

THE ONE YEAR BIBLE CLUB

WITH TEACHING COMMENTARY BY NICK BOORK

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August 21 – 1 Corinthians 14:1-17

Pursue love, and desire spiritual *gifts*, but especially that you may prophesy. ²For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands *him*; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries. ³But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men. ⁴He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. ⁵I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies *is* greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification. ⁶But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you unless I speak to you either by revelation, by knowledge, by prophesying, or by teaching? ⁷Even things without life, whether flute or harp, when they make a sound, unless they make a distinction in the sounds, how will it be known what is piped or played? ⁸For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare for battle? ⁹So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air. ¹⁰There are, it may be, so many kinds of languages in the world, and none of them *is* without significance. ¹¹Therefore, if I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be a foreigner to him who speaks, and he who speaks *will be* a foreigner to me. ¹²Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual *gifts*, *let it be* for the edification of the church *that* you seek to excel. ¹³Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. ¹⁴For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. ¹⁵What is *the conclusion* then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding. ¹⁶Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say “Amen” at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say? ¹⁷For you indeed give thanks well, but the other is not edified.

OKAY, HERE'S MY TEACHING COMMENTARY

In this portion of Scripture Paul begins to teach on the difference between the gift of tongues and prophecy. These Christians at Corinth had received the message of the gospel and believed on Jesus Christ for salvation. Additionally, many of them had been baptized with the Holy Spirit and some were speaking in tongues in their public gatherings without self control and it was causing a scene and confusion. God has given us the gifts of the Spirit but we need to learn how to use them properly and become mature ourselves in how we exercise these gifts in public gatherings. When Paul says to pursue love he's saying make sure that love for God and man is your motivation when it comes to using spiritual gifts. He encourages them to go after spiritual gifts and then says especially the gift of prophecy (which we will cover in tomorrow's podcast in-depth). But why would he say this? He says this for a couple of reasons. First, it was

because of the abuse of the gift of tongues in their public worship services. What was happening was people were speaking out in tongues but there was no interpretation to follow the utterance. This is where we need to understand the three different kinds of spiritual tongues recorded in the Bible. I'm going to put them each in context right now so you can understand what tongues are and how they are to be properly used publicly and privately.

Category 1 – Prophetic Tongues:

This was the initial outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost when the 120 original disciples were in the upper room that we read about in Acts 2. These are prophetic tongues for a couple of reasons. First it is because the prophet Joel declared that this was going to happen in the last days so it was a fulfillment of prophecy. The apostle Peter referenced Joel when explaining to the crowd what was happening when they heard them speaking in tongues. Acts 2:16-17 “But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ‘And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy...’” Ref; Joel 2:28-29

The second reason that these tongues were prophetic was that the 120 disciples baptized in the Holy Spirit were supernaturally communicating by the Spirit in tongues the fulfillment of God's prophetic promises to send the Messiah to redeem humanity. There were at least fifteen different language groups of the foreigners visiting Jerusalem for the celebration of Pentecost that were hearing these Jewish believers speak in tongues that the wonderful works of God or in other words the wonderful salvation that we now have in Jesus Christ being made available to all nations! Acts 2:8-11 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 this is a category of speaking in tongues and it can happen whenever the Holy Spirit desires it to happen to communicate to someone the message of the Gospel. We know that this was not the kind of tongues being practiced in the church at Corinth because Paul was correcting their improper use of tongues because in their case no one could understand what they were saying! So what kind of tongues were the Corinthian Believers operating in? That brings us to the next category of tongues.

Category 2 – Praying in Tongues

This is the kind of tongues that was happening in the church at Corinth as they gathered for their worship services. We know this because the apostle Paul begins to teach about this kind or category of tongues. He says in verse 2 “For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands *him*; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.” Again in verse 4-5 “He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. I wish you all spoke with tongues but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies *is* greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the

church may receive edification.” This category of tongues enables believers to pray to God in a spiritual language by the Holy Spirit and is for the purpose of building up individuals spiritually. Jude 20: But you, beloved, build yourselves up on [the foundation of] your most holy faith [continually progress, rise like an edifice higher and higher], pray in the Holy Spirit, (Amplified)

God has provided for his people a means to pray the will of God in the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:26-27 teaches us that the Holy Spirit helps us to pray according to the will of God for our lives. Sometimes we just don't know how to pray about things. However I've experienced that when I begin to pray in tongues many times I experience a breakthrough concerning the situation I am praying about and even receive understanding in my mind after praying in tongues. This is a wonderful blessing to experience and unfortunately one that is also greatly misunderstood and in the case of the Corinthians and others even today misunderstood and not properly used for the purpose that God intended.

However, this category of tongues is for personal prayer to God enabling us to communicate to God and pray in the Spirit even what I cannot understand with my mind. Paul explains it like this in 1 Corinthians 14:14-15 “For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unproductive [because it does not understand what my spirit is praying]. Then what am I to do? I will pray with the spirit [by the Holy Spirit that is within me] and I will pray with the mind [using words I understand]; I will sing with the spirit [by the Holy Spirit that is within me] and I will sing with the mind [using words I understand].” (Amplified)

Paul here is teaching the difference between praying in tongues and praying with our own understanding in our own language. He also says he sings in the Spirit or in tongues and he also sings with his understanding. I love to pray in both English and in tongues. And I also love to worship God singing songs of praise in English and also in tongues by the Holy Spirit. Millions of other Christians have experienced this wonderful blessing of speaking in tongues and if you have not yet been able to pray in tongues I would encourage you to ask God to baptize you with the Holy Spirit to be able to speak in this category of tongues because it's a powerful spiritual blessing that will strengthen your prayer life with God!

Category 3 – The gift of tongues and the gift of interpretation of tongues

This kind of tongues is listed as one of the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit that Paul wrote about in 1 Corinthians 12:10-11...“to another *different* kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.” Notice that this gift is listed in the order of tongues and the gift of interpretation of tongues. So this gift of the Holy Spirit is always to be used with the gift of interpretation of tongues. Now this is where the Corinthians and some today also are misguided and not using spiritual gifts correctly. Can you imagine attending that church service and several people speaking out in tongues with no interpretation to the message? That's exactly what was happening and it was causing confusion and disorder in the church service. This is why Paul was writing on this topic so he could guide the Corinthians into the proper use of tongues personally and how the gift of tongues and interpretation of tongues for public worship services. The gift of tongues and interpretation of tongues are given by the Holy Spirit to communicate

first in a supernatural language but then the message in tongues is explained through the same person or another believer through the gift of the interpretation of tongues in a natural language like English which enables the hearers to understand the message. I have seen the proper use of the gift of tongues and interpretation of tongues in church services. The Lord has used me to function in the gift of interpretation of tongues from time to time. Many times you could sense the presence of the Holy Spirit and the Lord speaking and it would bring blessing and edification.

However, I have also experience church services that were definitely out of order where people were speaking in tongues out loud and there was no interpretation of their message. Some may ask why we do not see more of the gift of tongues and interpretation today. I believe the first reason is that it is not desired nor sought after and so churches just do not experience it. Another reason is that if the leadership of a local church does not believe in the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the manifestation of the spiritual gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12 for today then they probably won't experience them as God works in a partnership with his people in the use these spiritual gifts.

WHAT'S THE BOTTOM LINE?

1) Paul was writing this portion of Scripture to teach the Corinthians about the proper understanding of tongues.

2) There are three categories of tongues in the Bible:

- Prophetic tongues that were a fulfillment of prophecy and communicate of the gospel.
- The gift of tongues for personal edification to be used in prayer.
- The gift of tongues and the gift of the interpretation of tongues used in church services.

3) Never despise any gift of the Holy Spirit but learn to understand and use them correctly as God intended and they will be a blessing to individuals and churches.

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