

The truth about Speaking in Tongues - <http://www.speaking-in-tongues.net>

Glossolalia or speaking in tongues is practiced by an estimated 100 million Christians in the world today and the number engaging in tongues speaking is growing at a massive rate every year. That is approximately 20% of all Christians. These statistics originally included my family just so you know we have had first hand experience with speaking in tongues, which is also known as glossolalia and ecstatic tongues.

History of Speaking in Tongues

Throughout recorded history there have been many occasions where people have spoken in unknown tongues which are also known as 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 speaking in 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 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 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 tongue speaking 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 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. 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, tongue speaking as seen in the Church today is a fairly recent phenomenon in Christianity. It came in four waves. The 1st wave of tongue speaking 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. The 4th wave of speaking in tongues, the Evangelicals 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 as seen today was not the result of studying the Bible. It just happened. This should be of extreme concern to all Christians for as already shown; it is *not* uniquely a Christian practice and happened in the non-Christian cult world first. 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 tongue speaking 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 about Tongue Speaking?

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 speaking in tongues and tongues seems to be the only sought after gift in the tongue speaking Church today.

So what is the real truth about tongue speaking? 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 scriptures only. [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 speaking in tongues as we see it 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 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." We must also heed the following warning; [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." (Joel 2:28-32)

[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 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 "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." 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 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, 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. [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 Christs, 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. 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. 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 Tongue Speaking 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, 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 spoke 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 speaking in 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 speaking in 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 every where, 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 were Apostles to preach the Gospel to every nation?

In Acts chapter two we have the first and most significant mention of speaking in 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 speaking in 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 speaking in tongues for the benefit of the Church? Was it a sign to unbelievers as Paul said? Paul wrote in **1 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 speaking in 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 tongue speaking. 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-ah-ee*” 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 speaking in 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 speaking in 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 speaking in 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 tongues 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.” If tongues were angelic, how could they possibly cease? Is God going to take away the voices of all the angels? If tongues were angelic then surely we would be speaking in tongues all the more once we got to heaven.

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 speak 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 the *renew*. Jesus is saying they would speak in tongues which were new to them but already known, that is, recognizable languages which 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. **Mark 16:18** says, “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 speak in tongues, we must cast out more than one demon, we must be able to be bitten by a snake and not get sick or die, we must be able to drink poison and not get sick and 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 speak in 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.

[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 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 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. 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 speaking in 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 1:15 – John the Baptist “full of the Holy Ghost” no tongue speaking.

Luke 1:41 – Elizabeth “filled with the Holy Ghost” and no tongue speaking.

Luke 1:67 – Zacharias “filled with the Holy Ghost” and no tongue speaking.

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 tongue speaking to indicate this was necessary.

Acts 4:31 – Believers “all filled with the Holy Ghost” no tongue speaking.

Acts 7:55 – Stephen “full of the Holy Ghost” no tongue speaking.

Acts 8:14-17 – Samaritan believers “received the Holy Ghost” and no speaking in tongues.

Now if tongues had been spoken in all of the above cases, surely there would have been mention of it as speaking in 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 we 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. Here the element of complete faith is lacking. Like doubting Thomas, we will not believe unless we see and feel and have tangible evidence. 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 were 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."

In many of the Churches practicing tongue speaking today as it appeared in paganism and non-Christian cults, I think it would be fair to say that many of these Churches make up one giant tongue and the rest of the body is missing! 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 speaking in 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 tongue speaking 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.

It should be unmistakably apparent that the teaching that you are not saved or do not have the Holy Spirit unless you speak in 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 speaking in 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 (and 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 true 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. 16 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 their 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 on the final page for more information.

Does Paul contradict himself on tongue speaking?

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 example and for the purpose of demonstration we will 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.

2) In this example we will 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 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 exhorted 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" 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. 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 in 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 tongue speaking 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!

Speaking in tongues Linguistic Study

In a massive study of tongue speaking from a linguistic perspective by Professor William J. Samarin of the University of Toronto's Department of Linguistics, published after more than a decade of careful research, he rejected the view that glossolalia is xenoglossia, i.e. some foreign language that could be understood by another person who knew that language. Professor Samarin concluded that glossolalia is a "pseudo-language." He defined glossolalia as "unintelligible babbling speech that exhibits superficial phonological similarity to language, without having consistent syntagmatic structure and that is not systematically derived from or related to known language." (William J. Samarin, "Variation and Variables in Religious Glossolalia," Language in Society, ed. Dell Haymes, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972 pages. 121-130)

Felicitas D. Goodman, a psychological anthropologist and linguist, engaged in a study of various English, Spanish and Mayan speaking Pentecostal communities in the United States and Mexico. She compared tape recordings of non-Christian rituals from Africa, Borneo, Indonesia and Japan as well. She published her results in 1972 in an extensive monograph (Speaking in Tongues: A Cross-Cultural Study in Glossolalia by Felicitas D. Goodman, University of Chicago Press, 1972).

Felicitas Goodman concludes that "when all features of speaking in tongues were taken into consideration, which is the segmental structure (such as sounds, syllables, phrases) and its suprasegmental elements (namely, rhythm, accent, and especially overall intonation), she concluded that there is *no distinction* in tongues between Christians and the *followers of non-Christian (pagan) religions*. Goodman in the prestigious Encyclopaedia of Religion (1987) wrote the "association between trance and glossolalia is now accepted by many researchers as a correct assumption". Goodman also concludes that glossolalia "is, actually, a learned behaviour, learned either unwarily or, sometimes consciously." Others have previously pointed out that direct instruction is given on how to "speak in tongues," i.e. how to engage in glossolalia. In fact, it has been found that the "speaking in tongues" practiced in Christian churches and by individual Christians is identical to the chanting language of those who practice voodoo on the darkest continents of this world.

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 any form of such disorderly behaviour in the Church or shows it as being acceptable.

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.

Glossolalia has even been manufactured by University students in America (some of whom were atheist and had no religious interest at all) as a demonstration of what can happen given the right emotional environment and the right emotional effort. To quote one example, in Geelong, Victoria, Australia, two men as an experiment (again apart from religion) spoke in tongues after repeating “Timbucktoo” in the right emotional setting. One in just a few minutes and one partly after two hours! (Modern New Tongues” p. 59 – A.S. Hill).

Its universal appeal can be seen in its evidence amongst both Catholics and Protestants, Christian and Heathen, those living good moral lives, those living in sin. All can and do experience this phenomenon. That in these conditions “Tongues” CANNOT be a sign of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit becomes immediately evident.

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. There is no sign here 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.

Another aspect that is very noticeable is that an English Pentecostal speaking in tongues, though it may be quite unintelligible, is still recognizably English in intonation and syllable construction. Essentially he is still speaking “English.” So also with other nationals. A Scotchman is still “Scottish.” A Frenchman still is “French” in intonations and syllable construction. 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 never 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 information on [who is the beast of Revelation 13 and the little horn in Daniel 7](#) 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. This is evidence that the tongues they are speaking are the counterfeit. The Bible says that when the Holy Spirit comes into a person’s life it leads him into all truth, according to John 16. He will guide us, it says, into all truth. 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 confirm something? 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? All the Protestant churches with exactly the same gift of tongues believe it helps them to accept Jesus and His sacrifice more. If it’s supposed to be the same spirit there’s a problem isn’t there? It is clearly evident that it’s a spirit alright, but it’s not the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit, when it comes guides us and leads us into all truth, not just some of the truth.

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 speaking in tongues such as what entered the Church in 1901. It was after this practice (previously only seen in 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 is not 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?

Comparison of early and modern Church Tongue speaking

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.

Early Church Tongue Speaking	Modern Church Tongue Speaking
The least important gift. 1 Corinthians 14:5, 12:27-31	The most important and only sought after gift.
Sign to unbelievers. 1 Corinthians 14:22	A Sign to believers.
Spoken in turn. 1 Corinthians 14:27	Spoken together in confusion.
If no interpreter keep silent. 1 Corinthians 14:28	Rarely an interpreter and almost always proven false.
Pray for interpretation. 1 Corinthians 14:13	Pray for speaking in tongues.
Only one interpretation.	Interpretations differ when put to the test.
To edify the Church. 1 Corinthians 14:26	To edify yourself.
Spoke a known language. Acts 2:4-11	Almost never a known language.
Accusation of madness. 1 Corinthians 14:23	No accusation of madness.
Spoken for the benefit of hearers. 1 Corinthians 14:9	Spoken for the benefit of the speaker.
Maximum of 3 to speak at a time. 1 Corinthians 14:27	Whole Church freely speaks with no interpretation.
Interpret so everyone understands. 1 Corinthians 14:16	Interpretation almost never done today.

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 speaking in 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? See Acts 2:4-11 previously quoted in this document.

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? In order that we are not deceived, it is imperative that we follow God's Word alone.

A very misunderstood chapter on Speaking in Tongues

As previously stated, the main scriptures that are used to justify speaking in 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. Prophecy 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. Prophecy 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.

1 Corinthians 14:1-33, 39-40 “Follow after charity, and desire spiritual *gifts*, but rather that ye may prophesy. (*Prophesying 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 speaking in 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 [verse18] 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 speaking in 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 can not 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 *any thing* 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 prophesy first but tongues are allowed if 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 speaking in 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."

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"

Act 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;

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 so 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”

1 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 be 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 be 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.”

“Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible”

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 nowhere 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.