

Kids say some of the most interesting things, if you just stop and listen. Harper Lei, just last night exclaimed to her mother, “My hair is getting on my nerds (nerves)!” Mary-Emma is constantly looking in her room for the “cromote” (remote) for her television. Elizabeth, eight years of age going on twenty or so, needed some “savaline” ,which in adult terms is Vaseline, for some reason or another yesterday. It really is quite interesting to listen to them try and form words. The thing is, one has to be really listening intently to pick up on just what is they are trying to say. When all my children were younger and had just began to speak, they spoke in some sort of baby language only their good mother could understand. There were many times I had to go to mom for translation of just what they trying to say. It seemed I was some foreigner in a foreign land trying to maneuver parenthood with these little one speaking some other language. I was in desperate need of an interpreter and mom fit the bill. Without mom (my wife), I could not understand the simple request my children were telling me.

In I Corinthians 14: 6-18, Paul writes to the Corinthian church about this spiritual gift. “But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you unless I speak to you either by revelation, by knowledge, by prophesying, or by teaching? ⁷ Even things without life, whether flute or harp, when they make a sound, unless they make a distinction in the sounds, how will it be known what is piped or played? ⁸ For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare for battle? ⁹ So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air. ¹⁰ There are, it may be, so many kinds of languages in the world, and none of them *is* without significance. ¹¹ Therefore, if I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be a foreigner to him who speaks, and he who speaks *will be* a foreigner to me. ¹² Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual *gifts*, *let it be* for the edification of the church *that* you seek to excel. ¹³ Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. ¹⁴ For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. ¹⁵ What is *the conclusion* then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding. ¹⁶ Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say “Amen” at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say? ¹⁷ For you indeed give thanks well, but the other is not edified. ¹⁸ I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all; ¹⁹ yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.”

The tongues Paul spoke of here in I Corinthians 14 were not gibberish or some “language” understood only by the angels as some claim today. They were real languages spoken by the many different groups represented at the church in Corinth. Many today “believe” with conviction that they can speak in tongues. Many today stand before an audience of people and shout and shake during a worship service declaring that the Holy Spirit has given them utterance with this “unknown language”. Yet, when we read and study God’s Word in I Corinthians we come to understand that the languages were not some form of gibberish but real languages. They were spoken and interpreted to edify and encourage the church. One was not to speak in tongue unless there was an interpreter. Also important to keep in mind is that these gifts were bestowed on these individuals by the apostle and those bearing the gifts had not the ability to pass them on to others. They only had the spiritual gift that was given them.

However, God does speak to us today. He speaks to us through His Living Word. He does not veil His Word in mystery or some tongue only the angels can understand, but it is plain for all to understand. We only must listen intently to what it says. Many times, as with my girls, I must go to someone who has a better understanding, a better grasp of what is being said. That is to say the preacher still needs to be taught so he may teach others. I believe the same can be said about many others as well. Let us listen closely to God’s Word so we have ears that hear and we may be doers of the Word as well.

In Christ,

Joe Rhodes