

Speaking in Tongues (3 of 3)

David Halbrook

To understand “speaking in tongues,” you must understand God’s plan for revealing truth. When God revealed truth, He let a miracle prove the words were from Him. In Matthew 9:1-8, a miracle proved that Jesus was speaking truth.

Read Hebrews 2:1-4. Verse 3 reminds us that Jesus’ words are true, but how do we know His words are true? Verse 4 says that God was “bearing witness” by various miracles. Miracles were the way that God showed that the words of Jesus and the apostles were true. That is what happened in Acts 2—since the audience knew God gave the apostles the power to speak in those languages (tongues), they also knew God approved of what they taught. Speaking in tongues was a piece of evidence that the apostles’ message was true.

Today, the Bible records the words and miracles of Jesus and His apostles so we know what is right and have the evidence proving it is true. God is not giving new teachings or new evidence today. He has completed His plan for revealing and “bearing witness” to truth. Since we need no new message or evidence, tongue-speaking has ceased. (Send us any comment or question)

Editor’s Note: Use our article in *Arkansas Weekly* to encourage others to search the Scriptures, understand this subject, or at least to get them thinking about spiritual things. If you don’t help your friends and neighbors learn spiritual truths, who will?

Simple opportunities to teach the lost and assist each other.

Pray for: Janice White, The Ledgerwoods, Novela Puckett, Samuel Southall, others with ongoing trials, our brethren who are travelling, and new Christians among us.

Is anyone willing to fill the signboard by the road during October? (Eph. 4:16)

We assemble each Sunday at 10AM, 10:45AM, 5PM & Wednesday at 7PM

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The Exhorter

Acts 11:23 *Exhorted them all... cleave unto the Lord*

Church of Christ--Quail Valley

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Is There A Difference in “Doctrine” and “Gospel”?

David Halbrook

Like worship, our efforts aimed at unity must be made in spirit and truth. While Satan has no genuine interest in unity in a godly spirit or unity in truth, he can appear as an “angel of light” whose spirit is fully set on unity! However, his efforts are always at the expense of truth for there is no truth in him (Jn. 8:44). Satan’s soldiers sometimes claim to be fighting the good fight for unity with the battle cry *Unity in the gospel, not in doctrine!*, or some similar slogan which emphasize “gospel” over “doctrine.” All such slogans ring hollow when we understand what the gospel and doctrine are in the Bible, resulting in a clearer plan for the unity of the Spirit.

The Meaning and Use of “Gospel” and “Doctrine” in the New Testament

Both of these words have relatively simple meanings. The word gospel means “good news” and doctrine means “teaching.” They each tell us something about the nature of God’s message. “Gospel” emphasizes the joy this message brings. “Doctrine” emphasizes that this message must be taught and learned.

Their use in Scripture shows how God used these words. The first words of Mark’s record of the life of Jesus are, *The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God* (Mk. 1:1). Thus, every word which Jesus spoke and everything He did on earth is a part of the record of the *good news*, including the things recorded by Matthew, Luke, and John (even though John never uses the word “gospel” in his record of Jesus’ earthly life). In addition to His birth, death, and resurrection, this would also include the words Jesus spoke about the memorial of His death (Mt. 26:26-28), the necessity of worship in spirit and truth (Jn. 3:23-24), the effort of the church to save certain members (Mt. 18:15-17), the timing of the kingdom of God on earth (Lk. 9:27), etc. The doctrine (teaching) of Jesus on the subjects of worship, responsibilities of His congregations, and the nature of His kingdom are, in the opening words of Mark’s Spirit-guided book, God’s record of “the gospel of Jesus Christ.” We could

say that the gospel is a record of Jesus' doctrine and visa-versa. The only difference between these words is their technical definition. In reference to the message they identify and represent, these words are synonymous with each other and other words (*faith* Eph. 4:5; *word* 2 Tim. 4:2; *truth* 1 Pet. 1:22; *counsel* Acts 20:27). At times, these words may refer to a specific part of God's message (such as first or latter principles), but typically they simply identify different aspects of God's message.

The Sanhedrin rebuked the apostles for *filling Jerusalem with your doctrine* after realizing many people were being added to the Lord (Acts 5:28, 14). They were filling Jerusalem with the gospel though the word "gospel" is absent from the first seven chapters of Acts (Mk. 16:15; Lk. 24:47; Acts 1:8). This was not only what was making men believers, it was the message that the believers continued steadfastly in (Acts 2:42). Paul also uses these words interchangeably (Rom. 6:17; 10:16).

Efforts to Divide "Gospel" from "Doctrine"

Though I was not alive, I have heard and read of concentrated efforts by some brethren in the late 60s and 70s to redefine "gospel" and "doctrine" as a new plan for unity. They claimed that *gospel* was limited to certain first principles and *doctrine* to other latter principles. Some claimed that Galatians 1:8-9, Jude 3, and 2 John 9 may only be applied in first-principle controversies and do not apply to controversy in matters which they categorized as "doctrine" (instrumental music, church-sponsored recreation, etc.). At the same time, some of them claimed that the apostolic epistles are not part of the gospel but are purely doctrinal.¹ Their purpose was clear in statements like "one's knowledge of apostolic doctrine has nothing to do with his being God's child"² and "there is as much difference between the gospel and doctrine as there is between a daily newspaper and a marriage guide . . ."³ Today, you may or may not have heard such arguments but they live on---not only in the archives of these papers but in similar ways of speaking, thinking, and acting.

This idea is alive among denominations When I lived in Baytown, Texas the local United Methodist Church invited area "believers" to join with them in a local choir and "for at least one day, [to] transcend the barriers of denomination." Similar so-called unity efforts are often based on the idea that people should temporarily ignore their differences and unite on their common belief in some particular teaching of Jesus. Their differences are often classified in terms of doctrine (Methodist doctrine,

Catholic doctrine, etc.), but for some reason they never refer to their differences as involving gospel (I've never heard reference to Methodist gospel or Catholic gospel). This thinking doesn't stop with inter-denominational efforts. In the continuing debate among many denominations on homosexuality, some argue that homosexuality "does not touch the core of the faith and is therefore no grounds for church splits."⁴ Do you see that the reference to "the core of the faith" is merely a first cousin to the gospel-doctrine distinction? This man-made distinction is subjective and therefore leads to subjective lists of what must be defined as "gospel" or "doctrine." Once that thinking is accepted, fellowship is unaffected by differences of "doctrine," and the broad gate of fellowship opens into even broader pastures.

This idea is alive among Christians and churches claiming to be "of Christ" The February 2014 issue of *The Christian Chronicle* (a monthly paper reporting news among primarily "mainstream churches of Christ") reported a joint worship service involving the Central Church of Christ, First Presbyterian Church, First Baptist Church, and United Methodist Church in Amarillo, Texas. Allen Stranglin, who preaches for the Central congregation, had "dreamed that my kids could experience something like that" because it allowed worshipers to "tear down walls" and "celebrate what we have in common." This is "gospel-doctrine distinction"-thinking in practice, even if they would not use those terms. Do you think they would agree that they were "tearing down gospel walls" in this effort? No, and they would likely be offended at the suggestion. Would they be equally as offended if asked whether the walls they tore down were "doctrinal walls"? Unlikely because many people think that all churches teach the same "gospel" but are divided over "doctrine." Biblically, this is the equivalent of saying "We disagree about truth but are united in the word of God." We cannot speak as the oracles of God and say such things (1 Pet. 4:11; Col. 3:17).

If we dare dabble in this direction of thinking, we have seen where it will take us and/or those whom we influence. The brethren who made this appeal in the past, today typically have joined the denominations or are among churches who have women leading the assembly (or even the church as elders), teach that the unrighteous will not exist into eternity (annihilationism), and have "social ministries" of every kind. The broad gate leads to a broader path which leads to destruction (Mt. 7:13).

Conclusion Since God holds us fully accountable to the words He has revealed, let us hold each other accountable to and unite in them (Prov. 27:17; Jn. 17:17, 20-23).

* For more study, see the series of articles at www.aubeacon.com/HellAndMrFudge/ArticleIndex.htm

¹ For specific examples, see *Mission Messenger* July, Feb. 1973; Dec. 1972; Jan. 1965; Oct. 1965; June 1965 available at <http://www.unity-in-diversity.org/MissionMessenger/index.htm> [accessed 10-2-14]

² & ³ *Mission Messenger*, Vol 30, No. 10. Oct 1968 at www.unity-in-diversity.org/ [accessed 10-2-14]

⁴ Humphrey, Edith. "What God Hath Not Joined" *Christianity Today*, Sept 2004, p40