



First Bible Church

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Speaking in Tongues

GLORIFYING GOD BY
HELPING PEOPLE
KNOW, LOVE, OBEY
AND EXALT
JESUS CHRIST



SPEAKING IN TONGUES

**A Position Paper
First Bible Church of Decatur**

Introduction

The Reformers were attempting to reform the Roman Catholic Church. Of the many protests against the Catholic Church in those days, two in particular became main virtues of the Reformation. ***Faith alone*** (Latin: *sola fide*), was the rallying cry of the Reformers. Through an elaborate system of theology and philosophy, the Catholic Church had preserved some of the language of Romans but practically, human works remained a condition for salvation.

Scripture alone (Latin: *sola scriptura*), was the foundation and starting point of the Reformation. The Church had accumulated an impressive body of literature that represented its *tradition*: the findings of councils, the teaching of scholars, the interpretation of popes. This tradition was rich and at times helpful, but it was not inspired nor inerrant. Yet it was often elevated to a position equal in authority with Scripture.

As John Armstrong writes of ***Scripture alone***: "What this truth meant, simply, was that the church should not preach, teach, command, or practice anything contrary to the written Scriptures of the biblical canon". (*Coming Evangelical Crisis*, 19). Scripture is *necessary* because we are so depraved that we need an objective, written revelation that we cannot distort. Scripture is *authoritative* because we are so depraved that we would soon set up our own authority (personal opinion) in the church. Scripture is *sufficient* and needs no additions because we are so depraved that we would only amend Scripture in a way that pleased us. Where the principle of ***Scripture alone*** is held, the church and the gospel thrive.

The gift of tongues is a potential threat to this historic principle. Are the miraculous words revelation from God? If they are not from God, then from whom? If they are from God, then is God adding to Scripture? If God is adding to Scripture, how can we say that Scripture is sufficient?

And then there is the question of validation. Should we accept a message as from God simply because the speaker says it is from God? How shall messages be tested? Should they be tested? The main question is this: ***Does God speak today apart from the Scripture?***

Key Verse in 1 Corinthians

When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church. 14:26

Comments on Key Verse

Paul does not discourage broad participation of many members in corporate worship, but he does insist that the worship service be orderly, since the style of worship is a reflection

on the God of peace (33). The church leaders must see to it that the worship is in order so the people can learn what God wants them to learn that day. In these elements of worship, God wants his people to hear his voice so they will be strengthened.

Perhaps the *hymn* was an old favorite, or one the church member wrote that week (or even that morning). The *word of instruction* probably refers to the sermon where God's word was explained. The *revelation* was some kind of utterance given by the Holy Spirit for the church's benefit. Speaking in a *tongue*, whether it was a known human language or some "heavenly" language, was at least a language understood by the speaker, but not by anyone else except the one gifted in interpretation. An *interpretation* is the translation of the message spoken in tongues.

Four Views on the Gift of Tongues

1. The Pentecostal/Charismatic View: Tongues Are Normal and Necessary

God speaks today apart from the Scripture. In some Pentecostal circles, every saved person will speak in tongues. Therefore, if you don't, you aren't! In other circles (*Assemblies of God*), every believer filled with the Spirit will speak in tongues. Therefore, if you don't, you aren't!

Kenneth Hagin writes: "Speaking with tongues is an initial supernatural sign or evidence of the Holy Spirit's indwelling. It is the beginning of it all. I have found in my own life that the more I pray and worship God in tongues, the more manifestation of other gifts of the Spirit I have. The less I talk in tongues, the less manifestation I have. Speaking in tongues is the door into the rest of the spiritual gifts". (*Why Tongues*, 9,10)

2. The Moderate Charismatic View: Tongues Are Normal but Unnecessary.

God speaks today apart from the Scripture, but never contrary to it. God still guides and instructs just like he did in the Bible. He speaks to people through dreams, visions, prophets, and angels and tells them things that cannot be found in the Bible. (Wayne Grudem, Jack E. Deere)

3. The Dispensational View: Tongues Have Ceased

God does not speak today apart from the Scripture. The Holy Spirit may illuminate, prompt, urge, but he does not speak (Luke 24:45). Miracles in Bible are clustered around new revelation that needs authentication. The closing of the canon and death of the apostles removed the need for revelatory gifts like prophecy and tongues, as well as miraculous gifts like healing. (Chafer, Pentecost, Ryrie, MacArthur)

4. Moderate Dispensational and Reformed View: Tongues Have *Probably Ceased*

God could speak today apart from the Scripture, but if he does, there will be a verifiable miracle. It is not normally wise to say "God can't". He nowhere specifically said that the gift of tongues would cease after the closing of the canon. But tongues, as currently understood (mysterious words, not from a known language), are easy to fake and there is a lot at stake. **Therefore, the testing process should be unapologetically thorough and rigorous.**
(Blaising, Packer)

First Bible Church has taught only views three and four. We are open to the work of the Holy Spirit and we believe that a Sovereign God can do anything he wants to do. Therefore, we leave room for the possibility of this miraculous gift. However, Scripture is clear that the legitimacy of these gifts, especially those that involve a claim to direct and divine revelation, must be subjected to vigorous examination. This we will do for all who claim to possess this gift and desire to exercise it publicly.