

May 24, 2015



# Oaks Early Risers Bible Class

The Oaks  
Baptist Church  
Grand Prairie, Texas

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### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

**THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:**  
The power of God's Spirit gives power to our witness

**POEM FOR THE WEEK:**  
God's guidance and help that we need day to day  
Are given to all who believe;  
The Spirit has come and He is the source  
Of power that we can receive. —Branon

**SCRIPTURE FOR THE WEEK:**  
But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

(Acts 1:8 NKJV)

(From "Our Daily Bread", May 10, 2008)

### Series: THE SPIRIT COMES

UNIT: One in the Bond of Love

### NEXT WEEK

**The Greatest Gift is Love**

(1 Cor 13:1-13)

## Gift of Languages Acts 2:1-7; 1 Cor 14:13-19

### Aim and Application of the Lesson

The lesson teaches us about the **Gift of Languages**. The **study's aim** is to discover the gift of tongues entailed speaking in a language not known by the speaker. The **study's application** is to be a testimony for Jesus Christ in any language we speak.

*(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)*

### Lesson Introduction and Background

What makes you feel like you really belong with a group of people? We appreciate a warm welcome, the offer of a place to sit, etc. But what we need most is to understand what is going on around us. We want to listen to conversation that we can understand, and we want to be understood when we speak. Without such understanding, we easily feel that we do not belong. We can make an effort to relate with gestures or facial expressions, but words are our best means of making a connection. Today's text is about an extraordinary way that God enabled some followers of Christ in the first century to make a connection with language. But that enabling was a double-edged sword, and Paul needed to issue special instructions to the believers in Corinth in that regard.

The issue of language in human relationships has deep roots in the Bible. It tells of the tower of Babel, where people of one language banded together to build a tower "that reaches to the heavens" so that they could "make a name" for themselves (Genesis 11:4). In response to their unholy ambitions, God caused their language to be confused as he scattered them across the earth (11:6-9). In doing so, God restrained peoples' ability to work together for evil. The story of Babel becomes foundational to the rest of the biblical worldview. The division and resulting conflict between tribes and nations, epitomized in the multiplying of languages, is rooted in human pride and rebellion against God. But God promised to bring blessings to the plurality of nations that resulted from his judgment on human pride. He promised a blessing on Abram, to make his descendants a great nation so that "all peoples on earth will be blessed" (Genesis 12:3) through him. As the nation of Israel grew, God sent prophets who repeated that promise. Sometimes those prophets delivered the promise with an image of people of many languages coming to know the true God (Isaiah 66:18; Zechariah 8:23; etc.). With Christ's death and resurrection, God brought to the point of fulfillment his promise to bless the nations. The risen Christ commanded his followers to wait for power from on high, the Holy Spirit, who would enable them to be witnesses to the entire earth (Luke 24:45-49; Acts 1:4-8). The Spirit would enable the worldwide triumph of God, the fulfillment of his promise to Abram and a reversal of the judgment of Babel. That enabling began on the Day of Pentecost, about seven weeks after Christ's crucifixion. Pentecost is known in the Old Testament variously as the Festival of Weeks, day of firstfruits, and Festival of Harvest (Exodus 23:16a; 34:22a; Leviticus 23:15-21; Numbers 28:26-31; Deuteronomy 16:9-12, 16). Meaning "50 days," Pentecost came seven weeks after Passover to celebrate and dedicate the grain harvest of spring (Deuteronomy 16:9, 10). By the first century AD, Jewish tradition had come to associate Pentecost with God's giving of the law to Moses at Mount Sinai 50 days after the exodus, although there is no trace of such a time line in the Bible.

*(Adapted from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)*

## NOTES AND CROSS-REFERENCES

The **tongues of fire** portray the presence of God. Several times in the Old Testament God displayed Himself in the form of flames (Gen. 15:17; Ex. 3:2-6; 13:21-22; 19:18; 40:38; cf. Matt. 3:11; Luke 3:16). No believer there was exempt from this experience, for the flames **separated and came to rest on each of them**. The filling with the Holy Spirit is separate from the baptism of the Spirit. The Spirit's baptism occurs once for each believer at the moment of salvation (cf. Acts 11:15-16; Rom. 6:3; 1 Cor. 12:13; Col. 2:12), but the Spirit's filling may occur not only at salvation but also on a number of occasions after salvation (Acts 4:8, 31; 6:3, 5; 7:55; 9:17; 13:9, 52). An evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit was **other tongues** (*heterais glossais*; cf. Acts 11:15-16). These were undoubtedly spoken living languages; the word used in Acts 2:6, 8 is *dialektō*, which means "language" and not ecstatic utterance (Rom 8:26-27). This gives insight into what is meant by "tongues" in Acts chapters 2; 10; 19; and in 1 Corinthians 12-14. This event marked the beginning of the church. Up to this point the church was anticipated (Matt. 16:18). The church is constituted a body by means of Spirit baptism (1 Cor. 12:13). The first occurrence of the baptism of the Spirit therefore must indicate the inauguration of the church. Of course Acts 2:1-4 does not state that Spirit baptism took place at Pentecost. However, Acts 1:5 anticipates it and Acts 11:15-16 refers back to it as having occurred at Pentecost. The church, therefore, came into existence then.

Human sounds, apart from a shared understanding of their meanings, were worthless. So was the Corinthian preoccupation with uninterpreted tongues. That was why Paul did not discourage their interest in **spiritual gifts** but did encourage them to pursue those gifts that benefited all in **the church** (1 Cor 14:12; cf. 1 Cor 12:31; 14:1). Interpreted tongues, like prophecy, could benefit the assembly (cf. Acts 19:6). Therefore the gift of interpretation should be requested of God. If no one was present who was able to interpret, the tongues-speaker was to keep silent (1 Cor. 14:28). It was also true that however beneficial the gift of tongues might be to its recipient (cf. 1 Cor 14:4), when coupled with the gift of interpretation it had much more value because it involved not only the feeling aspects of a person, but his mental faculties as well. If it were true that one who possessed the gift of tongues would find his worship enhanced by the possession and use of the gift of interpretation (1 Cor 14:15), it was certainly true that anyone listening to him who did not have the same gift could not empathize with the tongues-speaker. Paul's concern to harness the enthusiasm for the gift of **tongues** in Corinth was not motivated by sour grapes. When it came to the gift of tongues, he could outtalk them **all**. But Paul was not primarily interested in self-fulfillment. Instead he was concerned with ministering to others and thereby glorifying God (cf. 1 Cor 10:31-33). Where then did tongues fit into God's purpose? Paul discussed that next. The Corinthian infatuation with tongues was for Paul another manifestation of their immaturity and worldliness (cf. 1 Cor 3:1-3). This he hoped would change, especially in regard to an enhanced appraisal of prophecy and a recognition of the importance of this gift for the assembled church. His final words, contrasting prophecy and tongues (1 Cor 14:21-25), were intended to conclude the exhortation begun in verse 1. This summary argument in verses 21-25 began with the citation of a portion of Isaiah's prophecy against Israel (**Isa. 28:11-12**). Because Israel refused to listen to God's message proclaimed by His prophets, Isaiah predicted that another message would come. This one would be delivered in a foreign tongue unintelligible to the Israelites, yet unambiguous. The foreign tongue symbolized God's rejection (cf. Deut. 28:49; Isa. 33:19), His disciplinary response to Israel's stiff-necked rebellion against Him (cf. 2 Kings 17:14; Acts 7:51). Foreigners instead of Israel became the temporary servants of God (cf. Isa. 5:26; Hab. 1:6; Matt. 21:43; Rom. 10:19-21), and their foreign tongue was a punitive **sign** to Israel of what had taken place. That seems to be the significance which Paul attached to tongues. As such, the primary arena for its exercise was **not** the company of **believers but... unbelievers** (cf. Matt. 13:10-15, on parables).

*(Adapted from The Bible Knowledge Commentary - underlining my emphasis)*

Clearly, we all need to consider how we use the abilities that God's Spirit has given us. We need to look past the controversy about speaking in tongues in our day and instead give careful thought to whether we act in the name of Christ in ways that make others feel second-rate or left out altogether. What do we say or do in the church that is hard for others to understand? Do we ever speak or act in ways that put others in the position of outsiders? What should we do to assure that everyone is fully welcomed, fully engaged, fully a part of the life of Christ's church? How do we tell every person for whom Christ died that he or she is at home among Christ's people? Is our church more like the Day of Pentecost or the tower of Babel? Is our church more like the church at Corinth as corrected or as uncorrected?

*(Adapted from The NIV Standard Lesson Commentary - underlining my emphasis)*