

3ABN SABBATH SCHOOL PANEL
06 - WEDNESDAY – August 28, 2026

The Gift of Tongues

What about the gift of tongues? In line with the manifestation of the gift elsewhere in the Bible (*Mark 16:17, Acts 2:1–13, Acts 10:44–48, Acts 19:6*), the gift of tongues in 1 Corinthians is most likely the Spirit-granted ability to speak in foreign languages.

Acts 10:44 (NKJV) “While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word.”

Paul mentions the gift of tongues in the list of gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:8–10 (see also 1 Cor. 12:28, 30; 1 Cor. 13:1, 8). However, he refers to it repeatedly in 1 Corinthians 14. Indeed, the Greek word *glōssa* (“tongue”) appears more than twenty times in 1 Corinthians 12–14, with fifteen occurrences in 1 Corinthians 14 alone. Besides these, the Greek word *heteroglōssos* (“another tongue”) also occurs, in 1 Corinthians 14:21.

1 Corinthians 12:8-10 (NKJV) “(8) for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, (9) to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, (10) to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.”

The misuse and abuse of this gift by the church in Corinth caused disorder and confusion in public worship

1. TONGUES MUST BE UNDERSTOOD TO HAVE VALUE

1 Corinthians 14:5, 9 “...greater is he who prophesies than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets...” “...if you utter... words easy to understand... how will it be known what is spoken?”

Meaning:

- Tongues are **real, understandable communication**
- If no one understands → **no benefit to the church**

God does not give gifts that produce confusion

The purpose is **edification, not mystery**

2. INTERPRETATION IS REQUIRED—PROVING IT IS A REAL LANGUAGE

1 Corinthians 14:13, 27

“Let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret.”

“If anyone speaks in a tongue... let one interpret.”

Key Insight:

- You don’t interpret **gibberish**
- You interpret **language**

This shows:

- Tongues are **translatable communication**
- Like speaking Spanish, French, or another known language not previously learned

Without interpretation: Paul says **be silent** (v.28) **1 Corinthians 14:28 (NKJV) “But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God.”**

3. NOT EVERYONE HAS THIS GIFT—AND IT IS NOT A UNIVERSAL PRAYER LANGUAGE

1 Corinthians 12:10, 30

- **“To another different kinds of tongues...”**
- **“Do all speak with tongues? (Implied answer: No)”**

Meaning:

- Tongues is **one gift among many**
- Not given to every believer
- Not a required sign of spirituality

Therefore: It cannot be:

- A universal prayer language
- A required spiritual experience

4. THE HOLY SPIRIT DOES NOT USE HUMANLY SPOKEN “UNKNOWN SOUNDS” — HE INTERCEDES BEYOND SPEECH

Romans 8:26 “The Spirit... makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”

Key Insight:

- When we cannot express ourselves:
 - The Spirit **does not give us strange languages to speak**
 - He **intercedes directly to God**
- “Cannot be uttered” means: Not spoken in human language at all

Conclusion:

- Biblical tongues = **spoken, understandable languages**
- The Spirit’s intercession = **beyond human speech entirely**

FINAL SUMMARY (PREACHING FORM)

1. **Tongues must be understood to edify**
2. **Interpretation proves it is real language**
3. **Not all speak in tongues—it is not universal**
4. **The Spirit intercedes beyond speech, not through strange utterances**

Thought Questions: Are there people in your church who speak other languages? How can they use this ability to reach other people for Christ? How can this fact help us understand the true nature of tongues that Paul is addressing?