

**“Rules and Standards for Public Worship”**  
**1 Corinthians 11:2-14:40**  
**“The Use of Spiritual Gifts”**  
**1 Corinthians 12:1-14:40 [Part 22; Sermon #105]**  
**The Basis of the Gifts - 1 Cor 13**

**IV. Difficulties in the Church—7:1-14:40**

**C. Difficulties Concerning Corporate Worship—11:2-14:40**

**3. The Use of Spiritual Gifts—12:1-14:40**

**a. Confusion Concerning Spiritual Gifts— 12:1-31**

**b. Correction of the use of Spiritual Gifts—13:1-13**

**1.) The Dilemma of No Love—v.1-3**

**2.) The Department of True Love— v.4-7**

**3.) The Dominion of Love—v.8-13**

**a.) Love is Permanent—v.8a**

Paul surrounds this section with the word [agape], first in v.8 and then twice in v.13. His point is that love is permanent and abides forever, as opposed to some other gifts which are only temporary.

Notice the words, “*never ends*” basically means, “to fall”, but it especially has the idea of a final falling, collapsing, suffering ruin, or ending. IOW—love never dies!

The word never has reference to **time** or **frequency**, so, “love never ends” means, that there will never be a time when this love, that is a part of God’s nature will ever fall, or wither, or die or decay. Love is permanent! This idea of love never failing or ending does not refer to the **success** of love. The greatest example of this is Jesus Christ Himself. His love was perfect and yet it did not prove to be successful in winning the affections of every individual on earth.

The flip side of this idea is that wherever Christians go and whatever they do, it will only be successful (*in a spiritual sense*) if what they do is done through love.

So Paul is not speaking of love’s successes, but of its long **lastingness**, or its **permanence**. That’s why he says, “Love never ends.”

This strong statement of endurance is there to compare the provisional nature of the other gifts; namely prophecy, knowledge and tongues.

**b.) Gifts are Provisional—v.8a (Temporary)**

When one compares the wording of the **permanent** nature of love to the **temporary** nature of prophecy, tongues and knowledge, it becomes clear that

these other gifts will not last.

The gifts of **prophecy** and **knowledge** are to “*pass away*”. These words are from a verb that means, “to reduce to inactivity; to abolish.” They are both passive verbs, meaning that their ending or abolishment will come from someone or something that will cause them to stop. That something in v.10 is called “*the perfect*”. (We will look at this a little later.)

Tongues is said to “*cease*”. The word means, “to cease doing something; to stop.” Here it literally means, “to cease or stop oneself.” IOW—tongues would cease by itself. It would simply fade away and no longer be used.

We began answering some basic questions that need to be asked with regard to tongues (*particularly since tongues is such a pervasive part of the Christian movement across the world.*)

1. What does the Biblical word “tongues” mean?
2. What was the purpose for tongues?
3. If tongues ceased, can that be substantiated by history?
4. Is the tongues seen and practiced in the church today the same as that which was practiced in the early church?
5. What was it that caused tongues to cease?

So let’s take each one of these questions and answer them in order. (Keep in mind that this is not an exhaustive study on the subject of tongues.)

### **Question 1**

#### ***What does the Biblical word “tongues” mean?***

The word for “*tongues*” in the NT is the word, [*glossa*]. It is from this word that we get our English word ‘glossary’. Depending on how it’s used it can mean;

- The physical organ of speech; the tongue.
- A body of words and systems that make up a body of speech.
- Simply, “language(s)”. That’s it! Tongues in the Bible, in that context, is nothing more than languages that peoples of the earth speak.

That means there is no such thing as an unknown language (unless it be that it is unknown by one who hears it.) It also means that tongues is always an intelligible language, as opposed to garble or gibberish.

### **Question 2**

#### ***What was the purpose for tongues?***

As we have stated before tongues is among the “*sign gifts*” and as such was

used as a sign to unbelieving Jews. This point is not known by many people. A look at tongues in the book of Acts will substantiate this truth. There are several points to make concerning tongues in Acts.

- **Tongues in the book of Acts were a sign in every case.** We see this in chapter 2, 10, 19.
- **Tongues in the book of Acts were a sign to Jews only, never Gentiles.** (As a race)
- **Tongues in the book of Acts was a sign to individual Jews, only in a qualified sense.** (Never a sign of the HS baptism, or HS filling)  
Tongues in Acts is a sign of receiving the *gift of the Spirit*, consequent to salvation by faith alone in Christ's atoning sacrifice.
- **Tongues in the book of Acts were a sign to the Jews of a change in God's divine economy.**

Paul says in;

**1 Corinthians 1:22 (ESV)**

**22** For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom,

Tongues then, became the sign that God used to graphically impress upon the Jews that God was ushering in a new age in which He would now deal with mankind through His marvelous grace. After all, they had seen more than 15 centuries of rigorous disciplines under the Law of Moses. This new message was so earth shattering in their minds that they needed proof that this was really God's doing. Tongues, given as a supernatural gift, was an unmistakable sign for them that God's economy had changed.

This new "age" transition was implemented several times in Acts. Let's look at each one briefly.

- **Acts 2:4-14**

What happened on the day of Pentecost included at least three miracles. As they waited in obedience to the Lord's command, there came a **mighty rushing wind**, then there was **fire** that rested on them, then they all **spoke** in other tongues (i.e. other languages that were not their own mother tongue.)

The crowd of Jews from at least 19 different language groups heard the gospel in their own mother tongue/language. The ones doing the speaking on that day were Galileans, and would not have spoken these other languages, yet everyone there heard their own language being spoken. Some thought they were drunk, but Peter assured them that they were not drunk, but that this display was the promise of God's grace and salvation given through Jesus, the ascended Lord. And as he preached more than 3000 were saved. It was an initial sign to the Jews that Christ was indeed their Messiah and that this same gospel would be preached

around the world to every people group for salvation.

- **Acts 10:46**

Like on the day of Pentecost, the tongues displayed in Caesarea were also sign to the Jews. You remember the story of Peter and how he was called by God to go to the house of Cornelius, the Roman Centurion.

This occasion proved beyond any doubt that God was opening up the gospel to the Gentiles. The Gentiles that were saved that day spoke in tongues not because they had been baptized with the Spirit or because they had the fullness of the Spirit, but they spoke in tongues as a sign to the Jews that were present they too had received the gift of salvation just as the Jews had. Peter related the whole story and stated the truth of this to the council in Acts 11.

**Acts 11:11–18 (ESV)**

**11** And behold, at that very moment three men arrived at the house in which we were, sent to me from Caesarea. **12** And the Spirit told me to go with them, making no distinction. These six brothers (all Jews) also accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. **13** And he told us how he had seen the angel stand in his house and say, 'Send to Joppa and bring Simon who is called Peter; **14** he will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and all your household.' **15** As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning. **16** And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' **17** If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?" **18** When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life."

The Jews needed clear cut proof that salvation had been given to the Gentiles, and they got it through the gift of tongues given to these Gentiles just for that purpose.

- **Acts 19:1-6**

This section revolves around the 12 disciples of John the Baptist that Paul met in Ephesus. They were OT saints who did not know that Jesus was the promised Messiah. As Paul questioned them concerning their faith he realized they were not believers in Christ and so preached the gospel to them. When they heard that Jesus was the Christ they believed and received the **gift** of the HS as others had done before them.

They were baptized as a result of their faith in Christ and as Paul blessed them the HS came upon them and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. This was to show and validate that salvation had come to them.

In every case there were Jews who needed to be convinced that this new thing, the church, was of God, and that God had turned to the Gentiles with the good news of the gospel!

The point of all this is to show that tongues were a **sign**. A sign to the Jews that would convince them that what they were witnessing was indeed of God.

In 1Cor 14:21-23 we are told God's purpose for giving this gift:

**1 Corinthians 14:21–22 (ESV)**

**21** In the Law it is written, "By people of strange tongues (*languages*) and by the lips of foreigners will I speak to **this people**, (*the Jews*) and even then they (*Israel*) will not listen to me, says the Lord." **22** Thus tongues (*Gentile languages*) are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, (*i.e. to unbelieving Israel*), while prophecy is a sign not for unbelievers but for believers. (*i.e. to believing Israel*)

The nation of Israel had been God's witnesses to the world for 1,500 years (Isa.43:10), but when the promised Son of David, their Messiah, had come, the nation rejected Him. In the above passage Paul quoted a prophecy from Isaiah 28:11-12.

**Isaiah 28:11–12 (ESV)**

**11** For by people of strange lips and with a **foreign tongue** [*Gentile languages*] the LORD will speak to this people, **12** to whom he has said, "This is rest; give rest to the weary; and this is repose"; yet they would not hear.

Here God had warned the nation that He would one day speak to them in Gentile languages as a sign of coming judgment. That judgment came in AD70 and AD135 when the Romans destroyed the city of Jerusalem and scattered its survivors across the world.

The passage in Isaiah 28 is clearly speaking about the time of Christ's first coming, for it says:

**Isaiah 28:16 (ESV)**

**16** ... "Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: ...

This verse is referred to four times in the New Testament, and each time identifies Jesus Christ as the corner stone rejected by the builders but chosen by God (Matt 21:41-44; 1Pet.2:4; Eph 2:20; Rom 9:33).

**Matthew 21:41–44 (ESV)**

**41** They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons." **42** Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: " 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'? **43** Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. **44** And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him."

**1 Peter 2:4 (ESV)**

**4** As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious,

**Ephesians 2:20 (ESV)**

**20** built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,

**Romans 9:33 (ESV)**

**33** as it is written, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."

So the **whole purpose** of the gift of tongues (languages) was to fulfill the Old Testament prophecy and thus warn Israel of the seriousness of their position following their rejection of Christ! Did Israel heed the warning? They did not!

Just as the prophecy stated:

**1 Corinthians 14:21–22 (ESV)**

**21** ... even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord."

**Question 3**

**3. *If tongues ceased, can that be substantiated by history?***

If tongues and the other miraculous sign gifts had continued in the church, one would expect to see an unbroken line of evidence in church history from the apostolic times to the present day. Such a line does not exist! In fact the ceasing of tongues took place just after the days of the apostles, and did not reappear until the early part of the 19th century.

Quote Speaking of tongues, one church historian writes;

"The first sixteen centuries of its history were lean ones indeed. . . . if the first five centuries were lean the next were starvation years for the practice in Western Christendom and doubtful ones in Eastern Christendom."

In fact there is nothing about tongues from the apostles after the book of Acts and 1 Corinthians, which is the earliest of the epistles.

Through church history many voices of the Apostolic Fathers and Church Fathers bore witness to the cessation of tongues.

Quote Someone said;

"It is significant that the gift of tongues is nowhere alluded to, hinted at or even found in the Apostolic Fathers." (Cleon Rogers)

Quote John MacArthur writes;

"During the first five hundred years of the church, the only people who claimed to have spoken in tongues were followers of Montanus, who was branded a heretic.

● **John Chrysostom** (c. 344–407):

This whole place [*speaking about 1 Corinthians 12*] is very obscure: but the

obscurity is produced by our ignorance of the facts referred to and by their cessation, being such as then used to occur but now no longer take place.

(Source: John Chrysostom, *Homilies on 1 Corinthians*, 36.7. Chrysostom is commenting on 1 Cor 12:1–2 and introducing the entire chapter. Cited from *1–2 Corinthians*, in the Ancient Christian Commentary Series, 146.)

He is saying that tongues (and the other sign gifts) ceased so long before his time that no one was really certain of their characteristics.

- **Augustine** (354–430):

In the earliest times, the Holy Spirit fell upon them that believe and they spoke with tongues, which they had not learned, as the Spirit gave them utterance. These were signs adapted to the time. For there was this betokening of the Holy Spirit in all tongues [*languages*] to show that the gospel of God was to run through all tongues over the whole earth. That thing was done for a sign, and it passed away.

(Source: Augustine, *Homilies on the First Epistle of John*, 6.10. Cf. Schaff, NPNF, First Series, 7:497–98.)

The list goes on of those during the early church who believed that tongues and the other sign gifts would cease—Polycarp, Papias, Cyprian, Origen and others never mention tongues. Why? Because, they stopped of their own accord.

The same was true of the reformation.

- **Martin Luther** (1483–1546)

In the early Church the Holy Spirit was sent forth in visible form. He descended upon Christ in the form of a dove (Matt. 3:16), and in the likeness of fire upon the apostles and other believers. (Acts 2:3.) This visible outpouring of the Holy Spirit was necessary to the establishment of the early Church, as were also the miracles that accompanied the gift of the Holy Ghost. Paul explained the purpose of these miraculous gifts of the Spirit in I Corinthians 14... Once the Church had been established and properly advertised by these miracles, the visible appearance of the Holy Ghost ceased.

(Source: Martin Luther, *Commentary on Galatians 4*, Trans. by Theodore Graebner [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1949], pp. 150-172. This is from Luther's comment on Gal. 4:6.)

We could go on and on with people like John Calvin, John Owen, Thomas Watson, Matthew Henry, Jonathan Edwards, Kuyper, Shedd, Warfield, Pink—they all say the same thing—that tongues ceased at the close of the apostolic age.

Suffice it to say that the tongues we see at Corinth and the tongues we see today are similar and have no Biblical or historical credence.

Next time we will look closer at whether tongues used today is the same as it was in Acts and the early church.