

The Holy Spirit

Session # 9 / Wednesday, October 10, 2007

THE BEAUTY OF SPIRITUAL LANGUAGE

Acts 2:1-4

And when the day of Pentecost was 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 all the house where they were sitting. [3] 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.**

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps no theological theme (apart from eternal security) elicits such controversy as that of “speaking in tongues.” There are churches adamantly opposed to the practice, calling it a manifestation that is no longer either biblical or valid (there are even some who call the practice demonic), and there are those to whom speaking in tongues has become almost their central theme, emphasized out of all priority. The truth lies between these two antipodes or extremes. I will approach this study from that central perspective as “balance” is the key to vital spiritual health in all issues.

I have used Jack Hayford’s title for this study, THE BEAUTY OF SPIRITUAL LANGUAGE, taken from his book of the same name, published by the Thomas Nelson Publishing Company. Everything from God is truly and eternally beautiful. True speaking in tongues carries with it the magnificent, the beauty, of spiritual language. We in the Assemblies of God consider this manifestation not only a very important part of our lives and spoken devotion to God, but also as the initial (very first) physical evidence of having received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit.

The reason for selecting that phrase, “The Beauty of Spiritual Language,” is my effort to recast the image many seem to have of “tongues.” A stereotype persists, one which suggests that the practice of speaking in tongues is broken from the mold of a back-woods tent meeting. You’ve seen it on television documentaries: a bevy of snake handlers mouthing gibberish while stringing reptiles over their shoulders. But that is certainly an image far removed from the beauty and the order which I have discovered during times of private communion in the presence of a loving God.”

(Hayford/The Beauty of Spiritual Language/Nelson/page 15-16)

1 It is valid at this point in our consideration to look at the Apostle Paul, one of history's
2 most respected thinkers and a university graduate, not to mention the greatest theologian
3 outside of Christ Himself. Paul's testimony was this: **"I thank my God I speak with
4 tongues more than you all." (I Cor. 14:18) "Do not forbid (others) to speak with
5 tongues." I Cor. 14:39)** The Apostle Paul hardly fit into that category of strangeness
6 written of by Hayford in the box on the preceding page. However, it should be noted
7 that Paul also insisted that the motivation, as well as the practice of tongues, be carefully
8 monitored on the part of every participant. We will deal with that later in this study.

9
10 I suspect that those who live very private lives (and I am among that group) tend to be
11 much less demonstrative in our public worship than those who are more outgoing. And
12 yet even to the former group, speaking in tongues is revealed by the Holy Spirit to us as a
13 direct line to God, the expression of the very spirit of us to the Spirit of God. The action
14 is very precious to us in every way.

15
16 Are their abuses to speaking in tongues? Of course. But I would remind you that there
17 is also counterfeit money. If someone handed you a trunk-full of hundred-dollar bills
18 would you say, "No, thanks - there's just too much phony money around"? I think not.
19 For where there is fake there has to be real.

20
21 In our last study, I took you through the five places in the Book of Acts where the
22 narrative indicates people who were baptized in the Holy Spirit. From those five
23 accounts, we accurately deduce that the common reaction to the baptism was speaking in
24 tongues. Now in this study tonight, let's discuss WHY tongues are precious to God, a
25 gift to us from Jesus and so important in our spiritual lives.

26 27 WHY ARE SO MANY "TURNED OFF" BY SPEAKING IN TONGUES

28
29 There are probably as many reasons as there people. But allow me to list a few of the
30 major ones I have encountered in my years of ministry:

31
32 1. Pride often enters into the minds and expressions of tongues-speaking Pentecostals.
33 Some have offended and irritated non-Pentecostal believers by saying to them, "There is
34 something lacking in your life. If you don't speak in tongues, you must not have faith."
35 They don't say it but behind their words is the implication, "I'm a better Christian than
36 you are!"

37
38 2. We have all been in services in which the moving of the Holy Spirit was so precious
39 only to have the spirit broken wide open by someone yelling in a harsh staccato-fashion
40 and rapid delivery an alleged message in tongues. The expression shattered what the
41 Holy Spirit was doing and drew attention to the one speaking in tongues and off Jesus
42 Christ. I can honestly report to you that in my nearly 21 years of pastoring this church,
43 I have encountered this only a handful of times and have dealt with it on every occasion.

1 But there have also been very helpful and inspiring utterances and I would say to this
2 congregation that I pray the Holy Spirit gives us more of them.

3
4 3. We have all been in services where the leaders have virtually “commanded” the Holy
5 Spirit to speak through someone in the congregation, usually at the close of worship
6 singing. Is the mighty Spirit of God limited only to certain times when He can speak?
7 After all, He IS God, you know. Someone once said to me, “Pastor, if you took more
8 time in the singing worship, the Holy Spirit could move more.” I long for His presence
9 and activity, but is the Holy Spirit bound by me? I think not! He could manifest His
10 presence in spiritual utterings during the offering if He chose, or, yes, even during the
11 welcome or the anywhere else along the way. When those leading services attempt to
12 dictate when or when not the Holy Spirit can move, it becomes a very ugly or contrived
13 exercise and a factual turn-off to those eager to learn more of God and of the Spirit’s
14 moving in our midst.

15 16 WHAT TONGUES ARE NOT

17
18 I once again refer to Jack Hayford’s book, *The Beauty of Spiritual Language*, for his
19 excellent insight to this particular phase of our study:

20
21 1. First, speaking with tongues is neither unbiblical nor outdated. Nothing in the New
22 Testament Scriptures restricts or confines speaking with tongues to being only a first-
23 class exercise. Only strained, laborious interpretative schemes can impose such a notion
24 onto the text of Scripture. The idea of “passe” or “outdated” or “early church only”
25 cannot be found in God’s Word.

26
27 2. Second, speaking with tongues is not a transcendental experience. This is not a
28 resigning the control of one’s mind or to indulge one’s emotions to a point of extraction.
29 The exercise of spiritual language DOES involve a conscious choice to allow God’s
30 assistance to transcend our own linguistic limits, but it does not surrender to any order of
31 a mystical, trancelike trip beyond oneself.

32
33 3. Third, speaking with tongues is not a status symbol. One of the most common
34 “uglies” concerning spiritual language is that the sole orientation many have to the
35 subject of tongues is its presentation as a qualifier, as a required manifestation to verify
36 that they, as Christians, have passed some initiation rite. Consequently, if devoted
37 believers in Christ hear this, and they have not spoken with tongues as yet, they feel
38 they’re being cast in a role of second-class citizen, as slightly sub-Christian—only on the
39 grounds of their not having yet spoken in tongues. Unsurprisingly, they flee the subject,
40 since the very proposition smacks of cultishness and violates Scripture.

41
42 4. Fourth, speaking with tongues is not proposed as a substitute for spiritual growth.
43 Growth in the Christian life requires feeding on God’s Word, walking in the disciplines

1 of His Son and fellowshiping with His family—the church. But just as speaking in a
2 nation’s language doesn’t necessarily mean that you’re a citizen of that country or that
3 you live according to its laws, so someone’s appearing to speak with tongues does not, by
4 itself, guarantee that the speaker has been born into God’s Kingdom or is living in
5 obedience to God’s Word.

6
7 **WHY 500-MILLION PEOPLE TODAY REJOICE IN SPEAKING IN TONGUES -**
8 **THEIR SPIRITUAL LANGUAGE**

9
10 1. The tongue is the most difficult member of your body to control.

11
12 **James 3:1-12**

13 **Don't be in any rush to become a teacher, my friends. Teaching is highly**
14 **responsible work. Teachers are held to the strictest standards. [2] And none of us**
15 **are perfectly qualified. We get it wrong nearly every time we open our mouths. If**
16 **you could find someone whose speech was perfectly true, you'd have a perfect**
17 **person, in perfect control of life.**

18 **[3] A bit in the mouth of a horse controls the whole horse. [4] A small rudder on a**
19 **huge ship in the hands of a skilled captain sets a course in the face of the strongest**
20 **winds. [5] A word out of your mouth may seem of no account, but it can accomplish**
21 **nearly anything—or destroy it!**

22 **It only takes a spark, remember, to set off a forest fire. [6] A careless or wrongly**
23 **placed word out of your mouth can do that. By our speech we can ruin the world,**
24 **turn harmony to chaos, throw mud on a reputation, send the whole world up in**
25 **smoke and go up in smoke with it, smoke right from the pit of hell.**

26 **[7] This is scary: You can tame a tiger, [8] but you can't tame a tongue—it's never**
27 **been done. The tongue runs wild, a wanton killer. [9] With our tongues we bless**
28 **God our Father; with the same tongues we curse the very men and women he made**
29 **in his image. [10] Curses and blessings out of the same mouth!**

30 **My friends, this can't go on. [11] A spring doesn't gush fresh water one day and**
31 **brackish the next, does it? [12] Apple trees don't bear strawberries, do they?**
32 **Raspberry bushes don't bear apples, do they? You're not going to dip into a**
33 **polluted mud hole and get a cup of clear, cool water, are you?**

- 34
- 35 • Speaking in tongues means we have conceded control of our tongue to the Holy
36 Spirit. Out of the abundance of your heart, an ocean of praise and thanksgiving
37 to God, you allow God to take control of your tongue. Again I emphasize to you
38 again, FAITH comes into play because YOU BEGIN TO SPEAK THOSE
39 WORDS GOD PUTS IN YOUR MIND TO SAY, EVEN THOUGH YOU
40 DON'T UNDERSTAND THEM.
 - 41
 - 42 • Satan will have a field day telling you that it’s gibberish, nonsense, silly. But
43 remember Acts 2:4: “**They** (the 120 Christians in the Upper Room which

1 included the eleven remaining disciples, including Mary, the mother of Jesus)
2 **began to speak in tongues** as the Holy Spirit moved upon them to do so.

- 3
4 • Only when the Holy Spirit baptizes us, takes control of our body, do we become
5 willing to RELINQUISH CONTROL OF THE MOST DEMANDING MEMBER
6 OF OUR BODY - THE TONGUE.

- 7
8 • Often in this church we raise our hands when we sing or pray. The upraised
9 hands have a two-fold purpose: 1) We are REACHING for God; and 2) we are
10 SURRENDERING to Him. What we do physically in raising our hands, we do
11 spiritually by speaking to God in the tongue of the Holy Spirit, at which point we
12 are surrendered to Him.

13
14 2. Tongues BEGIN as a result of our praise to Jesus.

- 15
16 • When you begin to seek God for the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, speaking in
17 tongues should not be foremost in your attention or prayer. Those who initially
18 seek to speak in tongues are SEEKING AN EXPERIENCE. The key to receiving
19 the baptism is to SEEK GOD. You want to draw as close to Him as you can,
20 going farther than you have ever gone before.

21
22

In my own experience of receiving the Baptism in the fall of 1951, long after all the people had left the church and I was alone in the sanctuary, I had no feelings of emotion whatsoever. In fact, the only emotion I was aware of was weariness for it was now well after 2 in the morning. But I began to center all my thoughts and attention on Jesus and began to express to Him OUT LOUD my admiration, my appreciation, my wonder at Who He is. **James 4:8** “**Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.**” By an act of my will I began to seek for Jesus, not tongues or any other sign. And the more I drew near to Him, the closer He drew to me until - sometime after 3 a.m. - His glory filled the sanctuary. I felt as if I must be in the ancient “holy of holies” and IN MY MIND I BEGAN TO HEAR, SEE, FEEL WORDS THAT WERE NOT ENGLISH. My soul longed to speak those words but my brain told me it was gibberish. But as I drew closer to God, my soul overcame the reluctance of my brain and I began to PHYSICALLY speak those words OUT LOUD. This is what happened on the Day of Pentecost: “**They all began to speak** in tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.” (Acts 2:4)

- 23
24
25 • To those who are waiting to be hit with some kind of “trance” and involuntarily
26 begin to pray in tongues, I remind you of one of the primary gifts of God to us is
27 our WILL. God never violates our will. Thus the God-given power of our will
28 is never intended to be out of our control. Note the powerful testimony of Paul:

1 1 Cor. 14:15 “What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the
2 understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the
3 understanding also.”
4

5 Paul is saying, in effect: “I am fully submitted to the Holy Spirit in the exercise of
6 tongues; but I am still the one who chooses when and where to speak or sing in my
7 spiritual language.” **The Bible teaches that while God gives us the reasons *for***
8 **praise, the power *to* praise and the call *unto* praise, we are the ones who make the**
9 **decision as to when, how, and where to do it.** (Hayford / p. 47)
10

11 IF ANY MANIFESTATION OF THE SPIRIT IS VALID AND TRUE, IT WILL
12 HONOR CHRIST JESUS.
13

- 14 • Jesus indicated in John that the Holy Spirit would glorify Him (Jesus). Therefore
15 it only stands to reason that any manifestation of the Holy Spirit will put Jesus on
16 the pedestal of attention.
17
 - 18 • Acts 2:11 “We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.”
19
- 20 3. The Spirit gives us tongues to assist us in praying/interceding.
21

22 **Romans 8:22-27**

23 **For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together**
24 **until now. [23] And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of**
25 **the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit,**
26 **the redemption of our body. [24] For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is**
27 **not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? [25] But if we hope for**
28 **that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. [26] Likewise the Spirit also**
29 **helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but**
30 **the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.**
31 **[27] And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit,**
32 **because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.**
33

- 34 • There are countless stories on record in our headquarters world missions
35 department concerning people who have woken in the night with a burden to pray
36 for such and such a missionary. They prayed in tongues, often not knowing the
37 need for which they prayed. Only later would they learn that the person for
38 whom they prayed was saved from a difficult situation or healed or delivered.
39 “The Spirit ... maketh intercession for us with groanings (deep prayers) which
40 cannot be uttered (because we often don’t even know what the need is).
41
- 42 • Oftentimes we begin praying or interceding in our own known language, but find
43 the travail of spirit within us overwhelming and begin praying in tongues where

1 we find somehow a deep release from the burden and know our prayers have
2 reached the throne.
3

Remember that while God is divine, Satan is not. He is a created being. Yes, he has more powers than we; but he is not God. He cannot read our thoughts or hearts as God can. He can certainly understand our known-spoken language. But he cannot know nor interrupt our supplications sent to God by heavenly language, or tongues. Therefore we can pray knowing our thoughts or words to God have gone through unhindered.

4
5
6 **1 Cor. 14:2**

7 **For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God:**
8 **for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.**

9
10 IS SPEAKING IN TONGUES FOR EVERY BELIEVER?

11
12 Yes, most certainly. Here is what the scriptures teach:

13
14 **Acts 2:39**

15 **For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even**
16 **as many as the Lord our God shall call.**

17
18to all who are afar off.... We (you and I) are afar off - both by virtue of centuries
19 and geography.

20
21 THEN SINCE THE BAPTISM WITH THE INITIAL PHYSICAL EVIDENCE OF
22 SPEAKING IN TONGUES (SPIRITUAL LANGUAGE) IS FOR ALL BELIEVERS,
23 HOW DO I RECEIVE?
24

25 1. First, come before the Lord with your heart cleared of any offenses toward God or
26 people. Bring any guilt, failure, neglect or condemnation you feel under the blood of
27 Jesus - knowing:

28
29 **1 John 1:7-9**

30 **But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with**
31 **another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. [8] If we say**
32 **that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. [9] If we confess**
33 **our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all**
34 **unrighteousness.**

35
36 2. Forgive any person who has hurt or offended you. The Holy Spirit is not going to

1 fill or energize anyone with a bitter, unforgiving spirit, no matter how long you “tarry.”
2 Whatever has been in the past, lay it at Jesus’ feet NOW and get on with life and your
3 walk with the Lord.

4

5 3. Worship Him. Use whatever help you need.....your Bible....a hymnal.....a spiritual
6 chorus sheet.....soft spiritual music.....but get your attention fully centered on the Lord
7 Jesus Christ. Begin to worship Him audibly.

8

9 4. Seek Him with great expectation, knowing that the promise of God in all things is for
10 you. Again Acts 2:39, “this promise is to you and your children.”

11

12 5. Thank the Lord in believing faith for what you are receiving.

13

14 As your pastor, I truly believe we will see many of our church family enter into this total
15 promise of God in the next days. It is my fervent prayer that everyone in this
16 congregation be baptized in the Holy Spirit according to Acts 2:1-4 and that you will
17 receive and utilize your “spiritual language.”

18

19

20 Next Wednesday, October 17th, it will be “Ask the Pastor” night. We will take the
21 entire evening for you to ask any question of me you like, either verbally or written. No
22 subject is off-limits.