

September 4th – Speaking in Tongues

“I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all; yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.” (1 Cor. 14:18-19)

In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul clearly identifies speaking in tongues as a spiritual gift. The Bible indicates that tongues-speaking is like all the other gifts – it has been given for the edification of the church. But tongues are also “a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers” (1 Cor. 14:22). We see this use of tongues many times in the book of Acts. On the day of Pentecost, God allowed men to speak in tongues so that those of different languages could hear the Gospel in their own tongue (Acts 2).

But there are times that God might allow a believer to speak in an unknown tongue so that the church can be built up. On those occasions, the Bible says that there are to be “two or at the most three” (1 Cor. 14:27). When those two or three begin to speak, there is to be someone available to interpret the utterance. “If there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God” (1 Cor. 14:28). Based on these standards, it’s not hard to see that there are some unbiblical things taking place.

On the other hands, there are some who teach that speaking in tongues is no longer a gift of the Holy Spirit. Nowhere does the Bible say that tongues have ceased – only that they will cease when Jesus comes back because they will no longer be needed (1 Cor. 13:8-10). So when it comes to the gift of tongues, the Bible says we shouldn’t seek it, but neither should we forbid it when done biblically.