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Title: The Five-Fold Blessings of Tongues

Text: Various Scriptures

The calendar says today is Pentecost Sunday. I trust last Sunday was Pentecost Sunday as well. I pray that next Sunday will also be Pentecost Sunday! As I see it, a Pentecostal church can't have too many Pentecost Sundays. Pentecost is a reality that we should live in, walk in, move in - 365 days per year! I believe that Christ rose again, ascended into heaven and sent the HOLY SPIRIT to indwell us EVERY day of the year.

Churches throughout the world are celebrating the birth of the early church and the special pouring out of the Holy Spirit on the early church which began on the day of Pentecost. Most of you are familiar with the story. Jesus told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they were filled with power from on high. On the Day of Pentecost - which was a festival day for Jewish people - the disciples were gathered together praying in an upper room, and the Holy Spirit came upon them in a powerful way. A mighty wind blew through the place, tongues of fire fell on each of them, AND they began speaking in tongues (other languages).

Today I'm going to focus on the other tongues. Here's where our church differs from many other churches. Some churches hold that the gifts of the Spirit were for a day gone by. Some have gone so far as to say that tongues are of the devil. We believe differently. I don't recall seeing anything in Scripture that indicates to me that the gifts of the Spirit were an opening day special. Rather, I believe that they are available for the blessing and benefit of every believer and every Bible believing church TODAY and EVERY DAY until Jesus comes. I've read several articles and sermons this week from sources that hold a different theology than ours. Several used the following verse to say that tongues have ceased. (If I were to select a verse to say that tongues have ceased, I would find another verse.) 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 says, *"Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away."* The passage mentions prophecies, tongues, and knowledge. Have prophecies failed yet? No! Has knowledge vanished yet? No! So why would anyone suppose that tongues has already ceased? When will tongues cease? At the same time prophecies fail and knowledge vanishes away. *"When that which is perfect is come"* - when Jesus, the perfect Son of God, returns. After Jesus returns, we will no longer need prophecies, knowledge, and tongues. Maybe tongues will cease soon, but not yet. Since Paul wrote this after the birth of Christ, after His first coming, it would only make sense that this reference is to Christ's second coming.

Today we're going to examine the blessings of Tongues. Trivia question - How many languages are spoken today on Planet Earth? Would you believe perhaps as many as 6,000. It has been noted by linguistic experts that no one has ever gained a basic grasp of even as many as one hundred languages. With this in mind, tell me who could claim with any degree of credibility at all that any "language" spoken by a Pentecostal worshipper was not truly a language? That he or she was simply speaking "gibberish?" Any logic at all would tell us that the most trained observer would still be ignorant of several thousand languages - any one of which he or she could hear spoken by a tongue speaker. Some languages are most unusual. The language of a tribe of people from the Kalahari Desert in Africa is a variation of clucking sounds. At Pentecost, Acts 2, a number of different languages were recognized by those who had gathered in the streets of Jerusalem to see and hear these new Pentecostals. As per missionary stories, it isn't all that unusual for people to recognize the language that is being spoken, even though it is a language that is totally unknown to the one doing the speaking. Then too, Paul in 1 Corinthians 13 speaks of *"tongues of angels."* Perhaps some of the languages spoken in our Pentecostal/Charismatic churches today may only be understood in heaven.

Leaving that, I want to share with you several portions of Scripture: Mark 16:17, 1 Cor. 14:2, 5, 14, 18, 22 & 39. In these verses we see tongues as: something good, something to be desired, something of God, something that we should be thankful for, something with a divine purpose, and that tongues are not to be forbidden. Today I want to address these and other verses as we seek to examine the BLESSINGS of tongues. As a result of this sermon, I hope that each one of us will come to better understand and appreciate speaking in other tongues. I promise to do my best not to express my opinion, but rather I will share as simply and plainly as I know how what THE WORD says about tongues. Then I simply ask you to take WHAT THE WORD SAYS, make application and decide for yourself.

Know that I'm not insinuating that the purpose of Pentecost is all about speaking in tongues. Pentecost is about power to win the lost. I do want to preface my remarks by stating a couple of things. Most of what we read in the Word about tongues comes from the Apostle Paul. This is the same Apostle that teaches us about salvation, justification,

sanctification, redemption, propitiation, predestination, communion, marriage, the Second Coming, parenting, sex, relationships, evangelism, and a host of other topics and themes. Most of our New Testament theology comes from the writings of the Apostle Paul. Most every preacher preaches on these themes penned by the Apostle Paul - it doesn't matter the denomination. Many of those same preachers, however, back away from preaching on the gifts of the Spirit - especially tongues. Some preachers even forbid its practice. Let me add, I do not believe you need to speak in tongues to get to heaven.

- 1. Speaking in Other Tongues is a POWERFUL AID TO PRAYER.** 1 Corinthians 14:2 states, *"For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God."* Speaking in tongues gives the believer the privilege of talking privately, directly, and supernaturally to God - period! Whatever else anyone may say about tongues, this is the Bible's bottom line - Tongues are connected to heaven's throne. In Scripture, the Holy Spirit is known as the Paraclete. This speaks of the Spirit's ability to come alongside us; He is our divine helper. He comforts us. He helps us better remember and understand the Word. He gives us direction when we are seeking the will of God. He empowers us. In like fashion, He is our helper in prayer. Many Christians struggle in prayer. This should not surprise us, for even the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray. To be honest, there are times when I too have problems in this area. Sometimes I don't feel like praying or I pray but nothing seems to happen. The psalmists and the prophets made the same confession on occasions. What do we do? In those moments when my prayer-life seems to need a jump start, when my mind wanders, and when heaven is brass, I have learned that that is a great time to turn to the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, for help. I simply start praying in the Spirit (in other tongues) and it works for me. Many a time I haven't known what to pray for or how to pray. My own vocabulary is inadequate. Let's look at **Romans 8:26** - *"In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness..."* What is this weakness that is spoken of here? Simply put, *"We do not know what we ought to pray for..."* I think most of us can relate to that. For example, suppose a friend asks you to pray about an important decision that he or she is about to make? How would you pray? What would be God's will? What would the Spirit have you say or do? What direction, if any, should you give your friend? Should it be yes? No? Maybe? Or later? What if someone calls you to pray about a matter that is private and confidential? You are supposed to pray - but for who or about what? I often get prayer requests from missionaries with very little detail. Sometimes just a name. How does one pray intelligently for such requests? I'm sure the need is great! Again, what do we pray for? We need help! Paul says that our weakness is that we don't know how to pray as we should, but the Holy Spirit helps us overcome our weakness in that He is all wise and all knowing as well as everywhere present at the same time. He knows the who, the what, the when, the where, and the how. The verse continues, *"...The Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express."* I have found that sometimes the Spirit speaks in tongues, sometimes in groans, sometimes in my native language, sometimes in tears, or laughter, or in spontaneous joy. Regardless of which language He uses, the Spirit knows and understands each one perfectly and uses it to convey to the Father that which we need. The next verse, **Romans 8:27**, says: *"And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will."* The Bible points out that we have two intercessors praying on our behalf: The Lord Jesus Christ stands at the right hand of God and intercedes for us AND the Holy Spirit here on earth prays in and through us. When you pray in tongues, the Holy Spirit intercedes or prays through you in exact harmony with the will of God. He is the perfect prayer. This is prayer without an if. It's praying in a new spiritual dimension. It is the Spirit of God literally taking our place in prayer. Knowing this as we do, we can therefore pray with a NEW assurance and faith! The Spirit knows and the Spirit is helping! Ephesians 6:18 exhorts us to "pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests..." 1 Corinthians 14:15 adds, *"So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind."* Prayer with the Spirit and prayer with the mind or understanding - both are important. Both have great merit. I encourage you to develop a balance between these two powerful means of communication with God. As I wrap up this point, let me repeat something: 1 Cor. 14:2 - *"For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God."* The next time the enemy whispers - "That doesn't sound like a language to me," use this verse and reply - "That's because I wasn't talking to you, I was talking to God in the prayer language He gave me!" I believe that a believer praying in tongues especially makes the devil nervous because he doesn't know what we're saying to God.
- 2. Speaking in Tongues ENHANCES YOUR PRAISE AND WORSHIP.** Let's look at two scriptures that show the results of a mighty move of God. Acts 2:11 shows us what happened as a result of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. Acts 10:46 tells of the outbreak of the Holy Spirit at the house of Cornelius, the

Roman centurion. In both cases, the people immediately began to worship and praise the Lord with this new gift - speaking in other tongues. Today many teachers teach in error that the tongues at Pentecost were for preaching the Gospel. But that is not what the passage says. In both instances, tongues were used - not to preach - but rather to declare in numerous languages the *"wonderful works of God"* and to bring glory to Jesus Christ, God's Son! As a result of their praise and worship, as well as Peter's preaching, 3,000 people accepted Christ! Let me ask you - How does one express the inexpressible? How does one express those feelings too deep for words? Charles Wesley wrote: "O for a thousand tongues to sing My Great Redeemer's praise, The glories of my God and King, The triumphs of His grace..." Speaking in tongues is the response, the loving response, of the child of God to the WONDER and GLORY, the LOVE and BEAUTY, the MAJESTY and TRIUMPH of HIS GRACE. When we see that tongues is really a vehicle of praise that better enables us to worship God, we begin to better understand why Paul expressed with such joy, *"I speak in tongues more than you all."*

3. Speaking in Tongues is a SIGN TO THE UNBELIEVER. 1 Corinthians 14:22 declares, *"Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers..."* And Acts 2:6-8 adds, *"When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. Utterly amazed, they asked: 'Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language?'"* Let me emphasize - Charismatic/Pentecostal ministries total more converts than any other sector of Christianity today. I've been told that the number of Charismatic/Pentecostal missionaries total far more than half of all Protestant missionaries today; and that the central message of this group is *"Jesus Christ and Him crucified,"* and the sole authority for their proclamation is the eternal Word of the Bible. One cannot possibly divorce evangelism from the work of the Holy Spirit and stay true to the Scriptures. The Spirit gives us power to witness (Acts 1:8). The Spirit fell on the Day of Pentecost and 3,000 were immediately added to the church. The Spirit empowered these new believers to turn the world upside down for the Lord! The Spirit declared that tongues are a sign to the UNBELIEVER. The theme is pretty consistent, wouldn't you say? A good book on this subject is *"Spoken by the Spirit"* by Ralph Harris. In the book the author records true accounts of: Cannibals canceling their plan to kill a captured missionary after he miraculously speaks their language. A Jewish surgeon who accepts Christ after he hears about the Messiah in his Hebrew tongue from a Christian woman on his operating table. According to Harris's book, Evangelist Jack West conducted a series of revival services in Ontario, Canada some while back. While there he noticed an athletic looking gentleman by the name of Blake who came to some of the meetings. Mr. Blake had served as a sergeant major in the Canadian Army. While serving in India on the Afghanistan border for six years, he had learned to speak Hindustani fluently. While he was away in his country's service, his wife attended the Pentecostal Tabernacle in London, Ontario, and received Christ as her Savior. After Sergeant Blake returned home, he became antagonistic toward his wife's new found faith, but she continued living for the Lord and eventually received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. One night, as she knelt to pray by her bedside, she began to speak in other tongues. To her husband's amazement, he realized she was praying in Hindustani, even quoting Scripture in that language. Mr. Blake spoke to his wife the next morning in the Hindustani language and discovered she could not understand even one word that he was saying. To his queries she explained she had been baptized in the Holy Spirit, and it was God who had enabled her to speak in a language she had never learned. Convinced of the reality of her experience, and convicted of sin, Sergeant Blake accepted Christ, and shortly thereafter he too was filled with the Holy Spirit. Thousands of people have accepted the blessing of salvation because they were convinced of the reality of the power of God by someone speaking in tongues.

4. Speaking in Tongues brings PERSONAL EDIFICATION. 1 Corinthians 14:4 states, *"He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself..."* The term "edifies" simply means to build up or strengthen. It speaks of promoting the spiritual growth and development of character in a believer. In Ephesians 5:18 Paul adds, *"Do not get drunk on wine...Instead, be filled with the Spirit."* The Greek tense indicates a continuing action: "Be continuously filled with the Spirit." The phrase "be filled" is significant in that it is not meant to be a once-and-for-all experience. Obviously, Paul did not believe in "ONCE FILLED, ALWAYS FILLED." The flow of the Spirit in the life of the believer must be maintained. We must ever strive to be built up or edified. The great evangelist D.L. Moody noted that, "We are leaky vessels and therefore we have to be kept right under the fountain at all times so as to remain full." I have found that I most need self-edification when: I am weary in spirit or body, I know that a difficult test or trial is coming up, I am in the midst of a period of spiritual warfare, I am facing a personal struggle with some evil temptation, or I need a fresh infusion of God's wisdom. Some teach that it is selfish for a believer to practice self-edification. That is silly. Again, the Bible tells us to build ourselves up. Jude 1:20 notes,

"Building yourselves up on your most holy faith; praying in the Holy Spirit." God is the one who has provided the ways and the means for our self-edification through praying in the Holy Spirit. The Lord is obviously interested in our spiritual growth. It would only stand to reason that we cannot do a very good job of building others up unless we are built up ourselves.

5. **THE GIFT OF TONGUES (with INTERPRETATION) is for the EDIFICATION OF THE CHURCH.** Thus far in this message, I have mainly dealt with tongues as a prayer language (personal tongues, tongues for the "prayer closet" or tongues that are directed to God as a form of prayer). The Gift of Tongues is different. In 1 Corinthians 12:10 Paul lists tongues as one of the nine gifts of the Spirit. It is directed to the church. Instead of speaking to God, this is God speaking to the body of Christ. It edifies or builds up the church rather than the individual believer. 1 Corinthians 14:29 says, *"If anyone speaks in a tongue, two - or at the most three - should speak, one at a time and someone must interpret."* It is to be limited to 2 or at the most 3 messages during any one service. For it to be in order, it is to be interpreted. 1 Corinthians 12:30 asks, *"Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?"* The answer is yes and no. Let me explain. Yes - we should all have our prayer language which we exercise regularly. No - we will not all have the Gift of Tongues. Again, not everyone will give a message under the guidance of the Spirit that is to be heard, judged and received by the fellowship.
6. **Conclusion.** I want to go back to a statement that was made by the Apostle Paul. He said, *"I would that you all spoke with tongues."* I feel the same way as the Apostle. As I have noted in this message, there are five powerful blessings of tongues. Have you experienced them? Have you spoken in other tongues?