a
simple matter of fact that some were qualified to perform offices which others were not; that
some were endowed with the abilities requisite to the apostolic office, and others not; that
some were endowed with prophetic gifts, and others were not; that some had the gift of
healing, or the talent of speaking different languages, or of interpreting and that others had
not.

“John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible”
1 Corinthians 12:30 - Have all the gifts of healing?… No; when these gifts were in being,
all had them not. When anointing with oil, in order to heal the sick, was in use, it was only
performed by the elders of the church, not by the common members of it, who were to be sent
for by the sick on this occasion:

do all speak with tongues? no; it was not true in fact, as they well knew; though this was
greatly coveted after, as a following chapter of this epistle shows;

do all interpret? that is, unknown tongues, strange languages; or can they? no. This also was
a peculiar gift bestowed on some persons only.

By the Spirit you speak mysteries if others don’t speak the language.
1 Corinthians 14:2 “For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but
unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.”

“Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible”
1 Corinthians 14:2 - For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue - This verse is designed
to show that the faculty of speaking intelligibly, and to the edification of the church, is of
more value than the power of speaking a foreign language. The reason is, that however
valuable may be the endowment in itself, and however important the truth which he may
utter, yet it is as if he spoke to God only. No one could understand him.

Speaketh not unto men - Does not speak so that people can understand him. His address is
really not made to people, that is, to the church. He might have this faculty without being
able to speak to the edification of the church. It is possible that the power of speaking foreign
languages and of prophesying were sometimes united in the same person; but it is evident
that the apostle speaks of them as different endowments, and they probably were found
usually in different individuals.
But unto God - It is as if he spoke to God. No one could understand him but God. This must evidently refer to the addresses “in the church,” when Christians only were present, or when those only were present who spoke the same language, and who were unacquainted with foreign tongues. Paul says that “there” that faculty would be valueless compared with the power of speaking in a manner that should edify the church. He did not undervalue the power of speaking foreign languages when foreigners were present, or when they went to preach to foreigners; see 1Co_14:22. It was only when it was needless, when all present spoke one language, that he speaks of it as of comparatively little value.

For no man understandeth him - That is, no man in the church, since they all spoke the same language, and that language was different from what was spoken by him who was endowed with the gift of tongues. As God only could know the import of what he said, it would be lost upon the church, and would be useless.

Howbeit in the Spirit - Although, by the aid of the Spirit, he should, in fact, deliver the most important and sublime truths. This would doubtless be the case, that those who were thus endowed would deliver most important truths, but they would be “lost” upon those who heard them, because they could not understand them. The phrase “in the Spirit,” evidently means “by the Holy Spirit,” that is, by his aid and influence. Though he should be “really” under the influence of the Holy Spirit, and though the important truth which he delivers should be imparted by his aid, yet all would be valueless unless it were understood by the church.

“Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible”

1 Corinthians 14:2 - For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue - This chapter is crowded with difficulties. It is not likely that the Holy Spirit should, in the church, suddenly inspire a man with the knowledge of some foreign language, which none in the church understood but himself; and lead him to treat the mysteries of Christianity in that language, though none in the place could profit by his teaching.

Dr. Lightfoot's mode of reconciling these difficulties is the most likely I have met with. He supposes that by the unknown tongue the Hebrew is meant, and that God restored the true knowledge of this language when he gave the apostles the gift of tongues. As the Scriptures of the Old Testament were contained in this language, and it has beauties, energies, and depths in it which no verbal translation can reach, it was necessary, for the proper elucidation of the prophecies concerning the Messiah, and the establishment of the Christian religion, that the full meaning of the words of this sacred language should be properly understood. And it is possible that the Hebrew Scriptures were sometimes read in the Christian congregations as they were in the Jewish synagogues; and if the person who read and understood them had not the power and faculty of explaining them to others, in vain did he read and understand them himself. And we know that it is possible for a man to understand a language, the force, phraseology, and idioms of which he is incapable of explaining even in his mother tongue. We shall see, in the course of these notes, how this view of the subject will apply to the illustration of the apostle's words throughout the chapter.

Speaketh not unto men, but unto God - None present understanding the language, God alone knowing the truth and import of what he says: -

In the spirit he speaketh mysteries - Though his own mind (for σο πνεύματι is understood here by many eminent critics) apprehends the mysteries contained in the words which he reads or utters; but if, by the spirit, we understand the Spirit of God, it only shows that it is by
that Spirit that he is enabled to speak and apprehend these mysteries. See the note on 1Co_14:19.

"John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible"

I Corinthians 14:2 - For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue,

Or with tongues, as some copies and the Ethiopic version read: Dr. Lightfoot thinks, that the Hebrew tongue, which was become a dead language, and understood but by few, is here meant, and that not without reason; seeing the public prayers, preaching, and singing of psalms among the Jews, were in this languages (x); in imitation of whom, such ministers, who had the gift of speaking this language, read the Scriptures, preached, prayed, and sung psalms in it, which were no ways to the edification of the people, who understood it not; upon which account the apostle recommends prophesying, praying, and singing, in a language that was understood: otherwise he

speaketh not unto men; to the understanding, profit, and edification of men: but unto God: to his praise and glory, and he only knowing, who knows all languages, and every word in the tongue what is said; excepting himself, unless there should be any present capable of interpreting:

for no man understandeth him: or "heareth him": that is, hears him, so as to understand him; he may hear a sound, but he cannot tell the meaning of it, and so it is of no use and advantage to him:

howbeit in the Spirit he speaketh mysteries; though under the influence and by the extraordinary gift of the Spirit he has, and to his own Spirit and understanding, and with great affection and devotion within himself, he speaks of the deep things of God, and the mysteries of his grace, the most glorious truths of the Gospel, yet the meaning of his voice and words not being known, he is a barbarian to them that hear him; and though what he delivers are truths of the greatest importance, they are a mere jargon to others, being unintelligible.

You only edify yourself if the Church doesn’t speak the language.

1 Corinthians 14:4 “He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; [Paul said the gifts are NOT for yourself. 1 Cor 12:7] but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.” [Which Paul said is the purpose of the gifts]

Paul said the gifts of the spirit are for the “profit of all” and not the individual (1 Corinthians 12:7). And here he shows that speaking in a foreign language the listeners don’t know does not edify the Church but prophesying does. Paul is not saying that tongues are for your edifying but for the whole Church as are all the gifts.

“Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible”

1 Corinthians 14:4 - Edifieth himself - That is, the truths which are communicated to him by the Spirit, and which he utters in an unknown language, may be valuable, and may be the means of strengthening his faith, and building him up in the hopes of the gospel, but they can he of no use to others. His own holy affections might be excited by the truths which he would deliver, and the consciousness of possessing miraculous powers might excite his gratitude. And yet, as Doddridge has well remarked, there might be danger that a man might be injured by this gift when exercised in this ostentatious manner.
“Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible”

1 Corinthians 14:4 - He that speaketh in an unknown tongue - In the Hebrew for instance, the knowledge of the depth and power of which he has got by a Divine revelation, edifieth himself by that knowledge.

But he that prophesieth - Has the gift of preaching.

Edifieth the Church - Speaketh unto men to edification, exhortation, and comfort, 1Co_14:3.

“John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible”

1 Corinthians 14:4 - He that speaketh its an unknown tongue,… Be it the Hebrew language, or any other; some copies, and the Ethiopic version, read, "with tongues":

edifieth himself; his heart may be warmed, his affections raised, his devotion kept up, and he be in a very spiritual and comfortable frame, knowing and understanding what he himself says:

but he that prophesieth, edifieth the church : which is the great end of the Gospel ministry, which is for the edifying the body of the church: wherefore that which tends to the edification of more, even the whole church, must be preferable to that, which at most can only edify one, and that the speaker himself.

It profits no one speaking in an unknown foreign language.

1 Corinthians 14:6 “Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?”

“Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible”

1 Corinthians 14:6 - Now, brethren, if I come unto you… - The truth which the apostle had been illustrating in an abstract manner, he proceeds to illustrate by applying it to himself. If he should come among them speaking foreign languages, it could be of no use unless it were interpreted to them.

Speaking with tongues - Speaking foreign languages; that is, speaking them “only,” without any interpreter. Paul had the power of speaking foreign languages 1Co_14:18; but he did not use this power for ostentation or display, but merely to communicate the gospel to those who did not understand his native tongue.

Or by knowledge - By making it intelligible. By so explaining it as to make it understood. Knowledge here stands opposed to the “ignorance” and “obscurity” which would attend a communication in a foreign language.

Or by prophesying - See the note at 1Co_14:1. That is, unless it be communicated, through interpretation, in the manner in which the prophetic teachers spoke; that is, made intelligible, and explained, and actually brought down to the usual characteristics of communications made in their own language.

You may as well speak to the air than speak an unknown foreign language.
1 Corinthians 14:9 “So likewise you, except you utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for you shall speak into the air.”

"Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible"

1 Corinthians 14:9 - So likewise ye… - To apply the case. If you use a foreign language, how shall it be known what is said, or of what use will it be, unless it is made intelligible by interpretation?

Utter by the tongue - Unless you speak.

Words easy to be understood - Significant words (margin), words to which your auditors are accustomed.

For ye shall speak into the air - You will not speak so as to be understood; and it will be just the same as if no one was present, and you spoke to the air. We have a proverb that resembles this: “You may as well speak to the winds;” that is, you speak where it would not be understood, or where the words would have no effect. It may he observed here, that the practice of the papists accords with what the apostle here condemns, where worship is conducted in a language not understood by the people; and that there is much of this same kind of speaking now, where unintelligible terms are used, or words are employed that are above the comprehension of the people; or where doctrines are discussed which are unintelligible, and which are regarded by them without interest. All preaching should be plain, simple, perspicuous, and adapted to the capacity of the hearers.

Speaking in a foreign language no one understands is unfruitful.

1 Corinthians 14:14 “For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.”

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1 Corinthians 14:14 - For if I pray in an unknown tongue - If my prayers are composed of sentences and sayings taken out of the prophets, etc., and in their own language - my spirit prayeth, my heart is engaged in the work, and my prayers answer all the purpose of prayers to myself; but my understanding is unfruitful to all others, because they do not understand my prayers, and I either do not or cannot interpret them. See the note on 1Co_14:19.

"John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible"

1 Corinthians 14:14 - For if I pray in an unknown tongue,….In the Hebrew tongue, which the greatest part of the Jewish doctors insisted (a) upon should be only used in prayer; which notion might be borrowed from them, and now greatly prevailed in the church at Corinth; and the custom was used by such as had the gift of speaking that language, even though the body and bulk of the people understood it not:

my spirit prayeth; I pray with my breath vocally; or else with affection and devotion, understanding what I say myself, and so am edified; or rather with the gift of the Spirit bestowed on me:

but my understanding is unfruitful; that is, what I say with understanding to myself is unprofitable to others, not being understood by them. (a) Vid. Trigland. de Sect. Kar. c. 10. p. 172, 173.
Paul spoke more foreign languages than them all.

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

Paul stating this, in this chapter and in this context, just further verifies that these were all known foreign languages. This is what speaking in tongues is all about. The gifts of the Spirit are to benefit all and not for personal use. Nowhere in the Bible is it introduced as anything but. All of 1 Corinthians 14 is a rebuke for the misuse of the gift of speaking in tongues. In 1 Corinthians 3, Paul refers to them as carnal baby Christians.

“Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible”

1 Corinthians 14:18 - I thank my God - Paul here shows that he did not undervalue or despise the power of speaking foreign languages. It was with him a subject of thanksgiving that he could speak so many; but he felt that there were more valuable endowments than this; see the next verse.

With tongues more than ye all - I am able to speak more foreign languages than all of you. “How many” languages Paul could speak, he has no where told us. It is reasonable, however, to presume that he was able to speak the language of any people to whom God in his providence, and by his Spirit, called him to preach. He had been commissioned to preach to the “Gentiles,” and it is probable that he was able to speak the languages of all the nations among whom he ever traveled. There is no account of his being under a necessity of employing an interpreter wherever he preached.

“Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible”

1 Corinthians 14:18 - I speak with tongues more than ye all - He understood more languages than any of them did: and this was indispensably necessary, as he was the apostle of the Gentiles in general, and had to preach to different provinces where different dialects, if not languages, were used. In the Hebrew, Syriac, Greek, and Latin, he was undoubtedly well skilled from his education; and how many he might understand by miraculous gift we cannot tell. But, even literally understood, it is very probable that he knew more languages than any man in the Church of Corinth.

“John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible”

1 Corinthians 14:18 - I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than you all. This the apostle says, to observe to them that he did not despise speaking with tongues: nor did he endeavour to beat them off, and dissuade them from desiring them, or envied their having them, because he was destitute of them himself; for he had this gift in a very eminent manner, and oftentimes made use of it, and was frequently under a necessity of so doing; he could speak with more tongues than any of those that had them, and spoke them oftener than they did; having occasion for them through his travelling into different countries, and preaching the Gospel to people of divers languages; and this he mentions also not in a boasting manner, but in great humility, giving thanks to God, and acknowledging him to be the author of this gift.

An unbeliever would say a Church speaking in different foreign languages was mad.

1 Corinthians 14:23 “If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that you are mad?”
“Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible”

1 Corinthians 14:23 - Be come together into one place - For public worship.

And all speak with tongues - All speak with a variety of unknown tongues; all speak foreign languages. The idea is, that the church would usually speak the same language with the people among whom they dwelt; and if they made use of foreign languages which were unintelligible to their visitors, it would leave the impression that the church was a bedlam.

And there come in - those that are “unlearned.” Those that are unacquainted with foreign languages, and to whom, therefore, what was said would be unintelligible.

Or unbelievers - Heathen, or Jews, who did not believe in Christ. It is evident from this that such persons often attended on the worship of Christians. Curiosity might have led them to it; or the fact that they had relatives among Christians might have caused it.

That ye are mad - They will not understand what is said; it will be a confused jargon; and they will infer that it is the effect of insanity. Even though it might not, therefore, be in itself improper, yet a regard to the honor of Christianity should have led them to abstain from the use of such languages in their worship when it was needless. The apostles were charged, from a similar cause, with being intoxicated; see Act_2:13.

Paul warns again, if no one interprets or no one understands the language, keep silent.

1 Corinthians 14:28 “But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God.”

“Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible”

1 Corinthians 14:28 - But if there be no interpreter - If there be none present who can give the proper sense of this Hebrew reading and speaking, then let him keep silence, and not occupy the time of the Church, by speaking in a language which only himself can understand.

1 Corinthians 14 - Speaking in unknown Tongues by Albert Barnes Commentary

Below is the whole commentary on 1 Corinthians 14 from Albert Barnes Notes on the Bible commentary that is related to speaking in tongues i.e. speaking in an unknown tongue to you of another foreign country.

1 Corinthians 14 - Introduction

This chapter is a continuation of the subject commenced in 1 Cor. 12 and pursued through 1Co_13:1-13. In 1 Cor. 12 Paul had entered on the discussion of the various endowments which the Holy Spirit confers on Christians, and had shown that these endowments were bestowed in a different degree on different individuals, and yet so as to promote in the best way the edification of the church. It was proper, he said 1Co_12:31, to desire the more eminent of these endowments, and yet there was one gift of the Spirit of more value than all others, which might be obtained by all, and which should be an object of desire to all. That was love; and to show the nature, power, and value of this, was the design of the thirteenth chapter, certainly one of the most tender and beautiful portions of the Bible. In this chapter the subject is continued with special reference to the subject of “prophecy,” as being the most valuable of the miraculous endowments, or the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit.
In doing this, it was necessary to correct an erroneous estimate which they had placed on the power of speaking foreign languages. They had prized this, perhaps, because it gave them importance in the eyes of the pagan. And in proportion as they valued this, they undervalued the gift of being able to edify the church by speaking in a known and intelligible language. To correct this misapprehension; to show the relative value of these endowments, and especially to recommend the gift of “prophecy” as the more useful and desirable of the gifts of the Spirit, was the leading design of this chapter. In doing this, Paul first directs them to seek for charity. He also recommends to them, as in 1Co_12:31, to desire spiritual endowments, and of these endowments especially to desire prophecy; 1Co_14:1. He then proceeds to set forth the advantage of speaking in intelligible language, or of speaking so that the church may be edified, by the following considerations, which comprise the chapter:

1. The advantage of being understood, and of speaking for the edification of the church; 1Co_14:2-5.

2. No man could be useful to the church except he delivered that which was understood, any more than the sound of a trumpet in times of war would be useful, unless it were so sounded as to be understood by the army; 1Co_14:6-11.

3. It was the duty of all to seek to edify the church; and if a man could speak in an unknown tongue, it was his duty also to seek to be able to interpret what he said; 1Co_14:12-15.

4. The use of tongues would produce embarrassment and confusion, since those who heard them speak would be ignorant of what was said, and be unable to join in the devotions; 1Co_14:16-17.

5. Though Paul himself was more signally endowed than any of them, yet he prized far more highly the power of promoting the edification of the church, though he uttered but five words, if they were understood, than all the power which he possessed of speaking foreign languages; 1Co_14:18-19.

6. This sentiment illustrated from the Old Testament; 1Co_14:20-21.

7. The real use of the power of speaking foreign languages was to be a sign to unbelievers, an evidence that the religion was from God, and not to be used among those who were already Christians; 1Co_14:22.

8. The effect of their all speaking with tongues would be to produce confusion and disorder, and disgust among observers, and the conviction that they were deranged; but the effect of order, and of speaking intelligibly, would be to convince and convert them; 1Co_14:23-25.

9. The apostle then gives rules in regard to the proper conduct of those who were able to speak foreign languages; 1Co_14:26-32.

10. The great rule was, that order was to be observed, and that God was the author of peace; 1Co_14:33.

11. The apostle then gives a positive direction that on no pretence are women to be allowed to speak in the church, even though they should claim to be inspired; 1Co_14:34-35.
12. He then required all to submit to his authority, and to admit that what he had spoken was from the Lord; 1Co_14:36-37. And then,

13. Concludes with directing them to desire to prophesy, and not to forbid speaking with tongues on proper occasions, but to do all things in decency and order; 1Co_14:38-40.

1 Corinthians 14:1 “Follow after charity, and desire spiritual *gifis*, but rather that ye may prophesy.”

**Follow after charity** - Pursue love 1Co_13:1; that is, earnestly desire it; strive to possess it; make it the object of your anxious and constant solicitude to obtain it, and to be influenced by it always. Cultivate it in your own hearts, as the richest and best endowment of the Holy Spirit, and endeavor to diffuse its happy influence on all around you.

**And desire spiritual gifts** - I do not forbid you, while you make the possession of love your great object, and while you do not make the desire of spiritual gifts the occasion of envy or strife, to desire the miraculous endowments of the Spirit and to seek to excel in those endowments which he imparts; see the note at 1Co_12:31. The main thing was to cultivate a spirit of love. Yet it was not improper also to desire to be so endowed as to promote their highest usefulness in the church. On the phrase “spiritual gifts,” see the note at 1Co_12:1.

**But rather that ye may prophesy** - But especially, or particularly desire to be qualified for the office of prophesying. The apostle does not mean to say that prophecy is to be preferred to love or charity; but that, of the spiritual gifts which it was proper for them to desire and seek, prophecy was the most valuable. That is, they were not most earnestly and especially to desire to be able to speak foreign languages or to work miracles; but they were to desire to be qualified to speak in a manner that would be edifying to the church. They would naturally, perhaps, most highly prize the power of working miracles and of speaking foreign languages. The object of this chapter is to show them that the ability to speak in a plain, clear, instructive manner, so as to edify the church and convince sinners, was a more valuable endowment than the power of working miracles, or the power of speaking foreign languages.

On the meaning of the word “prophesy,” see the note at Rom_11:6. To what is said there on the nature of this office, it seems necessary only to add an idea suggested by Prof. Robinson (Greek and English Lexicon, under the article, Προφήτης Prophētēs), that the prophets were distinguished from the teachers (διδάσκαλοι didaskaloi), “in that, while the latter spoke in a calm, connected, didactic discourse adapted to instruct and enlighten the hearers, the prophet spoke more from the impulse of sudden inspiration, from the light of a sudden revelation at the moment (1Co_14:30, ἀποκάλυφθη apokaluphe), and his discourse was probably more adapted, by means of powerful exhortation, to awaken the feelings and conscience of the hearers.” The idea of speaking from “revelation,” he adds, seems to be fundamental to the correct idea of the nature of the prophecy here referred to. Yet the communications of the prophets were always in the vernacular tongue, and were always in intelligible language, and in this respect different from the endowments of those who spoke foreign languages.

The same truth might be spoken by both; the influence of the Spirit was equally necessary in both; both were inspired; and both answered important ends in the establishment and edification of the church. The gift of tongues, however, as it was the most striking and remarkable, and probably the most rare, was most highly prized and coveted. The object of Paul here is, to show that it was really an endowment of less value, and should be less desired by Christians than the gift of prophetic instruction, or the ability to edify the church in
language intelligible and understood by all, under the immediate influences of the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 14:2 “For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.”

For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue - This verse is designed to show that the faculty of speaking intelligibly, and to the edification of the church, is of more value than the power of speaking a foreign language. The reason is, that however valuable may be the endowment in itself, and however important the truth which he may utter, yet it is as if he spoke to God only. No one could understand him.

Speaketh not unto men - Does not speak so that people can understand him. His address is really not made to people, that is, to the church. He might have this faculty without being able to speak to the edification of the church. It is possible that the power of speaking foreign languages and of prophesying were sometimes united in the same person; but it is evident that the apostle speaks of them as different endowments, and they probably were found usually in different individuals.

But unto God - It is as if he spoke to God. No one could understand him but God. This must evidently refer to the addresses “in the church,” when Christians only were present, or when those only were present who spoke the same language, and who were unacquainted with foreign tongues. Paul says that “there” that faculty would be valueless compared with the power of speaking in a manner that should edify the church. He did not undervalue the power of speaking foreign languages when foreigners were present, or when they went to preach to foreigners; see 1Co_14:22. It was only when it was needless, when all present spoke one language, that he speaks of it as of comparatively little value.

For no man understandeth him - That is, no man in the church, since they all spoke the same language, and that language was different from what was spoken by him who was endowed with the gift of tongues. As God only could know the import of what he said, it would be lost upon the church, and would be useless.

Howbeit in the Spirit - Although, by the aid of the Spirit, he should, in fact, deliver the most important and sublime truths. This would doubtless be the case, that those who were thus endowed would deliver most important truths, but they would be “lost” upon those who heard them, because they could not understand them. The phrase “in the Spirit,” evidently means “by the Holy Spirit,” that is, by his aid and influence. Though he should be “really” under the influence of the Holy Spirit, and though the important truth which he delivers should be imparted by his aid, yet all would be valueless unless it were understood by the church.

He speaketh mysteries - For the meaning of the word “mystery,” see Note, 1Co_2:7. The word here seems to be synonymous with sublime and elevated truth; truth that was not before known, and that might be of the utmost importance.

1 Corinthians 14:3 “But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.”

But he that prophesieth - See the note at 1Co_14:1. He that speaks under the influence of inspiration in the common language of his hearers. This seems to be the difference between those who spoke in foreign languages and those who prophesied. Both were under the influence of the Holy Spirit; both might speak the same truths; both might occupy an equally important and necessary place in the church; but the language of the one was intelligible to
the church, the other not; the one was designed to edify the church, the other to address those who spoke foreign tongues, or to give demonstration, by the power of speaking foreign languages, that the religion was from God.

_Speaketh unto men_ - So as to be understood by those who were present.

_To edification_ - See the note at 1Co_10:8, note at 1Co_10:23. Speaks so as to enlighten and strengthen the church.

_And exhortation_ - See the note at Rom_12:8. He applies and enforces the practical duties of religion, and urges motives for a holy life.

_And comfort_ - Encouragement. That is, he presents the promises and the “hopes” of the gospel; the various considerations adapted to administer comfort in the time of trial. The other might do this, but it would be in a foreign language, and would be useless to the church.

1 Corinthians 14:4 “He that speaketh in an _unknown_ tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.”

_Edifieth himself_ - That is, the truths which are communicated to him by the Spirit, and which he utters in an unknown language, may be valuable, and may be the means of strengthening his faith, and building him up in the hopes of the gospel, but they can he of no use to others. His own holy affections might be excited by the truths which he would deliver, and the consciousness of possessing miraculous powers might excite his gratitude. And yet, as Doddridge has well remarked, there might be danger that a man might be injured by this gift when exercised in this ostentatious manner.

1 Corinthians 14:5 “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.”

_I would that ye all spake with tongues_ - “It is an important endowment, and is not, in its place, to be undervalued. It maybe of great service in the cause of truth, and if properly regulated, and not abused, I would rejoice if these extraordinary endowments were conferred on all. I have no envy against anyone who possesses it; no opposition to the endowment; but I wish that it should not be overvalued; and would wish to exalt into proper estimation the more useful but humble gift of speaking for the edification of the church.”

_Greater is he that prophesieth_ - This gift is of more value, and he really occupies a more elevated rank in the church. He is more “useful.” The idea here is, that talents are not to he estimated by their “brilliancy,” but by their “usefulness.” The power of speaking in an unknown tongue was certainly a more striking endowment than that of speaking so as simply to be “useful,” and yet the apostle tells us that the latter is the more valuable. So it is always. A man who is useful, however humble and unknown he may be, really occupies a more elevated and venerable rank than the man of most splendid talents and dazzling eloquence, who accomplishes nothing in saving the souls of people.

_Except he interpret_ - However important and valuable the truth might he which he uttered, it would be useless to the church, unless he should explain it in language which they could understand. In that case, the apostle does not deny that the power of speaking foreign languages was a higher endowment and more valuable than the gift of prophecy. That the man who spoke foreign languages had the power of interpreting, is evident from this verse.
From 1Co_14:27, it appears that the office of interpreting was sometimes performed by others.

1 Corinthians 14:6 “Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?”

**Now, brethren, if I come unto you…** - The truth which the apostle had been illustrating in an abstract manner, he proceeds to illustrate by applying it to himself. If he should come among them speaking foreign languages, it could be of no use unless it were interpreted to them.

**Speaking with tongues** - Speaking foreign languages; that is, speaking them “only,” without any interpreter. Paul had the power of speaking foreign languages 1Co_14:18; but he did not use this power for ostentation or display, but merely to communicate the gospel to those who did not understand his native tongue.

**Either by revelation** - Macknight renders this, “speak intelligibly;” that is, as he explains it, “by the revelation peculiar to an apostle.” Doddridge, “by the revelation of some gospel doctrine and mystery.” Locke interprets it, that you might understand the revelation, or knowledge,” etc.; but says in a note, that we cannot now certainly understand the difference between the meaning of the four words here used. “It is sufficient,” says he, “to know that these reruns stand for some intelligible discourse tending to the edification of the church.” Rosenmuller supposes the word “revelation” stands for some “clear and open knowledge of any truth arising from meditation.” It is probable that the word here does not refer to divine inspiration, as it usually does, but that it stands opposed to that which is unknown and unintelligible, as that which is “revealed” ἀποκαλύψις apokalupsis stands opposed to what is unknown, concealed, “hidden,” obscure. Here, therefore, it is synonymous, perhaps, with “explained.” “What shall it profit, unless that which I speak be brought out of the obscurity and darkness of a foreign language, and uncovered or explained!” The original sense of the word “revelation” here is, I suppose, intended ἀποκαλύψις apokalupsis, from ἀποκαλύπτω apokaluptó, “to uncover”), and means that the sense should be uncovered, that is, explained or what was spoken could not be of value.

**Or by knowledge** - By making it intelligible. By so explaining it as to make it understood. Knowledge here stands opposed to the “ignorance” and “obscurity” which would attend a communication in a foreign language.

**Or by prophesying** - See the note at 1Co_14:1. That is, unless it be communicated, through interpretation, in the manner in which the prophetic teachers spoke; that is, made intelligible, and explained, and actually brought down to the usual characteristics of communications made in their own language.

**Or by doctrine** - By teaching (διδαχῇ didachē). By instruction; in the usual mode of plain and familiar instruction. The sense of this passage, therefore, is clear. Though Paul should utter among them, as he had abundant ability to do, the most weighty and important truths, yet, unless he interpreted what he said in a manner clear from obscurity, like “revelation;” or intelligibly, and so as to constitute “knowledge;” or in the manner that the prophets spoke, in a plain and intelligible manner; or in the manner usual in simple and plain “instruction,” it would be useless to them. The perplexities of commentators may be seen stated in Locke, Bloomfield, and Doddridge.
1 Corinthians 14:7 “And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped?”

**Things without life** - Instruments of music.

**Whether pipe** - This instrument (αὐλὸς aulos) was usually made of reeds, and probably had a resemblance to a flageolet.

**Or harp** - This instrument (κιθάρα kithara) was a stringed instrument, and was made in the same way as a modern harp. It usually had ten strings, and was struck with the plectrum, or with a key. It was commonly employed in praise.

**Except they give a distinction in the sounds** - Unless they give a difference in the “tones,” such as are indicated in the gamut for music.

**How shall it be known…** - That is, there would be no time, no music. Nothing would be indicated by it. It would not be suited to excite the emotions of sorrow or of joy. All music is designed to excite emotions; but if there be no difference in the tones, no emotion would be produced. So it would be in words uttered. Unless there was something that was suited to excite thought or emotion; unless what was spoken was made “intelligible,” no matter how important in itself it might be, yet it would be useless.

1 Corinthians 14:8 “For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?”

**For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound** - The trumpet was used commonly in war. It is a well-known wind instrument, and was made of brass, silver, etc. It was used for various purposes in war - to summon the soldiers; to animate them in their march; to call them forth to battle; to sound a retreat; and to signify to them what they were to do in battle, whether to charge, advance, or retreat, etc. It therefore employed a “language” which was intelligible to an army. An uncertain sound was one in which none of these things were indicated, or in which it could not be determined what was required.

**Who shall prepare himself…** - The apostle selects a single instance of what was indicated by the trumpet, as an illustration of what he meant. The idea is, that foreign tongues spoken in their assembly would be just as useless in regard to their duty, their comfort, and edification, as would be the sound of a trumpet when it gave one of the usual and intelligible sounds by which it was known what the soldiers were required to do. Just as we would say, that the mere beating on a drum would be useless, unless some tune was played by which it was known that the soldiers were summoned to the parade, to advance, or to retreat.

1 Corinthians 14:9 “So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air.”

**So likewise ye…** - To apply the case. If you use a foreign language, how shall it be known what is said, or of what use will it be, unless it is made intelligible by interpretation?

**Utter by the tongue** - Unless you speak.

**Words easy to be understood** - Significant words (margin), words to which your auditors are accustomed.

**For ye shall speak into the air** - You will not speak so as to be understood; and it will be just the same as if no one was present, and you spoke to the air. We have a proverb that
resembles this: “You may as well speak to the winds:” that is, you speak where it would not be understood, or where the words would have no effect. It may he observed here, that the practice of the papists accords with what the apostle here condemns, where worship is conducted in a language not understood by the people; and that there is much of this same kind of speaking now, where unintelligible terms are used, or words are employed that are above the comprehension of the people; or where doctrines are discussed which are unintelligible, and which are regarded by them without interest. All preaching should be plain, simple, perspicuous, and adapted to the capacity of the hearers.

1 Corinthians 14:10 “There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification.”

There are it may be... - There has been considerable variety in the interpretation of this expression. Rosenmuller renders it, “for the sake of example.” Grotius supposes that Paul meant to indicate that there were, perhaps, or might be, as many languages as the Jews supposed, to wit, seventy. Beza and others suppose it means, that there may be as many languages as there are nations of people. Bloomfield renders it, “Let there he as many kinds of languages as you choose.” Macknight, “There are, no doubt, as many kinds of languages in the world as ye speak.” Robinson (Lexicon) renders it, “If so happen, it may be; perchance, perhaps;” and says the phrase is equivalent to “for example,” The sense is, “There are perhaps, or for example, very many kinds of voices in the world; and all are significant. None are used by those who speak them without meaning; none speak them without designing to convey some intelligible idea to their hearers.” The “argument” is, that as “all” the languages that are in the world, however numerous they are, are for “utility,” and as none are used for the sake of mere display, so it should be with those who had the power of speaking them in the Christian church. They should speak them only when and where they would be understood. Voices - Languages.

1 Corinthians 14:11 “Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me.”

The meaning of the voice - Of the language that is uttered, or the sounds that are made.

I shall be unto him... - What I say will be unintelligible to him, and what he says will be unintelligible to me. We cannot understand one another anymore than people can who speak different languages.

A barbarian - See the note at Rom_1:14. The word means one who speaks a different, or a foreign language.

1 Corinthians 14:12 “Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.”

Even so ye - Since you desire spiritual gifts, I may urge it upon you to seek to be able to speak in a clear and intelligible manner, that you may edify the church. This is one of the most valuable endowments of the Spirit; and this should be earnestly desired.

Forasmuch as ye are zealous - Since you earnestly desire; See the note at 1Co_12:31.

Spiritual gifts - The endowments conferred by the Holy Spirit; See the note at 1Co_12:1.
Seek that ye may excel… - Seek that you may be able to convey truth in a clear and plain manner; seek to be distinguished for that. It is one of the most rare and valuable endowments of the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 14:13 “Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret.”

Pray that he may interpret - Let him ask of God ability that he may explain it clearly to the church. It would seem probable that the power of speaking foreign languages, and the power of conveying truth in a clear and distinct manner, were not always found in the same person, and that the one did not of necessity imply the other. The truth seems to have been, that these extraordinary endowments of the Holy Spirit were bestowed upon people in some such way as “ordinary” talents and mental powers are now conferred; and that they became in a similar sense the “characteristic mental endowments of the individual,” and of course were subject to the same laws, and liable to the same kinds of abuse, as mental endowments are now. And as it now happens that one man may have a special faculty for acquiring and expressing himself in a foreign language who may not be by any means distinguished for clear enunciation, or capable of conveying his ideas in an interesting manner to a congregation, so it was then.

The apostle, therefore, directs such, if any there were, instead of priding themselves on their endowments, and instead of always speaking in an unknown tongue, which would be useless to the church, to “pray” for the more useful gift of being able to convey their thoughts in a clear and intelligible manner in their vernacular tongue. This would be useful. The truths, therefore, that they had the power of speaking with eminent ability in a foreign language, they ought to desire to be able to “interpret” so that they would be intelligible to the people whom they addressed in the church. This seems to me to be the plain meaning of this passage, which has given so much perplexity to commentators. Macknight renders it, however, “Let him who prayeth in a foreign language, pray so as some one may interpret;” meaning that he who prayed in a foreign language was to do it by two or three sentences at a time, so that he might be followed by an interpreter. But this is evidently forced. In order to this, it is needful to suppose that the phrase ὁλαλῶν holalô̄n, “that speaketh,” should be rendered, contrary to its obvious and usual meaning, “who prays,” and to supply τις tis, “someone,” in the close of the verse. The obvious interpretation is that which is given above; and this proceeds only on the supposition that the power of speaking foreign languages and the power of interpreting were not always united in the same person - a supposition that is evidently true, as appears from 1Co_12:10.

1 Corinthians 14:14 “For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.”

For if I pray… - The reference to prayer here, and to singing in 1Co_14:15, is designed to illustrate the propriety of the general sentiment which he is defending, that public worship should be conducted in a language that would be intelligible to the people. However well meant it might be, or however the “heart” might be engaged in it, yet unless it was intelligible, and the understanding could join in it, it would be vain and profitless.

My spirit prayeth - The word spirit here (πνεῦμα pneuma) has been variously understood. Some have understood it of the Holy Spirit - the Spirit by which Paul says he was actuated. Others of the “spiritual gift,” or that spiritual influence by which he was endowed. Others of the mind itself. But it is probable that the word “spirit” refers to the “will;” or to the mind, as the seat of the affections and emotions; that is, to the heart, desires, or intentions. The word “spirit” is often used in the Scriptures as the seat of the affections, and emotions, and
passions of various kinds; see Mat_5:3, “Blessed are the poor in spirit;” Luk_10:21, “Jesus rejoiced in spirit.” So it is the seat of ardor or fervor Luk_1:17; Act_18:25; Rom_12:11; of grief or indignation; Mar_3:12; Joh_11:33; Joh_13:21; Act_17:16. It refers also to feelings, disposition, or temper of mind, in Luk_9:55; Rom_8:15. Here it refers, it seems to me. to the heart, the will, the disposition, the feelings, as contradistinguished from the understanding; and the sense is, “My feelings find utterance in prayer; my heart is engaged in devotion; my prayer will be acceptable to God, who looks upon the feelings of the heart, and I may have true enjoyment; but my understanding will be unfruitful, that is, will not profit others. What I say will not be understood by them; and of course, however much benefit I might derive from my devotions, yet they would be useless to others.”

But my understanding - (ο̱ δε νο̱ς μου ho de nous mou). My intellect, my mind; my mental efforts and operations.

Is unfruitful - Produces nothing that will be of advantage to them. It is like a barren tree; a tree that bears nothing that can be of benefit to others. They cannot understand what I say, and of course, they cannot be profited by what I utter.

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

What is it then? - What shall I do? What is the proper course for me to pursue? What is my practice and my desire; see the same form of expression in Rom_3:9, and Rom_6:15. It indicates the “conclusion” to which the reasoning had conducted him, or the course which he would pursue in view of all the circumstances of the case.

I will pray with the spirit… - I will endeavor to “blend” all the advantages which can be derived from prayer; I will “unite” all the benefits which “can” result to myself and to others. I deem it of vast importance to pray with the spirit in such a way that the “heart” and the “affections” may be engaged, so that I may myself derive benefit from it; but I will also unite with that, utility to others; I will use such language that they may understand it, and be profited.

And I will pray with the understanding also - So that others may understand me. I will make the appropriate use of the intellect, so that it may convey ideas, and make suitable impressions on the minds of others.

I will sing with the spirit - It is evident that the same thing might take place in singing which occurred in prayer. It might be in a foreign language, and might be unintelligible to others. The affections of the man himself might be excited, and his heart engaged in the duty, but it would be profitless to others. Paul, therefore, says that he would so celebrate the praises of God as to excite the proper affections in his own mind, and so as to be intelligible and profitable to others. This passage proves:

(1) That the praises of God are to be celebrated among Christians, and that it is an important part of worship;

(2) That the heart should be engaged in it, and that it should be so performed as to excite proper affections in the hearts of those who are engaged in it; and,

(3) That it should be so done as to be “intelligible” and edifying to others.
The words should be so uttered as to be distinct and understood. There should be clear enunciation as well as in prayer and preaching, since the design of sacred music in the worship of God is not only to utter praise, but it is to impress the sentiments which are sung on the heart by the aid of musical sounds and expression more deeply than could otherwise be done. If this is not done, the singing might as well be in a foreign language. Perhaps there is no part of public worship in which there is greater imperfection than in the mode of its psalmody. At the same time, there is scarcely any part of the devotions of the sanctuary that may be made more edifying or impressive. It has the “advantage” - an advantage which preaching and praying have not - of using the sweet tones of melody and harmony to “impress” sentiment on the heart and it should be done.

1 Corinthians 14:16 “Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?”

**Else** - (Επεί Epei). Since; if this is not done; if what is said is not intelligible, how shall the unlearned be able appropriately to express his assent, and join in your devotions?

**When thou shalt bless** - When thou shalt bless God, or give thanks to him. If thou shalt lead the devotions of the people in expressing thanksgiving for mercies and favors. This may refer to a part of public worship, or to the thanks which should be expressed at table, and the invocation of the divine blessing to attend the bounties of his providence. Paul had illustrated his subject by prayer and by singing; be now does it by a reference to the important part of public worship expressed in giving thanks.

**With the spirit** - In the manner referred to above; that is, in an unknown tongue, in such a way that your own “heart” may be engaged in it, but which would be unintelligible to others.

**He that occupieth the room** - Is in the place, or the seat of the unlearned; that is, he who is unlearned. On the meaning of the word “room,” see the note at Luk_14:8. To “fill” a place means to occupy a station, or to be found in a slate or condition.

**Of the unlearned** - (τοῦ ἰδιώτου tou idiōtou. On the meaning of this word, see the note at Act_4:13. Here it means one who was unacquainted with the foreign language spoken by him who gave thanks. It properly denotes a man in “private,” in contradistinction from a man in “public” life; and hence, a man who is ignorant and unlettered, as such people generally were.

**Say Amen** - This word means “truly, verily;” and is an expression of affirmation Joh_3:5 or of assent. Here it means assent. How can he pronounce “the” Amen; how can he express his assent; how can he join in the act of devotion? This “might” have been, and probably “was,” expressed aloud; and there is no impropriety in it. It “may,” however, be “mental” - a silent assent to what is said, and a silent uniting in the act of thanksgiving. In one way or the other, or in both, the assent should always be expressed by those who join in acts of public worship.

1 Corinthians 14:17 “For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified.”

**For thou verily givest thanks well** - That is, even if you use a foreign language. You do it with the heart; and it is accepted by God as your offering; but the other, who cannot understand it, cannot be benefited by it.

1 Corinthians 14:18 “I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all:”
I thank my God - Paul here shows that he did not undervalue or despise the power of speaking foreign languages. It was with him a subject of thanksgiving that he could speak so many; but he felt that there were more valuable endowments than this; see the next verse.

With tongues more than ye all - I am able to speak more foreign languages than all of you. “How many” languages Paul could speak, he has no where told us. It is reasonable, however, to presume that he was able to speak the language of any people to whom God in his providence, and by his Spirit, called him to preach. He had been commissioned to preach to the “Gentiles,” and it is probable that he was able to speak the languages of all the nations among whom he ever traveled. There is no account of his being under a necessity of employing an interpreter wherever he preached.

1 Corinthians 14:19 “Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.”

Yet in the church - In the Christian assembly. The word “church” does not refer to the “edifice” where Christians worshipped, but to the organized body of Christians.

I had rather… - It is probable that in the Christian assembly, usually, there were few who understood foreign languages. Paul, therefore, would not speak in a foreign language when its only use would be mere display.

With my understanding - So as to be intelligible to others; so that I might understand it, and so that at the same time others might be benefitted.

1 Corinthians 14:20 “Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.”

Brethren, be not children in understanding - Be not childish; do not behave like little children. They admire, and are astonished at what is striking, novel, and what may be of no real utility. They are pleased with anything that will amuse them, and at little things that afford them play and pastime. So your admiration of a foreign language and of the ability to speak it, is of as little solid value as the common sports and plays of boys. This, says Doddridge, is an admirable stroke of oratory, and adapted to bring down their pride by showing them that those things on which they were disposed to value themselves were “childish.” It is sometimes well to appeal to Christians in this manner, and to show them that what they are engaged in is “unworthy” the dignity of the understanding - unfit to occupy the time and attention of an immortal mind. Much, alas! very much of that which engages the attention of Christians is just as unworthy of the dignity of the mind, and of their immortal nature, as were the aims and desires which the apostle rebuked among the Christians at Corinth. Much that pertains to dress, to accomplishment, to living, to employment, to amusement, to conversation, will appear, when we come to die, to have been like the playthings of “children;” and we shall feel that the immortal mind has been employed, and the time wasted, and the strength exhausted in that which was foolish and puerile.

Howbeit in malice be ye children - This is one of Paul’s most happy turns of expression and of sentiment. He had just told them that in one respect they ought not to be children. Yet, as if this would appear to be speaking lightly of children - and Paul would not speak lightly of anyone, even of a child - he adds, that in “another” respect it would be well to be like them - nay, not only like children, but like “infants.” The phrase “be ye children,” here, does not express the force of the original νηπιάζετε nēpiazete. It means, “be infants,” and is emphatic, and was used, evidently, by the apostle of design. The meaning may be thus expressed. “Your
admiration of foreign languages is like the sports and plays of “childhood.” In this respect be not children (παιδία; paidia); be men! Lay aside such childish things. Act worthy of the “understanding” which God has given you. I have mentioned children. Yet I would not speak unkindly or with contempt even of them. “In one respect” you may imitate them. Nay, you should not only be like “children,” that are somewhat advanced in years, but like “infants.” Be as free from malice, from any ill-will toward others, from envy, and every improper passion, as they are.” This passage, therefore, accords with the repeated declaration of the Saviour, that in order to enter into heaven, it was needful that we should become as little children; Mat_18:3.

**Be men** - Margin, “Perfect, or of a riper age” (τέλειοι teleioi). The word means full-grown men. Act like them whose understandings are mature and ripe.

1 Corinthians 14:21 “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.”

**In the law it is written** - This passage is found in Isa_38:11-12. The word “law” here seems to mean the same as revelation; or is used to denote the Old Testament in general. A similar use occurs in Joh_10:34, and Joh_15:25.

**With men of other tongues…** - This passage, where it occurs in Isaiah, means, that God would teach the rebellious and refractory Jews submission to himself, by punishing them amidst a people of another language, by removing them to a land - the land of Chal'dea - where they would hear only a language that to them would be unintelligible and barbarous. Yet, notwithstanding this discipline, they would be still, to some extent, a rebellious people. The passage in Isaiah has no reference to the miraculous gift of tongues. and cannot have been used by the apostle as containing any intimation that such miraculous gifts would be imparted. It seems to have been used by Paul, because the “words” which occurred in Isaiah would “appropriately express” the idea which he wished to convey (see the note at Mat_1:23), that God would make use of foreign languages for some “valuable purpose.” But he by no means intimates that Isaiah had any such reference; nor does he quote this as a fulfillment of the prophecy; nor does he mean to say, that God would accomplish the same purpose by the use of foreign languages, which was contemplated in the passage in Isaiah. The sense is, as God accomplished an important purpose by the use of a foreign language in regard to his ancient people, as recorded in Isaiah, so he will make use of foreign languages to accomplish important purposes still. They shall be used in the Christian church to effect important objects, though not in the same manner, nor for the same end, as in the time of the captivity. What the design of making use of foreign languages was, in the Christian church, the apostle immediately states; 1Co_14:22-23.

**Yet for all that…** - Notwithstanding all this chastisement that shall be inflicted on the Jews in a distant land, and among a people of a different language, they will still be a rebellious people. This is the sense of the passage, as it is used by Isaiah; see Isa_28:12. It is not quoted literally by the apostle, but the main idea is retained. He does not appear to design to apply this to the Corinthians, unless it may be to intimate that the power of speaking foreign languages did not of necessity secure obedience. It might he that this power might be possessed, and yet they be a sinful people; just as the Jews were admonished by the judgments of God, inflicted by means of a people speaking a foreign language, and yet were not reformed or made holy.
1 Corinthians 14:22 “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.”

Wherefore - Thus, (Ὥστε Ὁστε), or wherefore. The apostle does not mean to say that what he was about to state was a direct conclusion from the passage of Scripture which he had quoted, but that it followed from all that he had said, and from the whole view of the subject. “The true statement or doctrine is, that tongues are for a sign,” etc.

Tongues - The power of speaking foreign languages.

Are for a sign - An “indication,” an evidence, or a proof that God has imparted this power, and that he attends the preaching of the gospel with his approbation. It is a “sign,” or a “miracle,” which, like all other miracles, may be designed to convince the unbelieving world that the religion is from God.

Not to them that believe - Not to Christians. They are already convinced of the truth of religion, and they would not be benefited by that which was spoken in a language which they could not understand,

But to them that believe not - It is a miracle designed to convince them of the truth of the Christian religion. God alone could confer the power of thus speaking; and as it was conferred expressly to aid in the propagation of the gospel, it proved that it was from God; see the note on Act_2:1-15.

But prophesying - Speaking in a calm, connected, didactic manner, in language intelligible to all under the influence of inspiration; see notes on 1Co_14:1.

For them that believe not - Is not particularly intended for them; but is intended mainly for the edifying of the church. It is not so striking, so replete with proofs of the divine presence and power as the gift of tongues. Though it may be really under the influence of the Holy Spirit, and may be really by inspiration, yet it is not so evidently such as is the power of speaking foreign languages. It was, therefore, better adapted to edify the church than to convince gainsayers. At the same time the “truths” conveyed by it, and the consolations administered by it, might be as clear evidence to the church of the attending power, and presence, and goodness of God, as the power of speaking foreign languages might be to infidels.

1 Corinthians 14:23 “If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?”

Be come together into one place - For public worship.

And all speak with tongues - All speak with a variety of unknown tongues; all speak foreign languages. The idea is, that the church would usually speak the same language with the people among whom they dwelt; and if they made use of foreign languages which were unintelligible to their visitors, it would leave the impression that the church was a bedlam.

And there come in - those that are “unlearned.” Those that are unacquainted with foreign languages, and to whom, therefore, what was said would be unintelligible.
Or unbelievers - Heathen, or Jews, who did not believe in Christ. It is evident from this that such persons often attended on the worship of Christians. Curiosity might have led them to it; or the fact that they had relatives among Christians might have caused it.

That ye are mad - They will not understand what is said; it will be a confused jargon; and they will infer that it is the effect of insanity. Even though it might not, therefore, be in itself improper, yet a regard to the honor of Christianity should have led them to abstain from the use of such languages in their worship when it was needless. The apostles were charged, from a similar cause, with being intoxicated; see Act_2:13.

1 Corinthians 14:24 “But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all:”

But if all prophesy - See the note at 1Co_14:1. If all, in proper order and time, shall utter the truths of religion in a language intelligible to all.

Or one unlearned - One unacquainted with the nature of Christianity, or the truths of the gospel.

He is convinced of all - He will be convinced by all that speak. He will understand what is said; he will see its truth and force, and be will be satisfied of the truth of Christianity. The word here rendered “convinced” (ἐλέγχεται elengchetai) is rendered “reprove” in Joh_16:8, “And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin,” etc. Its proper meaning is to “convict,” to show one to be wrong; and then to rebuke, reprove, admonish, etc. Here it means, evidently, that the man would be convicted, or convinced of his error and of his sin; he would see that his former opinions and practice had been wrong; he would see and acknowledge the force and truth of the Christian sentiments which should be uttered, and would acknowledge the error of his former opinions and life. The following verse shows that the apostle means something more than a mere convincing of the understanding, or a mere conviction that his opinions had been erroneous. He evidently refers to what is now known also as “conviction” for sin; that is, a deep sense of the depravity of the heart, of the errors and follies of the past life, accompanied with mental anxiety, distress, and alarm. The force of truth, and the appeals which should be made, and the observation of the happy effects of religion, would convince him that he was a sinner, and show him also his need of a Saviour.

He is judged by all - By all that speak; by all that they say. The “effect” of what they say shall be, as it were, to pass a “judgment” on his former life; or to condemn him. What is said will be approved by his own conscience, and will have the effect to condemn him in his own view as a lost sinner. This is now the effect of faithful preaching, to produce deep self-condemnation in the minds of sinners.

1 Corinthians 14:25 “And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.”

And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest - Made manifest to himself in a surprising and remarkable manner. He shall be led to see the “real” designs and motives of his heart. His conscience would be awakened; he would recall his former course of life; he would see that it was evil; and the present state of his heart would be made known to himself. It is possible that he would “suppose that the speaker was aiming directly at him, and “revealing” his feelings to others; for such an effect is often produced. The convicted sinner often supposes that the preacher particularly intends “him,” and wonders that he has such an acquaintance with his feelings and his life; and often supposes that he is designing to disclose
his feelings to the congregation. It is possible that Paul here may mean that the prophets, by inspiration, would be able to reveal some secret facts in regard to the stranger; or to state the ill design which he might have had in coming into the assembly; or to state some things in regard to him which could be known only to himself; as was the case with Ananias and Sapphira (Act_5:1, seq.); but perhaps it is better to understand this in a more general sense, as describing the proper and more common effect of truth, when it is applied by a man’s own conscience. Such effects are often witnessed now; and such effects show the truth of religion; its adaptedness to people; the omniscience and the power of God; the design of the conscience, and its use in the conversion of sinners.

And so falling down on his face - The usual posture of worship or reverence in eastern countries. It was performed by sinking on the knees and hands, and then placing the face on the ground. This might be done publicly; or the apostle may mean to say that it would lead him to do it in private.

He will worship God - He will be converted, and become a Christian.

And report that God… - Will become your friend, and an advocate for the Christian religion. An enemy will be turned to a friend. Doubtless this was often done. It is now often done. Paul’s argument is, that they should so conduct their public devotions as that they should be adapted to produce this result.

1 Corinthians 14:26 “How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.”

How is it then, brethren? - See the note at 1Co_14:15. What is the fact? What actually occurs among you? Does that state of things exist which I have described? Is there that order in your public worship which is demanded and proper? It is implied in his asking this question that there might be some things among them which were improper, and which deserved reproof.

When ye come together - For worship.

Everyone of you… - That is, all the things which are specified would be found among them. It is, evidently, not meant that all these things would be found in the same person, but would all exist at the same time; and thus confusion and disorder would be inevitable. Instead of waiting for an intimation from the presiding officer in the assembly, or speaking in succession and in order, each one probably regarded himself as under the influence of the Holy Spirit; as having an important message to communicate, or as being called on to celebrate the praises of God; and thus confusion and disorder would prevail. Many would be speaking at the same time, and a most unfavorable impression would be made on the minds of the strangers who should be present, 1Co_14:23. This implied reproof of the Corinthians is certainly a reproof of those public assemblies where many speak at the same time; or where a portion are engaged in praying, and others in exhortation. Nor can it be urged that in such cases those who engage in these exercises are under the influence of the Holy Spirit; for, however true that may be, yet it is no more true than it was in Corinth, and yet the apostle reproved the practice there. The Holy Spirit is the author of order, and not of confusion 1Co_14:33; and true religion prompts to peace and regularity, and not to discord and tumult.

Hath a psalm - Is disposed to sing; is inclined to praise; and, however irregular or improper, expresses his thanks in a public manner, see the note at 1Co_14:15.
Hath a doctrine - Has some religious truth on his mind which he deems it of special importance to inculcate, see the note at 1Co_14:6.

Hath a tongue - Has something made known to him in a foreign language, or has a power of speaking a foreign language, and exercises it, though it produces great confusion.

Hath a revelation - Some truth which has been particularly revealed to him; perhaps an explanation of some mystery (Doddridge); or a revelation of some future event (Macknight); or a prophecy (Bloomfield); or a power of explaining some of the truths couched in the types and figures of the Old Testament. Grotius.

Hath an interpretation - An explanation of something that has been uttered by another in a foreign language; See the note at 1Co_12:10.

Let all things... - Let this be the great principle, to promote the edification of the church; See the note at 1Co_14:12. If this rule were followed, it would prevent confusion and disorder.

1 Corinthians 14:27 “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.”

Let it be by two, or at the most by three - That is, two, or at most three in one day, or in one meeting. So Grotius, Rosenmuller, Doddridge, Bloomfield, and Locke, understand it. It is probable that many were endowed with the gift of tongues; and it is certain that they were disposed to exercise the gift even when it could be of no real advantage, and when it was done only for ostentation. Paul had shown to them 1Co_14:22, that the main design of the gift of tongues was to convince unbelievers; he here shows them that if that gift was exercised in the church, it should be in such a way as to promote edification. They should not speak at the same time; nor should they regard it as necessary that all should speak at the same meeting. It should not be so as to produce disorder and confusion nor should it be so as to detain the people beyond a reasonable time. The speakers, therefore, in any one assembly should not exceed two or three.

And that by course - Separately; one after another. They should not all speak at the same time.

And let one interpret - One who has the gift of interpreting foreign languages, (Note, 1Co_12:10), so that they may be understood, and the church be edified.

1 Corinthians 14:28 “But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God.”

But if there be no interpreter - If there be no one present who has the gift of interpretation.

And let him speak to himself and to God - See the note at 1Co_14:2, note at 1Co_14:4. Let him commune with himself, and with God; let him meditate on the truths which are revealed to him, and let him in secret express his desires to God.

1 Corinthians 14:29 “Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.”

Let the prophets - See the note at 1Co_14:1.

Speak two or three - On the same days, or at the same meeting; see the note at 1Co_14:27.
And let the other judge - The word “other” (οἱ ἄλλοι hoi alloi, “the others”), Bloomfield supposes refers to the other prophets; and that the meaning is, that they should decide whether what was said was dictated by the Holy Spirit, or not. But the more probable sense, I think, is that which refers it to the rest of the congregation, and which supposes that they were to compare one doctrine with another, and deliberate on what was spoken, and determine whether it had evidence of being in accordance with the truth. It may be that the apostle here refers to those who had the gift of discerning spirits, and that he meant to say that they were to determine by what spirit the prophets who spoke were actuated. It was possible that those who claimed to be prophets might err, and it was the duty of all to examine whether that which was uttered was in accordance with truth. And if this was a duty then, it is a duty now; if it was proper even when the teachers claimed to be under divine inspiration, it is much more the duty of the people now. No minister of religion has a right to demand that all that he speaks shall be regarded as truth, unless he can give good reasons for it: no man is to be debarred from the right of canvassing freely, and comparing with the Bible, and with sound reason, all that the minister of the gospel advances. No minister who has just views of his office, and a proper acquaintance with the truth, and confidence in it, would desire to prohibit the people from the most full and free examination of all that he utters. It may be added, that the Scripture everywhere encourages the most full and free examination of all doctrines that are advanced; and that true religion advances just in proportion as this spirit of candid, and earnest, and prayerful examination prevails among a people; see the note at Act_17:11; compare 1Th_5:21.

1 Corinthians 14:30 “If anything be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace.”

If anything be revealed to another - If, while one is speaking, an important truth is revealed to another, or is suggested to his mind by the Holy Spirit, which he feels it to be important to communicate.

Let the first hold his peace - That is, let him that was speaking conclude his discourse, and let there not be the confusion arising from two persons speaking at the same time. Doddridge understands this as meaning, that he to whom the revelation was made should sit still, until the other was done speaking, and not rise and rudely interrupt him. But this is to do violence to the language. So Macknight understands it, that the one who was speaking was first to finish his discourse, and be silent, before the other began to speak. But this is evidently a forced construction. Locke understands it as meaning, that if, while one was speaking, the meaning of what he said was revealed to another, the first was to cease speaking until the other had interpreted or explained it. But the obvious meaning of the passage is, that the man that was speaking was to close his discourse and be silent. It does not follow, however, that he was to be rudely interrupted. He might close his discourse deliberately, or perhaps by an intimation from the person to whom the revelation was made. At any rate, two were not to speak at the same time, but the one who was speaking was to conclude before the other addressed the assembly.

1 Corinthians 14:31 “For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted.”

For ye may all prophecy… - There is time enough for all; there is no need of speaking in confusion and disorder. Every person may have an opportunity of expressing his sentiments at the proper time.
That all may learn - In such a manner that there may be edification. This might be done if they would speak one at a time in their proper order.

1 Corinthians 14:32 “And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.”

And the spirits of the prophets - See in 1Co_14:1 for the meaning of the word prophets. The evident meaning of this is, that they were able to control their inclination to speak; they were not under a necessity of speaking, even though they might be inspired. There was no need of disorder. This verse gives confirmation to the supposition, that the extraordinary endowments of the Holy Spirit were subjected to substantially the same laws as a man’s natural endowments. They were conferred by the Holy Spirit; but they were conferred on free agents, and did not interfere with their free agency. And as a man, though of the most splendid talents and commanding eloquence, has “control” over his own mind, and is not “compelled” to speak, so it was with those who are here called prophets. The immediate reference of the passage is to those who are called “prophets” in the New Testament: and the interpretation should be confined to them.

It is not improvable, however, that the same thing was true of the prophets of the Old Testament; and that it is really true as a general declaration of all the prophets whom God has inspired, that they had control over their own minds, and could speak or be silent at pleasure. In this the spirit of true inspiration differed essentially from the views of the pagan, who regarded themselves as driven on by a wild, controlling influence, that compelled them to speak even when they were unconscious of what they said. Universally, in the pagan world, the priests and priestesses supposed or feigned that they were under an influence which was uncontrollable; which took away their powers of self-command, and which made them the mere organs or unconscious instruments of communicating the will of the gods. The Scripture account of inspiration is, however, a very different thing. In whatever way the mind was influenced, or whatever was the mode in which the truth was conveyed, yet it was not such as to destroy the conscious powers of free agency, nor such as to destroy the individuality of the inspired person, or to annihilate what was special in his mode of thinking, his style, or his customary manner of expression.

1 Corinthians 14:33 “For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.”

God is not the author of confusion - Margin, “Tumult,” or “unquietness.” His religion cannot tend to produce disorder. He is the God of peace; and his religion will tend to promote order. It is calm, peaceful, thoughtful. It is not boisterous and disorderly.

As in all churches of the saints - As was everywhere apparent in the churches. Paul here appeals to them, and says that this was the fact wherever the true religion was spread, that it tended to produce peace and order. This is as true now as it was then. And we may learn, therefore:

(1) That where there is disorder, there is little religion. Religion does not produce it; and the tendency of tumult and confusion is to drive religion away.

(2) True religion will not lead to tumult, to outcries, or to irregularity. It will not prompt many to speak or pray at once; nor will it justify tumultuous and noisy assemblages.

(3) Christians should regard God as the author of peace. They should always in the sanctuary demean themselves in a reverent manner, and with such decorum as becomes people when they are in the presence of a holy and pure God, and engaged in his worship.
(4) all those pretended conversions, however sudden and striking they may be, which are attended with disorder, and confusion, and public outcries, are to be suspected. Such excitement may be connected with genuine piety, but it is no part of pure religion. That is calm, serious, orderly, heavenly. No person who is under its influence is disposed to engage in scenes of confusion and disorder. Grateful he may be, and he may and will express his gratitude; prayerful he will be, and he will pray; anxious for others he will be, and he will express that anxiety; but it will be with seriousness, tenderness, love; with a desire for the order of God’s house, and not with a desire to break in upon and disturb all the solemnities of public worship.

1 Corinthians 14:34 “Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law.”

Let your women keep silence… - This rule is positive, explicit, and universal. There is no ambiguity in the expressions; and there can be no difference of opinion, one would suppose, in regard to their meaning. The sense evidently is, that in all those things which he had specified, the women were to keep silence; they were to take no part. He had discoursed of speaking foreign languages, and of prophecy; and the evident sense is, that in regard to all these they were to keep silence, or were not to engage in them. These pertained solely to the male portion of the congregation. These things constituted the business of the public teaching; and in this the female part of the congregation were to be silent. “They were not to teach the people, nor were they to interrupt those who were speaking” - Rosenmuller. It is probable that, on pretence of being inspired, the women had assumed the office of public teachers.

In 1 Cor. 11, Paul had argued against their doing this in a certain manner - without their veils 1Co_11:4, and he had shown, that “on that account,” and “in that manner,” it was improper for them to assume the office of public teachers, and to conduct the devotions of the church. The force of the argument in 1 Cor. 11: is, that what he there states would be a sufficient reason against the practice, even if there were no other. It was contrary to all decency and propriety that they should appear “in that manner” in public. He here argues against the practice on every ground; forbids it altogether; and shows that on every consideration it was to be regarded as improper for them even so much as “to ask a question” in time of public service. There is, therefore, no inconsistency between the argument in 1 Cor. 11: and the statement here; and the force of the whole is, that “on every consideration” it was improper, and to be expressly prohibited, for women to conduct the devotions of the church. It does not refer to those only who claimed to be inspired, but to all; it does not refer merely to acts of public preaching, but to all acts of speaking, or even asking questions, when the church is assembled for public worship. No rule in the New Testament is more positive than this; and however plausible may be the reasons which may be urged for disregarding it, and for suffering women to take part in conducting public worship, yet the authority of the apostle Paul is positive, and his meaning cannot be mistaken; compare 1Ti_2:11-12.

To be under obedience - To be subject to their husbands; to acknowledge the superior authority of the man; see the note at 1Co_11:3.

As also saith the law - Gen.3:16, “And thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.”

1 Corinthians 14:35 “And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.”
And if they will learn anything - If anything has been spoken which they do not understand; or if on any particular subject they desire more full information, let them inquire of their husbands in their own dwelling. They may there converse freely; and their inquiries will not be attended with the irregularity and disorder which would occur should they interrupt the order and solemnity of public worship.

For it is a shame - It is disreputable and shameful; it is a breach of propriety. Their station in life demands modesty, humility, and they should be free from the ostentation of appearing so much in public as to take part in the public services of teaching and praying. It does not become their rank in life; it is not fulfilling the object which God evidently intended them to fill. He has appointed people to rule; to hold offices; to instruct and govern the church; and it is improper that women should assume that office upon themselves. This evidently and obviously refers to the church assembled for public worship, in the ordinary and regular acts of devotion. There the assembly is made up of males and females, of old and young, and there it is improper for them to take part in conducting the exercises. But this cannot be interpreted as meaning that it is improper for females to speak or to pray in meetings of their own sex, assembled for prayer or for benevolence; nor that it is improper for a female to speak or to pray in a Sunday School. Neither of these come under the apostle’s idea of a church. And in such meetings, no rule of propriety or of the Scriptures is violated in their speaking for the edification of each other, or in leading in social prayer. It may be added here, that on this subject the Jews were very strenuous, and their laws were very strict. The Rabbis taught that a woman should know nothing but the use of the distaff, and they were specially prohibited from asking questions in the synagogue, or even from reading. See Lightfoot. The same rule is still observed by the Jews in the synagogues.

1 Corinthians 14:36 “What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only?”

What! came the word of God out from you? - The meaning of this is, “Is the church at Corinth the “mother church?” Was it first established; or has it been alone in sending forth the Word of God? You have adopted customs which are unusual. You have permitted women to speak in a manner unknown to other churches; see 1Co_11:16. You have admitted irregularity and confusion unknown in all the others. You have allowed many to speak at the same time, and have tolerated confusion and disorder. Have you any “right” thus to differ from others? Have you any authority, as it were, to dictate to them, to teach them, contrary to their uniform custom, to allow these disorders? Should you not rather be conformed to them, and observe the rules of the churches which are older than yours?” The “argument” here is, that the church at Corinth was “not” the first that was established; that it was one of the “last” that had been founded; and that it could, therefore, claim no right to differ from others, or to prescribe to them. The same argument is employed in 1Co_11:16; see Note.

Or came it unto you only? - As you are not the first of those who believed, neither are you the only ones. God has sent the same gospel to others, and it is traveling over the world. Others, therefore, have the same right as you to originate customs and special habits; and as this would be attended with confusion and disorder, you should all follow the same rule, and the customs which do not prevail in other churches should not be allowed in yours.

1 Corinthians 14:37 “If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.”

If any man think himself to be a prophet - See the note at 1Co_14:1. If any man claim to be divinely endowed. Macknight renders it, “be really a prophet.” But the more correct meaning here is, doubtless, “If any man “profess” to be a prophet; or is “reputed” to be a
prophet.” Bloomfield. The proper meaning of the word δοκέω dokeō is to seem to oneself; to be of opinion, to suppose, believe, etc.; and the reference here is to one who should “regard himself,” or who should believe and profess to be thus endowed.

Or spiritual - Regarding himself as under the extraordinary influence of the Spirit.

Let him acknowledge… - He will show that he is truly under the influence of the Holy Spirit, by acknowledging my authority, and by yielding obedience to the commands which I utter in the name and by the authority of the Lord. All would probably be disposed to acknowledge the right of Paul to speak to them; all would regard him as an apostle; and all would show that God had influenced their hearts, if they listened to his commands, and obeyed his injunctions. I do not speak by my own authority, or in my own name, says Paul. I speak in the name of the Lord; and to obey the commands of the Lord is a proof of being influenced by his Spirit. True religion everywhere, and the most ardent and enthusiastic zeal that is prompted by true religion, will show their genuineness and purity by a sacred and constant regard for the commands of the Lord. And that zeal which disregards those commands, and which tramples down the authority of the Scriptures and the peace and order of the church, gives demonstration that it is not genuine. It is false zeal, and, however ardent, will not ultimately do good to the cause.

1 Corinthians 14:38 “But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant.”

But if any be ignorant… - If anyone affects to be ignorant of my authority, or whether I have a right to command. If he affects to doubt whether I am inspired, and whether what I utter is in accordance with the will of God.

Let him be ignorant - At his own peril, let him remain so, and abide the consequences. I shall not take any further trouble to debate with him. I have stated my authority. I have delivered the commands of God. And now, if he disregards them, and still doubts whether all this is said by divine authority, let him abide the consequences of rejecting the law of God. I have given full proof of my divine commission. I have nothing more to say on that head. And now, if he chooses to remain in ignorance or incredulity, the fault is his own, and he must answer for it to God.

1 Corinthians 14:39 “Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues.”

Covet to prophesy - See the note at 1Co_14:1. This is the “summing up” of all that he had said. It was “desirable” that a man should wish to be able to speak, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, in such a manner as to edify the church.

And forbid not… - Do not suppose that the power of speaking foreign languages is useless, or is to be despised, or that it is to be prohibited. “In its own place” it is a valuable endowment; and on proper occasions the talent should be exercised; see in 1Co_14:22.

1 Corinthians 14:40 “Let all things be done decently and in order.”

Let all things be done decently and in order - Let all things be done in an “appropriate” and “becoming” manner; “decorously,” as becomes the worship of God. Let all be done in “order, regularly;” without confusion, discord, tumult. The word used here (κατὰ τάξιν kata taxin) is properly a military term, and denotes the order and regularity with which an army is drawn up. This is a general rule, which was to guide them. It was simple, and easily applied. There might be a thousand questions started about the modes and forms of worship, and the
customs in the churches, and much difficulty might occur in many of these questions; but here was a simple and plain rule, which might be easily applied. Their good sense would tell them what became the worship of God; and their pious feelings would restrain them from excesses and disorders. This rule is still applicable, and is safe in guiding us in many things in regard to the worship of God. There are many things which cannot be subjected to “rule,” or exactly prescribed; there are many things which may and must be left to pious feeling, to good sense, and to the views of Christians themselves, about what will promote their edification and the conversion of sinners. The rule in such questions is plain. Let all be done “decorously,” as becomes the worship of the great and holy God; let all be without confusion, noise, and disorder.

In view of this chapter, we may remark:

(1) That public worship should be in a language understood by the people; the language which they commonly employ. Nothing can be clearer than the sentiments of Paul on this. The whole strain of the chapter is to demonstrate this, in opposition to making use of a foreign and unintelligible language in any part of public worship. Paul specifies in the course of the discussion every part of public worship; “public preaching” 1Co_14:2-3, 1Co_14:5, 1Co_14:13, 1Co_14:19; “prayer” 1Co_14:14-15; “singing” 1Co_14:15; and insists that all should be in a language that should be understood by the people. It would almost seem that he had anticipated the sentiments and practice of the Roman Catholic denomination. It is remarkable that a practice should have grown up, and have been defended, in a church professedly Christian, so directly in opposition to the explicit meaning of the New Testament. Perhaps there is not even in the Roman Catholic denomination, a more striking instance of a custom or doctrine in direct contradiction to the Bible. If anything is plain and obvious, it is that worship, in order to be edifying, should be in a language that is understood by the people.

Nor can that service be acceptable to God which is not understood by those who offer it; which conveys no idea to their minds, and which cannot, therefore, be the homage of the heart. Assuredly, God does not require the offering of unmeaningful words. Yet, this has been a grand device of the great enemy of man. It has contributed to keep the people in ignorance and superstition; it has prevented the mass of the people from seeing how utterly unlike the New Testament are the sentiments of the papists; and it has, in connection with the kindred doctrine that the Scripture should be withheld from the people, contributed to perpetuate that dark system, and to bind the human mind in chains. Well do the Roman Catholics know, that if the Bible were given to the people, and public worship conducted in a language which they could understand, the system would soon fall. It could not live in the midst of light. It is a system which lives and thrives only in darkness.

(2) Preaching should be simple and intelligible. There is a great deal of preaching which might as well be in a foreign tongue as in the language which is actually employed. It is dry, abstruse, metaphysical, remote from the common manner of expression, and the common habits of thought among people. It may be suited to schools of philosophy, but it cannot be suited to the pulpit. The preaching of the Lord Jesus was simple, and intelligible even to a child. And nothing can be a greater error, than for the ministers of the gospel to adopt a dry and metaphysical manner of preaching. The most successful preachers have been those who have been most remarkable for their simplicity and clearness. Nor is simplicity and intelligibleness of manner inconsistent with bright thought and profound sentiments. A diamond is the most pure of all minerals; a river
may be deep, and yet its water so pure that the bottom may be seen at a great depth; and glass in the window is most valuable the clearer and purer it is, when it is itself least seen, and when it gives no obstruction to the light. If the purpose is that the glass may be itself an ornament, it may be well to stain it; if to give light, it should be pure. A very shallow stream may be very muddy; and because the bottom cannot be seen, it is no evidence that it is deep. So it is with style. If the purpose is to convey thought, to enlighten and save the soul, the style should be plain, simple, pure. If it be to bewilder and confound, or to be admired as unintelligible, or perhaps as profound, then an abstruse and metaphysical, or a flowery manner may be adopted in the pulpit.

(3) we should learn to value “useful” talent more than that which is splendid and showy; 1Co_14:3. The whole scope of this chapter goes to demonstrate that we should more highly prize and desire that talent which may be “useful” to the church, or which may be useful in convincing unbelievers 1Co_14:24-25, than that which merely dazzles, or excites admiration. Ministers of the gospel who preach as they should do, engage in their work to win souls to Christ, not to induce them to admire eloquence; they come to teach people to adore the great and dreadful God, not to be loud in their praises of a mortal man.

(4) ministers of the gospel should not aim to be admired. They should seek to be useful. Their aim should not be to excite admiration of their acute and profound talent for reasoning; of their clear and striking power of observation; of their graceful manner; of their glowing and fervid eloquence; of the beauty of their words, or the eloquence of their well-turned periods. They should seek to build up the people of God in holy faith, and so to present truth as that it shall make a deep impression on mankind. No work is so important, and so serious in its nature and results, as the ministry of the gospel; and in no work on earth should there be more seriousness, simplicity, exactness, and correctness of statement, and invincible and unvarying adherence to simple and unvarnished truth. Of all places, the pulpit is the last, in which to seek to excite admiration, or where to display profound learning, or the powers of an abstract and subtle argumentation, “for the sake” of securing a reputation. Cowper has drawn the character of what a minister of the gospel should be. in the wellknown and most beautiful passage in the “Task.”

Would I describe a preacher, such as Paul. Were he on earth, would hear, approve, and own, Paul should himself direct me. I would trace. His master-strokes, and draw from his design. I would express him simple, grave, sincere; In doctrine uncorrupt; in language plain; And plain in manner; decent, solemn, chaste, And natural in gesture; much impress’d. Himself, as conscious of his awful charge, And anxious mainly that the flock he feeds. May feel it too; affectionate in look, And tender in address, as well becomes. A messenger of grace to guilty men. He establishes the strong, restores the weak, Reclaims the wanderer, binds the broken heart, And, arm’d himself in panoply complete. Of heavenly temper, furnishes with arms,
Bright as his own, and trains, by every rule.
Of holy discipline, to glorious war,
The sacramental host of God’s elect.

1 Corinthians 14 - Speaking in unknown Tongues by Adam Clarke's Commentary

Below is the whole commentary on 1 Corinthians 14 from Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible that is related to speaking in tongues i.e. glossolalia or speaking in an unknown tongue to you of a foreigner.

1 Corinthians 14 - Introduction

We should earnestly desire spiritual gifts; but prophesying is to be preferred, because it is superior to the gift of tongues, 1Co_14:1, 1Co_14:2. Prophesying defined, 1Co_14:3. How to regulate this supernatural gift of tongues, in teaching for the edification of the Church, 1Co_14:4-13. In praying and giving thanks, 1Co_14:14-17. Those who speak with tongues should interpret that others may be edified, 1Co_14:18-22 What benefit may accrue from this in the public assemblies, 1Co_14:23-28. How the prophets or teachers should act in the Church, 1Co_14:29-33. Women should keep silence in the church, 1Co_14:34, 1Co_14:35. All should be humble, and every thing should be done in love, 1Co_14:36-40.

1 Corinthians 14:1 “Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.”

**Follow after charity** - Most earnestly labor to be put in possession of that love which beareth, believeth, hopeth, and endureth all things. It may be difficult to acquire, and difficult to retain this blessed state, but it is essential to your present peace and eternal happiness. This clause belongs to the preceding chapter.

**Desire spiritual gifts** - Ye are very intent on getting those splendid gifts which may add to your worldly consequence, and please your carnal minds - but labor rather to get the gifts of God’s Spirit, by which ye may grow in grace, and be useful to others - and particularly desire that ye may prophesy - that ye may be able to teach and instruct others in the things of their salvation.

1 Corinthians 14:2 “For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.”

**For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue** - This chapter is crowded with difficulties. It is not likely that the Holy Spirit should, in the church, suddenly inspire a man with the knowledge of some foreign language, which none in the church understood but himself; and lead him to treat the mysteries of Christianity in that language, though none in the place could profit by his teaching.

Dr. Lightfoot’s mode of reconciling these difficulties is the most likely I have met with. He supposes that by the unknown tongue the Hebrew is meant, and that God restored the true knowledge of this language when he gave the apostles the gift of tongues. As the Scriptures of the Old Testament were contained in this language, and it has beauties, energies, and depths in it which no verbal translation can reach, it was necessary, for the proper elucidation of the prophecies concerning the Messiah, and the establishment of the Christian religion, that the full meaning of the words of this sacred language should be properly understood.
And it is possible that the Hebrew Scriptures were sometimes read in the Christian congregations as they were in the Jewish synagogues; and if the person who read and understood them had not the power and faculty of explaining them to others, in vain did he read and understand them himself. And we know that it is possible for a man to understand a language, the force, phraseology, and idioms of which he is incapable of explaining even in his mother tongue. We shall see, in the course of these notes, how this view of the subject will apply to the illustration of the apostle’s words throughout the chapter.

**Speaketh not unto men, but unto God** - None present understanding the language, God alone knowing the truth and import of what he says:

**In the spirit he speaketh mysteries** - Though his own mind (for so πνευματι is understood here by many eminent critics) apprehends the mysteries contained in the words which he reads or utters; but if, by the spirit, we understand the Spirit of God, it only shows that it is by that Spirit that he is enabled to speak and apprehend these mysteries. See the note on 1Co_14:19.

1 Corinthians 14:3 “But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men *to* edification, and exhortation, and comfort.”

**But he that prophesieth** - The person who has the gift of teaching is much more useful to the Church than he is who has only the gift of tongues, because he speaks to the profit of men: viz. to their edification, by the Scriptures he expounds; to their exhortation, by what he teaches; and to their comfort, by his revelation. - Whitby. I must here refer to my sermon on this text, intitled, “The Christian Prophet and his Work,” in which I have endeavored to consider the whole of this subject at large.

1 Corinthians 14:4 “He that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.”

**He that speaketh in an unknown tongue** - In the Hebrew for instance, the knowledge of the depth and power of which he has got by a Divine revelation, edifieth himself by that knowledge.

**But he that prophesieth** - Has the gift of preaching.

**Edifieth the Church** - Speaketh unto men to edification, exhortation, and comfort, 1Co_14:3.

1 Corinthians 14:5 “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.”

**I would that ye all spake with tongues** - The word θελω does not so much imply a wish or desire, as a command or permission. As if he had said: I do not restrain you to prophesying or teaching though I prefer that; but I give you full permission to speak in Hebrew whenever it is proper, and when one is present who can interpret for the edification of the Church, provided yourselves have not that gift, though you understand the language. The apostle said tongue, in the singular number, 1Co_14:2, 1Co_14:4, because he spoke of a single man; now he says tongues, in the plural number, because he speaks of many speaking; but he has the same meaning in both places. - Lightfoot.
Greater is he that prophesieth - A useful, zealous preacher, though unskilled in learned languages, is much greater in the sight of God, and in the eye of sound common sense, than he who has the gift of those learned tongues; except he interpret: and we seldom find great scholars good preachers. This should humble the scholar, who is too apt to be proud of his attainments, and despise his less learned but more useful brother. This judgment of St. Paul is too little regarded.

1 Corinthians 14:6 “Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?”

Speaking with tongues - Without interpreting.

What shall I profit you? - i.e. I shall not profit you;

Except I shall speak to you either by revelation - Of some secret thing; or by knowledge, of some mystery; or by prophesying, foretelling some future event; or by doctrine, instructing you what to believe and practice. - See Whitby. These four words are taken in different acceptations by learned men. The general sense of the terms is that given above: but the peculiar meaning of the apostle is perhaps not easily discerned.

1 Corinthians 14:7 “And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped?”

And even things without life - I may, as if he had said, illustrate this farther by referring to a pipe or harp; if these were to utter mere sounds without order, harmony, or melody, though every tone of music might be in the sounds, surely no person could discern a tune in such sounds, nor receive pleasure from such discords: even so is the person who speaks in an unknown tongue, but does not interpret. His speech tends no more to edification than those discordant and unmeaning sounds do to pleasure and delight.

1 Corinthians 14:8 “For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?”

If the trumpet give an uncertain sound - If, when the soldier should prepare himself for the battle, the trumpet should give a different sound to that which is ordinarily used on such occasions, the soldier is not informed of what he should do, and therefore does not arm himself; consequently, that vague, unintelligible sound of the trumpet, is of no use.

1 Corinthians 14:9 “So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air.”

Likewise ye - If ye do not speak in the Church so as to be understood, your labor is useless; ye shall speak into the air - your speech will be lost and dissipated in the air, withoutconveying any meaning to any person: there will be a noise or sound, but nothing else. Gifts of that kind, thus used, are good for nothing.

1 Corinthians 14:10 “There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification.”

There are, it may be - Ει τυχοι, For example.
So many kinds of voices - So many different languages, each of which has its distinct articulation, pronunciation, emphasis, and meaning; or there may be so many different nations, each possessing a different language, etc.

1 Corinthians 14:11 “Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me.”

If I know not the meaning of the voice - Τὴν δυναμὶν τῆς φωνῆς, The power and signification of the language.

I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian - I shall appear to him, and he to me, as a person who had no distinct and articulate sounds which can convey any kind of meaning. This observation is very natural: when we hear persons speaking in a language of which we know nothing, we wonder how they can understand each other, as, in their speech, there appears to us no regular distinction of sounds or words. For the meaning and origin of the word barbarian, see the note on Act_28:2.

1 Corinthians 14:12 “Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.”

For as much as ye are zealous - Seeing ye affect so much to have spiritual gifts, seek that ye may get those by which ye may excel in edifying the Church.

1 Corinthians 14:13 “Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret.”

Pray that he may interpret - Let him who speaks or reads the prophetic declarations in the Old Testament, in that tongue in which they were originally spoken and written, pray to God that he may so understand them himself, and receive the gift of interpretation, that he may be able to explain them in all their depth and latitude to others.

1 Corinthians 14:14 “For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.”

For if I pray in an unknown tongue - If my prayers are composed of sentences and sayings taken out of the prophets, etc., and in their own language - my spirit prayeth, my heart is engaged in the work, and my prayers answer all the purpose of prayers to myself; but my understanding is unfruitful to all others, because they do not understand my prayers, and I either do not or cannot interpret them. See the note on 1Co_14:19.

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

No Commentary for this verse

1 Corinthians 14:16 “Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?”

He that occupieth the room of the unlearned - One who is not acquainted with the language in which you speak, sing, or pray.

Say Amen - Give his assent and ratification to what he does not understand. It was very frequent in primitive times to express their approbation in the public assemblies by Amen.
This practice, soberly and piously conducted, might still be of great use in the Church of Christ.

This response was of the highest authority and merit among the Jews; they even promised the remission of all sins, the annihilation of the sentence of damnation, and the opening of the gates of paradise, to those who fervently say Amen. And it is one of their maxims that “greater is he who says Amen than he who prays.” See many testimonies of this kind in Schoettgen. Now, allowing that this was of so much consequence in the time of St. Paul, it was a very serious matter for a person to be in a congregation where prayer was offered, who could not say Amen, because the prayers were in a language which he did not understand.

1 Corinthians 14:17 “For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified.”

Thou verily givest thanks well - Because he felt gratitude, and, from a sense of his obligation, gave praise to God; but because this was in an unknown tongue, those who heard him received no edification.

1 Corinthians 14:18 “I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all:”

I speak with tongues more than ye all - He understood more languages than any of them did: and this was indispensably necessary, as he was the apostle of the Gentiles in general, and had to preach to different provinces where different dialects, if not languages, were used. In the Hebrew, Syriac, Greek, and Latin, he was undoubtedly well skilled from his education; and how many he might understand by miraculous gift we cannot tell. But, even literally understood, it is very probable that he knew more languages than any man in the Church of Corinth.

1 Corinthians 14:19 “Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.”

Yet in the church - As the grand object of public worship is the edification of those who attend, five words spoken so as to convey edification, were of much more consequence than ten thousand which, not being understood, could convey none. By the word γλώσση, tongue, to which we add unknown, I suppose the apostle always means the Hebrew, for the reasons offered in the note on 1Co_14:1.

One of the greatest difficulties, says Bishop Pearce, in this epistle is contained in the words πνεῦμα and νοῦς, spirit and understanding, which are frequently used in this chapter; and fixing the true meaning of these words will solve the difficulty. In this verse the apostle explains λαλεῖν τῷ νῷ, to speak with the understanding, by ίνα ἀλλοὺς κατηχήσω, that I might teach others; so that the sense of νοῦς, understanding, seems to be, that understanding which the hearer has of what is said; and this sense will agree well with, I will sing with the spirit, and with the understanding, 1Co_14:15.

He observes also that πνεῦμα, spirit, and νοῦς, understanding, have a sense opposite to each other; so that if νοῦς is rightly rendered, the understanding which another has of what is said; then πνεῦμα will signify a man’s own mind, i.e. his own understanding of what he himself speaks; and this sense agrees well with 1Co_14:2: In the spirit he speaketh mysteries.

1 Corinthians 14:20 “Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.”
**Be not children in understanding** - There are three words here to which we must endeavor to affix the proper sense.

1. *παιδια* signifies children in general, but particularly such as are grown up, so as to be fit to send to school in order to receive instruction;

2. *νηπιος*, from *νη*, not, and *ειπω*, I speak, signifies an infant; one that cannot yet speak, and is in the lowest stage of infancy;

3. *τελειοι*, from *τελεω*, I complete or perfect, signifies those who are arrived at perfect maturity, both of growth and understanding. We shall now see the apostle’s meaning: Brethren, be not, *παιδια*, as little children, just beginning to go to school, in order to learn the first elements of their mother tongue, and with an understanding only sufficient to apprehend those elements.

**In malice** - *Κακιᾳ*, In wickedness, *νηπιαζετε*, be ye as infants, who neither speak, do, nor purpose evil.

**But in understanding** - *Τελειοι γινεσθε*, Be ye perfect men, whose vigor of body, and energy of mind show a complete growth, and a well cultivated understanding.

1 Corinthians 14:21 “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.”

**In the law it is written** - But the passage quoted is in Isa_28:11. Here is no contradiction, for the term *תירה* torah, Law, was frequently used by the Jews to express the whole Scriptures, law, prophets, and hagiographia; and they used it to distinguish these sacred writings from the words of the scribes.

**With men of other tongues** - Bishop Pearce paraphrases this verse as follows: “With the tongues of foreigners and with the lips of foreigners will I speak to this people; and yet, for all that, will they not hear me, saith the Lord.” To enter into the apostle’s meaning we must enter into that of the prophet. The Jewish people were under the teaching of the prophets who were sent from God; these instructed, reproved, and corrected them by this Divine authority. They however became so refractory and disobedient that God purposed to cast them off, and abandon them to the Babylonians: then, they had a people to teach, correct, and reprove them, whose language they did not understand. The discipline that they received in this way was widely different from that which they received while under the teaching of the prophets and the government of God; and yet for all this they did not humble themselves before their Maker that this affliction might be removed from them.

1 Corinthians 14:22 “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.”

**Wherefore tongues are for a sign** - The miraculous gift of tongues was never designed for the benefit of those who have already believed, but for the instruction of unbelievers, that they might see from such a miracle that this is the work of God; and so embrace the Gospel. But as, in the times of the prophet, the strange Babylonish tongues came in the way of punishment, and not in the way of mercy; take heed that it be not the case now: that, by dwelling on the gift, ye forget the Giver; and what was designed for you as a blessing, may prove to you to be a curse. For if, because ye have the gift of tongues, ye will choose for your
own aggrandizement to use them in the public congregation where none understands them, God may curse your blessings.

**Prophesying** - Teaching the things of God in a known language is of infinitely more consequence than speaking in all the foreign tongues in the universe.

1 Corinthians 14:23 “If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?”

**Will they not say that ye are mad?** - So they well might, finding a whole assembly of people talking languages which those who had most need of instruction could not understand.

1 Corinthians 14:24 “But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all;”

**But if all prophecy** - If all those who teach do it in the tongue which all understand; if an unbeliever, or one who knows nothing of the sacred language, come in and hear things just suited to his own state, he is convicted by all, and he is judged by all.

1 Corinthians 14:25 “And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.”

**And thus are the secrets of his heart** - As these, who were the prophets or teachers, had often the discernment of spirits, they were able in certain cases, and probably very frequently, to tell a man the secrets of his own heart; and, where this was not directly the case, God often led his ministers to speak those things that were suitable to the case before them, though they themselves had no particular design. The sinner, therefore, convinced that God alone could uncover the secrets of his heart, would be often obliged to fall down on his face, abashed and confounded, and acknowledge that God was truly among them. This seems to be the plain meaning of the passages before us.

1 Corinthians 14:26 “How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.”

**How is it - every one of you hath a psalm, etc.** - Dr. Lightfoot understands this in the following manner: When the congregation came together, some were for spending the time in psalmody; others in explaining particular doctrines; others in reading, praying, or speaking in the Hebrew tongue; others were curious to hear of farther revelations; and others wished to spend the time in the interpretation of what had already been spoken. This may be specious, but to me it is not satisfactory. It seems more likely that, when the whole Church came together, among whom there were many persons with extraordinary gifts, each of them wished to put himself forward, and occupy the time and attention of the congregation: hence confusion must necessarily take place, and perhaps not a little contention. This was contrary to that edifying which was the intention of these gifts.

1 Corinthians 14:27 “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.”

**Speak in an unknown tongue** - The Hebrew, as has already been conjectured.
Let it be by two; or at the most by three, and that by course - Let only two or three in one assembly act in this way, that too much time may not be taken up with one exercise; and let this be done by course, the one after the other, that two may not be speaking at the same time: and let one interpret for all that shall thus speak.

1 Corinthians 14:28 “But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God.”

But if there be no interpreter - If there be none present who can give the proper sense of this Hebrew reading and speaking, then let him keep silence, and not occupy the time of the Church, by speaking in a language which only himself can understand.

1 Corinthians 14:29 “Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.”

Let the prophets - Those who have the gift of speaking to men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort; 1Co_14:3.

Two or three - As prophesying implied psalmody, teaching, and exhortation, Dr. Lightfoot thinks that the meaning of the place is this: Let one sing who has a psalm; let another teach who has a doctrine; and let a third exhort, or comfort, who has a gift of that kind.

And let the other judge - The other prophets, or qualified persons, judge of the propriety of what had been spoken; or let them discern, διακρίνετωσαν, how the revelation under the new covenant confirmed and illustrated the revelation granted under the Old Testament. It appears to have been taken for granted, that a man might pretend to this spirit of prophecy who was not sent of God; and therefore it was the duty of the accredited teachers to examine whether what he spoke was according to truth, and the analogy of faith. For the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets; every man’s gift was to be judged of by those whose age, experience, and wisdom, gave them a right to decide. Besides, though the person who did speak might do it from an impulse of God, yet, if he was not sufficiently known, his testimony ought to be received with caution; and therefore the aged prophets should judge of his gift, lest false doctrines should slide into the Church.

But all these provisions, as Schoettgen justly observes, were in imitation of the practice in the Jewish synagogues; for there it was customary for them to object, interrogate, judge, refute, etc.

1 Corinthians 14:30 “If anything be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace.”

Be revealed to another that sitteth by - Probably those who were teachers sat on a particular seat, or place, from which they might most readily address the people; and this may be the meaning of sitting by. If such a person could say, I have just received a particular revelation from God, then let him have the liberty immediately to speak it; as it might possibly relate to the circumstances of that time and place.

1 Corinthians 14:31 “For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted.”

For ye may all prophesy one by one - The gifts which God grants are given for the purpose of edification; but there can be no edification where there is confusion; therefore let them speak one by one.
1 Corinthians 14:32 “And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.”

**And the spirits of the prophets, etc.** - Let no one interrupt another; and let all be ready to prefer others before themselves; and let each feel a spirit of subjection to his brethren. God grants no ungovernable gifts.

1 Corinthians 14:33 “For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.”

**For God is not the author of confusion** - Let not the persons who act in the congregation in this disorderly manner, say, that they are under the influence of God; for he is not the author of confusion; but two, three, or more, praying or teaching in the same place, at the same time, is confusion; and God is not the author of such work; and let men beware how they attribute such disorder to the God of order and peace. The apostle calls such conduct ἀκατάστασις, tumult, sedition; and such it is in the sight of God, and in the sight of all good men. How often is a work of God marred and discredited by the folly of men! For nature will always, and Satan too, mingle themselves as far as they can in the genuine work of the Spirit, in order to discredit and destroy it. Nevertheless, in great revivals of religion it is almost impossible to prevent wild - fire from getting in amongst the true fire; but it is the duty of the ministers of God to watch against and prudently check this; but if themselves encourage it, then there will be confusion and every evil work.

1 Corinthians 14:34 “Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law.”

**Let your women keep silence in the churches** - This was a Jewish ordinance; women were not permitted to teach in the assemblies, or even to ask questions. The rabbins taught that “a woman should know nothing but the use of her distaff.” And the sayings of Rabbi Eliezer, as delivered, Bamidbar Rabba, sec. 9, fol. 204, are both worthy of remark and of execration; they are these: ישרפו דיברי תורה ואל ימסרו לנשים, “Let the words of the law be burned, rather than that they should be delivered to women.” This was their condition till the time of the Gospel, when, according to the prediction of Joel, the Spirit of God was to be poured out on the women as well as the men, that they might prophesy, i.e. teach. And that they did prophesy or teach is evident from what the apostle says, 1Co_11:5, where he lays down rules to regulate this part of their conduct while ministering in the church.

But does not what the apostle says here contradict that statement, and show that the words in chap. 11 should be understood in another sense? For, here it is expressly said that they should keep silence in the church; for it was not permitted to a woman to speak. Both places seem perfectly consistent. It is evident from the context that the apostle refers here to asking questions, and what we call dictating in the assemblies. It was permitted to any man to ask questions, to object, altercation, attempt to refute, etc., in the synagogue; but this liberty was not allowed to any woman. St. Paul confirms this in reference also to the Christian Church; he orders them to keep silence; and, if they wished to learn anything, let them inquire of their husbands at home; because it was perfectly indecorous for women to be contending with men in public assemblies, on points of doctrine, cases of conscience, etc. But this by no means intimated that when a woman received any particular influence from God to enable her to teach, that she was not to obey that influence; on the contrary, she was to obey it, and the apostle lays down directions in chap. 11 for regulating her personal appearance when thus employed. All that the apostle opposes here is their questioning, finding fault, disputing, etc., in the Christian Church, as the Jewish men were permitted to do in their synagogues; together
with the attempts to usurp any authority over the man, by setting up their judgment in opposition to them; for the apostle has in view, especially, acts of disobedience, arrogance, etc., of which no woman would be guilty who was under the influence of the Spirit of God.

**But - to be under obedience, as also saith the law** - This is a reference to Gen_3:16: Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. From this it is evident that it was the disorderly and disobedient that the apostle had in view; and not any of those on whom God had poured out his Spirit.

1 Corinthians 14:35 “And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.”

**For it is a shame for women to speak in the church** - The Jews would not suffer a woman to read in the synagogue; though a servant or even a child, had this permission; but the apostle refers to irregular conduct, such conduct as proved that they were not under obedience, 1Co_14:34.

1 Corinthians 14:36 “What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only?”

**Came the word of God out from you?** - Was it from you that other Churches received the Gospel? Are you the mother Church? that you should have rules, and orders, and customs, different from all others; and set yourselves up for a model to be copied by all the Churches of Christ?

**Or came it unto you only?** - Are you the only Church of God? Are there not many others founded before you that have no such customs, and permit no such disorders?

1 Corinthians 14:37 “If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.”

**If any man think himself to be a prophet, etc.** - He who is really a spiritual man, under the influence of the Spirit of God, and capable of teaching the Divine will, he will acknowledge that what I now say is from the same Spirit; and that the things which I now write are the commandments of God, and must be obeyed on pain of his displeasure.

1 Corinthians 14:38 “But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant.”

**But if any man be ignorant** - If he affects to be so, or pretend that he is ignorant; let him be ignorant - let him be so at his peril.

1 Corinthians 14:39 “Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues.”

**Covet to prophesy** - Let it be your endeavor and prayer to be able to teach the way of God to the ignorant; this is the most valuable, because the most useful gift of the Spirit.

**And forbid not to speak with tongues** - Let every gift have its own place and operation; let none envy another; nor prevent him from doing that part of the work to which God, by giving the qualification, has evidently called him.

1 Corinthians 14:40 “Let all things be done decently and in order.”

**Let all things be done decently** - Ευσχημονως: In their proper forms; with becoming reverence; according to their dignity and importance, Everything in the Church of God
should be conducted with gravity and composure, suitable to the importance of the things, the infinite dignity of the object of worship, and the necessity of the souls in behalf of which those religious ordinances are instituted.

**And in order** - Κατὰ τὰξιν: Everything in its place, everything in its time, and everything suitably.

Let all things be done decently and in order, is a direction of infinite moment in all the concerns of religion, and of no small consequence in all the concerns of life. How much pain, confusion, and loss would be prevented, were this rule followed! There is scarcely an embarrassment in civil or domestic life that does not originate in a neglect of this precept. No business, trade, art, or science, can be carried on to any advantage or comfort, unless peculiar attention be paid to it. And as to religion, there can be absolutely none without it. Where decency and order are not observed in every part of the worship of God, no spiritual worship can be performed. The manner of doing a thing is always of as much consequence as the act itself. And often the act derives all its consequence and utility from the manner in which it is performed.

**In Conclusion - Be Filled with the Spirit**

*(Taken from John Piper's Sermons - Olive Tree Bible Software)*

March 8, 1981

Scripture: Ephesians 5:18

"And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit."

The apostle Paul commands in Ephesians 5:18 that we be filled with the Spirit. Therefore, I want to try to answer two questions today. What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit? And, how can we be filled with the Spirit? I think it might help you follow me if I tell you at the outset where I am going. So I'll start with my conclusions and then give the biblical support. I think being filled with the Spirit means, basically, having great joy in God. And since the Bible teaches that "the joy of the Lord is our strength" (Nehemiah 8:10), it also means there will be power in this joy for overcoming besetting sins and for boldness in witness. But, basically, it means radiant joy, because the Spirit who fills us is the Spirit of joy that flows between God the Father and God the Son because of the delight they have in each other. Therefore, to be filled with the Spirit means to be caught into the joy that flows among the Holy Trinity and to love God the Father and God the Son with the very love with which they love each other. And then, in answer to the second question, the way to be filled with the Spirit is by trusting that the God of hope really reigns—that not a sparrow falls to the ground apart from his will (Matthew 10:29)—and that he runs the world for you and for all who trust his word. In believing that, you will be filled with the Holy Spirit and with joy.

With the spread of Pentecostalism in this country and in the third world, there has been a lot of discussion about the New Testament phrases "filled with the Spirit" and "baptized with the Spirit." I feel some obligation, therefore, today not merely to interpret Ephesians 5:18 in its immediate context, but also to orient what I say in the wider New Testament teaching.
What Does "Baptize in the Holy Spirit" Mean?

The phrase "baptize in (or with) the Holy Spirit" was apparently coined by John the Baptist. All four of our gospels record that he said, "I have baptized you with water, but he (i.e., Jesus) will baptize you with the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33). The only two writers in the New Testament who refer elsewhere to the phrase "baptize with the Spirit" are Luke in the book of Acts, and Paul in 1 Corinthians. Luke refers to it twice, quoting John each time (Acts 1:5; 11:16), and Paul refers to it once (1 Corinthians 12:13). But I don't think Paul and Luke use this phrase to refer to the same thing. For Paul, it is virtually identical to regeneration or new birth (conversion). For Luke, it is essentially the same as being filled with the Spirit and refers to that first introductory experience of this fullness.

I'll try to show very briefly why I think this. First, we must never assume that a particular phrase means exactly the same thing every place it occurs in Scripture. Good interpretation lets a word or phrase mean whatever the immediate context demands. What really matters in Scripture is not that a phrase everywhere have the same meaning, but that the reality which a phrase describes does not contradict other descriptions of reality in the Bible. So Paul and Luke need not use the phrase "baptized with the Spirit" in the very same sense. Paul uses the phrase only once. He says in 1 Corinthians 12:12, 13:

"Just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit."

According to this one reference, Paul conceived of Spirit-baptism as the act by which the Spirit made us members of Christ's body. Once we were alienated from God, cut off from Christ (Ephesians 2:12), but then the Holy Spirit swept over us and brought us to life by uniting us to the living Christ and thus to his people in one body. This is a once-for-all event. It is never repeated, and nowhere does Paul (or Luke) ever admonish a Christian to be baptized by the Spirit.

But Luke seems to mean something different by the phrase, namely, something essentially the same as being filled with the Spirit, which is not a once-for-all event (for Luke and for Paul) but an ongoing or repeated occurrence. The evidence for this comes from the book of Acts. In Acts 1:4, 5 Luke reports that Jesus, just before he ascended to the Father, told his apostles to stay in Jerusalem and wait for the promise of the Father which "you heard from me, for John baptized with water, but before many days you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit." This was a clear reference to Pentecost. But when Pentecost comes in chapter 2, listen to how Luke describes it:

“When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they
were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

Jesus promises in chapter 1 that they will be baptized by the Spirit, and Luke describes the fulfillment of that promise in chapter 2 in terms of the filling of the Holy Spirit. Yet we know from Acts 11:15—17 that Luke does see Pentecost as a baptism with the Spirit. He reports there how Peter described his preaching to the Gentiles, in Cornelius' house:

“As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, "John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit." If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?”

So this later outpouring of the Spirit on the Gentiles (in Acts 10:44ff.) is equated with the first Pentecostal outpouring, and both are explained as a baptism with the Spirit. Therefore, Luke sees what happened at Pentecost as both a baptism with the Spirit and a filling with the Spirit. Since Luke refers later on to the disciples being filled again (Acts 4:8, 31; 13:4), but never refers to them as being baptized again with the Spirit, it seems to me that for Luke "baptism with the Spirit" refers to that initial filling by the Spirit after a person trusts in Christ. I don't think Luke equates "baptism by the Spirit" with regeneration like Paul does. That would mean that all the apostles, who, with God's help, had confessed Jesus to be the Christ (Luke 9:20; Matthew 16:17) and had seen him alive after his resurrection and had their minds opened by him to understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45), were in fact dead in trespasses and sins and enslaved to the flesh during all their time with Jesus and up till Pentecost morning. If we asked Luke, "Is that what you mean?" I think he would say, "O no, they had already been born of the Spirit, just like all the great saints of the Old Testament, but they hadn't yet experienced to the full what God could do through them by his Spirit. But now that Christ has come and through his death and resurrection purchased all the blessings of God, it is God's purpose to call all his people to experience the fullness of the Holy Spirit." When a person first experiences this fullness of the Spirit, that is what Luke means by being baptized with the Spirit. And that is different from Paul who, I think, uses the phrase to refer to regeneration (new birth or moment of conversion).

**Interacting with Pentecostal Theology**

Now we are right at the heart of the charismatic controversy, and I want to try to sort out some things and let you know where I stand and why I think this stance is biblical. What is clear so far is at least this: if anyone ever asks you, "Have you been baptized with the Holy Spirit?" your first response should be to say, "What do you mean by baptism with the Holy Spirit?" So many of our arguments could be avoided if we just started off defining our terms. Suppose the definition they gave was this: "Baptism with the Holy Spirit is an experience you
have with God after conversion in which the Holy Spirit falls upon you in such a way that your heart bursts forth in the utterance of tongues (some ecstatic speech or unknown language)." What would our answer be, then? Some of us would say, "Yes, I have experienced that." Others would say, "No, I never have spoken in tongues." But both of us should then say, "But, you know, that definition of baptism with the Spirit is not a biblical one." There is no way to argue rightly from the book of Acts that God intends for baptism with the Spirit always to be accompanied by speaking in tongues. And Paul teaches plainly in 1 Corinthians 12:10 that God does not give the gift of tongues to everyone. Being baptized with the Holy Spirit may or may not result in glossalalia (tongues-speaking) and, therefore, speaking in tongues is not a necessary part of either Luke's or Paul's definition of baptism with the Spirit.

I want to stress here, though, that I do not reject the validity of the gift of tongues for our own day. It is wrong to insist that they are a necessary part of the baptism of the Spirit; it is not wrong to insist that they are a possible part of that experience today. When I was in high school, I listened to Mr. DeHaan on the radio. I was standing in my bedroom one morning, listening to him try to argue from the New Testament that the so-called sign gifts, like tongues and miracles and healing, were intended by God to come to an end at the close of the apostolic age, so that they are no longer valid today. And I can remember even in those early years saying to myself, "Mr. DeHaan, those arguments are not valid. All you are able to show is that if there are no tongues today, you can see some possible reasons for it. But nothing that you have said proves that God intends for these gifts to end before this age closes." And now after 20 years of Bible study and friendships with charismatic believers I will say with even more assurance: Let us not reject or despise any of God's gifts, including tongues. But now back to the person who is asking if you have been baptized with the Spirit. If he uses Paul's definition and means, "Have you been united to Christ by the Spirit so that you are part of His body (1 Corinthians 12:12)?"—then the answer of all believers should be, "Yes, I have indeed been baptized with the Spirit." If he uses Luke's definition and means, "Have you ever once been so filled by the Holy Spirit that you overflowed with joy, had victory over besetting sins, and were made bold to witness?"—then the answer should be and could be, "Yes," for all Christians, but probably won't be. The apostle Paul taught that there is such a thing as a babe in Christ, and he contrasted with the babe in Christ the person who is spiritual (1 Corinthians 3:1). Now, both Luke and Paul would have agreed that what this new, faltering babe in Christ needs is a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit into his life. Paul would have called this experience "being filled" with the Spirit. And Luke would have agreed, but then would have also called this first experience of the Spirit's fullness the "baptism of the Holy Spirit." So while the phrase "baptized with the Spirit" is used differently by Paul and Luke, they view man's need and God's action as basically the same.

Perhaps one other clarification of some Pentecostal teaching should be mentioned. We are sometimes urged to seek a "second blessing" or second experience of the Spirit after our initial conversion experience. Two things need to be said. First: the blessing of the fullness (or baptism) of the Holy Spirit may occur at the moment of conversion and leave nothing to be sought but its preservation and growth or repetition. Second: even if one does not experience the fullness of the Spirit at conversion, the thing to be sought is not "the second blessing," as if that experience would be the end of our spiritual quest. What we should seek (and this applies to all Christians) is that God pour his Spirit out upon us so completely that we are filled with joy, victorious over sin, and bold to witness. And the ways he brings us to that fullness are probably as varied as people are. It may come in a tumultuous experience of ecstasy and tongues. It may come through a tumultuous experience of ecstasy and no tongues.
It may come through a crisis of suffering when you abandon yourself totally to God. Or it may come gradually through a steady diet of God's Word and prayer and fellowship and worship and service. However it comes, our first experience of the fullness of the Spirit is only the beginning of a life-long battle to stay filled with the Spirit.

**But What About Jude 20:1? Why Pray in the Spirit? And what does it mean?**

The focus last week and this week is on the phrase in Jude verse 20, "Praying in the Holy Spirit." Last week we answered the why question: Why pray in the Holy Spirit? We got the answer from the relationship between the participle "praying" and the main verb which follows it (verse 21a), "Keep yourselves in the love of God." "Praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God." In other words, one essential way to keep yourself in the love of God is to pray in the Spirit. By praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God.

We called prayer a "means of divine grace." Why did we use that term? Because keeping ourselves in the love of God is not something we can do on our own. God is the decisive keeper of our souls. If God doesn't keep us, we will not persevere in faith; we will perish. We saw that in verse 1 and verse 24. Verse 1b: "To those who are the called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ." Notice the passive verb: We are "kept," not "we keep." We are kept by someone else, not by ourselves. By whom? We saw the answer in verse 24: "Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling . . ." Who is able to do that for us? The answer is in the next verse (verse 25): "... to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord." So God the Father is our ultimate keeper through Jesus Christ. Which means that our task of keeping ourselves is dependent on God's decisive keeping. That is why prayer is mentioned as a crucial way of keeping ourselves in the love of God. God is the decisive keeper. How then do we keep ourselves, if God is the decisive keeper? Answer: we ask God to keep us. That is, we pray. Praying is the "means of grace" that God uses to keep us in his love. God is the decisive keeper and he uses means to keep us. One of the means he uses is our prayers, so we are dependent keepers. And we show our dependence mainly by praying for him to do his decisive work. We saw an example this kind of praying in Luke 21:36. Jesus says, "But keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man." Do you want to be kept from the destructive effects of the last days? Yes? Well, Jesus says, "Pray that you may be able . . . to stand before the Son of Man," when he comes.

Another example of praying for God to keep us comes from Jesus' example of how he prayed for Peter in Luke 22:32. After saying that Peter would deny him three times, Jesus says, "But I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." This is the way we should pray for ourselves and each other. It is God the Father who decisively keeps, but we have a dependent role to play: We pray. And we pray like Jesus: O Father, don't let my faith fail; keep me. Prayer is the means of grace that God uses to keep us secure and cause us to persevere to the end in faith.

Now today the question is not, Why? But, What? And How? What is "praying in the Holy Spirit"? And, How do we pray in the Spirit?
What Is "Praying in the Spirit?"

The best brief statement I have found of what it means to pray in the Holy Spirit goes like this: It means "so to pray that the Holy Spirit is the moving and guiding power." The key words there are "moving" and "guiding." In other words, when you pray in the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God is "moving" you to pray. That is, he is the one who motivates and enables and energizes your prayer. And when you pray in the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God is "guiding" how you pray and what you pray for. So, to pray in the Holy Spirit is to be moved and guided by the Holy Spirit in prayer. We pray by his power and according to his direction.

The Power of the Spirit

Let's see where this interpretation of praying in the Holy Spirit comes from in the Bible. The first thing to notice is the very close parallel passage in Ephesians 6:18, where Paul says, "With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit." The reason this is important is that it shows that "praying in the Spirit" is not a special form of prayer – like speaking in tongues. We can tell this is so because Paul says in Ephesians 6:18 that we should pray "at all times" in the Spirit. In other words, all prayer should be "in the Spirit." Praying in the Holy Spirit is not one form among several. It is the way all prayer is to be offered.

The second thing to see is the parallel in Romans 8:26 where Paul says, "The Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words." Here it is plain that one thing the Holy Spirit does for us is help our weakness when we need to pray but can't the way we should. So it is natural to take "praying in the Holy Spirit" to mean praying with the help of the Holy Spirit – with the strength and enablement of the Spirit to make up for our weakness.

A third parallel would be Romans 8:15-16 where Paul says, "You have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!' The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God." The point here is that the Spirit of God helps us have assurance that we are children of God by causing us to cry out from the heart (to pray!), "Abba, Father." In other words, the Spirit moves our prayers. He motivates, enables and energizes our prayers. That's a key part of what "praying in the Holy Spirit" means.

(Not speaking in tongues as some have mistakenly twisted the meanings of these scriptures)

The Guidance of the Spirit

The other part of what it means to pray in the Holy Spirit is that when we do so, our prayers are not only "moved" by the Spirit, but also "guided" by the Spirit. This is no surprise, because if the Holy Spirit is prompting and enabling and energizing our prayers, it would be natural to think that he does so in a way that accords with his nature and his Word. We would not want to say, The Spirit moves our prayers, but they are not according to God's will. If the Spirit is moving us to pray, then he would move us according to his will and Word.

So praying in the Holy Spirit would mean not only experiencing the power of the Spirit (God’s Spirit) to help us pray when we are weak, but also experiencing the guidance of the Spirit to help us when we are foolish or confused or selfish. For example, James 4:3 says, "When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures." That would not be praying "in the Holy Spirit." That would be praying "in the flesh" or in your own sinful nature.
How Do I Pray in the Holy Spirit?

So now the question is the practical one: How do you pray in the Holy Spirit? Don't fail to see how utterly unusual it is to be told to do something by the power and guidance of another. It is God telling me to do it – pray! And yet telling me that it is a work of the Holy Spirit when I do it. It is just like other things in the Christian life: Galatians 5:16, "Walk by the Spirit." Romans 8:13, "Put to death the deeds of the body by the Spirit." 1 Corinthians 12:3, "Say Jesus is Lord by the Spirit." Philippians 3:3, "Worship by the Spirit." In all these things we are supposed to do something. But we are to do them in a way that it is the Spirit (God's Spirit) who is doing them through us.

This is the way human life is, since God is sovereign and we are responsible. We act. We are responsible to act. But God is the decisive actor. Our action is dependent. So when we are told to "walk" (Galatians 5:16), or fight sin (Romans 8:16), or confess the Lordship of Jesus (1 Corinthians 12:3), or worship (Philippians 3:3), or pray (Jude 1:20), we are told to do it "in the Holy Spirit." You do it so that it is the Holy Spirit who is doing it in and through you.

So how do I pray so that it is really the Holy Spirit prompting and guiding the prayer?

Trusting God to Give His Spirit

I think there are two basic answers. The first is faith. We pray "in the Holy Spirit" when we take our stand on the cross of Christ (which purchased all divine help) and trust God for his help by the Spirit. In other words, when you admit that without the help of the Spirit you cannot pray as you ought, and then you consciously depend on the Spirit to help you pray, then you are praying "in the Holy Spirit." So the first answer to the question, How?, is by faith – by trusting God to give you the Holy Spirit to help you pray.

You can see this from the New Testament in several ways (see, for example, Galatians 3:1-5; 2 Thessalonians 2:13). One is that in Philippians 3:3 it says, "We worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh." Here, worshipping "in the Spirit of God" is explained by "put no confidence in the flesh." I think that means, instead we put confidence in the Spirit, that is, in God's blood-bought mercy to help us worship as we ought by his Spirit. So I take it that the way to "pray in the Holy Spirit" is the same as the way to worship "in the Spirit of God," namely, by not putting any confidence in what we can do in our own nature, but instead looking away from our own resources and trusting in the mercy of God to help us pray by his Spirit.

That is what we should do this year in all our praying. Trust God for the help we need to pray. When you are too weak or too confused or too depressed or too angry or too dull to pray, at that moment do not assume that you can't pray. Instead, consciously look away from yourself to Christ and to the mercy of God in Christ, and trust him to help you (by his Holy Spirit) – even if it is only to produce groanings too deep for words (Romans 8:26). Learn to distrust yourself and to trust God in prayer. Learn that without him you can do nothing and cast yourself on him at all times for all you need in order to pray.

Let Your Prayers Be Shaped by God's Word

The other answer to the question of how to pray "in the Holy Spirit" is to bring all your praying into conformity to the Word of God which the Spirit inspired (2 Peter 1:21; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). Right here is where God's call to be in the Word every day and his call to pray at all times in the Spirit become intertwined.

If you live in the Word of God, meditating on it day and night by reading it every day and memorizing portions to carry with you all day and savoring them hour by hour, then your prayers will be shaped by the Word. Which means they will be shaped
by the Spirit. And that is what it means to pray "in the Holy Spirit." Not only to be moved by the Spirit in prayer, but to be guided by the Spirit in prayer. And since this is something we are called to do ("pray in the Holy Spirit"), our role is to take what we know about the Spirit's will from the Word and saturate our prayers with it.

Keep Yourselves in the Love of God.

So that is my pastoral appeal to you this year: Keep yourselves in the love of God by praying in the Holy Spirit. That is, pray continually by banking on the Spirit's help and by living in the Spirit's word in the Bible. Stay in the Bible and stay in prayer, and look away continually from your own resources to the infinite and merciful resources of God in Christ.

I close with some concrete examples of praying in a Bible-saturated way – which is a key to praying in the Holy Spirit.

When you ponder praying for $2.7 million more in pledges for Education for Exultation, recall texts like 1 Chronicles 29:18, where the people give lavishly to build the temple and David prays, "O Lord . . . preserve this forever in the intentions of the heart of Your people, and direct their heart to You." Then pray about the intentions of the hearts of people and call on God to shape them and incline them toward generosity. And say with David in verse 14, "All things come from You, and from Your hand we have given You."

When you ponder praying about the future of our church in 2001 and how to respond to growth, and how to structure for pastoral care and building and church planting and missions, etc., and how it all fits together to meet so many hundreds and thousands of needs, recall what Solomon prayed when the Lord said to him in 1 Chronicles 3:5, "Ask what you wish me to give you." Solomon did not ask for long life, or riches or revenge on his enemies (3:11), but asked for "an understanding heart to judge Your people to discern between good and evil"
When you ponder praying about the staff additions that are to come this year at Bethlehem, recall what Jesus said to the crowds in Matthew 9:38, "Beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest." Pray with warrant from Christ himself that the right workers would be positioned in his kingdom.

When you ponder praying for boldness for yourself and others in evangelism, recall the way the church prayed in Acts 4:29 and what happened, "And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence. . . . And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness" (4:29-31).

And when you love someone and ponder praying for his or her conversion, recall Romans 10:1 where Paul set his sights on his own Jewish kinsmen and said, "Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation."

To be in the Word rightly is to be in prayer. And when faith and the Word shape prayer, we are praying in the Holy Spirit. And when we pray in the Holy Spirit, we keep ourselves in the love of God. And there every blessing in heaven will be ours. O learn to pray in the Word – for the sake of your soul and for the sake of the nations.

Similarly, Jesus prays in John 17:11-15 that the Father would keep us. "I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are. While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled. But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves. I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one."

Johannes E. Huther, Meyer's Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the General Epistles of James, Peter, John, and Jude, translator Paton J. Gloag (Winona Lake, Indiana: Alpha Publications, 1980, original, 1883), p. 697, italics added. See also John Calvin's excellent comment on Jude 20: "This order of perseverance depends on our being equipped with the mighty power of God. Whenever we need constancy in our faith, we must have recourse to prayer, and as our prayers are often perfunctory, he adds, 'in the Spirit,' as if to say, such is the laziness, such the coldness of our makeup, that none can succeed in praying as he ought without prompting of the Spirit of God. We are so inclined to lose heart, and be diffident that none dares to call God 'Father,' unless the same Spirit puts the Word into us. From the Spirit, we receive the gift of real concern, ardor, forcefulness, eagerness, confidence that we shall receive – all these, and finally those groanings which cannot be uttered, as Paul writes (Romans 8:26). Jude does well indeed to say that no one can pray as he ought to pray, unless the Spirit direct him." (John Calvin, A Harmony all of the Gospels Matthew, Mark and Luke, vol. 3 and the Epistles of James and Jude, translator, A. W. Morrison [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1972], pp. 334-335).

See also the enabling role of the Spirit in our confessing Jesus as incarnate Lord: "Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, 'Jesus is accursed'; and no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:3).

Similarly 1 Peter 4:11, "If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen."
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Contact: brent.tremain@gospelbibletruth.com

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