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## SPIRITUAL GIFTS PART V

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### Part 31 of 1st Corinthians

Pastor Mark Driscoll | 1 Corinthians 13:1-14:25 | September 10, 2006

A brush of idealism paints the first century church as a nostalgic example of community and perfection. Nothing could be farther from the truth. In this sermon series, Pastor Mark Driscoll teaches on Paul's First Letter to the Church in Corinth. The Apostle wrote to the Corinthians to untangle the many moral and theological knots they'd created, providing some of the richest theological sections of the New Testament. If you have any questions following this podcast, email [feedback@marshillchurch.org](mailto:feedback@marshillchurch.org). To subscribe to this and other Mars Hill podcasts, go to [marshillchurch.org](http://marshillchurch.org), and here's Pastor Mark with 1 Corinthians: Christians Gone Wild.

We're dealing in 1 Corinthians 13 and 14 on the issue of tongues and prophecy. We're spending seven weeks looking at the issue of spiritual gifts. This is the second to the last sermon in that series and I've saved two of the most controversial and debated issues for the sermon today. I'm sick with the flu and so I'll go ahead and pray. Obviously, I don't have the gift of healing, otherwise I would've fixed that. We'll get right to work on what is oftentimes a very hotly debated series of issues that have split whole churches and denominations and if we do it right, hopefully that won't happen to us. So good to have you all. Thanks for coming out. We'll pray and get to work.

Father God, as we open our time together, we get ready to study your word, we're coming to do some investigative work today on the issues of tongues and prophecy – very highly debatable, very controversial. Lots of interpretations, lots of teams. Lots of confusion. Sometimes, lots of debate and sadly, tragically, sometimes lots of division. And so as we study, we pray that you would give us the truth of Scripture but also the humility of Jesus and the love of the Holy Spirit, so that we might have difference but not division. That we might be unified around the fact that you love us and we love you and we love each other and that might be even in spite of some of our differences. And so God, as we study today, we ask for wisdom. We ask that we would understand this issue well, so that we would be Biblically informed as a people, and for that to happen, we ask that you would send the Holy Spirit to inform our understanding and we ask that at the end of our time together, our eyes would be focused on Jesus and our hearts would be inclined to love as he has loved us and it's in his good name that we ask these things. Amen.

Well, as we get into it, it's gonna be a lot of teaching. I'm gonna move super quick, cover lots of issues and I'll start by explaining to you what the gifts of tongues and prophecy are. We've been doing the series on spiritual gifts and those are supernatural endowments that God enables Christians to have so that we can do ministry for and like Jesus on the earth and today, we'll deal with the two issues of speaking in tongues and the issue of being a prophet or prophesying and so I'll need to start by defining for you what these even are because part of the debate is over what is even meant by these terms in your Bible.

So we'll start with tongues and when your Bible uses the word "tongues," it means, literally, languages. The Greek word – I won't get into all of the different Greek words that I'll be using tonight but this Greek word that's translated "tongues" in the English translation actually means languages – and so there are various languages, right? If you go to Mexico, people speak Spanish. If you go to Korea, people speak Korean. If you go to Quebec, they're speaking French. If you go to Texas, they're speaking redneck. If you go to, you know, South Central, they're speaking Snoop shizzle. If you go to Heaven, there's apparently, as well, a Heavenly language that God and the angels use to communicate and there's a Heavenly language there as well.

And so when we're speaking of tongues, we're speaking of languages – various earthly languages, as well as the Heavenly language spoken by God and the angels – and when it comes to the gift of tongues, the first thing I wanna say is that we reject two extreme positions. One is the Pentecostal position, which essentially states that everyone can and should speak in tongues. We reject that because not everyone can or should speak in tongues. It says in Romans 12:6 that we each have different gifts. So not everybody's gonna have the same gift – we have different gifts. Some of you speak in tongues, some of you don't. We have different gifts. In 1 Corinthians, Chapter 12, I think it was around Verse 11, he said that God the Holy Spirit sovereignly distributes spiritual gifts as he determines. You can't pick your gift and I can't give you a gift. Some traditions will tell you if you come forward and I'm the anointed preacher, I whack you on the noggin', you get the Holy Ghost, you speak in tongues and I could just sorta give it away like, you know, coupons, but it doesn't work that way because I can't give gifts, the Holy Spirit gives gifts. You can't pick your gift. God the Holy Spirit chooses your gift and he chose for us to have different gifts. So some speak in tongues and some do not and Paul asked this question rhetorically at the end of Chapter 12 in Verses 29 and 30, where he asks this rhetorical question, "Is everybody an apostle?" and the answer is, well no. And then he asks, "Well, does everybody speak in tongues?" and the answer is, well no, not everybody but some do. Some do.

Now, the other extreme position is called the cessationist position. The cessationist's position says that no one should speak in tongues and that tongues are essentially not for today. We reject both of these. One saying that God can't have anybody speak in tongues and one saying that God must let every

Christian speak in tongues and we believe that tongues, like all other gifts, are given to some people but not all people. And so in this church, you do have pastors – this may surprise some of you – who have the gift of tongues. Actually, I didn't know it, I took an informal poll among our 15 pastors, and 3 of them speak in tongues, about 20 percent of your pastors here have the gift of tongues. I don't. I don't have the Heavenly language and I don't have that gift, okay? So I don't speak from experience on the gift of tongues.

When it comes to tongues, however, there are three different ways that the New Testament speaks of the expression of the gift of tongues, okay? And the reason I tell you this is that one of the great errors, theologically, is reductionism. Reductionism is this. It's not saying something is against the Bible, it's simply not saying everything that the Bible says. Okay? So when we come to an issue, if the Bible has ten things to say, we want to look at all ten of those things. Reductionism is saying we look at one of those things and we ignore the rest, right? And that's not lying, but it's also not full truthfulness and so we want full truthfulness when it comes to issues. If the Bible has three things to say about tongues, we want to look at all three, not just one. And so, I'll give you a big college word. What we wanna be in our theology is something that the theologians call multiperspectival. Big word, especially for a guy who went to public school. But I want you to make you feel like you got your money's worth. So I'll give you another big word, multiperspectival. I'll say it again, because it's fun. Multiperspectival – and what we mean by that is that if the Bible has a lot of things to say on an issue, we want to look at all the things the Bible has to say on that issue so that we're being thorough. We're looking at all the perspectives that the Bible has to give us.

And so, when it comes to tongues, the three perspectives, the three expressions that I want you to be aware of are these. The first expression of the gift of tongues is simply this. It is a prayer language, right? And again, I don't have this gift. I've never manifested this gift, but those who do and love Jesus that are friends of mine tell me that they'll be, for example, at home praying and they'll be praying in English and then they will slip into the Heavenly language. The language, apparently, of God and the angels and they're praying in that language. It's a language that is unknown to them and it's a miraculous, supernatural capacity that God gives them to speak in the Heavenly language, to have a private prayer time, that connects them to the Lord in a very powerful way, from what they have told me, so that they have this prayer ministry of intercession.

Paul speaks of this in 1 Corinthians 14:14 where he says, "I pray in a tongue." I've heard some people say, "I don't believe there's praying in tongues." Paul says, "I pray in a tongue. I pray in tongues." So, part of the expression of the gift of tongues is a private prayer language whereby you are not even altogether sure of what it is you are praying but you are connecting with God, speaking the Heavenly language and it's this miraculous, supernatural prayer language that God gives you. And I know, especially in this service, there are people who have this gift and they would say, "Yeah, that's what I do. I pray in tongues. I have a prayer language of tongues." And we would say, "Yes, that is one of the ways in which the gift expresses itself," and we would embrace that.

The second expression of the gift is a missionary gift where you meet someone and you don't speak their language and they don't speak yours and God wants you to tell them about Jesus and then God gives you the supernatural ability to speak their language, right? And again, I'll have to use an example from someone that I know who does love the Lord and is very mature and so I trust them. They said that they went on a mission trip to a country where they didn't speak the language, which to me in the first place, that sorta – I don't know why you'd go on a mission trip if you can't speak the language. I mean, that's like, I'm the lifeguard who can't swim. Like, well, couldn't somebody else do that? They went to this country and they didn't speak the language and they met some people and they were trying to tell them about Jesus and the people didn't speak English and they didn't speak their language and they were very frustrated. They tried to explain it in English and then they started speaking those people's native language and those people got saved and gave their lives to Jesus. That is the missionary ability to speak a known earthly language, not the heavenly language, otherwise, you wouldn't be able to communicate with them.

We see this demonstrated in Acts, Chapter 2 at the day of Pentecost. There was this huge party celebration feast, festival. All these people get together from lots of towns and lots of cities and lots of cultures and backgrounds and they're all together for this huge celebration and then God the Holy Spirit drops, literally, on his servants on the Christian leaders in that day and they start preaching about Jesus to the different groups of people in their own language and their own dialect, right? I mean, this is an unbelievable ability. It's one thing to just pick up a new language, instantaneously, but then to pick up the dialect – meaning if you're speaking to a Canadian guy, you drop a lotta As and if you're talking to a shizzle, you know, Snoop fan, all of a sudden everything's got a "izzle" on the end. You're just totally into not only the language, but the dialect. Talking to a guy from Texas and it's "y'all and Jay-sus," it's like that, right? And so all of a sudden, they're speaking – and, you know, in general, these are common people that are doing this and everybody's looking at it saying, "These guys are blue-collar guys. How do they know our language? When did they pick up linguistics and sub-cultural euphemisms and Southern draws? I mean where did these guys get that? It's a miracle." And they're telling us about Jesus. And it says on that day, 3,000 people gave their lives to Jesus and got saved. That's the supernatural ministry of being able to speak an earthly language that you otherwise have no ability to do so because you do not know it. Not only the language, but the subset, the dialect, the colloquialism to most effectively communicate to people that you otherwise would not be enabled to do so.

And then the third is a revelatory language. Okay, let me explain this to you. Let's say there is a king in another kingdom and he doesn't speak our language and we don't speak his but he wants to say something to us. So he sends an ambassador to speak on his behalf and then we would need to get a translator or an interpreter to translate or interpret what the ambassador said so that we, in English, could understand what the king from the other nation had to say to us. This is exactly what happens, for example, at a United Nations meeting, right? A king sends a delegate and then there's an interpreter or translator to make it known to others who are there that don't share the language.

Well, God is a king and in his kingdom, he speaks Heavinese, or whatever it is. He's got his own language there and so when he wants to speak to us, we don't speak Heavinese and so what God does, he chooses a Christian to be that ambassador with the gift of tongues and then they speak the Heavenly language – but now we need an interpreter or a translator; someone with that gift that's listed in 1 Corinthians 12:10, the gift of interpretation

or translation to then translate that into English so then we know what, you know, the King Jesus has to say to us, his loyal subjects.

And those are the multiperspectival views of tongues. It's a private prayer language. It's also the ability sometimes to speak to someone in a known earthly language and sometimes it's the ability to speak the Heavenly language, oftentimes accompanied with the gift of interpretation so that that can be made known in a known earthly language so we, who are listening, then know what is being said. That's tongues. That's just the definition. We'll get into the use of it in a few moments.

Second issue – prophecy. This is the one; there is lots of debate and confusion over. And so I would take you back, if you were here, to those weeks in which we looked at the gift of pastor in Ephesians 4 and in the 1 Corinthians 12 where we looked at the gift of apostle and I told you that there is such a thing as a capital-A Apostle and a little-a apostle. A capital-P Pastor and a little-P pastor and what I told you was that in one sense there's an office of Apostle reserved for the 12 who followed Jesus and then there is a gift of apostle for many other people who are movement leaders, church planters and multicultural missionaries. Small-a apostle. Additionally, I told you with the pastor gifting, that 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 gives specific qualifications to be a pastor but in addition to the office of pastor, there's also the spiritual gift of pastor that more people hold than just the pastors in the church and I would say to you that I hold this same conviction in the regard to prophecy and prophets. I believe that there is the Old Testament office of Prophet, which is limited to a handful and closed, and then there is the ongoing spiritual giftedness and ministry of prophecy that is subservient to and under, nonetheless like, though, the Old Testament gift of the prophet.

So let me explain this to you. First, let me explain to you the Old Testament office of prophet. When we're talking Old Testament prophet, we're talking a two-fold ministry. One, they hear from God; God reveals his truth to them, speaks to them, and then their second ministry is to communicate that to the masses. Some were speaking prophets. Some were writing prophets and some were both and when we think of Old Testament prophets, we're talking Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel. We're talking about the guys who gave us the Old Testament and these are, literally, the spokesmen, the amplifiers, the mouthpieces as it were, for God and God wants to speak and he speaks through them to the masses. And when they speak, they speak with the highest authority.

Gerhard Von Rad, he's an Old Testament scholar, he's gone through and counted up the number of times that the phrase "thus sayeth the Lord" appears in the Old Testament and he says that it appears 221 times in reference to an Old Testament prophet. So an Old Testament prophet says, "thus sayeth the Lord," that's what it says in the King James, and I think that just sounds so cool. Some of your translation will say, "God says," but that's not nearly as cool. "Thus sayeth the Lord" is the King James way of saying the prophet speaks on behalf of God and when the prophets spoke on behalf of God, they were giving us Bible, they were highest authority, they were speaking for God and you were supposed to repent of sin and return to God and that was the primary ministry of the prophet. They spoke and wrote for God. They were the mouthpiece of God on the earth and they gave us the Old Testament Scriptures.

That being said, I want to warn you that there are also false apostles. Jesus, John and Paul in the New Testament all say that false prophets always rise up in every generation. They lie and try to lead people astray. I want you to know that there are false prophets. I'll give you two examples. Mormonism was founded by one. A guy named Joseph Smith says, "I'm a prophet of God." We'll look at it in a moment but he doesn't meet the qualifications of the prophet of God. What he says doesn't agree with the Bible. What he says doesn't point to the Jesus of the Bible. Islam is founded by the self-proclaimed prophet, Muhammad. We don't believe that Muhammad was a prophet. We believe Muhammad was a false prophet because he doesn't agree with the rest of the Bible and he doesn't point to the Jesus of the Bible. Therefore, that's a false prophet. And so we are Christians, not Muslims and there is a great difference because they believe that Muhammad is the last and greatest prophet, even superior to Jesus. We don't believe anyone is superior to Jesus, especially a false prophet. And so how do you know whether or not someone is a real prophet or a false prophet? Because if you follow a false prophet, you'll join a false religion, you'll worship a false god and you can end up on Hell for that. See, I tell you this because I want you all to be discerning and not end up in some cult or some weird whack-job religion. So you gotta get your prophets straight.

The two places in the Old Testament that are clearest – there are many others – but that are clearest on what constitutes a true versus a false prophet are Deuteronomy, Chapter 13; Deuteronomy, Chapter 18; both written by the great prophet, Moses. In Deuteronomy 13, a couple of the things that he says is that a false prophet can do false miracles. So just because somebody has power or can heal people or does signs, wonders and miracles, do not automatically assume that they are stamped with God's approval because we see, for example, in the days of Moses that it was the Egyptian pharaoh who had his magicians who were doing signs, wonders and miracles falsely. It says in Thessalonians that Satan will do counterfeit signs, wonders and miracles in an effort to even deceive the elect. So just because someone has signs, wonders, miracles, supernatural power – they heal somebody, they do something miraculous – that does not mean they automatically are stamped with God's approval. They may be working through demonic power and authority, not divine power and authority.

Secondly, they will point – Deuteronomy 13 says – to false gods, right? They're not gonna point you to the Jesus of the Bible and even if they use the name Jesus, they use it like 2 Corinthians 11 says, it's another Jesus. All right, it's another gospel. It's another Holy Spirit. It's a whole 'nother set of teaching. Mormonism does not believe that Jesus Christ is eternal God who became a man. Believes that Jesus Christ is essentially the brother of Lucifer and a created man, who's not eternal God. That's a different Jesus. That's a false prophet. Muhammad does not believe that Jesus Christ is God. He doesn't believe that Jesus died on the cross and rose for our sins. That's a false prophet. It doesn't point to the Jesus of the Bible.

Now what happened in the Old Testament, according to Deuteronomy 13 is, if you were a false prophet who pointed away from the Jesus of the Bible, what did they do to you? They killed you. The consequence for false prophecy is becoming metaphysically challenged. That is what happens to false prophets. That's why you don't get repeat offenders, right? You're like, "I was a false prophet. Just once." That's all you get. Swing, miss, you're out. No three strikes. You're done, right? And see, this is where, in our day when you got these whackjobs on TV, predicting the end of the world. "I'm a

prophet. I got a prophecy.” It’s like, “Hey, if you think you’re equal to the Bible, great. Then if you make a mistake, we whack you.” I mean, that settles a lot of the you know, “Oops, I didn’t – I made a mistake.” No, prophets don’t make mistakes like that. When you read the Old Testament, there are hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of prophecies that all come true in excruciatingly accurate detail. Many of them surrounding the person and work of Jesus. Born of a virgin in the town of Bethlehem. As a little boy, goes to the temple that was destroyed in 70 AD and no longer exists. Rides into town on a donkey. Is betrayed by a friend for 30 pieces of silver. Is hung on a cross. Is crucified between two thieves and then he rises from death. I mean, these are incredible prophecies. Not to mention the fact he’d be born of a virgin. I mean the Bible is incredibly accurate 100 percent of the time with the prophecies that it gives and if you are a true prophet of God, in the Biblical sense of the Old Testament, your requirement is to bat a thousand.

Which leads me to Deuteronomy 18. The qualification there for a real prophet is two-fold. One, they are consistent with the prior revelation of the prophets, the Old Testament Scriptures. Anybody who comes along and disagrees with the Bible, they’re a false prophet. Secondly, they are always accurate 100 percent of the time and if not, again, in Deuteronomy 18 and the old covenant, you could put them to death if they were not. So what we’re saying is there are real prophets, there are false prophets. Real prophets love Jesus. Real prophets repent of sin. Real prophets tell the truth. Real prophets aren’t for hire, out to the highest bidder. Real prophets point to the Jesus of the Bible. Real prophets agree with Scripture and real prophets bat a thousand. Those are some of the requirements that the Bible gives for a real prophet.

False prophets – whole ‘nother story. That means even if you get a guy like Nostradamus, who had a few right, we seem to think. If he didn’t bat a thousand, he’s still a false prophet because true prophets bat a thousand. These are some of the ways we can distinguish between a true prophet and a false prophet, you know, real worship of the real God and counterfeit religion and counterfeit cults and the occult and such.

Another way we could distinguish as Christians is John 7:17. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would live in Christians and he would give us discernment to know what was from God and what wasn’t and so part of what we have going for us is we have the inward testimony of the Holy Spirit saying, “Well, that agrees with the Bible and that honors Jesus,” or “No that doesn’t. That can’t be from God.” And the Holy Spirit helps us to distinguish these things.

So in conclusion, let me put these two together. Ephesians 2:20 says that the church is built on the cornerstone of the Lord Jesus Christ and the foundation of which is laid is the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament apostles. Those are the people who give us the 66 books of the Christian canon of the Bible, right? These are the people who either wrote, spoke or were eyewitnesses to and gave the report for the books of the Bible, okay? And so what he’s staying is this, in Ephesians 2:20, he’s saying that the Old Testament and the New Testament come from the capital-P Prophets and the capital-A Apostles. Either they said it. They wrote it. They saw it. They confirmed it. They’ve testified to it. They’ve authenticated the truth and therefore once we have that foundation laid, we don’t have prophets and apostles in that same sense. Meaning today there will not be a prophet that rises up and gives us new books of the Bible to throw in at the end. The canon is closed. The Bible is established. It is now our highest authority and we test everything by the Bible and it is the metaphorical Supreme Court of highest authority.

How does this work with prophecy? Well, what that means is that the New Testament gift of prophecy is less authoritative than the Old Testament prophets were because we take what is said by potential prophets today and we test it by the Bible because they are under the Bible. Give you two examples. In 1 Thessalonians 5, Paul says; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Meaning somebody comes in, says, “I have a prophecy,” you go, “Oh man. Another wingnut? What is – is happy hour over? Are they out again?” You know, I mean, “Here they come, they got a word from God,” you know, “Blah, blah, blah.” I mean you can – if you’re from more of an extreme charismaniac shake-and-bake background, you may be just so prophesied out. You know, you’ve heard the end of the world is coming 27 times. You know, you bought all the canned goods, bottled water. Nope, swing and a miss. Next. You know, you’re saying, “Okay, enough already. Stop predicting the end of the world. Stop predicting the floods, the earthquake, that we’ll all get BMWs, that Angelina Jolie’ll have a crush on me. Knock it off. I don’t wanna hear any more stuff. Just – none of it’s ever gonna happen.” Right? Especially the Angelina Jolie part, right, it’s just never gonna happen. “Don’t get my hopes up. Don’t get my fears up. Just leave me alone.”

If you’ve been around an abuse of prophecy, you might treat prophecies with contempt. Like, “All right, look. I’ve had enough. Enough of that.” He says, don’t treat prophecies with contempt but here’s what he does say. Test all things. Reject that which is evil. Cling to that which is good. Meaning if somebody says they got a prophecy? Test it. Now that’s different than the Old Testament prophets because they were highest authority, thus sayeth the Lord. New Testament, the gift of prophecy is under the authority of the Old Testament prophets and we check it, we test it by the Bible. Paul says the same thing in 1 Corinthians 14. We’ll look at it next week. The second half of the chapter, he says, if someone has a prophecy, they don’t automatically get to go up in front of the church and get a mic and say, “I prophesy the end of the world! I prophesy this, that and the other thing. What they do is they meet with the leaders of the church – here it would be the elders, the pastors – they tell us what their prophecy is. We check it. If it’s true, then we share it with you. If not, then we don’t. We’ve had all kinds of people who had prophecies. So far, we haven’t had any of them that we thought were Biblical. That’s why you don’t hear about them. We don’t just put a mic up and have, like, you know, open mic, you know American Idol prophet night. Everybody give it a shot, you know, and if it comes true, then you go to the next round, you know what I mean? It doesn’t go like that. You get tested. You get checked because in the New Testament, the prophet isn’t the highest authority, the pastors are and if somebody says they have a prophetic word, then the pastors check that and they check it by the Bible because that is the highest authority. So the highest authority is the Bible. The pastors and leaders of the church are under the authority of the Bible and any potential prophetic word needs to be tested by the leaders through the Bible to confirm whether or not it’s true and if not, it’s to be rejected.

So, what is prophecy then? Well, I believe, like tongues, there are three expressions of prophecy that the New Testament speaks of. The first is proclaiming the word of God. It is essentially preaching. It’s what I do for a living. It’s taking the word of God and by the anointing of the Holy Spirit, proclaiming it as truth so that people would repent of sin and trust in Jesus. It’s a preaching function. This is the broadest and most general – and most generous – use of the concept of prophecy. I’ll give you some references. 1 Corinthians 14:4 says that prophecy “edifies the church,” right, if I do my

job right and I teach the Bible well, then the whole church is edified – and my prophecy is not some new word from God, new book of the Bible, it's just taking the words of the Bible and explaining them so we have understanding. 1 Corinthians 14:6 and 7 speak of a prophecy or a word of instruction. So it links prophecy with teaching or word of instruction as synonyms. Thereby, in this sense, the prophecy is teaching the Bible. It's the word of instruction. That's preaching and teaching. That's what I do. And then in 1 Corinthians 14:24 and 25, it says that preaching the Bible, prophesying the truth that is already in Scripture, will allow non-Christians to come in, learn about Jesus, recognize they're sinful and get saved. Right, that's not you know, predicting the end of the world, that's teaching the Bible so that people would meet Jesus. So in the broadest sense, the most generous sense, prophesying today includes the ministry of preaching God's word as truth.

The second use of the gift is where it gets a little more controversial and that is foretelling the future and when I say, "prophecy," most of you probably think that. At the time of its writing, 25 percent of your Bible, roughly, was prophetic in nature, predicting some future event, many and most of them surrounding the person and work of Jesus Christ. He's the centerpiece of prophecy and he is our prophet. He is the one who speaks for God. Now, when it comes to prophecy, there are times when God has, for a church like ours or a group of people that are assembled, a word for them and it's telling them about some future event that they need to be knowledgeable of so that they can be prepared. 1 Corinthians 14:6 speaks of revelation or knowledge or prophecy. It puts those things together. The prophecy is the revelation of some future knowledge that would otherwise be unknown. The reason that God could tell us the future is that God has perfect knowledge: past, present and future of all things. There's some heresies and false teachings today. One is like open theism and process theology that will tell you that God doesn't know the future. Well, that's curious, because in Isaiah, he keeps saying, "I'm not like any other God, I know the future. I know the end from the beginning." One of the things that God says makes him most clearly revealed as God is his knowledge of the future, which is why God has a lot of prophecy in the Bible to indicate to us that he is sovereign over all of human history and he knows everything, including the future. And since God knows the future, he can reveal the future to us so that we can be prepared for it.

I'll give you an example of this, from your Bible. There's a guy named Agabus in Acts, Chapter 11, Verses 28 and 29 and he goes to the Christians in that day and he tells them – and it says he's a prophet. He says I come with a message from God and God says there's a famine coming. You know, does that seem like something that God's people would need to know? Yeah. Meaning, Get ready. People are gonna starve to death, right? Get ready to feed your family and get ready to love your neighbors and to care for other people, too. So the prophet Agabus, in Acts 11:28 and 29 is raised up by God. God speaks to him and says there's a famine coming, go tell the Christians. He's a Godly man, loves Jesus, good character. He's in agreement with Scripture. He's doctrinally sound. He's tested and approved by the leaders in the church and he steps up and says there's a famine coming and you know what? There was. He prophesied a famine.

Now, I'm hesitant to tell you that I've got this gift because most people who say that are total wingnuts, which maybe I am, which would explain a ton. And when I say that, I know I have the prophetic teaching, preaching proclamation aspect, but there are times in my ministry where I've had this future revelation knowledge thing going on – where I know the future and proclaim it to a group of people. I'll tell you one. It was the weirdest day. It was years ago. I was at a young pastors' conference and they bring out the speakers and bring you out on the stage and everybody gets a chance to teach and there's like, I don't know, maybe a thousand young pastors. This big organization, led by this prominent young teacher, preacher guy, and I was supposed to speak at lunch, which is not the best slot. Everybody's eating. This is not, you know, you're the third opening band before the headliner, that kinda gig and so I'm like, "Oh great. I get to teach the Bible while everyone is eating. I'm sure this will be, just be life-changing for everyone over dessert." And so I got up and I was planning on teaching the book of Ephesians on the reconciling power of the Gospel to bring diverse people groups together in Jesus Christ, and I went to do my teaching up front. I thought, "Well, I better open in prayer," so I start praying, "Dear Jesus," next thing I know, I start prophesying. Unexpectedly, over lunch, at a pastor's conference and God told me that some of the key leaders in this conference that was hosting me and paid for my hotel and flight and honorarium had ongoing, unrepentant sexual sin. That the other leaders in the ministry knew of it and wouldn't do anything about it and that God was frustrated because there was a disqualified leader leading the thing and he wanted me to publicly declare it and repent for him in public on the stage, during lunch, in my prayer time, at a pastor's conference with the guys who write the check.

So, I start praying and I'm like, "God and I'm sorry that, you know, I'm sorry that there's sexual sin and perversion and disqualification – that the leaders will not address this issue and I know judgment is against the organization and I know you will expose the evildo-." I go off. I kept my eyes closed, because I'm thinking, "If they chuck stuff, I don't even wanna see it coming," you know? I'm like, "Oh, man! Where is this coming from?" and I'm flowing and going and I'm like, "Oh, man. I hope this is the Ghost. I hope this is real." So I'm going with this. I go for about 15, 20 minutes in a prayer, right? And I finally open my eyes, "Amen," everybody's still got their food on their fork, like – at first they're like, "This is a weird skit," and then they're like, "This is really weird," you know? And a pastor's magazine wrote it up as a prophetic moment. I said, "Amen," and I just didn't know what to do, so I just walked away. I just left. Yeah. See you later. So I just leave. I walk off the stage and the guy who's on the stage side, who runs the ministry – he's the headliner, he's the emcee, this is his organization. I just was like, "I'm sorry, dude. You know, I didn't," – and he gets the mic and he comes out and he's trying to pick up the mess, because they got, like a half-hour left on the schedule they gotta fill. So he's like, "Blah, blah, blah." He sounds like the teacher from Peanuts. He's not saying anything. He doesn't know what to say. Less than a year later, it gets exposed that he was the guy who was an absolute sex addict, out of control, disqualified from ministry. People knew and weren't doing anything about it. I prophesied against that guy and then he got fired and he got exposed and I haven't gotten any invitations back, but I felt like that was a prophetic moment, that I wasn't looking for. I wasn't trying to – I was just gonna, "Hey, let's go to Ephesians and talk about nice Jesus." Next thing I know, I'm running for the airport, you know? And sometimes, that's the way the prophetic word works. You don't walk in, "Hi, I'm a prophet." No. You don't elect yourself to be a prophet. If you read the Old Testament, the prophets end up getting killed and they cry a lot, so this isn't what you, you know coach your kids to grow up and be, you know? "Hey, you could be a prophet." They're like, "I don't wanna be that. I want the gift of helps. People like them," you know, I mean this is – this is a weird gift. And sometimes it's not revelation of future knowledge to a group like this. Sometimes it's just to an individual. That's why a lot of prophecy shouldn't even happen in the church, it's a personal one-on-one word, word of knowledge or wisdom or revelation – some other traditions

will call it – but it’s a personal word from God through someone with a gift of prophecy to an individual.

Again, Agabus is a good illustration of this. The prophet in Acts 21:10 and 11. God gives him a word on how Paul is gonna die. So he goes to Paul and says, “Paul, I know how you’re gonna die and he tells him, here’s how you’re gonna die.” That’s a personal word from God through the prophet Agabus to Paul. And again, I’ve had this. The first time I did it, it freaked me out. I was on a national radio show taking calls from all around the country for three hours on Saturday night. I was hosting the show because the usual host was on vacation, so I’m taking calls, talking about Jesus, answering Bible questions, having a good time. This guy calls in. I don’t remember his name. We’ll call him Hank, because I don’t remember his name. We’ll call him Hank. Hank calls in from Ohio – I think it was Cleveland – and Hank just goes off on his church. “I hate my church. The music stinks. The pastor stinks. Everything stinks. I hate going to church. I hate being there. Pastors stink. You stink. Everything stinks.” And I just – I couldn’t believe it. I said, “Hank, here’s the problem. You don’t like going to church because you’re cheating on your wife and you’re running around being just a totally out of control sexual deviant and you’re committing adultery and when you go to church, you feel convicted. That’s why you don’t like the church. It’s a good church and the pastor loves Jesus and he’s preaching the Bible and you feel guilty when you’re there because you’re there with your wife. Don’t blame it on the church, repent of your sin, otherwise God might kill you.”

Right? And this is Hank in Ohio. And I remember looking at the mic going, “Oh, man! I never met Hank. I don’t know Hank.” These are my first words to Hank and I’m like, “That just went across the whole country right there.” I’m going, “Man, I hope that was God, not the taquito I ate for dinner, you know, that, that right there could get me in some serious trouble,” and it gets really quiet and I’m trying to figure out how to save this and then Hank goes, “How did you know I was cheating on my wife?” I said, “Dude, that’s God. You better knock it off. Better knock it off.” You know? But you don’t – I – you don’t look for this stuff. Sometimes God just gives you something and you roll with it.

I had another one, when we were over at the old building. The church was just starting to grow. We had a couple services and I remember I did one of the morning services and I was getting ready to do the other one and this Asian family walks in and they all look exhausted and they’re all tired and the kids are kinda falling asleep on mom and she looks tired and dad’s there and he says, “I – we need to meet with you right now.” I said, “I can’t meet right now, dude. I just got done with one service. I’m doing another service. I don’t do meetings right now. I just got, like, a little bit of time between the services.” He says, “God told us to come to you. We need the word from a prophet.” I was like, “Well, if you find one, you know, tell him I said ‘Hi!’ and send him over. I got stuff I wanna ask him, too. I don’t got anything for you, man. I’m not the prophet.” He says, “No, God said you’re the prophet and you have the word for us.” I said, “Well, where are you from?” He said, “We drove all night from Canada.” Apparently there are no prophets in Canada, so they had to come down. I said, “Okay.” I said, “You drove all night?” He said, “We drove all night,” from somewhere up in central Canada. I said, “Okay, so that explains why you all look so tired. You’ve been in the car all night.” So I didn’t know anything about this guy. I said, “Well, I’ll meet with you for a few minutes, pray for you. I mean, least I could do, you drove all night with your family.

Sat them on the couch. Prayed. Looked at them. Then went off on this whole rant. I said, “Look, the church you’re in is a Godless church. They have a hard heart. Some of the leaders have hidden, unconfessed, unrepentant sin. They are just not participating with God. God needs to judge those leaders, remove them, cleanse and purify the church, then if they are repentant, he will grow it. If not, he will shut it down. You’re in the same situation as Revelation 2 and 3. You, however, keep holding on to the church, trying to salvage it and save it and make it work because you’re being proud and you think that it’s a reflection of you. It’s not a reflection of you, it’s a reflection of Jesus. You need to get out of the way. Quit your job. Jesus has another job for you at this other church. You take that job. He’ll bless you there. Get out of the way. Let him deal with this church. That’s what his word is to you. You’re a pastor, right?” I mean, I didn’t know. I gave him this whole thing and I’m like, “Are you a pastor?” He’s like, “Yeah.” I was like, “Then that’s what it is.” So – and he gives me a big hug. He says, “Okay. That’s what we’ve been wrestling with. We didn’t – I want to leave but I didn’t know if it was me or the Lord that was moving me on and I needed confirmation.” His wife’s crying. Gives me a big hug. She says, “In my heart, I knew that’s what God had for us, but I didn’t wanna tell my husband because I wanted him to hear from God. Thank you so much.” I pray for them. They go home and I see them a few years later at a conference. He said, “Everything happened just like you said. I’m at the other church. We’re happy. It’s growing. God’s blessing it. Massive sin came out in the leadership of the other church. They now are in the process of either repenting or not and the church is gonna live or die. It’s teetering on the edge, just like you said.” I’m like, “Okey dokie. Okay.” You know, I don’t understand this all the time.

Okay, but what I’m saying is, I don’t believe I write books of the Bible. I don’t. I don’t believe I’m equal to the Bible. I’m not. I don’t believe that everything I say should be taken as true. I believe it should be tested by the leaders of the church and I believe it should be tested by the word of God. But I do believe that there can be prophecy insofar as preaching, general sense. Or a word about the future. Foretelling for a people or sometimes a personal word to an individual that God would have to speak to them to warn them of sin they are in and to compel them to turn from it and to come to Jesus. That’s tongues, prophecy defined. That’s my introduction. Now we will look at 38 verses. Ready? I’ll get some water. We do Bible here, if you’re new. We do a lot of Bible. We like the Bible.

Chapter 13, Verse 1. Now, having defined tongues and prophecy for you, now we will look at the rules that are governing how tongues and prophecy are used in the church, okay? 1 Corinthians 13:1. “If I speak in the tongues of men and angels,” there’s the heavenly language, right? There’s the Heavense. “If I speak in the tongues of men and angels but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.” Here’s what he’s saying. I could speak in tongues all day but if I’m a jerk, it doesn’t count. Right? I mean, that’s the point. You know, you need to be loving, too. See, every Christian has different gifts but one thing we’re all supposed to have is what? Love. And our gifts are little more than differing ways that we can all love each other. If you’re a servant, you love by serving. If you’re a teacher, you love by teaching. If you’re a helper, you love by helping. If you’re a leader, you love by leading. The spiritual gifts are just ways to love each other. And so if we have the gift but we don’t love, we’ve missed the whole point. That’s what he’s saying.

And Jesus said this: by this, everyone will know that you guys belong to me if you what? If you love each other. The evidence of Christian maturity is not that you can speak in tongues or prophesy or teach – it's that you love people and you love Jesus and you love people with the love of Jesus. Like Romans 5 says, through the power of the Holy Spirit, that is poured out the love of God into your heart. See, the Corinthians were like, "I pray in tongues." "I pray in tongues better than you." "I pray in tongues more than you." Paul says, "You're not very nice. You're all good at tongues and you're all bad at Christianity. Need to work on that."

"If I have the gift of prophesy" – right, I mean, that's a cool gift – "and could fathom all mysteries." "I know who's gonna win the Superbowl! I know who's gonna win the World Series. I know who's gonna win the election. I could tell you the future." Cool. "And if I could fathom all mysteries and knowledge and if I have a faith that can move mountains," I could look at Mt. Rainier and say, "Go to Canada," and it does. I mean, that's cool, if you could do that. I'd pay to see it. I mean, that's cool – "but have not love," I'm what? Jack squat. That's what the Greek says, "Jack squat," right? I mean, you could move Mt. Rainier. You could walk on water, right? You can fly in a flaming chariot to Heaven, but if you're a jerk, you're still junior varsity. It doesn't matter. That's what he's saying. "If I give all I possess to the poor" – I start a big foundation. I write those enormous checks. "If I surrender my body to the flames." – I take a bullet for somebody. Somebody needs a heart and a lung and I give them mine and I'm still alive – "but have not love, I gain nothing." It doesn't count. It doesn't matter.

See, the problem is never the spiritual gift. The problem is always when it's exercised without love. We believe in tongues. We just say, in addition to tongues, be loving. We believe in prophecy but in addition to prophecy, be loving. That's all. What is love? Well, he gets into the great wedding verse. Most of you who are married, were married with this verse. That was out of context, but it's still a good verse. The context is spiritual gifts, Chapter 12 spiritual gifts, Chapter 14 spiritual gifts, Chapter 13 – some people say, "Why is he talking about love?" because the whole point of spiritual gifts is they're different ways that we can love each other.

What is love? "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails." Here's what he's saying. Big idea. There's spiritual gifts and then there's spiritual maturity and they're different and what he's saying is you can be a great leader but if you don't love the people you lead, you're not doing any good. You could be a great teacher but if you don't love the people you're teaching, you're not doing any good. You could be a great servant, a great administrator, a great orator, a great miracle worker, a great healer but if you don't love people, you're immature. You're not using the gift for the purpose that God ordained it. There is a difference between spiritual giftedness and spiritual maturity and sometimes young, zealous, immature people think, "I have a gift! I'm amazing!" No. Humility, love, selflessness, that is the miracle – a changed life.

Here's what he says. But where there are prophecies, they will cease;" Will prophecy exist forever? In Heaven, will we prophesy? Will a word need to come from God through a prophet? No, Jesus'll just tell us. Super simple shortcut, right? "I wonder what God thinks." "Well, let's go ask him." That's easy enough. Prophecy is temporary but what exists forever is love. There won't be prophecy in Heaven but there will be love. That's why love is more important than all the gifts. See, prophecy'll stop but love, that'll keep going into the kingdom. "[W]here there are prophecies, they will cease, where there are tongues, they will be stilled;" Will we speak in tongues in Heaven? No. We'll speak the Heavenly language, I'm assuming. We won't need interpreters and missionaries and – we won't need linguists. We'll all communicate. "[W]here there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part," how many have you have felt that in your Christian walk? I know, partly. Right?

I mean, that's Christianity. We know, in part. We don't know everything that we would like to know – we know everything we need to know. That means Christianity distinguishes between questions and uncertainty and unbelief. Unbelief says, "I don't believe the Bible. I don't believe in Jesus. I don't believe I'm a sinner. I don't believe in Heaven and Hell." That's unbelief. Christianity says, "I believe in Jesus, the Bible, Heaven and Hell. There's just some things I don't understand. I know, in part. There's some questions I still got and I live by faith and when I get to heaven and see Jesus, I'm sure everything'll get cleared up for me. So I'm just waiting until I see him." That's Christianity. If you have doubts, if you have questions, you could still be a faithful Christian because you know in part. The guy who says, "I figured out everything!" He hasn't figured out anything. The guy who says, "I figured out some things," he's figured it all out.

"For we know in part, we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears." Hugely debated verse. Those who hold what is called cessationism that says that certain supernatural, miraculous gifts – tongues, prophecy, healing, miracles, and such – only existed in the early church and they ceased when the perfect came. And they will tell you that the perfect is what? The Bible. Now that we have the Bible, we don't need tongues, prophecy or knowledge, they have ceased. Okay, one thing I would say is this. Do we at Mars Hill believe that the Bible is perfect? We do. We are a Bible-believing church, absolutely, unequivocally, unapologetically. We like the Bible. We like the Bible. We believe every word of it. All right, Proverbs 30:5 and 6, "Every word of God is flawless." We believe the Bible is perfect. We do. The doctrine of inerrancy. No mistakes in the Bible. We believe that.

But is that the perfect that is being spoken of here? It's not. Keep reading with me. Verse 11, "When I was a child," when I was a selfish little kid, "I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me." Here's what he's saying. These people are very immature in their faith. They could speak in tongues. They could prophesy. They could heal, but they're not very nice to each other and they're not very considerate of one another and some of them are still getting drunk, and one's having sex with his mom and the rest are shacking up together, and just because they could speak in tongues and prophesy doesn't really matter. Right, I mean, speaking in tongues with your naked girlfriend does not count, amen? That does not count. You say, "We're speaking in tongues." And you're going to Hell. Knock it off. You're not supposed to do it like that. That's what they're doing. They think that because they have spiritual gifts, they're super. No. What makes you mature is love and humility and maturity and the differentiation between adult and a child is this – a child is absolutely self-consumed.

I have a six-month-old son. I love him. He's fat and happy. His name's Gideon. He's a wonderful kid but he is selfish. He does not know that there are other people on the earth and he thinks that the ones that are there are solely there for his use. So it could be 3:00 in the morning, he'll poop himself and he will scream. He will want the whole world to drop whatever they are doing and run to his aid at 3:00 in the morning because he's got a little tiny tootsie roll in his shorts. He cannot handle it. He's not, he's not – you know, he's not adult. I mean, he doesn't think, "Well, it's 3:00 in the morning. Mom's sleeping. I've already eaten 27 times today. The poor woman hasn't even had a nap since the first Bush term, you know, I should leave her alone." He doesn't think that. And that's how we are when we're childish. It's all about me and what I feel and what I want and what I needed. My ministry and my gift and Paul says that's like a kid. Be a grownup and say, "You know what? It's not about me. It's about him, it's about us." Don't be childish. "But I like to speak in tongues! I wanna do it in public! I wanna do it at the Bible study! I wanna do it at the youth rally!" Well, is that loving? Is that Biblical? Is that edifying other people? Is that helping anybody? "No, but it helps me." Well then, don't be a baby about it. Go home. Lock the door. Scream. Shout. Have a great old time. God bless you. You know? But don't be a child about it. Be an adult.

"Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see," what? "[F]ace to face." He said, "You know what? We have imperfect ministries. My teaching, imperfect. Our church, imperfect. Our administrative systems, imperfect. Everything here is imperfect and one day, our imperfect ministries will go away and in the meantime, we want to mature and grow and do the best we can at the ministries that God has apportioned to us but one day, our imperfect ministries go away and the perfect comes, what's the perfect? He just told us. We'll know when the perfect comes because we'll see him face-to-face. What's that? It's the second coming of Jesus. Imperfect people. Imperfect churches have imperfect ministries until Jesus comes back and then everything gets straightened out. The curse is lifted. Sin is no more. Death is no more. Certain gifts we don't even need in Heaven.

Gift of mercy. Go visit the people in the hospital that are dying. There's gonna be no hospitals and nobody's dying. Gift of healing – nobody's gonna need to be healed. Everybody's gonna be fine. Certain gifts won't be needed. So the perfect does not refer to the coming of the Bible, though that is perfect. The perfect refers to the coming of Jesus. We believe that Jesus Christ is coming again. We long for that day. I mean it's his face on the horizon. Our hopes, our dreams, our goals, our aspirations are all tied up with seeing the face of Jesus. Okay, that's what we want as Christians. We want to mature, serve Jesus, do ministry, be the church and one day when Jesus gets back, just look him in the face and have him look at us and say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Then, my ministry has come to an end and I enter into the kingdom where everything is perfect and sin and the curse are lifted and the Lord Jesus is the one in charge and he does everything perfectly. We do ministry until we see Jesus. That's the point. That's the point.

He says at that point, "I shall know fully, even as I am fully known." My faith becomes sight. My questions get resolved. In the meantime, "these three remain: faith," what it is – I trust in Jesus. I'm waiting for Jesus. I love Jesus. He's coming or I'm going, one way or another, I'm gonna see him. That leads to "hope." My life is not in vain. My church is not in vain. My ministry is not in vain. Even though I'm not perfect, even though my ministry's not perfect, I still have hope that God's using it. "And love." And he says, "the greatest of these is," what? "love." You know what? We're not gonna need a lot of things in Heaven, but love will still be there and so it's the most important thing. So he goes on then, here are the guidelines. "Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy." Telling the church, honor all the gifts, respect all the gifts. We've looked at them in 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, Ephesians 4, 1 Peter 4. We've looked at the gifts. He says honor all the gifts. Desire that the church would have all of the spiritual gifts. That there would be enough people with varying gifts. This is why I don't have a lot of happiness with house churches and exceedingly little churches that intentionally keep themselves small. They can't have all the gifts with eight people. You can't have all the expression of the fullness of Christ with me and my two buddies. It takes more than that. It takes multigeneration, multiracial, multinational. It takes multihistory. It takes the diversity of God's people woven together to really value the fullness of the body of Christ.

He says if you wanna value anything, value one gift above the others. Prophecy. I believe here he's talking about the preaching of the Bible. That the one thing that keeps the church straightened out and keeps everybody on mission and keeps everything together is when the Bible is taught accurately so that the people in the church, whatever their gift, know who Jesus is, know who Jesus isn't, know what the Bible says and are able to follow the teachings of God.

So what he says is this – love all the gifts and if you wanna honor one, honor the teaching and preaching of the Bible. "For anyone who speaks in a tongue," Verse 2, "does not speak to men but to God." That's the prayer language thing. "Indeed, no one understands him; he utters," rather, "mysteries with his spirit." If you have the prayer gift of tongues, it's between you and God. We do not know what you are talking about. We still love you, but we do not know what you're talking about. It'd be like me getting up and doing Klingon for an hour. You know, I'm speaking Klingon and you're all like, "It was cute for a minute and now we're lost." When you have the prayer language of tongues and we don't know what you're talking about, we love you. We're glad you're happy, but you should do that somewhere else, like at home, because here, we don't know what you're talking about.

He goes on, "But everyone who prophesies," speaks the Bible, proclaims the truth of God's word. "Everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort." So he's distinguishing here about when we all get together. Tongues isn't a bad thing but it's not good for the corporate gathering. Preaching, however, is a good thing for the corporate gathering. "He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself," which isn't bad, but the whole point of a spiritual gift is not to edify yourself, right? It's to build up the body. It's to edify others, right? If you have the gift of hospitality, you don't just bake muffins for yourself. No. You make muffins for other people. That's the gift of hospitality. If you have the gift of teaching, you don't say, "Well, every Thursday night I lecture to myself and parse Greek verbs." No. Get some other people and teach them. The whole point of gifts, spiritual gifts, is to edify other people, not just yourself. Now, in using your gift, you are edified but if you only serve in such a way as to edify yourself, you're being very childish and immature. You're saying it's about me, not about us, not about them.

He goes on, "[H]e who speaks," Verse 4, "He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church." Bible preaching benefits the whole church. Speaking in tongues may make you happy but the rest of us are just totally in the dark. "I would like every one of you to speak in tongues," does Paul say we shouldn't speak in tongues? No. Are we against speaking in tongues? No. We're saying if you're gonna speak in

tongues, do it Biblically, be loving and considerate of others and everything'll be fine. And actually, prophecy and tongues have never been a divisive issue in the history of this church, I think because the people that have those gifts have been very loving, very kind, very mature, if you wanna use Paul's words, and they have used them in a way that is Biblical. So we've actually never had any problems with these gifts, which just absolutely delights me. These have split whole churches and denominations and at Mars Hill, it's never really been an issue. I didn't even know that three of the elders spoke in tongues until I asked them. "Any of you guys speak in tongues?" They're like, "We do. Can we still be elders?" "Yeah, praise God." I didn't even know. I mean, obviously, it wasn't divisive, you know? I mean, you're an elder. We get along fine. I love you. Pray for me in tongues. I'm cool with that, you know?"

"I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. He who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues unless he interprets, so that the church may be edified." So preaching is above tongues. That's why the majority of our time is spent preaching the Bible and we don't get together and have a tongue-athon, you know? We don't do that. "Now, brothers, if I come to you and speak in tongues, what good will I be to you, unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or word of instruction? Even in the case of lifeless things that make sounds, such as the flute or harp, how will anyone know what tune is being played unless there is a distinction in the notes? Again, if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle? So it is with you. Unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue, how will anyone know what you are saying? You will just be speaking into the air. Undoubtedly there are all sorts of languages in the world, yet none of them is without meaning. If then I do not grasp the meaning of what someone is saying, I am a foreigner to the speaker, and he is a foreigner to me. So it is with you. Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that," that edify, that "build up the church."

What he's saying is this – you may have the gift of tongues. Show up to Mars Hill, "Yabba dabba do, Jesus loves you. Woo hoo hoo." We don't know what you're talking about. We love you. We're glad you're fired up. You just, you know, you got your own little party of one going on and the rest of us are just feeling kinda left out. So this isn't the best place for that. Doesn't mean you can't do it, it just doesn't fit here. Now, I know some of you have been to churches where everybody comes in, speaks in tongues, you know, I mean they are screaming, shouting, yelling, sweating, hankies flying. Praise banners, tambourines, you know, I mean it's nuts. You know, Icy Hot for the pulled hamstrings. It's just, I mean it's, you know, it's a good time and you feel weird because everybody's speaking in tongues but you don't know what's going on and I'm telling you, those are immature, Corinthianesque selfish, childish worship services. I know that sounds harsh and judgmental but that's exactly what's going on in Corinth. And some people say, "Well, we need to do it like the Corinthians." No, we need to do it unlike the Corinthians. These are people who are drunk at church. Right, these are people having sex with each other. These are not the people we want to emulate ourselves after. These are people who get a series of rebukes. He just told them you're being a bunch of babies. You're acting like little kids. Knock it off. Grow up. Be mature. And they were acting like some immature services, where everybody, "Oh, but I feel so good. I feel so energized. I feel so filled with the Holy Ghost." Well, if you looked around and realized that everybody else is in the dark and nobody knows what you're doing and you're not being loving and considerate and you're not involving them and they're totally lost.

Now the reason that people get into that sort of extremism is they think if you speak in tongues, that's a good thing. If we all speak in tongues, that's a really good thing. If we all speak in tongues really, really loud, that must be a really, really good thing. No. The next verse clarifies. He goes on. Verse 13, "For this reason anyone who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret what he says." You'd like to have the gift of tongues and interpretation so when you speak the Heavenly language, you could translate into the earthly language so that you and other people know what you're talking about.

"For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays," my soul is connecting with God, that's not a bad thing, but it's insufficient, "but my mind is unfruitful." I don't know what I'm talking about. "So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit," pray in your tongues, "but I will also pray with my mind;" Right? Pray in English, and pray your prayers as well. If you have the gift of tongues for a prayer language, pray in English and in tongues. Pray your requests and pray as the spirit leads, he is saying. He says, "I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind." So part of the gift of tongues may include the ability to sing in the Heavenly language. Some people actually, I know, claim to have this and they're Godly people I believe. I just don't have it, so I've never experienced it.

"If you are praising God with your spirit, how can one who finds himself among those who do not understand say 'Amen' to your thanksgiving, since he does not know what you are saying? You may be giving thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified." When you go to church, you don't just sit there and say, "What's in it for me." You come in say, "Well, what about everybody else?" Right, and if you are speaking in tongues and fired up and having a good old time and the guy next to you doesn't know what in the world you're talking about, you haven't loved him. You haven't prayed for him. You haven't talked to him. You haven't shook his hand. You just totally ignored him. Is he experiencing the love of God? No. What you've just told him is, "I came here to ignore you." No, no, we – we can do these things at home and come here to be together, not to ignore one another.

He says, "I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you." Paul had the gift of tongues. Now, I argued with one pastor a while back. He said, "We don't believe in tongues, because we got the Bible." I said, "The guy who wrote the Bible had tongues." I hate to point out the obvious. You can have both. The guy who wrote the Bible did. All right, Paul has the gift of tongues. If you have the gift of tongues, we don't wanna diminish that. A guy who wrote the Bible had the gift of tongues. It's a good thing, providing it's used Biblically for the edification of the church and also done in a way that is loving and considerate of others. That's all. "But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue." Right? Now some, again, would say, "But if tongues is good, why don't we all speak in tongues together at the same time, super loud, then everybody'll know that the Holy Spirit's here with us. Yee haw."

Is that true? If everybody's speaking in tongues, is that a guarantee that the Holy Spirit is there in power? It's not. I'll prove it to you. Verse 20,

"Brothers, stop thinking like children." Stop being immature. "In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults. In the Law it is written." He quotes Isaiah 28:11 and 12. "Through men of strange tongues and through the lips of foreigners I will speak to this people, but even then they will not listen to me," says the Lord." Here's what he says. He says, just because people are speaking in tongues, that doesn't mean that the Holy Spirit has dropped in full power, force and authority and that God is super excited and you're varsity. What it may mean is that God is judging you and you're all immature and he's unhappy and the tongues are a sign of judgment. The error of Pentecostal theology is thinking that every time tongues are spoken it's evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes it's evidence of the conviction of the Holy Spirit that the judgment on God's people. He quotes Isaiah 28 to illustrate this. In that day, God's people all spoke Hebrew, the language of the Old Testament, in the days of Isaiah. And they would be in their city, speaking their language. What he says is this. Isaiah 28. You're hard-hearted. You're rebellious. You're sinning against me. You're doing wicked. I'm going to send another nation of people who don't know me and they don't love me and I'm going to use them like a rod in my hand to discipline you and to judge you. I think it was the Assyrians and then they pull into town and they take over the city and then they're walking through the streets speaking a foreign language which means God has judged us.

What he's saying is this, just because you hear tongues doesn't necessarily prove that the Holy Spirit is at work. Sometimes tongues are evidence of God's judgment on the immature, sinful, and self-righteous. You will not hear that at a lot of Pentecostal churches. You will hear, the more people that speak in tongues, the more Holy Spirit we've got. He says, not all the time. Don't be childish. Are you mature? Do you hate sin? Do you love Jesus? Are you loving people? Are you considerate of others? Are you doing things Biblically? Are you seeking to interpret? Are you distinguishing between your private prayer language and your corporate worship? If not, all of that noise might just be condemnation. Do we believe in tongues? Yes. Do we believe that it is often abused? Yes. Do we believe that therefore we should get rid of it? No. What do we believe? It should be done Biblically. It should be done lovingly. It should be done maturely and then there's no trouble at all. The problem is never the gift. The problem is the person who uses the gift wrongly. That's always the problem.

He goes on – I will close as quickly as I can – "Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers;" the missionary gift, to tell them about Jesus. "[P]rophecy, however, is for believers, not for unbelievers." The preaching of the Bible in the church so that people would become mature and stop being childish. "So if the whole church comes together," we all get together for a big meeting, just like today, "and everyone speaks in tongues," if right now I said, "Okay, one, two, three, lock and load, go!" "It's a tongues-athon, right? It's tongues-fest. It's tongues-apalooza. Go!" Right, let's say that we did that and we're not, if you're a charismatic, sit down, we're not doing that. I'm speaking hypothetically here. We're charismatic with a seatbelt, use yours. If the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues and someone comes in who's new, doesn't understand, you know, Frankie Fremont comes in, you know? Bill Ballard comes in, "Hi. Got a lotta people here. Cool band. What's going on?" "You're at a church." "Oh. Church. Well, the girls are cute. I'll stick around and see what happens." Or some unbelievers come in. You bring your non-Christian friend, what's he gonna think? "These people are nuts." Why will they think that? Because those people are nuts! Right? Right, if the non-Christian comes in it's like "[babbles]" You know? The non-Christians are like, "Woah. This is like happy hour at a Slovakian bar. Everybody's crazy and they don't speak English."

I had a buddy of mine take me to one of those shake-and-bake charismaniac churches like this. I was, I don't think I was a Christian yet. It was early in college, and he put me in the middle row of one of these charismatic college meetings. Middle of the row. I can't get out! I'm near the front. Next thing I know, everybody's going nuts singing, praying in tongues, screaming, yelling, I am totally lost. He looks at me and he says, "What do you think?" I was like, "I think I wanna go. I think I wanna go! You guys are nuts. You're freaking me out. I wish somebody," nobody ever told me about Jesus. I sat there, I'm like, "You guys are all fired up about something. I have no idea what. It would be nice if somebody clued me in to what's exciting here." Oh, Jesus rose. Woulda been nice had somebody mentioned that but they're so busy speaking in tongues and freaking out and sweating and pulling a hamstring they never got to that. What Paul's saying is, you know, you gotta consider the fact that there are visitors, there are non-Christians that come to the church and if you act like a bunch of total whackjobs, you're not helping, right?

Now some of you, I know, you've brought people to Mars Hill. How would you feel if you finally got your friend, neighbor, co-worker, family member – "Come on. Come to Mars Hill." And that day was tongues-apalooza and I forgot to say anything about Jesus, right? All the way home, you'd be, "I'm so sorry. I am so sorry. It's usually not like that. I am so sorry. I'll pay for the therapist. It's my fault. It's all my fault." I mean, you wanna bring your friends to church and you wanna have them hear about Jesus and not just get freaked out. I mean, Christianity's freakish enough, right? We don't need to add to the freakishness.

"But if an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying," right? They're learning the Bible. The Bible's being preached. They're agreeing with sound doctrine. "He will be convinced by all that he is a sinner." He'll say, "You know what, I'm a sinner," "and will be judged by all, and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, 'God is really among you!'" When we get together, the point is Bible teaching, Bible preaching. About Jesus. So that you can bring your friends, family, neighbors, co-workers and not have them totally freak out and you know that we're gonna talk about Jesus and we're gonna open the Bible and if you have a prayer language, then great, then exercise that in private. It's not functioning here. This is not the best place for it. The point of all of this is simply this. There is a distinction between spiritual giftedness and spiritual maturity. All the spiritual gifts exist for the one purpose of having various ways that we get to demonstrate our love for each other and so the whole point is love and if somebody comes in and they're loved – you shake their hand, you love them, you care for them, you are a kind host, and we talk about sin, that we are all sinners and we talk about Jesus – that he is perfect. See, perfection – Jesus has come once and he's coming again. The first time, he came to live without sin perfectly, to die as the perfect substitute for our sin and to rise from death, conquering our enemies of Satan, sin and death perfectly. And now Jesus has reconciled us to God. He has taken away our sin and he has taken we who are imperfect and he is changing us as we, day by day, grow to be more like him as we repent of sin and we grow in holiness and we're made more perfect and one day either he will return or we will die and we will see him face-to-face and we'll be made perfect, physically, spiritually, emotionally,

mentally perfect. Fully saved. Fully redeemed. Fully restored. The whole point is Jesus. All the gifts exist to point people to Jesus and if at any point, the gift is utilized in such a way that it detracts from Jesus, then it is not functioning Biblically, lovingly, maturely.

So now, we ask you to respond. If you're not a Christian, become a Christian. From these two gifts, I want you to see that our God is a living God and that he's a speaking God. And if you wanna hear from him, read your Bible. The words of prophecy that are recorded in this great, true, perfect, ancient text. And hear from God, who speaks to you about Jesus. Give your life to Jesus, respond to him in prayer. That's your communication with God. He speaks through his word, you speak through your prayers. Our God is a living God, he's a speaking God. That's what tongues and prophecy are all about. Ours is a speaking God. He's here to speak with you about your sin and your need for him, Jesus. Give your life to Jesus, become a Christian today. If you are a Christian, repent of your childishness, your immaturity, your ways of thinking and acting and being stubborn and self-righteous and into your gift but not as loving and connected to the church and considerate of the church and serving of others as you perhaps could and should be. When you're ready, you who are Christians or become today, you come forward. Give your tithes and offerings, take communion, remembering Jesus' body and blood shed for us sinners and then we're gonna sing. Why? Because that's where we're one. All our voices come together as one. As we sing in one language, we are saying it's not just about me, it's about us. And yes, Jesus loves me but he loves us and yes, Jesus uses me, but he uses us and we need one another and together, we are the family of God and we love one another and we love the Lord Jesus and that all coalesces in our singing. So we would encourage you to sing and if you wanna raise your hands, raise your hands and if you wanna be glad and excited for the Lord Jesus, we encourage that. All we say is, be considerate of your neighbor, that's all. Be loving to those around you as well. I went long and hard. We've covered a lot, thank you for your patience. I will close us in prayer and transition for your time of response.

Lord Jesus, I thank you so much that you're a living God, that you're a speaking God. I thank you that you will go to lengths like tongues and prophecy to communicate with us. Jesus, I pray you would give us ears to hear. I pray that those of us who are not Christians, that we would seriously weigh our eternal state, our relationship with you, the sin we have committed and our desperate need for a savior. For God, those who are Christians, I pray that not only would they know their gift but they would use it in a loving, Biblical, and mature way so that we could be a unified and not a divided church. And Jesus I thank you for those in the church with the gifts of prophecy and tongues. That in our almost ten years of history, they have not been divisive, they have not been troublesome, they have not been unbiblical, they have not been immature. And God, for that, we are exceedingly glad. We pray that these doctrines would not divide this church as it sadly has so many. May we all pursue the Lord Jesus. May we all pursue the love of one another until we see –