

TONGUES AND OTHER SPIRITUAL GIFTS

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The modern Charismatic Movement has made some bizarre claims regarding *Tongues and Other Spiritual Gifts*. They claim that speaking in tongues is the gift of the Holy Spirit and not just a manifestation of the Spirit. If this were true, then speaking in tongues would be necessary for salvation (Romans 8:9). Additionally, there are many within this movement who claim that they are able to perform all of the miracles that our Lord performed. This is quite a claim since no one within the movement has ever produced substantial evidence that they are raising the dead, walking on water, causing the blind to see, turning water into wine or feeding thousands with a little boy's lunch. Nevertheless, despite the outlandish nature of their claims, we will seek to discover if there is any Scriptural authority for their claims.

We will begin our study with the gift of the Holy Spirit. Our Lord commanded His disciples, before He ascended into heaven, ... *that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which saith, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized [in]*

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water; but ye shall be baptized [in] the Holy [Spirit] not many days hence (Acts 1:4-5). Several years before this, our Lord had spoken of this same promise at one of the feasts of the Jews:

... If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy [Spirit] was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.) (John 7:37-39)

In the text we cited from the book of Acts, our Lord made reference to John the Baptist, and in the following text John made reference to our Lord: ... *There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. I indeed have baptized you [in] water: but he shall baptize you [in] the Holy [Spirit]* (Mark 1:7-8). These prophecies and the many references in the fourteenth through sixteenth chapters of the Gospel of John, along with the prophecy of Joel and numerous other Old Testament allusions to the gift of the Spirit of God, were all fulfilled on the day of Pentecost ten days after our Lord's ascension into heaven.

Unleavened Bread, Pentecost and Tabernacles were feasts of the Jews which required the attendance in Jerusalem each year of all of the devout male Jews (Deuteronomy 16:16). These three feasts gave the Jews the opportunity to be present for all seven feasts of the Jews (Leviticus 23). The first three feasts of the Jews were observed in the first month of the year during the week of Unleavened Bread. Pentecost was observed fifty days after the Feast of Firstfruits, which placed it in the middle of the year; and the last three feasts of the Jews were observed from the first to the fifteenth of the seventh month, when the Feast of Tabernacles would begin. Thus the devout Jews were present in Jerusalem for the trial, crucifixion, burial and resurrection of our Lord at the beginning of the week of Unleavened Bread. Even so only redeemed Jews saw Him

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after His resurrection. The Jews were also present to witness the giving of the Holy Spirit to the Lord's newly formed church on the day of Pentecost, and they will probably be present in Jerusalem to witness the coming of our Lord on the day of Atonement, when they shall look on Him Whom they pierced and be saved. Once Israel is saved, they and the redeemed of all ages will reign with Christ and observe the Feast of Tabernacles from year to year during the millennial reign of Christ (Zechariah 14:16).

Nevertheless Isaiah prophesied of Israel's departure from the truth. He spoke of the judgment that would be hers because of her false doctrines and idolatrous practices. He also prophesied of those in Israel who would hear the wonderful works of God in Gentile languages. (This is what is meant by *stammering lips and another tongue* in Isaiah 28.) Some of these would be brought to salvation through the messages that they would hear, but the greater number of the Jews would continue in their apostasy, which is represented by wine, strong drink and drunkenness in the following Scripture:

In that day shall the LORD of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people, and for a spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment, and for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate. But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment. For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean.

Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little: for with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear. But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.

Wherefore hear the word of the LORD, ye scornful men, that rule this people

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which is in Jerusalem. Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves: therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not [be ashamed]. (Isaiah 28:5-16, emphasis mine)

Thus Isaiah's prophecy spoke of the continuation of the apostasy of the nation of Israel even unto the first advent of our Lord, after which John wrote: *He came unto His own [nation], and His own [people] received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name* (John 1:11-12). The Jews had indeed made a covenant with death and hell and had made lies their refuge at the coming of our Lord. Even so, as in Isaiah's day, there would be a very small remnant who would receive the proclamations of the truth, precept upon precept and line upon line. It would be these newborn babes (spiritually speaking) who would receive His doctrine. To them He would be the foundation stone which the builders rejected and upon which He would build His temple:

... Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD: even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both. (Zechariah 6:12,13)

As we journey through the book of Acts, from the day of Pentecost until Paul's imprisonment at Rome, we see the manifestation of the Spirit of God through the gift of tongues as prophesied by Isaiah on numerous occasions. However each of these manifestations of the gift of tongues was not without a specific purpose:

For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom

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of God. (I Corinthians 1:22-24, emphasis mine)

Paul also wrote: Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not... (I Corinthians 14:22, emphasis mine). When we bring these two statements into context with one another, we find that tongues were given for a sign to unbelieving Jews. Consequently every time there was a manifestation of tongues in the book of Acts, there were Jews present. Even so, after the writing of the New Testament Scriptures, the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and as those who possessed the gift of tongues began to die, the manifestation of the true gift of tongues eventually disappeared altogether.

Nevertheless we can learn a great deal about the gift of tongues from the first manifestation of tongues in the book of Acts. There we will find information that is important to the proper understanding of every other discussion of tongues in the New Testament:

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy [Spirit], and began to speak with other tongues [languages], as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.

And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans [i.e., uneducated]? And how hear we every man in our own tongue [language], wherein we were born? [1] Parthians, and [2] Medes, and [3] Elamites, and the dwellers in [4] Mesopotamia, and in [5] Judaea, and [6] Cappadocia, in [7] Pontus, and [8] Asia, [9] Phrygia, and [10] Pamphylia, in [11] Egypt, and in the parts of [12] Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of [13] Rome, Jews and proselytes, [14] Cretes and [15] Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues [languages] the wonderful works of God.

And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine. But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: for these are not drunken,

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as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; and it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: and I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: and it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. (Acts 2:1-21, emphasis and numbering mine)

The context clearly establishes that there were Jews and Jewish proselytes from fifteen different Mediterranean nations of the world in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. This was according to the law of God (Deuteronomy 16:16); and, by design, God used the Feast of Pentecost to assemble these Jews in Jerusalem to witness the giving of His Holy Spirit to His church.

The foreign Jews were absolutely dumbfounded when they heard these Galilaeans speak to them in the languages in which they were born. Galilaeans were uneducated (Jerusalem was the center of Jewish learning), but these languages had not been learned. The disciples spoke them instantly by the power of the Holy Spirit Who had come to indwell them forever. Unbelief works rapidly. So what the disciples had done by the power of the Holy Spirit was attributed to drunkenness. Thus Peter said: *These are not drunken as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel...* (Acts 2:15-16).

On the night before His crucifixion, our Lord had promised the disciples that the Spirit of God, Who had been with them for salvation and for service, would then be in them. He promised that *He would never leave them nor forsake them*. The indwelling Holy Spirit of God is God's pledge to believers that He will fulfill all that He has promised. So, before His ascension into

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heaven, our Lord told His disciples to tarry in Jerusalem until they received the promise of the Father.

The evidence of the fulfillment of the promise of the Father was very prominently displayed at the Feast of Pentecost by the gift of tongues. This, along with the other sign gifts, was to convince the nation of Israel of the authority of the New Testament church. Our Lord had also promised His disciples that the miraculous things He had done they would do, but in greater numbers (John 14:12-13). This promise was not for the entire church age (see I Corinthians 13:8-13), but was necessary in the infancy of the church to convince the Jews that the Spirit of God was in the newly formed church of Jesus Christ (because *the Jews require a sign*).

To understand why the Jews required a sign takes little thought. Who were they? They were God's chosen people, and they had been the custodians of the truth of the Word of God for about fifteen hundred years. They were of the lineage of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Jacob's name was changed to Israel, so they were the children of Israel. God used the Jews to give us the Bible. Every word of the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, was written by Jews, because ... *unto them were committed the oracles of God* (Romans 3:1-2). So the Jews had to be convinced that God was breaking off the natural branch and grafting in a wild olive branch to take their place during the church age (Romans 11:13-25).

Consequently, by the sign-gifts, our Lord gave the first century church the ability to do many of the things He had done until the New Testament Scriptures were written. Interestingly, the completion of the New Testament Scriptures and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. occurred at about the same time. Once Israel was destroyed as a nation, there was no longer a

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reason for the sign-gifts, and with the completion of the New Testament Scriptures the church's authority rested in the complete revelation of the Old and New Testament Scriptures. So the disciples were able to explain the Old Testament Scriptures by means of the New Testament revelation that they received from the Spirit of God.

Before we continue with our study of tongues, we need to consider some historical and geographical information about the city of Corinth. This information will aid us in our understanding of the gift of tongues:

A glance at the map of Greece will show that Corinth was made for greatness. The southern part of Greece is very nearly an island. On the west the Saronic Gulf deeply indents the land and on the east the Corinthian Gulf. All that is left to join the two parts of Greece together is a little isthmus only four miles across. On that narrow neck of land Corinth stands. Such a position made it inevitable that Corinth should be one of the greatest trading and commercial centres of the ancient world. It was necessary that all of the north to south traffic of Greece should pass through Corinth; there was no other way for it to go. All traffic from Athens and from the north of Greece to Sparta and the Peloponnese had to be routed through Corinth, because Corinth stood on the little neck of land that connected the two.

But it so happened that not only the north to south traffic of Greece passed through Corinth of necessity, but by far the greater part of the east to west traffic of the Mediterranean passed through her from choice. The extreme southern tip of Greece was known as Cape Malea, or, as it is now called, Cape Matapan. It was a dangerous cape, and to round Cape Malea had in ancient days much the same sound and implications as to round Cape Horn had in later times. The Greeks had two sayings which showed what they thought of the voyage around Malea -- "Let him who sails around Malea forget his home," and "Let him who sails around Malea first make his will." The consequence was that mariners followed one of two courses. They sailed up the Saronic Gulf, and, if their ships were small enough, they dragged them out of the water, and set them on rollers, and hauled them across the isthmus, and re-launched them on the other side. The isthmus was actually called the *Diolkos*, the place of dragging across. The idea is the same as that which is contained in the Scottish place name *Tarbert*, which means a place where the land is so narrow that a boat can be dragged from loch to loch. If that course was not possible because the ship was too large the cargo was disembarked, carried by porters across the isthmus, and re-embarked on another ship at the other side. This four mile journey across the isthmus, where the Corinth Canal now runs, saved a journey of two hundred and two miles round Cape Malea, the most dangerous cape in the Mediterranean. (*The Letters to*

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the Corinthians by William Barclay, Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1956, pg. 1-2.)

Corinth was a cosmopolitan city. The nations of the Mediterranean world passed through it daily for the reasons seen in William Barclay's description. Therefore every debauchery known to man was practiced in Corinth. On the hill of the Acropolis, which towered over the isthmus, was the temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love. This temple was home to one thousand prostitute priestesses who plied their trade on the streets of Corinth. Vices and idol worship of every sort were commonplace. Also the languages spoken in Jerusalem at the Feast of Pentecost (when the spiritual gift of tongues was first given) were spoken daily by the flow of traffic that passed through Corinth. This information lends itself to our understanding of Paul's remarks in the twelfth chapter of I Corinthians:

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led. Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy [Spirit].

Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; 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: but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. (I Corinthians 12:1-11, emphasis mine)

In a city of many languages, such as Corinth, with the spiritual gift of tongues being the ability to speak in a foreign language by the power of God, without having previously learned the language, how was it possible to know whether a man was speaking about the Lord Jesus Christ by his native language, by a learned language or by the Spirit of God? The answer does not lie

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in the phenomena of speaking about Christ in a foreign language (or what is called, *speaking in tongues*) but in the content of what is spoken: *no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed*. This was the point of Paul's argument. The Jews of the *diaspora* on the day of Pentecost heard the truth of the Word of God in the languages in which they were born.

Therefore one speaking by the Spirit of God, of necessity, would have to present the Lord Jesus Christ in agreement with the Word of God. He could not, therefore, deny His Person or His work, because *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God*. So Paul drew a comparison; he contrasted the many parts of a human body with the diverse spiritual gifts within a local assembly of the body of Christ:

For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. 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. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? 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? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?

But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: and those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.

And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. (I Corinthians 12:12-28, emphasis mine)

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Thus the spiritual gifts were not confined to the outward sign-gifts, but the majority of the gifts were for the edification of the body of Christ and continues to this day. Paul listed some of the gifts to show the nature of the gifts. He then made it clear that it was the Spirit of God Who gave the gifts, and it is the Spirit of God Who energizes the gifts. He also made it clear that every believer has a gift, but some believers have more than one.

The spiritual gifts had a distinct purpose. They were given for the edification of the body and not the self-aggrandizement of individuals within the body. They were given by the Spirit of God according to His will and not according to our individual desires. Consequently the apostle asked the Corinthians a series of questions, all requiring a negative answer: *Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?* (I Corinthians 12:29-30)

You need not be able to understand the Greek New Testament to know that Paul's comparison of the church to a human body dictates that there are many parts within the body of Christ, because the spiritual gifts were distributed severally according to the will of the Holy Spirit. Thus the claim that speaking in tongues is the baptism of the Holy Spirit is absolutely false. If it were true, all believers would speak in tongues, but they do not according to Paul's testimony in the twelfth chapter of I Corinthians.

There is one more verse that we need to consider. It is the verse to which all in the charismatic movement cling for authority for what they believe and do: *But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way* (I Corinthians 12:31). This verse as translated contradicts all that has preceded it. This verse as translated gives the charismatic movement hope.

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This verse as translated gives them the authority to earnestly desire to speak in tongues. This verse as translated gives them the authority to earnestly desire the gift of healing or any other gift which might give them status within the body of Christ.

The fault does not lie in the Scriptures. That is an impossibility, because *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and God cannot lie*. The fault lies in the translation of the Scriptures in our English Bible. This is true no matter what English translation you use. In fact I have never been able to find an English translation of the Bible that has translated I Corinthians 12:31 correctly. This statement is not an expression of my ego, but of the fact that translators can become myopic. They can be so concerned with the few verses before them that they lose sight of the context of those verses.

This is apparently what happened with verse thirty-one, because, as we have previously stated, the translation of verse thirty-one contradicts its immediate context. It is impossible for this contradiction to be a part of the original Scriptures because God cannot lie. So what is the solution? It lies in the word translated *covet earnestly*. The Greek word is *zeloute*. Oddly, this word, with this spelling, represents three different moods in the Greek language. It is second person plural present indicative; it is second person plural present imperative, or it is second person plural present subjunctive. This means it could have been translated *you are earnestly coveting*, *covet earnestly*, or *you may be earnestly coveting*. The translators of our English Bible simply did not select the correct mood for the word *zeloute* to fit the context. Paul did not command them to covet earnestly the best gifts; nor did he say that they might be coveting earnestly the best gifts, he told them what they were doing and suggested an alternative.

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Thus this completes chapter twelve and leads us into chapter thirteen, where with the correct mood for *zeloute*, the text should read: *Ye are coveting earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.* This translation agrees with the context of both the twelfth and the thirteenth chapters of I Corinthians; thus it is the correct mood for the word *zeloute* in this context. Interestingly, in chapter fourteen, the translators translated *zeloute* in the indicative mood: *Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church* (I Corinthians 14:12, emphasis mine). This is the correct mood for *zeloute* in this context, and it is also the correct mood for *zeloute* in I Corinthians 12:31, but why the translators did not recognize this is a mystery. Even so it is not a mystery why modern translators continue to translate the same way -- there are millions in the modern charismatic movement, and the translators are interested in selling their translations.

Thus Paul wrote about what they were doing and then he promised to show unto them a *more excellent way*, a way which was superior to what they were doing. The more excellent way that Paul promised is found in chapter thirteen where Paul spoke of *charity*. Again the translators did something peculiar. They translated *agape* as *charity*, when virtually everywhere else in the New Testament *agape* is translated *love*. Again they seemed to lose sight of the context, because the *more excellent way* of chapter thirteen had nothing to do with what English-speaking people call *charity*. Rather, *agape* was a special kind of love which transcended any and all of their gifts. So the *more excellent way* of chapter thirteen suggested to them that whatever gift or gifts they had, the gifts must be exercised within the confines of this special kind of love. We do not learn what that love was by studying Greek; we learn it by studying the Scriptures. Therefore the

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Biblical definition for *agape* is supplied for us by the apostle John in I John chapter four where he wrote:

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. (I John 4:7-11, emphasis mine)

Each use of love in these verses is *agape*. The Greeks used this word to express the highest form of love, but more importantly the Holy Spirit used it throughout the New Testament to express the love Christ manifested in His vicarious sacrifice on the cross of Calvary. Consequently the love that believers are to manifest towards one another and towards a lost world is: ... *how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures* (I Corinthians 15:3-4).

Even so, in the thirteenth chapter of I Corinthians, the translators translated *agape* as *charity* nine times. Since the English word *charity* does not come close to expressing the meaning of *agape*, as used by the Holy Spirit, we have taken the liberty to substitute the phrase *the love of Christ* for the nine uses of the word *agape* in this text (translated *charity*):

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not [the love of Christ], I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. 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 [the love of Christ], I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not [the love of Christ], it profiteth me nothing. [The love of Christ] suffereth long, and is kind; [the love of Christ] envieth not; [the love of Christ] vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in [the] iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. [The love of Christ] never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall [be rendered useless]; whether

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there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall [be rendered useless]. For we know [out of] part, and we prophesy [out of] part.

But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is [out of] part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know [out of] part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, [the love of Christ], these three; but the greatest of these is [the love of Christ]. (I Corinthians 13:1-13)

We stated earlier that the spiritual gifts, which were given severally as the Spirit of God willed, were not for self-aggrandizement. Each gift was given for the benefit of the body of Christ (of which all believers are members in particular). So the spiritual gifts were given for the proclamation of the gospel to a lost world and for the building up of the saints within the body of Christ. Consequently all of the gifts were to be exercised in the love of Christ manifested in the gospel:

And these signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out [demons]; they shall speak with new tongues; 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. (Mark 16:17-18, emphasis mine)

It is important to understand that our Lord said: *And these signs shall follow them that believe*. This means that there were certain gifts of the Spirit that were sign-gifts, and the apostle Paul informed us that *the Jews require a sign*. Consequently there is no concrete evidence that this promise (Mark 16:17-18) was for the entire church age, particularly because Israel ceased to exist as a nation very early in the church age (70 A.D.). Thus it behooves us to compare this promise in Mark's Gospel with another promise recorded in the Gospel of John and determine the extent of each promise:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And

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whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. (John 14:12,13)

This promise of our Lord has two parts. One part, which we learned from I Corinthians chapter thirteen, was that certain gifts were to be exercised until *that which is perfect is come*. The other part of the promise was that the prayers of believers would be answered in accordance with the will of the Father. Thus, according to the mercy and grace of God, this part of the promise still gives the believer access to the power that was manifested in some of the sign-gifts. Consequently, even without the sign-gifts, in every age ... *The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much* (James 5:16).

Let us consider, then, the first manifestation of the gift of tongues. Jews of fifteen different countries of the Mediterranean world were able to hear the Word of God in their own language *wherein they were born* when tongues were first manifested on the day of Pentecost. Thus the gift of tongues was the ability to speak in a foreign language without having first learned that language. Because of this, I have thought: If the gift of tongues is still being manifested today, as many claim, then why is it that pastors do not have the gift of tongues in Greek and Hebrew, since these are the languages of the Scriptures? And why do missionaries have to spend their first four or more years on a foreign field learning the language of the country to which they have been called? If such a gift of tongues was still available, this would truly edify the churches, but the gibberish that is spoken in some churches (with the claim that it is the gift of tongues) edifies no one. It does, however, exalt the flesh. This is interesting, since the Scriptures say: *For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would* (Galatians 5:17).

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The book of Acts gives us the history of the church from the ascension of our Lord from the mount of Olives until the imprisonment of the apostle Paul in Rome (or from approximately 29 A.D. to 68 A.D.). In the early chapters of the book of Acts, the apostles performed many miracles like the ones performed by our Lord, but as we near the end of the book of Acts the number and frequency of the miracles diminishes dramatically. There must be a reason.

In I Corinthians chapter thirteen, we have a promise that many have misunderstood. It tells us that there was to be a cessation of certain gifts when *that which is perfect is come*. Many have assumed that this is a reference to the coming of our Lord, but this does not fit the grammar of this passage of Scripture. *That which is perfect* is in the neuter gender in the Greek text. This means that it is a reference to a thing, not a person.

What thing was yet to come when Paul wrote to the Corinthians that would enable believers to know even as they are known? It seems rather obvious to me that it was the completion of the revelation of the New Testament Scriptures. This analogy fits perfectly into the context of the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians, especially when it is understood that the word translated *in* in this text is the Greek word *ek*, which in this text is more correctly translated *out of*. Thus the text speaks of preaching out of a partial revelation:

Charity [the love of Christ] never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether their be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in [out of] part, and we prophesy in [out of] part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in [out of] part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in [out of] part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. (I Corinthians 13:8-13, emphasis mine)

Paul's prophecy did not promise a disappearance of the Old Testament Scriptures. It

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promised an end of the partial revelation provided by the Old Testament Scriptures. So with the completion of the New Testament Scriptures, the Old Testament has ceased to be a partial revelation. There are several elements to Paul's promise. First, the love of Christ, as expressed in the gospel, shall never fail. The word translated fail is *ekpipto*. It was used by the Greeks to describe someone who fell out of a chariot; or of sailors who were thrown ashore; or of things which suffered shipwreck. Therefore the love of Christ shall never fail to accomplish its assigned purpose. Second, in contrast to the love of Christ, *tongues shall cease*. The Greek word translated cease (*pauo*) means to stop altogether. Third, in contrast to the love of Christ, there will be the time when *prophecies* will be rendered useless, because they will have been fulfilled. Fourth, also in contrast to the love of Christ, *knowledge* shall also be rendered useless, because, like *prophecies*, there will come a time when our present knowledge shall be unnecessary. So, according to the promise, the love of Christ shall continue forever; tongues were to cease entirely; and prophecy and knowledge will (at the end of the age) be rendered useless. All of this is understood with the completion of the New Testament Scriptures. The New Testament, rightly divided, provides clarity for the mysteries of the Old Testament Scriptures. Thus we no longer preach from a partial revelation but from all of the Word of God; and, because of the New Testament Scriptures, it is the Word of God *rightly divided*.

This brings us to Paul's illustration: *When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things*. When we understand what *that which is perfect* is, then Paul's illustration makes sense. As a child Paul did things he no longer did as an adult. So, in the infancy of the church, there were things that were

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necessary that would no longer be necessary with the passage of time. Consequently there were sign-gifts for the Jews when the church was in its infancy. These would no longer be necessary after the destruction of Jerusalem and the completion of the New Testament Scriptures. So the authority of the church does not lie in its abilities to perform signs and wonders. Its authority lies in the Word of God (both Old and New Testament Scriptures). Consequently, with the New Testament to guide us, the shadows and types of the Old Testament are made plain. Thus they are no longer viewed as Paul described them:

For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in [out of] part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity [the love of Christ], these three; but the greatest of these is charity [the love of Christ]. (I Corinthians 13:12,13)

Paul's statement, *For now we see through a glass, darkly*, was a perfect rendering of the conditions which existed at the time of his writing of First Corinthians. With only the Old Testament Scriptures, the believer's view of God's revelation of Jesus Christ was like using a piece of polished brass for a looking glass: the details were obscured because of the view. So the word *darkly* is the equivalent of our word *enigmatically*. Thus the view of the Old Testament Scriptures without the New Testament to unveil them is a mysterious view. However, with the New Testament to unlock the Old Testament, the view is *face to face*. This means that the New Testament enables us to *know even as we are known*.

Paul then concluded chapter thirteen with these words, *And now abideth faith, hope, charity [the love of Christ], these three; but the greatest of these is charity [the love of Christ]*. This is the logical conclusion to Paul's argument: without the love of Christ, as expressed in the gospel, there is no basis for faith. Consequently, without the love of Christ, which is the basis

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of our faith, we have no hope. It is self-evident, then, that the greatest of the three is the love of Christ.

As we begin chapter fourteen, we are again confronted in verse one with the rendering of *zeloute* in the imperative mood rather than in the indicative mood. Once again this mood does not fit the context: *Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.* In view of our previous discussion of I Corinthians 12:31, it makes no sense (contextually) for Paul to once again command the Corinthians to earnestly desire something that only the Spirit of God has the power to give. In fact, in the omniscience of God, the gifts were given *severally as He wills* before the foundation of the world. So again *zeloute* should have been translated in the second person plural present indicative mood rather than in the imperative mood. If it had, it would read something like this: *You are earnestly desiring spiritual gifts [i.e. the sign-gifts], but rather pursue charity [the love of Christ] in order that you may prophesy.*

In this context *prophesy* means to proclaim in one's own language the truth of the saving grace of Jesus Christ. So Paul was not writing about the spiritual gift of prophesy (which in that age could have been both foretelling and telling forth), for they could no more pursue, with the hope of obtaining, the spiritual gift of prophesy than they could the sign-gifts. Nevertheless, to bring things into perspective, each believer has the capacity for a personal witness of his relationship with the Lord. Consequently the more the believer knows of the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, the more complete his witness can be. Thus the believer should seek to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord in order to testify to the truth:

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. But he that

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prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort. He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church. I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.

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? 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? For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? 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.

There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification. Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a [foreigner], and he that speaketh shall be a [foreigner] unto me. Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church. (I Corinthians 14:2-12, emphasis mine)

So Paul explained: even if one has the power to speak in a foreign language, if he speaks that language among people who do not understand it -- no matter what he speaks -- what benefit can it bring? In contrast to that, Paul emphasized that one who prophesies (witnesses the truth in his own language and the language of those to whom he speaks) does so unto *edification, and exhortation, and comfort*. This does not produce confusion. This produces growth.

Throughout this fourteenth chapter of I Corinthians, Paul writes about the many languages of this world. There are myriad languages and none of them is without significance to those who understand them, but in the church everything is to be done decently and in order. *God is not the author of confusion*. Consequently foreign languages can be spoken if there is an interpreter, but if there is no interpreter, then those who speak in foreign languages must keep silent: for everything must be unto edification, exhortation and comfort.

We have pointed out that there were sign-gifts and gifts for the daily function of the

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churches of Jesus Christ. The sign-gifts were for unbelieving Jews, because the Jews require a sign. So with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., those gifts disappeared with the deaths of those who possessed them, but the other gifts have been manifested in every age from the first century until now. The use of our spiritual gifts within the body of Christ are well summarized by Paul:

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? But if all prophesy [speak in the language of the people], and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: 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.

How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying. 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. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God. Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all prophesy [speak in the language of the people] one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.

For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints. Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.

What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only? If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant. Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order. (I Corinthians 14:23-40, emphasis mine)