

The Gifts Of Tongues & Prophecy
Pastor Jonathan Schaeffer
October 15, 2023

So good to worship with you, to remember what Jesus has done in our lives. Well, some of you heard that our family welcomed a special gift this past Wednesday our daughter and son in law, Brad, and their great son, Teddy. Her name is Ellie Joy. And all of us, including her two year old brother Teddy, think she's really precious, so grateful for these treasures. You know, someone said if I had known years ago how wonderful grandparenting is, I want to just skip the whole thing about having kids and just going straight to having grandkids. But in case any of my five kids and my daughters here, I love you and I would never trade that for anything. You know, when you think of the joy that is experienced, when you welcome someone to the family, maybe you're the an uncle, grandparent, you're the parent, whatever.

There's something about welcoming a new person to the family that just you know, there's a celebration. Right. And that is a reflection of what we read in Luke chapter 15, when it says, Jesus gives the only time he does three parables about lost items being found, a lost coin, a lost sheep, a lost son. And he says when the lost item has been found and he's talking about us, he says, It's when you were lost and you're found by God. He says, There is a great celebration. There's rejoicing in the presence of home of Angels, right? So even heaven is rejoice seeing the moment that you put your trust in Jesus. That's what happened. And if you haven't taken that step yet, when you give your life to Jesus and invite him to come into your life, I mean, it is just the Bible says the old is gone, a new life has begun.

You're forgiven of your past. You're without blemish. You're free from accusation. God, the Holy Spirit comes in, lives in you. He empowers you. He gives you purpose for your life. He gives you a forever home in heaven that's guaranteed. And he gives you with abilities to make an impact on the people around you, your church, family, and your community.

To wherever you are, he says. I want to do something through your life. And that's the context of what we've been reading, that when you're born again into God's family, that he gifts you and and he wants you to

make an impact. He sees us even as we gather here as a family. And and and he wants to talk about the gifts that he gives us.

We're going to look at that and we're going to look at a passage that tells us about a couple of gifts that have created some controversy from the first century. And even today around the world, there is some confusion, you know, disagreement on this. And so we want to look at that. Let's turn together to first Corinthians chapter 14.

There are some notes that maybe you picked up on your way in and or if those of you engaging online, really glad to have you watching from lots of different places. If you want to go to our Web site, Gracy May, Dawg, you'll see our bulletin there in the notes. Are there guys at Loraine Correctional? Really glad to have you joining us as well.

Look forward to being with you again. And and those of you are checking in on the podcast. Thanks for digging into God's word with us. My prayer is that we're going to leave you with a better understanding of of what Paul's teaching about what Jesus wants for us today, that that things that are maybe confusion is confusing, don't have to be scary that we can actually learn and then say, Wow, I want to embrace this.

Like this is something that God might have for me. So first Corinthians Chapter 14, I'm going to read, beginning with verse one in the New Living Translation. And here's here's where Paul writes Let love be your highest school. But you should also desire the special abilities the spirit gives, especially the ability to prophesy for its view of the ability to speak in tongues.

You will be talking only to God, since people won't be able to understand you. You'll be speaking by the power of the spirit, but it will all be mysterious. But one who prophesies strengthens others, encourages them and comforts them. A person who speaks in tongues is strengthened personally, but one who speaks a word of prophecy strengthens the entire church.

I wish you could all speak in tongues, but even more I wish you could all prophesy for prophecy is greater than speaking in tongues unless someone interprets what you were saying. So that the whole church

will be strengthened. Dear brothers and sisters, if I should come to you speaking in an unknown language, how would that help you? But if I bring you a revelation or some special knowledge or prophecy or teaching that will be helpful.

Even lifeless instruments like the flute or the harp must play the notes clearly or no one will recognize the melody. And if the bugler doesn't sound a clear call, how will the soldiers know that they are being called to battle? It's the same for you. If you speak to people in words they don't understand. How will they know what you were saying?

You might as well be talking into empty space. There are many different languages in the world in every languages. Meaning? But if I don't understand the language, I will be a foreigner to anyone who speaks it and the one who speaks it will be a foreigner to me. And the same is true for you, since you were so eager to have the special abilities, the spirit gifts, seek those that will strengthen the whole church.

All right. We pause there. One of the things I love about Grace Church, this family is that God has given us a lot of diversity. It's a whole lot easier to be in a group that's homogenous. You all think alike, vote alike, look alike, sound alike. But it's better to be part of a diverse group that just reflects, you know, the family that God is building and what heaven's going to be like, right, is going to be people from every different tribe, a language, a nation.

And so when we have a taste of that here, that's honoring to Jesus and but it means that we come from a lot of different backgrounds, including on this issue. So, for instance, some of you grew up in a religious tradition where the gift of tongues was like used a lot. Like people just did that, you know, and you're like, everyone seemed to have the gift.

Others of you grew up in a tradition religiously where you're like, We like never. I never heard that. We never talked about it. It was like that was the first century and it wasn't beyond that. Some of you were going, I didn't grow very religious or I don't even know what you're talking about. Like, I'm just glad I have a tongue in my mouth.

But in terms of some kind of spiritual gift, you've like, lost me. I don't know what Paul's talking about. I'm really glad you're here. And I like the fact that we're all over the map. And I think what we do is we come back to the scriptures and say, Let's let the Bible speak for itself, and and it listen in and see what does it really mean?

Like, let's let's understand this. And so that's what we want to do today. To get the context, though, for what Paul is saying, because he didn't just send first Corinthians 14 is a letter. He sent it as part of a larger letter. And Chapter 14 is just one part of 16 chapters. And so what we find out is that this section of Paul's letter, Chapter 12 to 15, is all about the Holy Spirit, how he, in fact, is the longest section in the New Testament about how the Holy Spirit gifts us.

He gives you abilities, you know, the gift of administration or encouragement or teaching or tongues or prophecy or whatever. And and so here's let's just look at the backdrop. Okay? So you'll see these four points in your notes, first of all. And first Corinthians six, Paul makes it clear that God begins a new work in you when you put your trust in Jesus.

That's the starting point. You don't receive gifts until this step happens. So Paul puts it this way in First Corinthians chapter six, verse nine, he says, Don't you realize that those who do wrong will not inherit the kingdom of God? Verse 11 Some of you were once like that, but you were. Listen to this identity. When you put your trust in Jesus, you were made holy.

You were made right with God by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. So Jesus makes you clean and holy, puts you in a right relationship with God. It's the starting point. And if you haven't taken that step yet, that's your first step to say, Jesus, I need a new start in my life.

I know that I'm not acceptable to you as I am. I. I'm not going to make it to heaven on my own. You're the way, the truth and the life. I surrender my life to you. When you do that. Then Paul goes on first Corinthians 12 and he says that God gives you gifts. We have different gifts and personalities, but the same Jesus lives in all of us.

This is great news that for those of you who go, you know what? I think I look around me and I think God can use these other people because they've been Christians way longer than I have. They just seem like there's this godly aura about them and God's not going to use. I want you to stop right there.

God wants to use you even if you're brand new. Remember in John chapter four, he's talking to the woman at the well, Jesus. She goes and tells the whole village and she's a brand new follower of Jesus. All these people follow Jesus as a result. It doesn't matter if you're brand new in your faith. God wants to gift you and give you the joy of using that gift in your church community and in the world large.

It's also clear from Chapter 12 that number three gifts are not something we manufacture on our own. There's special abilities given by the Holy Spirit, and I put a partial listing gifts in your notes. You'll see that we'll show them on the screen a little bit later in the message. We don't earn these. We don't work for them.

We they're gifts. And so you just receive them and you can even ask for them. And then in chapter 13, Paul addresses a problem. There were Christians in the city of Corinth, Greece, who began to brag about the gifts that they had received and their like. And for them they were like, I have the gift of tongues. What's your gift?

And they sort of saw it is like the elite gift. And if you had that gift, it was a mark that you were a deeply spiritual person. And we saw last week that Paul says, you know what the real mark of spirituality is and tapped an indicator on your dashboard of your life that you're really doing well in your walk with Jesus.

He goes, It's not the gifts you have. He goes, If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but don't have love, He goes, I'm just I'm just like that loud cymbal, right? I'm nothing. So the best indicator of spiritual maturity is do you do you really value people and treat even difficult people with dignity? So number four, they're no matter how gifted or spiritual I think I am, if my words and actions are not marked, first of all, by love, my life is a big zero.

Now, with that in mind, let's look at chapter 14 again, verse one, and he picks up this theme and he says This Let love be your what? Your high school. But he says he's not diminishing the gifts he said you should also desire the special abilities the spirit gives, especially the ability to prophesy. Now, what does that even mean?

To get the context for what Paul is about is going to address here in chapter 14, let's look at chapter 14, verse 18, maybe a summary verse for this section. And here's what he writes. He says, I thank God that I speak in tongues more than any of you, but in a church meeting, I would rather speak five understandable words to help others than 10,000 words in an unknown language.

So Paul holds up these two gifts for comparisons, tongues and prophecy. And as you read the chapter, you begin to get the gist of what Paul is saying. And he helps us to navigate the use of these two gifts. And if you were to summarize, here's what Paul makes clear. The gift of tongues is good, and the gift of prophecy is even what is even better.

The gift of tongues is good. And Paul says, I speak in tongues more than all of you. So he's not diminishing the gift. He has a great gift. He goes, This is even better. So let's take a look at this first. At the gift of Tongues. Paul himself, as I said, had this gift. Quite a few folks at Grace and our Grace Church family have this gift.

And it is a gift from God. And if you were to define it, this is in your notes, a gift from the Holy Spirit tongues as a gift in which a believer speaks in a language they have not learned and which they do not understand. If you look again at chapter 13, verse one, just back a chapter, it seems that there are two types of tongues mentioned in the Bible.

Paul says. If I speak in the tongues of men or of one angels. And so the tons of people would be like languages, and the gift of tongues might be an unlearned foreign language. The technical word for that is Zino, Lilia Zino like, you know, xenophobia, foreigner, Zino means foreigner in the Lilia to talk. And so you talk in a foreign language and I won't turn there but acts to you guys can put a couple as verse on the screen if you want but the next chapter too, when the Spirit of God falls among the

early church and there is a sound of mighty rushing when the flames of fire and it says this, it says that that all the unbelievers who are present, they're like, Whoa, something's happening here because they come from all over the Mediterranean world to Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. And when they're there, they begin to hear the praises to God among the early church, like this group of 120 in their own world language, they're like, Whoa, whoa, we're coming from Italy and Libya.

You see all the different places mentioned, and yet we're hearing the praises of God in our own language and something was taking place. Now, does that happen today? There was a report of a person who heard an American speak there, an American worship service, and this person who had grown up in Iran heard this person speaking in a Persian language in tongues, and they never learned it.

And they said, I heard him say, praise the Lord, glory to God on the highest. And they said, I heard in my own language, I've never encountered that. I think it's probably a rare happening. I do know some missionaries, including some of my own family, maybe some tuning in today who have probably at times desperately prayed for this gift as they've sought to learn a new language.

And they're like, God, I'm working so hard. If you just want to gift me with being able to speak this language like that would be awesome. But generally the Lord has us go through the difficult process of learning a language, building relationships, and, you know, and so no one that I know of has received the gift in this way today, where you speak another language that's understandable in another part of the world and you've never studied it, more common would be what we might say are the tongues of angels, which colossal also, which in our verbal patterns are not identified with any human language.

And I think this might be what Paul meant when he says, If I speak in the tongues of of angels, in other words, a language unknown to people, but a language used to praise God. So if you look at chapter 14, verse two again, he says this I think Paul is talking about this here. He says, If you have the ability to speak in tongues, you will be talking only to God, since people won't be able to understand you like this is something that God.

So. So if we were to talk about some of the characteristics of the gift of tongues, number one, they're spoken to God. Tongues are primarily for preaching, they're for praise. And that's what you see when they're mentioned in verse two. He says, You're speaking to God when you speak in tongues. Down over 16, he says, tongues are for praising God with your spirit.

And so tongues are primarily for something that is it's going to be like from your soul to the heart of God. A second characteristic of their tongues are mysterious, unintelligible, without interpretation. So in verse two, he says, Here in chapter 14, you'll be speaking by the power of the Spirit, but we'll all be mysterious. And then one more aspect.

Number three is that tongues are primarily, primarily for the benefit of the speaker, and verse four, he says, A person speaks in tongues, is strengthened personally. And how can tongues strengthen us? I was sure like this. I think that's been the experience of many people, of the gift of tongues, is that they'll sometimes say, I have so much overflow of praise in my heart that I feel like my own language.

You know, like for me, English is inadequate and sometimes the overflow of my heart and in an unknown language like in the tongues of angels that you're you're pouring out your heart and words that might not be understandable to other people, but it's between you and God. By the same token, there are people sometimes who are in such pain, and I think there might be a hint of this in Romans Chapter eight when when Paul says that the Spirit, the Holy Spirit takes groans that words what cannot express any interprets those to the Father.

Some of you have been in a place of such deep pain that you go, I feel like I can't even pray. And maybe there are groans that pour out. There's unknown words that would pour out of your heart and you say, That was a gift to me in a time where it was just difficult. So I think in times of either great, great joy, times of great pain, that the gift of tongues has been a gift to many.

James John was until his death a few years ago as a professor emeritus at Durham University and one of the foremost New Testament scholars in the world. And he said this about the gift of tongues. He wrote Studies have indicated that contrary to popular belief in which tongues

were associated with it, a psychological disorder, that really was the case.

At some point for someone, the world thought, this is these people have gone mad. Today it is said to give people a sense of balance, wholeness and well-being. He goes on to say Depression among tongue speakers is often reduced. They become more open to feeling and to the effective dimension of their experience, more spontaneous and better able to cope with anxiety.

So this has been a huge gift to a lot of people, and it might be something you go, God power Jonathan is talking about sounds, sounds really good. Like, would you give me that gift? God, I would. You know, I really love to have that gift. Paul says. It's a gift that that strengthens us. It's one of the gifts that's more intended probably for our own strengthening and lessons in interpretation for the church.

So what are some guidelines Paul gives for this gift of of tongues? Number one, when you're in church, do what's best for the whole church. Look what he says in verse 16 here. It's all about wanting everyone to understand. He says in chapter 14, verse 16 If you praise God only in the spirit, not just with the gift of tongues, how can those who don't understand you praise God along with you?

How can they join you in giving thanks when they don't understand what you were saying? You'll be giving thanks very well, but it won't strengthen the people who hear you. I thank God that I speak in tongues more than any of you. But in church meeting I would rather speak five understandable words to help others in 10,000 words in an unknown language.

So where did Paul primarily use his own gift of tongues? It would seem to be in private. That's Paul's point, that in public, whatever is spoken should be understandable and should lead to love and unity. And that's why even at Grace Church, this gift, if you're like, I've never heard that use like in a public worship service, it's primarily used in someone's own private relationship with Jesus, maybe in a small group, a prayer group or something like that, but a lessers interpretation, Paul says It's you always want it to be understandable.

Guideline number two, he says, Watch out for pride. If you have the gift of tongues or any other gift, don't look at that as some kind of, you know, status spiritually. Here is the problem in Corinth. If you look at this list of gifts here on the screen, this is how people often view the gift of tongues. They're like, you know, my friend is craftsmanship gives hospitality both the gift of tongues.

Man. That is the first class gift. The rest of you can sit back and coach, you know, and maybe someday you'll receive the gift. And Paul is saying he's going, you know what? Don't don't do that. God gives all the gifts. You didn't earn it. You didn't manufacture it, and so receive the gifts from him. But every gift has value.

Again, here's Paul's big point. The gift of tongues is good, and the gift of prophecy is what is better? Why? Why? First, a definition. Prophecy is a gift from the Holy Spirit, in which an individual believer is given the ability to communicate truths about the nature and the will of God. So a person with this gift is going to help you understand how the Word of God is applicable to today.

It might be an A. We said last week it might be in a small group Bible study in a middle class. It could be someone preaching the word, but they're saying something that makes the Bible relevant for today. But here's the difference with tongues. Prophecy is always in the language of the people. And so here's what Paul says in verse five.

He says, I wish you could all speak in tongues, but even more, I wish you could all prophesy for prophecy is greater than speaking in tongues unless someone interprets what you were saying so that the whole church will be strengthened again. In verse 18, he says, I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you.

But in the church I'd rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than 10,000 words in a tongue. So. So what is it about prophecy that's so positive for the church family? It would be this three characteristics of the gift to prophecy Prophecy. And it really comes back to what he says in verse three. He says, One who prophesies, does three things, strengthens others, encourages them and comforts them.

First of all, strengthens the word is is oikos Domin Oikos is house. Dominus to build. And so if you think of building a house and you know he says that's what I want you have a mind is that when you speak God's word that that you're helping to build people up to be come the ones that that Jesus wants them to be.

He also says that it encourages people in the trials of of life. It's the same word. Pericles says that perfectly. The Holy Spirit is one who comes alongside. He's he's encouraging you. He's convicting you, he's prompting you, he's empowering you. And Paul is saying that when you speak a word from God, that is an agreement with the Bible.

He's saying it can strengthen people on their journey. And then he finally says it comforts people assisting, assuring them of God's presence that that when used can speak a prophetic word, it can really. And, you know, sometimes it's not just, you know, me going through a passage of scripture, it might be something that God gives you a special word for something I had this happen this week.

A guy was talking to me and he didn't even ask me. He doesn't know what I'm speaking on. And he says, You know what? Two years ago he said, This friend of mine spoke a word into my life and it was a prophetic word. And he said, you know, we were praying together. And he said, I have this sense from the Lord, as we've been praying that you're going to encounter a crisis in these coming few years, but God wants you to know that you're not forgotten and that what he wants to do is he wants to sort of he wants to open up your heart and remove any of the negative.

And he wants to pour out his presence in a new way. And and he's and who you are at the end is going to be you're going to be more more Jesus like and your character and your your life. So the guy's tell me this. He goes, It happened. He goes, Within months I encountered a crisis. My heart was broken.

And he said, I felt like it happened, that God opened up my heart. He began to cleanse me and he goes, It was so helpful for me to have this sense of that. I am not forgotten that the guy told me, said, You're going to go through a hard time, but the Lord has not forgotten you. He's actually doing something in your life and you can trust him.

And he said, I'm I'm coming through that two years right now. And he goes, I think it's really that that's what a prophetic word can do. You experience the word of God for you. This can even happen in a message. I can tell you, many people have said me or someone else who's speaking, and we're just it's not us.

It's but the word of God is open. And they'll say, I feel like you were talking directly to me, like you were reading my mail and my wife call you. I'm like, She actually did. Yeah, and I did. I tailored my message just for you. Not really. That's just the work of the Holy Spirit, right? He takes the word and he opens to the extent that you know what Paul says.

Let me close with this in verse 25, Paul says that when you experience the gifts like this in the Holy Spirit as a work among you, he says even unbelievers will worship God, declaring God is truly here among you, and that what we want, you know, all the people who come and say, You know, the first week I was here, I don't know what happened.

I came in and I just the tears began to flow. I just sense, God, I give you one example. There was a guy who started coming to Grace. He wasn't a follower of Jesus, got in a conversation with a regular attender after a time, and they went a little bit deeper and the member from Grace just asked this guy said, You know, just curious, I know that you don't agree with the teachings, some of the teachings of the Bible and what Grace holds on to, you know, you're this is you're not like you wouldn't be quite in sync with with were Grace churches.

I'm just curious what draws you here week after week? And the guy goes, I can tell you that he said two things. He said, Number one, I sense God here. And number two, he goes, I feel loved. If that's you, you're in process. I hope that you sense that the you say, I'm not even a Christian yet, but there's something about the presence of God that I want to encounter him.

And and then I sense his love and the love of people around me. Is that what we want as a church family, that we're not just like going through motions and say, well, I'll show up as obligation and I'm supposed to do this and maybe I get credit with God, but you encounter God that you

experience some that other people, even if you have a Sunday, were like, Yeah, I'm sort of one out of obedience.

That's great too. But you'll say, God, you would you help other people? We have people praying right now that that will be happening. The people we will experience his presence. Friends, I long for that and ever greater measures in an hour with our kids or youth or young adults are for all of us. I would like to to just lead us in a prayer and just invite the Holy Spirit to come to fill our hearts new ways to give us whatever gift he wants to give us.

And and maybe we have some gifts that are being unused and that he will have his way in us and through us. Would you join me in that? Let's pray together. Holy Spirit, would you come, come and fill our hearts, dispense, Lord, whatever gifts you want to give. And may we not be afraid or hesitant to use those gifts, the Lord to step into those gifts that you give and ensure that your presence would be sensed, whether in conversations or prayer times or worship or gathering around your word, God, that you would have your way in us.

So Lord cleanses from anything that would hinder you. Just wash away any any of the the mess and the yuck that would be a blockage in our lives. And just we pray that your life and your love would flow through us. Jesus, would you do that? We pray. We invite you and your name. We pray. And everyone who agreed said Amen. Amen. May be we have such a great savior. Let's stand together as a team leads us.