

06a ACTS

Acknowledge the very necessary work of God's Holy Spirit in our souls, and to thank Him for the opportunity we have tonight. Shall we pray? Father, it is truly amazing grace that You bestow on us each day in sustaining us and encouraging us, watching over us, blessing us, providing for us, protecting us in ways that we never see and will not know until eternity, and in Your infinite patience with us as we struggle with our fallen nature and with the issues that beset us in the world and the ongoing manifest program of Satan to try to deflect and to distract from Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank You that we have Your Word.

We thank You that we have the Fellowship of Believers of Like Mind that encourages us and that reminds us that we are a body, we are a people that belong to You, and we have been redeemed, we have been purchased with the precious blood of Jesus Christ. We ask tonight as we study Your Word that God the Holy Spirit will illuminate it for us, help us to understand it and see its meaning and its applicability for us in our daily walk. We pray that we will be equipped for every good work both in this life and in the age to come as a result.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. We resume our study tonight in the sequel to the Gospels which is the book of Acts, Luke's volume 2 that he wrote and addressed to Theophilus, the one who loves God.

We have arrived at chapter 2. We have seen that the day of Pentecost has come. The disciples are together in one place, violent rushing wind. We saw the tongues of fire distributing themselves, resting on each one.

We saw them each filled with the Holy Spirit and beginning to speak with other tongues. We saw the reaction of the people in the town marveling. Why are not all these who are speaking Galileans? How is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born? It is time in the long history of Grace and Truth Bible Church we have never stopped and devoted a detailed study to the phenomenon of tongues as it is spoken of in the Word of God and specifically as it is brought forward into the 21st century by those who are of the charismatic persuasion, your assemblies of God, your people who believe that Glossolalia or the speaking in some form of undecipherable language is a sign and manifestation of the presence of the Holy Spirit in a unique and special way.

It is often called the second blessing or getting the ghost or holy rolling or any one of a number of other things. We are here, it is the first mention of this subject in the New Testament and we are going to take it, we are going to tackle it, we are going to dispense with it so that we can move on forward because it is going to occur several more times in Acts and of course Paul the Apostle will discuss it particularly in his first letter to the Corinthians. The first thing we should note here and this if you are taking

notes you can label as we are doing a study of the doctrine of tongues.

The first thing we note is as a general principle the first mention of something in the Bible is pretty significant. This is why our study of Genesis was so important because you have the first mention of all kinds of things in Genesis. But the first mention sets the tone and establishes the context for any particular subject.

In this case Acts chapter 2 is the first mention of tongues and so it would behoove us to take a look at exactly what we have in this context. First of all we look at the Greek word. It says in verse 4, They were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues.

In Greek this says Heterais Glosais. This tells you that it is from the Greek word Glosa. We get the word in English glossary from this.

What is a glossary? Glossary is a look up table for technical terms. If you are studying biology there might be a glossary that tells you what phylum means or what order means or what species means. Or if you are looking at the parts of a flower it will say the stamen and the pistil and various other parts of a flower.

The glossary gives you a look up, kind of a mini dictionary. It tells you that there is a correspondence. Glosa in its original sense means tongue.

It came to mean in the same way that in English we say he was speaking in his native tongue. It means language. You can safely translate Glosa and its derivatives as language everywhere it occurs in the New Testament.

In the original King James and part of the confusion that has arisen on this subject comes if you look at an original KJV because the translators insert in many of these passages the word unknown. And they say unknown tongue. If you look in the King James you will see that that word unknown is in italics.

Italics in your English translations are a notification to you that someone has added a word for clarification, for explanation, to make grammatical sense or whatever. And this unknown is interpretive. It doesn't say unknown in these contexts.

At any rate, here in chapter 2 it says heteros, glossos. Heteros, hetero means something different. Our most obvious use of this is in our modern society people just want to talk about their sexuality all the time.

This gal that stars in the Tomb Raider movie got on TV and wanted to talk about her private life. And so people are always talking about, well, is someone a heterosexual? Or are they homosexual? Or are they bisexual? This lady has placed herself firmly in the latter camp. But be that as it may, a normal red-blooded American human being is heterosexual.

What is that? It means that when you get ready to look for somebody to have a sexual experience with, it's not your same gender. It is something other, someone different. Heterodox instead of orthodox.

Orthodox means you hew to the doxa, to the, in this case, the knowledge or the policy or the belief system that has been put forward for any given organization or group. Heterodox means, well, you're all things to all people. Let's just pull it all in.

You start out being heterodox and you wind up being syncretistic. Syncretism always reminds me of concrete. You mix a whole bunch of stuff together and you get one big block that's just heavy and not good for much.

Heterodoxy is different than orthodoxy. Anyway, heteros here means other. So this is, they began to speak, la, la, oh, standard Greek verb.

So what are we saying here? They're speaking other languages. Now, if it's other language, anytime you say, you know, you can get yourself in trouble. You can imprecate yourself.

You can implicate yourself. You can sort of condemn yourself. You say, well, I was down there at the gas station talking to another idiot.

Well, who was the first idiot? If, you know, if there's another, there has to be a first. If there's an other language, there had to be a first language. They're talking about the standard language, which would be in a Hebrew community, Aramaic.

In a more polyglot community, such as existed in the Roman Empire, everyone, the lingua franca, the common language of the people to talk to any foreigner that was in the Empire there, would be Greek. Koine Greek, common Greek. In much the same way that English has become sort of a language of commerce and trade throughout the world and diplomacy and everything else.

So when it says other language, it tells us this is not gibberish. It's not jabbering. It's not yammering.

It's not making some goofball noises. These were specific, understandable, communicating languages. That's fine here in Acts chapter 2. People don't argue about that because you have a list of about 16 different peoples who say, I hear someone talking in my mother tongue.

And these are your Medes, Elamites, Parthians, Judeans, Mesopotamians, Cappadocians, people from Asia Minor, Pontus, Phrygia, Pamphylia, and so on. So we know these were spoken languages. Now, the Bible in the first usage has set up a correspondence between Glossa or Glosses and understandable spoken languages of various peoples.

Well, this is fine here, but what happens when you get further in the New Testament and you have Paul talking about tongues and the gift of interpreting tongues and all of the baggage that comes with it? Well, let's take a moment to examine this. Your passage begins in 1 Corinthians chapter 14. Let's turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 14 and we'll address this as we have it.

1 Corinthians chapter 14. Pursue love, Paul says, but earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy. What is prophesying? By the way, just as a matter of English grammar, one of the most misspelled words in theology or mispronounced words is prophesy versus prophecy.

If you talk about a prophecy, it's C-Y. If you're using the verb to prophesy, it's S-Y. So we're saying especially that you may prophesy.

P-R-O-P-H-E-S-Y. Paul says to the Corinthian church, these are church age believers, not Old Testament saints, the first thing he says is pursue love. He's just given the love chapter, 1 Corinthians 13.

And he said there, it doesn't matter if I speak with the languages of men and angels. If I don't have love, it's meaningless. One of the most oft-forgotten principles of those who say we are a tongue-speaking church is, well, what do you put first, tongues or love? Paul says love comes first.

He says I don't care what language you speak. You can talk angel talk, and if you don't have love, you're not any better than somebody beating on a trash can lid with a big stick. He says, even if I have the gift of prophecy, and if you look there, that's P-R-O-P-H-E-C-Y, the gift of prophecy, and I can understand mysteries, I've got knowledge, I can parse and dice and slice and interpret and tell you every single thing that's in the word of God.

If I don't have love, I am nothing. Even if I've got enough faith to actually move a mountain, mountain, be thou rooted up and cast into the sea. If I don't have love, I am nothing.

I could be the biggest benefactor in the world. I could give to charity more than anyone. I could feed the hungry, house the homeless, clothe the naked, build hospital wings, donate to cancer research, fund the cure for AIDS and the common cold, give my body to science, give my body to be burned, Paul says.

If I don't have love, it profits me nothing. Now this is a profound thing to say. You think about what we do in life, the efforts that we expend, the lengths to which we go.

If it is not done in love, if it's not done for love, if it's not done out of love, it is completely and totally zero. Counts for nothing. Accomplishes nothing.

It makes us nothing. We are nothing. We accomplish nothing.

We say nothing. How would you like to get to the end of your life? I used to think about this when I was a midshipman and then I went into the Marine Corps and they said, Oh, you've got this Annapolis afterburner going here. You're destined for great things.

You look at your stellar evaluations and all of that and here you are, you're in the gunnery instructor. It's the pinnacle of being in the artillery. All of these other things.

They say, you are launched. You are headed for the stars. You're on the fast track to success in that particular world.

And I got to thinking to myself as the bug to go to seminary and the realization that God had assigned me a particular task began to hit. And I thought, you know, people were saying, well, do both. Stay in the Marine Corps until you retire 20, 25, 30 years.

You'll have this big retirement check. Well, just do all the seminary you want. Preach all you want.

You'll have this benefits and all this. Why pull the plug on this big deal now? The smart money says stay in and get your government security. Then do this weird stuff of going to seminary.

But I got to thinking at the end of my life, if I look back and say I spent 30 years of my life and I became a stellar battalion commander, I was a regimental commander, I served in hither and yon and my unit got citations and I made my big mark in the Marine Corps, so what? By the way, that is one of the most useful questions you can ever ask yourself in any context. When we get to the end of a lesson and I have told you what the Word of God says, we ask ourselves, so what? It says that, but what's the punchline? What difference does that make? And I got to thinking, I had already seen battalion commanders and regimental commanders who were over me come and go, and a year after they were gone, all of their hard work and all of their discipline and all of their charisma and all of the momentum and impetus and energy that they had put into the unit had dispersed and faded away because new people come in, old people leave, the unit changes form, fashion, structure, other people come in, everything you built, it's like a sand castle. Wave comes in, it's gone.

And I thought, my life is more to me than a paycheck. It's more to me than security in the future. You want your life to mean something, to count for something, the time and the air that you breathed and all to accomplish something lasting.

And that just isn't it. Paul says, look, he says, I'm going to give you the straight scoop, and he uses himself as an example. And you'll pardon me for using myself as an example.

That's what Paul does here. He says, look, I'm an apostle. You people in the church, you think, wow, an apostle.

Lord Jesus Christ appeared to you on the road, struck you blind, gave you a commission, sent you to the world, gave you supernatural powers. You can heal, you can speak in tongues, you can prophesy, you can do all these things. It must be really great to be an apostle.

Wow, talk about your life counting for something. You're an apostle for crying out loud. Paul says, you know what? I can do all of these apostolic things, and if I don't have love, I say nothing.

If I don't have love, I am nothing. If I don't have love, it profits me nothing. The great thing about this revelation here in 13 of 1 Corinthians is you and I don't have a shot at being an apostle.

We don't have a shot at making this great, blazing, meteoric mark across the Christian world. But do you and I have a shot at love? At exhibiting love? At developing capacity for love? At treating one another in love? At developing capacity to love God? It's not that difficult. Jesus said, John 14 and 15, The one who has my words and keeps them, he's the one that loves me.

And I and my Father will come to him, and we will make our home with him. Now that, what is a greater honor? Did you know that there is no angel in the history of the universe, or the pre-universe, or the post-universe, there is no angel that God has ever said, I will come to you and make my home with you. You go to the first chapter of Hebrews, To which of the angels has he ever said, Sit at my right hand? Never had an angel.

God never became an angel and died on a cross. God became man. God has drawn us to himself in love, and asks for love as a response.

And you and I can do it. In our life, when everything else has faded, and God has rolled this universe up like a scroll, all of this material, molecular stuff that we see is gone. What we did in love, and from love, will last.

That's why at the end of this chapter, Paul says, You know, there are three things that last. First, faith lasts. Hope endures.

Love abides. And the greatest of those is love. With love, you can say something that counts.

With love, you can become something. With love, you can profit. You can be useful.

You can reflect the glory of God. You can be of service. You can be of meaning.

So this is the context when you get to 1 Corinthians 14. He says, Pursue love. What else is the point of life if it doesn't last? If it doesn't make a mark? You could have been a lot of things, but he says, Pursue love and desire spiritual things, especially that you may prophesy.

Why? To prophesy, or in these days to have the gift of prophecy, was to communicate God's word. That's what a prophet does. That's what the prophets did in Israel.

They only had the Law of Moses in writing in the days of the prophets. And they had maybe some of the books of history, maybe even a book of poetry or two. But in terms of God speaking and saying rebuke and correction and instruction and righteousness, that came through the prophets.

The prophets spoke the word of God to the people. In the New Testament age, they didn't have the completed New Testament yet. The Gospels had yet to be written.

Paul's letters had only begun to arrive at their first destination. They hadn't circulated. So here's a church in Antioch, and here's a church in Phrygia, and here's a church in Pamphylia, and here's a church hither and yon, all these different little countries and towns.

Laodicea and Pergamum and Thyatira and Ephesus and all these other little places. What are they going to do for Scripture? They say, OK, we're ready for Bible class. Well, we can drag out the Septuagint and study the Old Testament, but what about all these new things? We've got the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

What's it about? Well, the ministry of the Spirit and the things of the church were not revealed in the Old Testament. So what do they have Bible class with? God gifted individuals in those congregations in those early days before they had Scripture to stand up and speak forth church-age truth, to speak of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, to teach about the baptism of the Holy Spirit, to teach about turning away from dead works and faith toward God and the value of change of mind and all of the things that relate to the church, being the body of Christ, the bride of Christ, what is regeneration, what is sanctification, and what did the work of Christ on the cross mean and his redemption, reconciliation, propitiation, all of these things. Someone would just get an infusion of that information, just like the prophets in the Old Testament would stand up and prophesy and say, this is what is going to happen.

And to mark that out, the New Testament prophets would foretell a famine or foretell something that was going to happen in the near term. It authenticated them. It marked them out with the Old Testament criteria.

If he speaks it and it comes to pass, then he's not disqualified as a prophet. If he ever speaks something and it doesn't come to pass, he's disqualified as a prophet. It was

authenticating.

There were miraculous things to let them know this really is from God. But he says, desire that you may prophesy. Why? Because it communicates God's Word.

How are people going to pursue love? How are people going to respond to what he said in 1 Corinthians 13 about love? What is the key to love? The key to love is knowing God's Word. You cannot scrunch up and tense up and excrete love. You can't squint real hard and grit your teeth and produce love.

Love is produced in us. Romans 5.5 The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. What do we know about the ministry of the Holy Spirit? How much does he say out of his own head? How much does he bring to us from his own plan and his own thoughts and his own mind? Jesus said, God the Holy Spirit says nothing of himself.

He says, he will take of the things that belong to me, Jesus Christ, and he will bring them to you. He is the means. He is the way of access to the Father through the Son.

So when God the Holy Spirit sheds love abroad in our hearts, what's he doing? He's got to have the Word of God to work with. That's his voice. That's his content.

That's what he communicates. Well, I don't want to lose everybody here. We're in 1 Corinthians 14.

We're talking about tongues, but what we're really talking about is love. And that's what Paul is talking about. He says, pursue love.

He spent a whole chapter talking about the value of love. Love never fails. Prophecies will fail.

Tongues will cease. Knowledge will vanish away. Love suffers long.

Love doesn't envy. Love doesn't parade itself. Love isn't puffed up.

Love isn't rude. Love doesn't seek its own. It's not selfish.

Love is not easily provoked. It doesn't get poked and puffed up like a puffer fish. Love thinks no evil.

Love assumes the good. It doesn't matter how many times this person disappoints or double-crosses or fails. Love assumes the good.

It says, you know, it's not naivete. It's not stupidity, but it's benefit of the doubt. It's, I'll spot you, the past.

Love thinks no evil. Love does not rejoice in iniquity. Love rejoices in the truth.

That's where love has its source and its power is in the truth. It's the Word of God. That's why at our church, Grace and Truth Bible Church, we study the truth.

That's where God's grace comes from. That's how God's love is created in our hearts. It's through the power of God in our hearts.

So, Paul says in chapter 14, Desire that you may prophesy. Why? The one who speaks in a language, this is glossa, does not speak to men, but to God. No one understands him.

This is how it worked. Someone would begin to speak. Let's say I'm back in the New Testament days, and I begin to speak, and I'm speaking Swahili.

Swahili. And I say this. That's genuine Swahili.

It's the only Swahili I know. I don't know what that means, let's say, but it just came out of my mouth. And I'm standing up, and I am the instrument through which this Swahili message of the Gospel is coming out.

Well, I am performing a service before God. I'm standing up, and Swahili is coming out, but I don't understand what I'm saying. It's just coming out, and it's Swahili.

And I say, well, it must be some of these Swahili-speaking Africans here, and so I'm just going to stand here and let God speak through me in this language. Okay? No one understands him. In the Spirit, he is speaking mysteries.

Okay? What are mysteries? Church-age doctrines. We don't have time to go, but musterion means this is teaching for the church. It's not in the Old Testament.

Paul says, I'm a steward of the mysteries. These are the things that were not revealed. God has now made them manifest for the church.

I'm speaking new truth for the church under the ministry of the Spirit. I don't even understand what I'm saying, but somebody out there must need it, so let it fly. But he who prophesies, he's teaching, preaching the Word.

He speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men, because everybody there understands. He's speaking Aramaic or Greek. It's the common language that he and everybody else understands.

He who speaks in a language edifies himself. He builds himself up. Why? Not that he even understands what he's saying, but he is exercising a spiritual gift.

He is functional in the service of the Lord. He is built up in and through this service. He's useful to the Master.

He's a faithful servant. He gets this urge to speak Swahili. He stands up and it may be

embarrassing.

People say, it sounds like gibberish. It doesn't matter. He's speaking it and it works.

He who prophesies edifies the entire church. I wish you all spoke in languages, but I wish even more that you prophesied. For he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks in languages, unless that language is interpreted so that the church can be edified.

Why would you stand up and speak in Swahili? Everybody that's there at the church probably speaks Greek. It is a sign. It is a sign.

If you go back to 1 Corinthians 12, which we will do after the break, we will find out that this was the marking out of the fact that this prophetic message, this forth telling message of the mystery is from God. How do we know if this guy is just making it up? He might be talking about foot washing or infant baptism or playing with snakes or drinking poison or something. How do we know if what he is speaking that we can't verify in the Old Testament is genuine church age truth or if he's just making something up and he's a cult leader like Koresh or this Kool-Aid drinker down there.

How do we know? God authenticated it because this man who has never studied this foreign language is speaking a foreign language and someone in the crowd says, Hey, wait a minute. That's the language of the land of my birth. I recognize that.

So it's an authentication. It's a sign. It's a symbol.

Well, the whole point here is anytime we have a question about something, there's a difference in the church. There's a difference among denominations. There's a difference within a family about what does the Word of God teach on a particular subject.

There is clarity in God's Word. If we have a question, if we have a difference of opinion or a difference of understanding between people who are believers and who genuinely want to understand God's Word and do His will, the answer is in the Word of God. There has been no end of confusion about tongues.

But our study tonight, I think, will demonstrate that there is clarity in what the Word of God teaches about tongues and we've already seen that so far the expression *glosa* in Greek meaning an understandable language, at least one person understands it, holds water. And we're going to see that that will continue throughout all of the passages that we look at. That is our ground point.

The Word of God says it's an understandable language. If someone goes to yammering in some non-understandable language, we know that that's outside the scope of what Scripture teaches. So it should be very easy now to verify if someone is engaged in the biblical practice of tongues.

If one of us, I don't think any of us knows Tagalog, which is a native language in the Philippines. If one of us stands up and starts speaking Tagalog and we have a Filipino visiting us or we record the person and play it to a Filipino and they say, hey, he's preaching about Jesus in Tagalog. Then we'll know that we have a genuine manifestation of this early New Testament gift.

I would submit to you that that has never happened. Which tells me that the biblical gift of tongues has ceased. You don't have to argue it.

You don't have to question it. You don't have to wonder about it. Unless you find someone with no previous training speaking coherently a message about Jesus Christ that edifies and builds up the church in an identifiable language, it is not the biblical gift of tongues.

So, what a simple solution that is. Let's pause here and take our break. When we come back, we will finish our examination of this.

We have a couple of other passages to look at. And then we'll return to Acts chapter 2 and talk about the role of women in the church. I am just asking to get slapped in the head here on both tongues and women.

Fools walk in where angels fear to tread. That's what we'll take up when we come back.