

## Speaking In Tongues

It will not be long until our Pentecostal friends come to Lufkin for their annual Bible camp. One of the key doctrines that Pentecostals believe is the ability to speak in tongues, which they refer to as “glossolalia” (from Greek glossa meaning “tongue or language” and lalia meaning “to talk”). They claim that these unintelligible utterances prove Holy Spirit baptism. But do they really?

In Acts 2:8, the people said they heard the apostles in their own tongue. To reinforce this point, vv. 9-12 list 15 nations of people who heard the gospel, not in an unintelligible utterance, but in an understandable language! So “glossolalia” cannot be unintelligible. In order for it to mimic the New Testament, it must be to where someone can understand. Paul wrote, “Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret. For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful” (1 Corinthians 14:13-14). Tongue speaking did no one any good if it was unintelligible!

But Paul also wrote in 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 that spiritual gifts (including tongue-speaking) would be done away. The context shows that Paul was discussing the end of the manifestations which were used for the confirmation of God’s word. This was even seen in the Old Testament when the widow of Zarephath, after her food did not miraculously run out in the midst of a famine, said, “And the woman said to Elijah, Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth” (1 Kings 17:24). When the word was fully revealed, there was no further need of miraculous gifts (including speaking in tongues). However, some think that the reference to “perfect” in 1 Corinthians 13:10 refers to Christ — the only one who was “perfect”.

The word for “perfect” is teleios and it occurs 19 times in the New Testament (Matthew 5:48; 19:21; Romans 12:2; 1 Corinthians 2:6; 13:10; 14:20; Ephesians 4:13; Philippians 3:15; Colossians 1:28; 4:12; Hebrews 5:14; 9:11; James 1:4, 17, 25; 3:2; 1 John 4:18). It refers to something which is whole or complete; it lacks nothing. In the context of 1 Corinthians 13, “part” describes the way God revealed Himself to man through spiritual gifts. Although they confirmed the word (Mark 16:17-20; Hebrews 2:2-3), Christians could not clearly see all of God’s will until it had all been revealed. So the “perfect” is the completed revelation of God’s will to man. This is more clearly seen in Paul’s illustrations: “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known” (1 Corinthians 13:11-12). Also, in the original language, the word “perfect” is an adjective which is neuter in its gender. If it were referring to Christ, it would be masculine, just as in our language.

When Paul said “done away,” he referred to what was set aside forever. When the infancy period of the church was over, spiritual gifts ceased. People cannot speak in tongues, cast out demons, heal the sick, and raise the dead today the way they did in the first century church. Those times have passed and those days have been done

away. Pentecostals are behind the times, for they attempt to do something which God said is finished. No one can miraculously speak in an unknown tongue today. Those gifts are gone, but the word of God abides forever (1 Peter 1:25).

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