



PREACHING THE CROSS
God's Remedy for a Troubled Church

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF LAKE ORION

The Perversion of Tongues

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Dr. Juan M. Moreno

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 14:1–40

There is a great deal of confusion in the minds of many Christians regarding the subject of tongues mentioned in Acts and 1 Corinthians. One particular area of misunderstanding has to do with the nature of the gift itself. Are biblical tongues to be understood as *the gift of real languages* or are they some sort of unintelligible speech or gibberish? It is clear in 1 Corinthians 14 that Paul not only sees *tongues* as a foreign language, but also as an inferior gift to prophecy.

I. THE NEED FOR PROPHECY

At the time of the writing of 1 Corinthians, the New Testament Scriptures were still in the process of Holy Spirit inspired development. Depending on when you date the New Testament Scriptures, if 1 Corinthians was written about 55 AD, then only six other New Testament books were circulating at the time. The bulk of the New Testament (20 books) was yet to be written.

II. THE NATURE OF PROPHECY

A. The Definition of Prophecy

In the Bible, the prophecies were the utterances of God spoken through a human messenger who received God's message via dreams, visions and signs. The messenger [or the prophet] was to reveal and to interpret God's will to the people.

B. The Proclamation of Prophecy

1. Prophecy was proclaimed through a *human mouth piece or the prophet*.
2. Prophecy was revelation that originated with God.
3. The prophet was called by God.
4. The prophet could not contradict any previously revealed commands of Scripture.

C. Similarities to the Call to Preach

1. God's revelation is proclaimed through a human mouth piece.
2. God's Revelation— the Scripture— originates with God.
3. The preacher must be called, Rom 10:13-15.
4. The preacher is not to contradict God's Word but preach the whole counsel of God.

If the emphasis is on the message NOT the prophet, all preachers who sense God's calling and rightly divide and proclaim God's truth are prophets.

D. The Stipulations Placed on Prophecy

Prophecy had guidelines ,vv. 29-31.

1. Only two or three prophecies were to be given at any one service, 14:29.
2. When one spoke, the others in the church were to pass judgment, 14:29.
3. New revelation had priority over what had already been revealed, 14:30.
4. The goal of the prophecy was edification, 14:31.
5. The prophets were to exercise self-control, 14:32.

III. THE GIFT OF TONGUES

A. The Nature of Tongues (*Glossa*– the tongue; a language)

The supernatural practice of speaking in a genuine language that one has not acquired by natural means. It is for the purpose of communicating and proclaiming God's Word in another dialect by a messenger who had not previously been exposed to that dialect— Mark Snoeberger

1. It was a genuine language, Acts 2:1ff.
2. It was a *sign gift*, 1 Cor 14:22.
3. It was for the *initial* evangelism of the early Church, Matt. 28: 18-20, cf. Acts 2.

B. The Stipulations Placed on Genuine Biblical Tongues in the First Century Church

1. There needed to be an interpreter present, 14:27-28.
2. No more than three were permitted to speak during a service, 14:27.
3. It had to be done by course (each in turn), 14:28.
4. Women were not allowed to speak, 14:34-35.

C. The Perversion of Tongues, vv, 23-26

1. The false assumption that everyone can possess the same gift, vv. 23-26
2. The implication that some were counterfeiting the gift, vv. 23-26
3. The denial that it is the Spirit Who decides which gifts believers receive, chapter 12
4. The emphasis on an inferior gift
 - a. Tongues are not helpful when they cannot be understood, 14:6-9.
 - b. Tongues have value in their proper context, 14:10-11.

To have value, tongues must be understood!

- (1) It cannot by-pass the intellect, 14:13-15.
- (2) It must focus on the edification of others, 14:16-17.
- (3) It must be understandable, 14:18.