

False Doctrines and Claims of Tongues People

by John R. Rice

John R. Rice critiques the tongues movement, highlighting its false doctrines and the misinterpretation of biblical teachings regarding the Holy Spirit.

Scripture: Luke 1:41, Luke 3:21, Acts 8:14, Acts 9:17, 1 Corinthians 14:34

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "False Doctrine"

Description

John R. Rice addresses the tongues movement, acknowledging the sincerity and faith of its followers while critiquing the belief that speaking in tongues is the initial evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. He emphasizes the importance of being grounded in Scripture and highlights the false teachings and arrogance that can accompany the tongues movement. Rice points out the lack of biblical support for tongues as the primary evidence of the Spirit's fullness and challenges the notion that it is a superior spiritual gift compared to soul-winning.

Transcript

Now I come to bring the last message on the tongues movement -- the movement that teaches speaking in tongues as the initial evidence of the fullness of the Spirit or the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

First, let me say that many, many people of the tongues movement are good Christian people. They believe the Bible, they love the Lord. Many of them lead good Christian lives, and I have many friends among them.

One time during a citywide campaign in Springfield, Missouri, I not only spoke as a guest in the publishing house of the Assemblies of God, but one night twenty-six Assembly of God preachers were on the platform in that great four-pole tent.

I love people who love the Lord. In many a revival campaign people who believe in talking in tongues have been active in the campaign. I was with Dr. Flowers in the National Association of Evangelicals in those old days, before it went more or less New Evangelical. Dr. Flowers was the secretary of that movement.

So I am saying kind things about people I love and who are good people. I am not running down people, but I am talking about the tongues movement as such and the teachings that are involved in it.

I think I ought to say also that I have read the best books on this subject by the principal teachers themselves of the Pentecostal movement. I am thoroughly familiar with their teaching and I answer it fairly

and honestly.

Let me say also, I believe in the fullness of the Holy Spirit. I believe in a definite enduement of power that one ought to seek and have for the work of the Lord in winning souls. Not only have I earnestly sought before God again and again and again for such power of God, but I am certain in my mind that unworthy as I am, God has seen fit to put upon me the power of the Holy Spirit so that some tens of thousands of people have been saved under my frail, human ministry. So I say thank God for people who believe in the fullness of the Spirit.

And I think that the tongues heresy is wrong and does harm and that it some way blocks people, turning them away from the main truth of the fullness of the Spirit which God wants us all to have. I believe that the gifts of the Spirit are for today, that is, as much as they ever were and as much as God gives to each one severally as He will. He doesn't give all those gifts to everybody and they are not manifest in every community. For instance, how long has it been since you saw somebody with a gift of miracles? If there is an occasion for it, God gives such gifts as He chooses, and He taught us to pray for the power of the Spirit to prophesy, and we may do that.

The Tongues Heresy Goes With Any Kind of Doctrine

Now then, who is it who talks in tongues? Who is it in what you call the charismatic meeting, who talks in tongues? Not only Pentecostal, including Assemblies of God and Pentecostal Holiness people and the Apostolic churches and two branches of the Church of God, but a good many in other denominations do, too, talk in tongues. But it generally is the Pentecostal people.

I had a letter about talking in tongues the other day from a Baptist. They say Roman Catholics even now are taking part, not only having tongues meetings but coming to meet with others to talk and pray about the gift of tongues and teaching people to talk in tongues.

I was in a hotel in Denver the other day and there were three nondescript hippies with Levis on, and wearing tennis shoes, and they were more or less unwashed, with clothes unironed. They had long beards and hair. I happened to be waiting for a telephone, and one of these hippies said, "I got baptized with the Holy Ghost the other day." So a fellow who speaks in tongues can be a hippie or a Catholic. Even some of the Moslems, Mohammedans, have sometimes spoken in tongues, along with the Pentecostal people and some other denominations.

Isn't it surprising that one can believe in confessing his sins to a priest to get forgiveness and can believe there is a purgatory and one needs enough masses to get him out of it, and pray to Mary, yet with that kind of doctrine still talk in tongues? There is something wrong with any man's doctrinal position who thinks you can pray to Mary and confess to a priest and have masses for the souls in purgatory and then think you are following the Bible when you talk in tongues. One is not following the Bible in any of that.

Now, then, what are some of the bad things that go with the tongues movement? Well, there are good people, many sincere, earnest, good people -- but what is wrong?

First of all, there is often a great deal of false doctrine connected with it. These people say, "Oh, we want all God has," but they are generally not good Bible students. They are not as particular as they ought to be about Bible teaching. So it is very customary for people in the tongues movement to believe and teach boldly that it is God's will to heal every sickness of everybody. Now that is not taught in the Bible. Paul did

not get relief from his thorn in the flesh. Paul said, 'Timothy, take a little wine (or grape juice) for thine often infirmities, thy weak stomach.' Paul said, "Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick."

So it is not always God's will to heal the sick. A good proof of that is that good Christians die all the time. That is a false doctrine that usually goes along with those who believe in tongues. It is a false doctrine, just like this matter of a Catholic who speaks in tongues.

God bless Catholic people, but you can't say that the Bible teaches the priest can forgive sins, or that the Bible teaches you should pray to Mary. The same people who take that kind of teaching, take the doctrine of tongues. That means they are not very particular about the Bible doctrine. Let us say that however sincere they are, they are not well taught and they are not well grounded in the Scripture.

The Arrogant Conceit of Tongues People,

Boasting They Are Better Christians

Than Those Who Win More Souls!

And another thing wrong with these good people who talk in tongues is, they sometimes are rather arrogant and claim they are better than other Christians, that they have "more of God." Other people, they say, are not willing to wait on God; other people are afraid of criticism. That is a rather shocking idea but again and again, not only in letters to me but in their magazines and in their books, is their constant claim that you cannot be filled with the Spirit of God until you talk in tongues, that talking in tongues is the initial evidence, and you are not baptized with the Spirit (the term they use generally) or filled with the Spirit, and you are really only a second-rate Christian, if you do not talk in tongues.

Isn't it strange that a man who doesn't win souls to Christ but talks in tongues, would think that he has something better than D. L. Moody had, who won a million souls to God? Isn't that strange?

I was in big services in Toronto, in the Avenue Road Church. There was a great crowd. Some seventeen hundred packed the building to the door, with chairs in the aisles. When I preached we had, I think, fifteen adults saved, and these went with many tears to a room for further instruction. As I stepped out of the pulpit for a moment while the building filled up again with a good many others for a second service, a man came up to me and said, "Dr. Rice, have you been baptized with the Holy Ghost?"

"Well," I said, "if you mean an endowment of power from on High, yes. In my poor, unworthy way, I thank God I have prayed and God has given some power, with amazing results, to win souls. I don't claim any credit. I have to say that is the power of God."

"Oh," he said, "I didn't mean that. I mean did you talk in tongues?"

I said, "If you didn't mean that, what did you say that for?"

"But," he said, "Brother Rice, if you talk ... if you just turn loose and you don't know what you are saying but you just feel good and as light as a feather ... it is so wonderful!"

I said, "I talked in the English tongue tonight. It seemed like everybody could understand me."

"Yes," he said, "I know, but you don't know how much joy you would get if you would just cut loose and talk in tongues."

I said, "Well, if enough people come down the aisle and take Christ as Saviour and claim Christ and set out to live for Him, that will be joy enough for me." I said, "Now, let me ask you a question. Did you ever win a soul?"

"Well, I have witnessed to them."

"I know, but did you ever win a soul?"

"Well, I have prayed for them, all right."

I said, "Quit dodging. Did you ever take your Bible and show somebody he is a sinner, show him how to trust Jesus and get him to ask God for forgiveness and claim it and set out to live for Him? Have you ever won a soul?"

He said, "I guess I never did."

Now, isn't that strange that he would think he was a better Christian than I? He had never won one soul to Christ and God knows I have not won as many as I ought to and not nearly as many as some others, but I have seen thousands of people come to Christ. Oh, how many! I mean drunkards and infidels and heathen of various kinds. Isn't that a strange, arrogant spirit that is not of God when somebody thinks of himself more highly than he ought to think because he talks in tongues? That means those people think Gipsy Smith and R. A. Torrey and Charles G. Finney and Dr. Bob Jones, Sr. and Billy Sunday, the great soul winners, were not as good Christians as they are, who talk in tongues. That is a silly and, I think, a sinful attitude. That is one great thing wrong with the tongues movement.

Easily Misled Tongues People Regularly

Make False Claims

Now, here is another thing. I am sad to say it, but since tongues people are often ignorant and not very well educated and are not very intellectual, they often claim in print, as in the Full Gospel businessmen's magazine, that D. L. Moody talked in tongues, that Charles G. Finney talked in tongues, and so did R. A. Torrey. They did nothing of the kind.

I have just read how R. A. Torrey learned this blessed truth about the Spirit and how he could hardly preach about anything else. What he learned about the Holy Spirit was not about how he should talk in tongues, for he never did that. On D. L. Moody, I have twelve or fifteen books -- I have everything written about him that I can get my hands on; I have his own life story by his son and that by his son-in-law, Pitts; and I know Moody not only did not talk in tongues, but he didn't believe in it. Neither did Billy Sunday. I knew Billy Sunday. Neither did Gipsy Smith. Neither did Charles G. Finney.

There is something wrong with a man's system of truth when he is careless in making statements like that to try to bolster a doctrine that isn't found in the Bible. That is one thing wrong with the tongues movement.

Here is another thing: It is rather sad that women take a very prominent part in leadership in Pentecostal movements, when the Bible is very clear: "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." And, "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at

home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church" (I Cor. 14:34,35).

And yet, here in this matter, it is part of a heresy -- I don't mean that unkindly -- yet Christian people are taking part in a heresy. When people let themselves go and excuse it and cover it up and twist it a little on one matter, then they will be a little wrong on something else, too. For there is a moral guilt in heresy and it leads to further wrong. So there are some things wrong with the tongues movement.

The Basic Teaching That to Be Filled With the Spirit

One Must Speak in Tongues Is False

Now, then, here is a basic falsehood back of the tongues movement. That is the teaching that speaking in tongues is the evidence and especially the initial evidence of the baptism of the Holy Ghost or the fullness of the Spirit. Now they use the term "baptism of the Spirit." I don't use that term so often because it has been misused. I like more the term "filled with the Spirit." But they say that speaking in tongues is the evidence. Now there are two things wrong about that.

First, that is not what the Bible teaches anywhere. I have read the best writings of these Pentecostal brethren from England and America, I have their books in my library, I have read their magazines. They frankly admit the Bible doesn't say that anywhere; but they think it infers that! No, the Bible doesn't say that, neither does it infer it, unless you are looking for it. The Bible does not anywhere say that Christians ought to talk in tongues and that that would be a sign of the fullness of the Spirit. No, sir, that is not Bible doctrine.

Here is another thing. In the Bible we have case after case where people were filled with the Spirit. And in not a single case is tongues given as the evidence.

For instance, John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb. Not ever a mention of talking in tongues. In Luke, chapter 1, Elisabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit. The Bible tells what she said and she did it in the language that Mary, who was with her, understood. It is not what is called talking in tongues, but she was filled with the Holy Ghost.

In the same chapter, Luke 1, verse 67, Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and the Bible tells us what he said.

The Bible tells us how Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit in Luke 3:21-23. When He was filled with the Holy Spirit, the Bible tells us what He said. This is the first time Jesus was filled with the Spirit, yet He didn't talk in tongues.

Why wouldn't you be satisfied to have what Jesus had when the Holy Spirit came on Him, and now He is endued with power to witness and speak? Why wouldn't you be satisfied to have what Jesus had instead of something else? You can brag, "I've got it and the Baptists don't, and the Presbyterians don't have it, and the Methodists don't have it. I've got it and I am it!" You ought to be ashamed! No, most Bible characters never spoke in tongues when filled with the Spirit.

We have the case in Acts 9:17 of how Paul was converted and how right after that he was immediately filled with the Holy Ghost. Not a word is said about his talking in tongues. You see, people made that up. The Bible doesn't bear it out. There are no cases in the Bible where they did. There is the one case at Pentecost and there was a reason for it then, but it is not named there as an evidence of the fullness of the

Spirit.

In Acts, chapter 8, the apostles, Peter and John, came down to Samaria. Here were a group of converts and the apostles laid their hands upon them and prayed and they received the Holy Ghost. Nothing is said about them talking in tongues. Then why do you want to say it when the Bible doesn't?

The Bible doesn't bear you out. There is not any evidence that when Christian people were filled with the Holy Spirit in the Bible, they talked in tongues as an evidence of that. They did not except in the case at Pentecost where there was a special reason for it.

Now, more than that. I am an evangelist. I am not only an evangelist, I am a promoter of evangelism. I have kept this thing before God and the people all these years. And I know the great soul winners. Now, let me tell you frankly, the best soul winners did not talk in tongues, not Spurgeon, not Wesley, not Moody, not Torrey, not J. Wilbur Chapman, not Gipsy Smith, not Billy Sunday and not Bob Jones, Sr.

So the tongues business is a false doctrine that good people, but usually ignorant, take up because they are misled.

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