

06b ACTS

Study of the biblical teaching on tongues, which is a, I suppose, a digression or a departure based on its first mention in Acts chapter 2. You'll notice as we continue to look at the scripture in 1 Corinthians chapter 14, when you get down to verse 10, it says, There are, it may be, so many kinds of languages in the world, and none of them is without significance. The idea here is that the purpose of making noise with your mouth is to communicate. It has a significance.

Now, this sign gift had a significance that went beyond the meaning of the words. If God just wanted to communicate Church Age truth, which was his primary objective, if that was his only objective, then only the gift of prophecy would have been necessary. People would have stood up and prophesied in Aramaic or prophesied in Greek.

But God had another purpose, which was to confirm, to draw attention. What happened on the day of Pentecost, when everyone from Galilee began speaking these 16 other languages? It drew attention. It impressed people that there was a significant and wondrous thing taking place.

Well, in our life, as we tackle the tasks of the day and perform our functions and fulfill our duties, show up where we're supposed to be and converse and interact and just go through the mundane pieces of life as American citizens, does this have any relevance or any applicability to us? We're not on the day of Pentecost. We're not in the day and the time of sign gifts. So, we ask ourselves that famous question, so what? I can see that maybe we shouldn't be looking for some sort of supernatural glossolalia in our lives or in our worship life in the church, and maybe we ought to steer clear of those who concentrate on that to the exclusion of other things.

But, so what? What is the application of what we are in the middle of seeing over in Corinthians? Well, one thing is this, God consistently distinguishes His people by His presence. His presence is manifest in both extraordinary, miraculous, and supernatural ways, like the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire, like the smoke and thunder and lightning on Mount Sinai, like the blazing tongues of fire that descend on the heads of the people on the day of Pentecost, and also in more ordinary ways. The prophet who stood up and spoke the Word of God fearlessly.

The apostles, the preachers, not only in the early days of Christianity, but down through the centuries, who under oppression and persecution. They had a wonderful program, I don't know if you saw it this past week, on Martin Luther and his early days in the Catholic Church as a monk, and then his realization that the church of which he was such a slave and such a devotee was abusing people and was making stuff up that wasn't in the Word of God, and he began to go to the Scripture and he found out about righteousness by faith. He read the book of Romans and the Holy Spirit shined a light in

his soul and he was liberated and he was free from this tremendous yoke of guilt that he had been carrying around.

He had been scrubbing floors and denying himself. He would sleep out in the cold with no clothes on in the middle of winter and nearly froze himself to death a couple of times. The monks would run out and find him and bring him in, and he was just abusing himself, trying to achieve salvation, trying to be holy enough and dedicated enough, and he came to this realization.

He was courageous enough to nail it to the door of the Wittenberg Church and to risk capture and death at the hands of the agents of the Pope to promulgate this truth. He published his books and he preached to them. Of course, this started the Protestant Reformation.

It's one of the biggest things that's ever happened in the history of the church. Well, God looks at us. Here we are in the 21st century now, and we don't have a Wittenberg door to nail anything to.

There's not tongues of fire coming down. There aren't pillars of cloud, pillars of fire. So what does all of this mean to us? The people of God are always distinguished by the presence of God.

So the question is not do we no longer have the presence of God, but in what way is it manifest in our day? If you think about it, these have been extraordinary and temporary manifestations. The supernatural working of God in the early days of the nation of Israel only lasted a few years, and then they had hundreds of years of history. The supernatural working of God in the early days of the church only lasted a few years, and then we've had hundreds of years of history where it did not take place.

Most of the time, even in the Bible going back, Abraham went for decades without having a vision or hearing from the Lord. God would make him a promise. He would live his life, and there would be no visit, no vision, no angel, no supernatural anything.

He was just living his life, growing his flocks and herds, raising his family, moving around, interacting with the Hittites and so on. Most of what God has done throughout history has been in daily life. But always, always, the people of God are distinguished by the presence of God.

So the question we ask ourselves is how is the presence of God manifest in us? What should be different about us than our next door neighbor or several families in our block who know nothing of God? Maybe they're Muslims, maybe they're from some other faith any more around our area of the metroplex. You don't know what you're going to have living next to you in terms of religious preference. Well, what's different about us? They're dedicated to their faith.

We're dedicated to our faith. They find peace and happiness. We find peace and happiness.

They are stable and functioning members. We are stable and functioning members of society. So what's the difference? Is it many ways to God? Is it whatever feels good, do it? Is it whatever you find convenient? If you got it from your parents and you like it, stick with it.

It's all about the same. There ought to be something different. If Christianity is the true and genuine understanding of the way it really is, there ought to be something different.

And this is something that came up indirectly when we were talking on the break. I was reviewing some of the things that were in a pair of sermons I preached this last Sunday at visiting another church. And looking at Jeremiah 23-28, God talks about His Word.

And you might just turn there because it really makes the point of all of these chapters we're looking at in Corinthians and in Acts chapter 2. Jeremiah chapter 23, the verse that is in question here, or verse is, is verse 28 and verse 29. The context here, without going into great detail, is that Israel has become apathetic and indifferent and has gone after a feel-good religion. Prophets say what people want to hear.

Prophets are saying if you're doing evil, nothing bad is going to happen to you. It's okay. It's fine.

And they come up with dreams and they have bright visions of the future. You know, God's going to prosper you. Why, God told me last night that He's going to make you rich and famous.

And God says in verse 21 of Jeremiah 23, I have not sent these prophets. Turn on channel 58. Turn on channel 29 here in the Metroplex, your Daystar network and your Trinity Broadcasting Network, and you will get all kinds of people saying that they got a word from God.

You know what God says? I have not sent these prophets. What they are saying is not from me. You've got whole auditoriums of people that need to hear this verse.

Somebody ought to stand up in the middle of the auditorium. Some of those auditoriums are just west of us over here. Somebody ought to go down there and grab a good old King James Bible and say, I have not sent these prophets, saith the Lord.

And don't you think you'd get some un-Christian treatment after that? I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran. I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. It's what we're talking about in Corinthians, isn't it? Standing up and prophesy.

Paul says, I wish you would prophesy. God says here, I wish these would quit

prophesying because I didn't send them. If they had stood in my counsel, this is verse 22, Jeremiah 23, if they had stood in my counsel, what does that mean? Remember Psalm 1? Blessed is the man that walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, doesn't stand in the way of sinners.

He says, if they were standing in my counsel, if they were rooted in my word, if they had my message, if they were genuine prophets and were prophesying truth from God, if they had stood in my counsel, if they had caused my people to hear my words, God says, then they would have turned my people from their evil way. Notice, the word of God accurately communicated will turn evil people from their evil way. The word of God has the power to turn people from evil and from the evil of their doings.

This is what God says. You can take this verse to the bank, write it on a piece of paper, stick it on the refrigerator. If prophets, if communicators stand in God's counsel and cause God's people to hear God's words, they will turn God's people from evil ways and from the evil of their doings.

God says, what am I? Now this, by the way, this is translated backwards in almost all the English translations. Notice the word *am* is in italics. If you have any kind of a King James or whatever, *am* is in italics.

It needs to be the other way around. I am a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off. This is not a question.

This is a statement. God says, I am a God near at hand. I am not a God far off.

The next one is a question. Can anyone hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him, saith the Lord? The answer is no. Why? Because I'm the God near at hand.

I'm not off busy doing something. I'm not elsewhere. You can't hide from God.

He's near. Do I not fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord? I have heard what these prophets said. They prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed.

How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? God is just as blunt and as unkind and as untactful as he can be. But people say they offer comfort. They offer hope.

They're making us feel better. They're painting a rosy picture. We're encouraged.

We don't mind the incursions of our enemies and so on so much because these are wonderful dreams. These are happy dreams. These are fantasies.

Why are movies so popular? Why can you not turn on the news anymore and get any news? All you get is, I'm picking my dad's wife, and I'm the bachelorette, and now I was the bachelorette. Now I'm going to have these guys coming, and I get to pick, and it's

two million dollars instead of one. It's nothing but entertainment.

It's nothing but movies. And what's the latest movie? Terminator 3 is out. Tomb Raider is out.

This, that, and the other is out. All you get anywhere in the media is, take me away in a fantasy. Transport me with special effects and stories to another land.

Give me an experience. Give me a stimulation. Wow me.

Rock my world, is all you get. Why? This is why. These movies and these entertainments on television and everywhere else in our culture communicate a message.

And it's not the message from God. God says, you may have these dreams, you may have these fantasies, you may have these experiences, but they're not for me. It's not giving you my message.

Because you go to a movie, do you come back from Tomb Raider and say, you know, I have a new power in my marriage. I have a new ability for patience with my children. I have a newfound joy de vivre in my life, because man, that was a one heck of a great movie.

I saw Terminator 3, and you know, my anger has just left me. I'm no longer impatient. My mind has been changed.

I am bearing the fruits of righteousness. I have peace and patience and long-suffering. I am benevolent.

I am outward looking. My ingrown preoccupation with myself just left, because I saw Terminator. Or because I watched Tracy, or whatever the lady's name is, that it used to be the one that took the million dollars and turned down the guy for, you know, love or money or something.

And now she's getting her own show, and it's two million dollars, and all this other nonsense. It's dreams. It's fantasies.

But it is prophesied. It is put out to the world. And you've got Dr. Phil, and you've got Oprah, and you've got all the rest of the Susie Orman, all the rest of them giving you philosophies.

This is how to get ahead. This is how to be happy. This is how to live your life.

Get online. Heaven help you if you get online. Gracious sakes, I went up there looking for contact lenses or something, and I have never seen so much good advice on so many subjects in my entire life.

God says, do you want to know the difference between dreams and reality? See if it makes a difference. See if it can change a mind, a human soul. See if it has the power to eradicate evil.

Otherwise, it is just bubble gum for the brain. It is chewing gum for the mind. It passes the time.

It stimulates. It's got flavor for a little while. You know, they used to have a song back in the 40s or 50s somewhere.

Has your chewing gum lost its flavor? It occupies. It stimulates. It distracts.

It interests. But it's a fad. Today it's this diet.

Tomorrow it's that diet. Today it's this philosophy. Tomorrow it's that.

Today it's this program. Tomorrow it's that. God says, look, if they stand in my counsel, if they cause my people to hear my words, my people will turn from their evil way.

They will have the power to change. Did you notice the Nicorette commercial? There was a woman that used to be on the Nicorette commercial, and I recognized her because she had been in an episode of the Star Trek Next Generation. She was a hologram woman.

And then she was the Nicorette spokeswoman. And she said, the power to calm, the power to what? The power to something, the power to calm, the power to quit. And they used to say when the Nicorette commercials, you know, Nicorette is the gum to help you stop smoking.

The power to something, the power to calm, the power to quit. Nicorette gum gives you the power to quit. They had to take that off.

And if you notice, I probably am the only person in the whole world that ever paid any attention to this. The Nicorette lady came back on and she said, the power to comfort, the power to calm, the power to help you quit. Does it give you the power to quit? And somebody called them on that and said, we're going to sue you for saying it gives the power to quit when it doesn't.

Probably their competitors, the patch and the rest of it. You know, the fake cigarette and all these other things. They said, you don't have the power to quit.

It's an aid. And they had to change their commercials, yanked all the old ones and said, the power to help you. Well, how do you measure help? Oh, well, we were just helping.

I mean, the fact that you didn't quit, you can't sue us because you didn't quit. We were helping you. It just wasn't enough help.

You see the difference? God's word gives you the power to quit. It's not just a help. It's not an aid.

It's not advice. It is power. What does Second Timothy say? The word of God is living and powerful, sharper than a sword, pierces to the fiber of your being, lays bare the thoughts and intents of the heart.

All scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for doctrine, profitable for reproof, profitable for correction, profitable for instruction in righteousness so that the man of God may be complete and thoroughly equipped for every good work. Is there any area where you're unequipped by the word of God? Is there any good work for which you are not qualified by the word of God? Well, it's the word of God plus my program. It's the word of God plus my paperback book I got at Barnes and Noble.

It's the word of God plus the Fellowship of Sympathetic Believers. It's the word of God plus nothing. What does the word of God say? Look at Second Timothy 2.15. Look at Second Timothy 3.16. The word of God is living.

It is active and powerful, sharper than any human weapon. The best weapon on the planet was the machaira, the two-edged sword of the Roman centurion and the Roman legions. He says the word of God beats that thing hands down, pierces to the dividing center of soul and spirit and joints and marrow.

It doesn't matter if your problem is spiritual, soul and spirit. It doesn't matter if it is physical, joints and the marrow. The word of God gets to the root of it, gets to the heart of it, cuts to the quick, and it judges the thoughts and intents of the heart because that is where everything springs from.

It is only by diagnosing and fixing the thoughts and intents of the heart that we have any power. That's what Jeremiah 23 teaches. Look at verse 28.

The prophet that has a dream, let him tell his dream. If you've got this false happiness being floated out, if you've got all these entertainments, don't go on a campaign. Don't join concerned citizens for the abolishing of violent movies.

Don't go out and say we're going to change society. Boo on movies. Boo on television.

Boo on this. Boo on that. He says if they're going to tell their dreams, let them tell their dreams.

Let them put their stuff out. Let them be the Egyptian magicians. Let them throw down their rods.

Let them be the prophets on Mount Carmel. Let them dance and slash themselves. The prophet that has a dream, let him tell his dream.

Let the one that has my word speak my word faithfully. No holds barred, nothing held back, nothing watered down. He says what is the chaff to the wheat? You got people with dreams and chaff, let them spew their chaff.

You've got the man with my word, let him speak it. That's the wheat. And if you're looking for nourishment, and if you're looking for that which is valuable, you're going to see the difference.

You'll be able to tell the difference between the chaff and the wheat. Is not my word, verse 29, God says, is not my word like a fire, saith the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces? You can throw chaff at a cliff all you want, and it is not going to bust up that rock. Just get yourself some lightweight oatmeal type chaff, this, you know, husks, empty husks of wheat, and start throwing it at the rock.

I got to break this rock. I'm going to throw this chaff at this rock. I'm going to keep throwing chaff.

Put your chaff in a sandblaster and blow it at the rock. You are not going to break that rock in pieces. Chaff, you can plant all the chaff you want, it's never going to grow and produce a crop.

It's just empty husks. But you know the interesting thing, think about chaff and wheat. When you look at standing stalks of wheat, what do you see? You see the husk.

You see the external, but that's not where the value is. The value is on the inside. It's the kernel of wheat, and you don't find that until the threshing, until the separation, until the judgment.

God says, what is the chaff compared to the wheat? Is my word not like a fire? What does fire do to chaff? Two kinds of fire. We talked about it on the break. It's a consuming fire when you put it on chaff.

What happens when you put wheat in the fire? This is how you bake bread. This is how you make your nourishing food. This is what sustains you.

You put your wheat, you grind it up and put it in the fire, you get bread. It's useful, nourishing, sustains you. It's a staff of life.

Put the chaff in the fire, all you get is a brief, hot flash of fire. Is not my word like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces? Some of our rocks need breaking in pieces, don't they? If it's the rock in the parable of the soils that keeps the seed from sinking in, it needs breaking up. God's word will break up that rock.

The disciplining, rebuking, correcting parts of God's word will break up the rocks that need breaking up so that the seed can be planted. If you're just a hard-headed

reprobate, then the hammer is going to come down and it's going to break rock for a different reason and in a different way. It's kind of like Jesus talking about the rock of salvation.

He says, you know, you can either fall on that rock and be broken, be humbled and accept salvation from God or you can stand around and wait for the rock to fall on you. One way or the other, this is the power of God's word. That's why God says in verse 30, I am against the prophets that steal my words away from my people.

Steal them away from the neighbor. It's substitution. They're spouting all of this dream stuff and nobody can hear the real word of God.

He says, they're stealing my words away. Same idea, by the way, is found in the parable of the soils. So back to our second point of departure from Acts 2, which is 1 Corinthians 14.

What are we talking about? He says, Paul says, this speaking in tongues, speaking in a foreign language, you're going to have one or two there that say, hey, wait a minute, that's Phrygian that you're speaking there. That's that's the language of of the native language of Asia Minor that you're speaking. Wow, this must really be from God because you've never been to Asia Minor.

How do you know that language? He says, that's fine, but that's a sign that the message is from God. Now that you know it's from God, listen to the message from God. Get the word that builds up.

He says, I would rather speak five words that you understand and can apply because this is where the power of God is. That's the fire and the hammer. This is the means of developing love that endures and lasts.

It's going to be the object of faith. It's going to be the substance of hope. It's going to be the fuel and the power behind love is the only thing that works.

It's the only thing that transforms. It's the only thing that eradicates evil. It's the only thing that creates genuine good.

The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. He can't do a bit of that without the word. It has to be the unvarnished teaching of the word of God, prophesying of the word of God.

That's why Paul says in first Corinthians 14, you should rather desire to prophesy. Don't just have supernatural manifestations. Well, again, we ask ourselves, so what? What does this mean to me today? We like to see God intervene and solve our problems in an amazing way.

And that tells us that God is present. But what we really want is that daily miracle of growth, that daily miracle of victory over sin, the daily miracle of the eradication of evil, the daily miracles of the creation of love in our souls. That's what lasts.

That's what endures. Faith, hope, and love abide, these three. But the greatest of these is love.

And what Peter is going to do when you go back to Acts chapter two, when he talks about this phenomenon to all of those who are amazed and marveling, saying, wow, we've never seen anything like this. He says, these men are not drunk. This is the word of God being fulfilled.

And he quotes from the Old Testament. And then he preaches the Lord Jesus. He says, Jesus of Nazareth, the man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as you yourselves also know, he was delivered.

He was crucified and slain. God has raised him up. David speaks concerning him.

Therefore, this Jesus, verse 32, God has raised up, whereof we are all witnesses. Therefore, being at the right hand of God, exalted, having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has shed this forth which you are now seeing and hearing. It's not David that's up there.

Verse 36. Therefore, this is the punch line of this whole thing. Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this same Jesus whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

When they heard this, they were pricked in their heart and they said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, men and brethren, what shall we do? Peter delivers this message of conviction, this message of truth, this unvarnished communication of God's word, the fire and the hammer to his fellow Israelites. They hear it. They say, OK, what do I do? This is the question we ask ourselves going through most of this chapter now.

Thirty six verses of it. What do we do? Peter said to them, change your mind. Repent.

Change the way you live. Let the word of God do its work. Let it give you victory over sin.

Let it eradicate evil. Let it create love in your soul. The promise is for you and your children, everyone who's far off, all that the Lord has called.

And with other words, verse 40, he testified and exhorted, saying, deliver yourselves from this. Generation, this backward, this untoward, the old King James says generation, we live in a similarly. Untoward generation.

A similarly evil generation, a similarly unhealthy generation, how are we delivered out of

this society? How are we delivered out of this generation? We take the word of God and we make it the object of our faith. We treat it as real. We treat it as true.

And that is the means of our deliverance. That is where the power is. We don't rely on ourselves.

We rely on the power of God. And notice what these people did in verse 46, continuing daily with one accord in the temple. This is the place of the teaching of the word of God, breaking bread from house to house.

They ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. A new community, a new fellowship is established on this basis. And that's what we do.

That's why we gather ourselves to study the word of God. God works in us individually. He also works in us collectively.

And it is his spirit and his word that accomplishes it. We cannot change ourselves. We cannot change each other.

But God's word can. And speaking the truth to one another in love, our fellowship can be upbuilding and edifying. The ideas that we have, the things that strike us as we study God's word, I think our breaks are probably as valuable or more valuable in our fellowship before and after class than the lesson itself.

Because we build each other up. We encourage each other. We are edified and strengthened as a group and as a fellowship because of the presence of God's word and because of the presence of God's spirit.

We do that in our families. We do that in our church fellowship. We do that with others who are of the faith.

This is the life to which God has called us. It's the gift of God through Christ. It's worth pursuing.

It bears fruit in this life and it bears eternal reward in the next. How could we possibly not lay hold of it? Well, we will see as we go through Acts that after the initial blush of insight and understanding that comes with God's spirit, there are ways that we can miss it. And that is where we will resume next time as we finish chapter 2 and move into chapter 3 in the book of Acts.

Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you that you have made clear in your word the means by which we are to live our lives heartily as unto you. It is not in our own strength.

It is not from human wisdom or human philosophy or any other form of earthly power,

but it is through your spirit and through your word. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will impress these truths on our hearts, help us to live in a way that is pleasing in your sight and glorifying to our Savior. We pray it in Jesus' name, Amen.