

THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE

"...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel..." (Amos 7:8)

TONGUE SPEAKING: ECSTATIC UTTERANCE OR INTELLIGIBLE LANGUAGE?

The Holy Spirit gave to the apostles of Christ the ability to "speak with other tongues" (Acts 2:1-4). This phenomenon is greatly desired today by certain in the religious world. According to Fredrick Bruner, "speaking in tongues in Pentecostalism is sometimes explained dispensationally as God's unique sign to his church in the present age...As a result, Pentecostals cherish tongues and the gift of their interpretation as God's special gift for the present time" (A Theology of the Holy Spirit, 143).

It should be noted, first of all, that tongues were never intended as a "special gift to the church" or as a sign to the church. According to the apostle Paul "tongues are a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not" (I Corinthians 14:22a). When the Israelites went into Assyrian and Babylonian bondage the "tongues" of those foreigners were a witness to the unbelievers in Israel that God meant what He said (I Corinthians 14:21; Isaiah 28:11). The Corinthian brethren were admonished by the apostle Paul for making a show of tongues as a sign of some special spirituality on the part of those who had the gift (I Corinthians 14:1-23).

Second, it must be emphasized that the word, "tongue" or *glossa*, is used in the Bible as an organ of speech (Luke 1:20,64; 16:24; Mark 7:35). But, the term also refers to human language as revealed in Acts by the following statement: "And how hear we every man in our own tongue wherein we were born?" (Acts 2:8). That this is a language of man is explicitly stated in the same context; "Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language" (Acts 2:6). What made this such a miracle was the fact that the speakers had never studied those languages yet were able to converse in them! Any so-called "tongue" experience today that is not directed toward the unbelieving hearer in that hearer's language is not a biblical miracle (I Corinthians 14:9,19,22).

Further evidence that the Bible's usage of the word "tongue" is a reference to known human language is seen in the following verses: "Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches" (John 5:2); "And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem, insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood" (Acts 1:19); "And when there was a great silence, he spake unto them in the Hebrew tongue, saying (Acts 21:40b); "And when they heard that he spoke in the Hebrew tongue" (Acts 22:2a). The use of "tongue" in reference to an intelligible language can also be seen when Jesus spoke to Saul "in the Hebrew tongue" (Acts 26:14).

Some commentators try to say that the tongue of I Corinthians 14 (from verse 3 forward) is to be understood as a language and should be connected with the "signs" of Mark 16:17). "And these signs shall follow them that believe." But, that the gift of Acts 2:4 can only be understood in light of some unknown utterance, as in I Corinthians 14:2. In other words, only an impression was ever left of a foreign language to hearers in the first century for the assembly in Corinth appeared to outsiders as a group of madmen (I Corinthians 14:23,27). However, the reason that the assembly appeared to be a group of deranged worshipers is that the Corinthians were using the gift of

THE BEAUTY OF JESUS

Text: _____

I. Is Seen In His _____

Notes:

II. Is Seen In His _____

Notes:

III. Is Seen In His _____

Notes:

**I AM A NEWCOMER...
WON'T YOU PLEASE...**

Smile at me as I walk in the door. You are my first impression of the church, during the first few minutes I am in your building, and this first impression will probably stay with me a long time.

Help me find my place in the service. I will not find your help an intrusion. In fact, I will remember your kindness.

Speak to me during the after-service fellowship time. I know you want to see your friend, but I may find it hard to believe that you truly care for each other unless I first see evidence that you care for the “stranger” in your midst.

Tell me good things about the church, your elders, deacons, and ministers. I want to believe that I have come to a place where people love each other and where they believe that they are doing something exciting and important for the Lord.

Notice me even if I am not “family.” I don’t want to feel invisible just because I am unmarried, a single parent, a teenager, or an older person.

Talk to me again the second week when I come back and the third and the fourth. I am still not part of your family.

Invite me to become a part of some church activity or small group. I need more contact with the church family. I am not looking for a friendly church; I am looking for a friend.

tongues for the wrong purpose—to boast. If one came into the assembly who did not need to be addressed in a foreign tongue, why would one do so? Lest the reader argue that the “Holy Spirit made the speaker do it,” Paul clearly stated that every gift of the Spirit was subject to the speaker (I Corinthians 14:32).

Many religious cults have practiced “tongue speaking,” or the utterance of some phrase, groan, or gibberish, stimulated by emotions. The Cult of Dionysius, the Delphic Phrygians (some of whom became Christians and then fell back into their false ways and harmed the church; e.g. Colossians 2), the Cult of Bacides, the Sybils, and the Gnostic Marcos (see Iranaeus 13:3) who “transferred his gift to a woman,” all practiced “tongue speaking.” The Montanists (A.D. 200), the Covenol Prophets (1685), the Roman Catholic Jansenists (1731), the Shakers (whose corrupted practice included dancing naked while “speaking in tongues” - 1830), the Irvingites (1830—Edward Irving was a Scotch Presbyterian who founded the Catholic Apostolic Church. The first to “speak in tongues” in this group was a Mary Campbell who later confessed that she had lied about the experience.), the Mormons, who speak of a “pure Adamic language,” and modern holiness groups all claim tongue speaking as an experience of faith. How can such a diverse group of heresies and doctrines provide a background for a gift from the Holy Spirit?

Non-Christian Greek cults, mystery religions (Osiris, Mithra, Eleusinian, Dionysian, and Orphic), the Syrians whose goddess Juno provided such a “gift” of tongues, the Shamans of Haiti, Greenland, Micronesia, Africa, Australia, Asia, and North and South America practice “tongue speaking” usually in association with drugs, and Buddhist, Shinto, and Voodoo sects all say that they experience this phenomenon. If this is a “special gift” to the church, why are so many cults, sects, heretics, and non-believers claiming it?

Psychiatrists have reported this “ecstatic utterance” phenomenon in connection with mental illness such as in schizophrenia. The 1966 European Pentecostal Conference admitted, when faced with the overwhelming evidence of this so-called Holy Spirit experience that “tongues might occur apart from the Holy Spirit’s action!” If they do happen at all today, dear reader, they are indeed “apart from the Holy Spirit’s action!”

-Keith Mosher

FOR THIS CAUSE I BOW MY KNEES—1

Who looks stronger: a man on his feet or a man on his knees? To the untrained human eye the obvious answer would be the man on his feet because he is in command and in control. The man on his knees has the appearance of subservience and submission. But that is to the untrained human eye. To the trained eye of the child of God the answer is also obvious, but different. The man on his feet would appear to be egotistic and proud, while the man on his knees is showing his humility and total dependence upon another, namely God. It is exactly that thought that Paul had regarding his life and his concern for his own life and the lives of his brethren when he said, “*For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named...*” (Ephesians 2:14-15). Paul knew something about the need to spend some time on his knees, because when he appeared the weakest physically is when he knew he was the strongest spiritually.

Given the degree to which men and women like Paul suffered in the first century the world would consider it a wonder that they were ever respected enough by others to have an impact to the extent they did. They were beaten down, humiliated, arrested, and often even put to death. But what the world might not understand is that the punishment that they often endured came not because of weakness, but because of strength; not because of confusion, but rather conviction. There was one particular thing, though we know not specifically what it was, that bothered Paul more than anything else he had endured in life. He only refers to it as a “thorn in the flesh,” and he desperately wanted it taken away. In fact, he wrote about it in II Corinthians 12:7-8 and said, “*And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might be taken from me.*” Whatever this “thorn in the flesh” was it was driving Paul absolutely crazy. It was wearing him thin, but he would not allow it to wear him out. And when on occasion Paul would fall to his knees and beseech the Lord to remove this trial from his life, the world, no doubt, looked at Paul as being weak. But in God’s response and Paul’s reaction we learn something about the strength shown by a commitment to prayer. He wrote that God said to him, “*my grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness*” (II Corinthians 12:9a). And to the world this would seem to add more confusion than clarity, but as a Christian Paul understood and replied, “*Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: **for when I am weak, then am I strong***” (vs. 9b-10). In whatever state Paul found himself, he knew that true weakness was found in attempted independence; but in reality, true strength came through a complete dependence upon God. And for that cause, Paul would bow his knees.

Prayer is a Christian responsibility and opportunity that we can safely say can never be practiced too much. If I were to literally spend twenty four hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year in prayer, it could not possibly be too much. Prayer is that effective when it is practiced fervently and effectually. But it, though, stands as one of the most neglected areas of any Christian life. There may be token times when we pray out of tradition such as before meals, or maybe even before we go to bed, times at which we should pray. But we should be careful not to find ourselves instead of falling to pray, falling prey to those vain repetitions of which we are warned (Matthew 6:7). We can and should be a people of ceaseless prayer (I Thessalonians 5:17), because it is in that time of supposed weakness, that we truly derive strength.

Stephen Van Dulken tells the story that, “On February 26, 1829, a Jewish boy named Loeb Strauss was born in a cottage in the Bavarian village of Bittenheim. As a young man, Loeb changed his name to Levi and wound up in California, where he opened a textile company in San Francisco. One day a gold miner walked into Levi’s shop and assailed the young merchant. ‘Look at these,’ said the miner, pointing to the pants. ‘I bought ‘em six months ago, and now they’re full of holes!’ When Levi asked why, the miner explained, ‘We work on our knees most of the time.’ ‘What you need is some really strong material,’ replied Levi. ‘We have some canvas. It’s used to make tents. If we make your trousers out of canvas, I’m sure they won’t get holes.’ A tailor was called, and presently the miner had a set of trousers—and the rest is history. Soon miners across the West were wearing Levi Strauss’s jeans.”

While that story is more historical and informational, there is one point that we can draw from it. Like that miner, Christians, too, do most of our work on our knees.

-Andy Brewer
to be continued