

Grace Made Visible (Part 6) – Eccentric and Faithful

Matt Chandler – July 20, 2014

If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab them. We'll camp out today in 1 Corinthians 13. In fact, we'll start in verse 8, and we'll flow through verse 5 of chapter 14. I'll show a couple of other texts, but these will primarily be where we are. If you don't own a Bible or have one with you, right under your seat or around you should be a hardback black one that I would encourage you to grab so you can see I'm not making anything up or have any ulterior motives other than just proclaim to you what the Word of God has to say.

While you're turning there, I just want to say happy anniversary to our Fort Worth Campus. A year ago this weekend, they launched. God has done a profound and great work out there, so yeah. Amen. Just know, Fort Worth, that you are loved. I know this has been an interesting and difficult season, but we are very mindful of you and are hopeful that the Lord is at work among you.

In 1998, I was invited to go on a trip into India. The purpose of the trip was to do what was called Forums of American Life. That's what it was called. We would go into these universities, and they brought a businessman who would talk about capitalism. They brought a guy who would talk about American culture. I was the guy who was talking about American religion.

If you do not know, if you have not been overseas, for the most part American equals Christians to people who aren't American, which is tragic, absolutely tragic. Really what I would do is they would do a little sermon on capitalism, and they would do a little talk on American culture. Then I would get up and just preach the gospel. Then we would answer these questions at these universities. Then they would have this time to mingle afterward.

We were in Jaipur. There was a communist university in Jaipur, so that was the first time I was like, "The capitalist guy is going to get worked today. I'm the guy who is going to be awesome. Mr. Capitalism is going to get slaughtered. We each kind of did our deal. I did 25 minutes on what the gospel is. On our team were guys from other parts of the world, and there was a guy on my team

named Richard. That wasn't his name. We just kept trying to say his name, and he kept telling us we weren't saying it right, so he finally just with grace in his heart said, "Just call me Richard."

Richard (still his name to me to this day) was on our team. He was from southern Sudan which is not ironic but intriguing with all the work we do in southern Sudan that in '98, long before I became the pastor of this church, that Richard and I met. After that sermon in Jaipur, this moment is a distinct memory, a very clear memory in my head.

A young man came up to me afterward. A line kind of formed. The capitalism man was getting worked over there. I had a line ready to speak to me, and a young man asked me this question: "Is it possible that Jesus is simply another apparition of Krishna?" He was asking me the question, "Is it possible that Jesus is just yet another god?"

If you haven't studied Hinduism or you don't understand that, they're not monotheists. All right? They're polytheists. They believe there is Krishna and Shiva. There are all sorts of gods they worship. He's asking, "Is it possible that Jesus is just another one of those?" I'm straight prepared for that question. That's just like slow pitch softball. I was hoping somebody would ask me that.

I just walked through it. I was like, "There is no possibility whatsoever. Jesus himself taught this. 'I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no one will come to God except through me.' Jesus is saying, 'I'm not one of many. I am the God, and no one will know God who does not come through me to know and embrace him.'" I just felt like I nailed it.

As I'm having this conversation just quoting the Bible to him, Richard leans over my left shoulder and says, "I believe the Lord is telling me that your wife will be okay." The dude just immediately started bawling and walked away with Richard. Richard sits down with him, and 20 minutes later, the guy is a Christian. I'm like, "Wait a minute. That's mine. I nailed that. No way." For my upbringing, I have no category for what just happened. Here's what I mean by that. I came to know Christ via attendance at the First Baptist Church of Texas City, Texas.

Now, they were a very conservative, buttoned-up, straight, not going to show a lot of affection for the Lord kind of church. It was the kind of church where if you raised your hands, that was distracting and weird. You were selfish if you enjoyed the Lord too much. "Look at you with your happiness and gladness in the Lord. Do you know how distracting that is to me? I'm trying to read from the hymnal here. Can you put your hands down?" I'm not dogging that. That's where we were.

I was literally discipled in that environment where supernatural things... Sure, they were out there, but they weren't to be trusted, and they weren't normative, and they weren't to be pursued. If weird things happened like that then whatever, but what we're going to do here is pursue the Lord intellectually. That's right and good. In fact, I came to Christ because I had questions I kept asking until the Lord ignited my heart unto belief before answering all the questions I had.

You could say although my conversion was extremely supernatural, it was rooted in the intellect. I wanted to know how it worked. In fact, my questioning... I didn't even see it coming, which is what I love so much about that. I didn't even see it coming. My constant curiosity about what the Lord was doing to draw me. He wasn't even answering questions. He just kept giving me questions going, "Come on. Keep asking." *Bam!* Then he got me. I didn't even realize he got me until after he got me.

I'm am very much passionate about the intellect. Our faith is an intellectual faith. It's not a blind faith. We're not crossing our fingers and hoping. It's rooted in history, tested for millennia. We're not blind-faith people. Yet there is this supernatural thing that occurs in the body of Christ and around the body of Christ.

I had another moment where I was teaching. I was doing college ministry at the time, and I took a big group of our college students out to Los Angeles. We were working with the ministry down there. If you have a church background, you'll know exactly what I'm talking about. We were doing the evening debrief, you know, where you all get together in the evening where everybody cries and rededicates their lives to Christ.

"What did you pick up on today? What did the Lord show you?" We're having this talk, and there is a knock on the door where we're meeting. I open up the door, and there is this man I do not know who says to me, "I just feel like the Holy Spirit has told me to come here. I feel like I have a tongue for your group." At first, I'm going, "A tongue for our group. Oh."

Here's what I say. I'm going, "Great opportunity for me to teach my kids about loony theology." That's literally what popped into my head. "Let him come in. Let him babble. Then I'll go, 'Let me show you in the Bible why this man is absurd.'" That was my plan. I ask our students, "Is everybody cool with this guy coming in and speaking in tongues over us?" College kids were like, "Yeah! That'll be awesome and weird and crazy!"

I had they guy come in, and we all bowed our heads and closed our eyes, and he spoke what appeared to be gibberish. Not one single syllable did I understand. In fact (maybe it has been too long, and this wasn't a big enough movie), if you saw the movie *Bruce Almighty*, when Jim Carrey made the... That's literally what it was like in there.

While he is doing this, in my mind, I'm just, "This text here... I'll pull this. This is what I'm going to do. He's a God of order. He's not a God of chaos." That's what I'm in my head doing when all of a sudden a dear friend of mine and Lauren's who we had known for years (her name is Miriam) just began to sob. It got awkward. I was like, "I am a terrible college pastor. She is terrified. I've let this loon in, and now she is wiggled out at the lunacy of all of it." Literally, this is where my head is this whole time.

Then he says basically, "Amen," and rolls out. I had enough wherewithal at that moment not to rip the guy because I wasn't sure what was going on with Miriam. Later, Lauren and I sat down with Miriam, and the Lord... I don't know what happened that night, but I can tell you this. She has never been the same, and her zeal for the Lord, her drive for obedience rooted in her understanding of God's love for her forever changed that evening in that room with all the weirdness it entailed.

Here was the wrestle of my heart. The wrestle of my heart is that I had been told from very early on in my faith that that stuff was not only deceitful, but it might just be demons trying to deceive people. Not only is it not biblical, is it extra-biblical, but on top of that, it might just be demonic. Well, I knew enough of my Bible now to go, "I don't think the Devil is in the business of seeing people become Christians.

I don't think that on his agenda is, "You know what I'm going to do in India, in Jaipur with a guy who has no ties to a local church, no real understanding? In fact, just moments before he was asking if it was possible if Jesus might just be one god of many, I'm going to save him and rescue him by, through another vessel, encouraging him that his sick wife will be okay." From my understanding of Scripture, I knew the Devil wasn't in that business.

Nor is the Devil in the business of encouraging someone's faith to seriously pursue Jesus Christ, to understand more deeply God's affection for them in a way that drives them toward obedience. Now I'm in this weird spot where everything I'd been told and how I'd been studying and how I'd been helped to see was unraveling in my experience of the Bible making its way into the hearts of people and transforming lives.

I did what you're supposed to do. I went back to the Word of God and sought help. We're going to talk about the sign gifts today. Last week, we talked about kind of the natural gifts we're born with, how to leverage and use those for the glory of God and our joy, getting over the hurdle of pretense, of pretending we're more than we are, the joy of walking in honest with open-handedness.

Now this week, I want us to simply talk about the sign gifts. I want us to talk about prophecy and tongues and words of knowledge and dreams and visions and all that kind of quirky weird stuff that is always around where Christians are. I want to try to bring some clarity to it because I know there are some of you who have these gifts, and you don't know how they fit. You feel awkward and not sure what to do. There are others of you who think all of that is absurd. Both of you need to be corrected.

There are some of you who are for it but nervous about it. "Yeah, I can see it in the Bible. It still makes me nervous. I still think it would be cleaner without it." Already, you're like, "If you lead us into something weird here, Chandler... I just started liking this church; don't lead us weird. If you make this joint weird, I'm bouncing." I've just tried as honestly and openly as I can ever say it. My earnest desire is to please the Lord, and I don't believe we are for everyone. Let's let the Bible be the Bible, 1 Corinthians 13. We'll start in verse 8.

"Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away."

Verse 11. **"When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love."**

Chapter 14, verse 1. **"Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy. For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit. On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.**

The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies builds up the church. Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built up."

There are a couple of things I want you to see right out of the gate. The text starts with, "Pursue love. Love never fails. It's always going to be there." Then it gets into the list of gifts we're discussing this morning. "Where there are prophecies, they will cease. Where there are tongues, they will stop. Where there are words of knowledge, it also will cease." When? "When the perfect comes."

Here is where there is a divide in what people believe theologically. On one hand, some would say from this text, guys I respect and have a lot of love for would say that what is happening in this text is it's saying that prophecy and tongues and words of knowledge were necessary until the canonization of the Scripture was complete.

All we read in the book of Acts, all the miracles, all the sign gifts we see in the New Testament were there to validate the writing of this Word. Now that we have this, we have what is perfect, what is infallible, which has no error, so we no longer need these sign gifts. That system of believe is called cessationism. It believes that all the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit ceased with the death of the last apostle.

I have a ton of respect. I do not hate. I am not scared of, but I do strongly disagree with those who land in that camp. I find it to be biblically untenable. I'll show you from their very own argument. Again, I don't hate. I'm not afraid. I love very much a lot of men and women who land right here in this camp. I just don't see it as being biblically tenable. Let me show you that.

I don't think this is speaking of the Bible because of verse 12. Here is verse 12. **"For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face."** When the perfect comes, I'm no longer going to see dimly, but I'm going to see face to face. My litmus test is that hasn't happened. I know Jesus, love Jesus, am caught up in the person and work of Jesus Christ. We have not sat down face to face just yet. That day is coming. Praise his name. I'm looking forward to it, but we're not there yet.

Then look at the next line. **"Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known."** No one would argue that that has happened, yet this text is tied together like that.

When will prophecy cease, tongues cease? When will words of knowledge, dreams, visions... When is all of that going to stop? At the canonization of Scripture? No, at the return of Jesus Christ.

Do you know when we don't need prophecy anymore? When Jesus is here. We don't need prophecy. Do you know when we don't need tongues anymore? When Christ is right here. You know when we're no longer going to need a word of knowledge? When we no longer have need of that type of knowledge because all things have been made new in the manifestation of Christ's presence forever and ever and ever.

That's what this text is teaching. Yes, they will cease. They will cease not when we have our Bible because I have my Bible, and I was worked this mug cover to cover. Almost every page is written on, starred over and over again, and I still would not dare claim I fully know as I am fully known. I would not ever say, "Yeah, I have hung out with Jesus face to face. Dining room table last night." I just wouldn't.

I am earnestly holding fast to the day I will say that. I am giddy excited about that day, but for now, I know in part. I see dimly. I walk by faith, not by sight. The gifts, the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, the ones that make some of us uncomfortable and make some of us dance for joy will cease at the return of Jesus Christ.

Let's define them. What do we mean by prophecy? Is what I'm doing right now, teaching the Bible, is that what the Bible means when it talks about prophecy? Am I being a prophet right now just by preaching and teaching the Word of God? If that's true, then what do we do with the gift of teaching or the gift of preaching that are separate gifts listed in sections of gifts in the Scriptures to explain how men are gifted for the building up of the church for the glory of God?

Here is the best definition I've found by a man I deeply respect. Here is the definition of prophecy. Prophecy is a Spirit-prompted, Spirit-sustained utterance that does not carry intrinsic, divine authority and may be mixed with error. That's prophecy. We're talking about prophecy. We're talking about a Spirit-prompted... The Spirit prompts it. The Spirit sustains it. It is words I speak that don't necessarily carry any type of intrinsic authority and may be mixed with error.

Let me give you an example of how the prophetic works. Early on in my marriage, my wife felt really called to worship, to write songs, to sing unto the Lord, but she was always frustrated. If she got an opportunity to worship, she would come home. She was like, "I just feel like I messed up on

that. I didn't hit that like I wanted. I sounded terrible." If she didn't get to sing, she'd be like, "Oh, I suck. Nobody wants to use me."

I said to her, just being the man of God I am, at our dining room table, I just see it, "I don't see how the Lord is in this in any way. If you get to do it, it makes you miserable. If you don't get to do it, it makes you miserable. I just don't know how the Lord would be in that at all." As you can imagine, that did not go well for me. I did a lot of journaling on how to approach things in the future.

Big fight that night. I ended up apologizing, not even having categories for, "If I'm wrong, I don't even know how I'm wrong." I really didn't. "Maybe it's something where I'm right and just don't need to say I'm right. Just shut up and move along." I was young in marriage. I didn't realize how some of it has to be played. That was early in the week.

The next week, we're walking into the church I was working at at the time, and a man kind of pulled Lauren and me aside and said, "Hey, I just feel like God has given me a word for Lauren. Matt, do you mind if I share it?" I was like, "I don't mind if you share it at all." He said to my wife, "As I was praying for you and your husband, specifically when I was praying for you, I heard songbirds in my mind, and I think what that means is the Lord wants to encourage you to continue to pursue using your gifts for the glory of his name."

I'm thinking, "What? Really? You're going to do this to me, songbird man? I'm just still trying to lick my wounds from Tuesday night. You're going to drop that on her?" Let me tell you what that did for my wife. That was a game changer for my wife moving forward. Now, that wasn't somebody who read her a verse. It was a Spirit-prompted, Spirit-sustained utterance given to her that may or may not have been mixed with error, and it was a good thing and a right thing.

What's the role of this type of prophecy? We see it there in verse 3 of chapter 14. Here is what the prophetic word does. Things like that. Here is how they work. Here is what they accomplish. There are three things listed in verse 3 of chapter 14. The first thing is it's up-building. It builds us up. Here is a great way of think of this. It's like moving the ball forward, punting it down the field.

God's goal upon our salvation for the glory of his name to display his grace is to sanctify us by that very grace that saved us. One of the roles of prophetic words is to move us toward all God has for us in Jesus Christ. If you and I are being transformed from one degree of glory to the next, if you and I,

according to Romans 8, are being made more and more and more like Jesus Christ, one of the roles of the prophetic is to build us up more into the image of Jesus Christ. It's up-building.

The second thing is encouragement. Do you see it there in verse 3 of chapter 14? It is given to encourage. Here is the best way to think of encouragement. If you've ever been around an ember that kind of looks like charcoal now, kind of looks like ashes, and you just blow on it, what happens? It heats up. It starts to glow red. One of the roles of the prophetic is to blow on a dying ember or an ember that has lost some of its heat, lost some of its color and begins to let it swell again with heat. That's one of the roles of the prophetic, to encourage.

My wife that morning was built up in the Lord, pursued her gifts, started writing songs again, began to rest in who Jesus said she was, and breathed out, and just let the gift be the gift. That happened not by my right and correct critique without she was thinking, but rather through the prophetic and up-building encouragement of a brother who rolled the dice, knew nothing of what was going on in our home, rolled the dice, and stepped out on faith, trusting that God had given him a word.

The last thing listed here is consolation, the prophetic comforts. Once again, to go back to Lauren, that was comforting to Lauren. She felt crazy, partially because of how her husband had coached her in her situation. Think about the help I did. Now she's going, "Is God really in this, or am I just crazy?" Mr. Prophecy Man lands and consoles her heart and makes me look like... I still have some issues with this guy I need to work through. That's what the prophetic does.

Sidebar. Let's have a conversation. I want you to notice what's not there. You are not Isaiah, and you will never say, "Thus sayeth the Lord," ever. That is not your spot, is not your place. You are not Isaiah. You are not Habakkuk. You are not a major prophet or a minor prophet. That office is closed. That's not what this is talking about.

If you feel prompted by the Holy Spirit to utter everyone's sins against them, you are a fool, and that is not the gift of prophecy. "Are you saying we shouldn't correct sin we see?" No, you absolutely should, and the Bible gives you the clear pathway to do that in Matthew 18. You don't say, "Hey..." because that type of foolishness creates a type of habit that is unacceptable in the body of Christ.

I had a dear friend one time whom a woman approached and said, "Do with this what you want to do with it, but God has told me that there is a sin in your life, and if you don't repent of that sin, he's

going to remove you from ministry." He was like, "Did he tell you what sin? Because I'm not sure where I have indwelling sin in my life." She was like, "The Lord didn't tell me that."

At about 6:30 at night out in Abilene, Texas, somebody knocks on our door. He just has tears in his eyes. He's like, "Listen, man. This woman who really seems to be gifted in the prophetic, here is what she said to me. She said the Lord is about to remove my ministry if I don't repent. Chandler, I don't know what I'm supposed to repent of."

I said, "Did she tell you what the Lord wanted you to repent of?" He was like, "No, she didn't know." I just got him to calm down. I was like, "Do you really believe it's the character of God, for God to say, 'If you don't repent of this sin I'm going to remove your ministry.' 'What sin?' 'I'm not telling you. Figure it out.' Do you really think that's the character of God?"

Since prophecy can be mixed with error, let me assure you there is error. There is error. That's not the character. God doesn't play games like that with his people. If there were an area of your life that he wants you to repent, he's going to reveal that area of your life in consistency with the Word of God. It can have error, and that's why we must be people of the Word.

Don't wig out right now if you're just like, "Well, I'm just a Bible man." Yeah, so am I. In fact, what I'm trying to teach right now is actually the Bible. That's what makes that argument so silly. It's the Bible that says God speaks outside of the Bible. He just never contradicts the Bible. Again here, it is given to build up and encourage.

Yet... Let me just say this just so we can be careful. Although the prophetic is given at different times and different seasons for these purposes, it is not the expectation in the Word of God that we should see this as normative or how God will primarily communicate and encourage us. Did you hear that? Look right at me.

I'm going to say it again. Although we see that the gift of prophecy is a good gift given to us by God for up-building and encouragement and consolation, it is not God's primary vehicle in which he seeks to encourage us or grant us the wisdom to live our lives. We're not sitting around waiting for a prophetic word from someone. In fact, the apostle Paul will rebuke the church in Corinth for living that way. He'll say it's to their shame.

In fact, let me read it to you. It says in 1 Corinthians 6:5, "**I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is no one among you wise enough to settle a dispute between the brothers...?**" He's saying in this text that you should know the Word of God more than you do. You should be able to walk in wisdom that is not informed by some sort of supernatural, "I had a dream last night," or, "This brother kind of confirmed," but rather the Word of God itself should inform a type of wisdom that drives your behavior.

Maybe this would help. The week I met Lauren, I saw her across the room. Day four, I saw her across the room, and I thought to myself, "I'm going to marry that girl." Then I very quickly suppressed that thought, mainly because it was illegal. She was a little bit younger than I was at the time, so I just suppressed it. Two years later, we were engaged, and we've been married for 15 years now, been together 17.

Let me tell you why I married Lauren. I didn't marry Lauren because I looked across the room and felt like, "That's my wife." That's not what happened. I read in this book that reveals to me who God is and what God is like that he who finds a wife finds what is good. Marriage is good. I read in Proverbs 31 that charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.

I read that I needed to take Lauren's considerable hotness and get it off the table, and I needed to look down into her heart and see, "Does she love the Lord? Does she love the Word of God? Is she strong enough to help sharpen me? Is she strong enough to stand there and say, 'I love you, Matt, but you're wrong.' Is she strong enough to do that?"

For what God was leading me to, I could see early I don't need a super passive woman who is not willing to say, "Matt, the Bible says. You know the Bible says." I *needed* that. That's what I saw. That's what drove me down onto my knee to say, "How about the rest of our lives, we hang out together?" (I said it cooler than that, but that's what I said.)

It wasn't this super... I didn't have a dream of us walking down an aisle, and then the next day have a friend going, "I had this crazy dream of you and Lauren walking down an aisle." That's not what happened. The Word of God and the wisdom found therein drove me to look upon Lauren and go, "Yep, it's there. It's not there yet, but she's in that trajectory. She's in the Word. She's serious about the things of God. She's willing to sacrifice for the glory of God. She is certainly not impressed or afraid of me. Let's go." None of that was ethereal; it was rooted in the Word of God.

I think the people who are always looking for this supernatural thing are paralyzed, never move. **"He who finds a wife finds what is good..."** There we go in the Word of God. Men, he who finds a wife finds what is good. Go. If you have the gift of singleness, praise God. Work hard with your extra hours, but let's pursue. It is a good, right thing for us to seek jobs and have jobs. Go. You don't need some prophetic word about what you're supposed to do. Get a job.

You don't need some prophetic word about whether or not you're supposed to romance and love and serve your wife. You don't need some prophetic word about how to live either with stingy hands or generous. You don't need a prophetic word. You have the Word that has said, "Do this," the very Word of God. In fact, I'll push further.

If you ever want to hear from God his actual words, it's right there. If you want to do it in the morning, read it. It's the Word of God. If you want to hear it from the Word of God later in the afternoon, *bam*. Just flip a few pages. There he is again. Our God is an ever-speaking God. It's right there. This is what we mean by the prophetic.

On top of this... I just feel like it would be so much neater if we didn't have to worry about that because sometimes you get prophetic words that are so mixed with error they are hurtful and foolish. I have found that it would just be such cleaner if we could just keep this on an intellectual plane. Yes, let's let the Holy Spirit be the Spirit, but let's talk facts and what the Bible says, and let's not get out ethereal and all, but the Bible is going to forbid forbidding that.

Here it is in 1 Thessalonians 5:19-21, three very short verses. **"Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies..."** Listen to 21. **"...but..."** What? **"...test everything; hold fast what is good."** My expectation when someone has a prophetic word is that I need to test it by the Word of God. In fact, if they are mature, they have already tested it themselves by the Word of God. Then they're going to hand it over to me, and I'm going to test it via the Word of God. From there, we can land on what is good in it and what is not good in it because prophetic words in this day and age are not like our Bible.

The Bible is never wrong; we are often wrong. The Bible is completely inerrant, without error; we are wrought with error. God does not change his mind; we constantly change our minds. We'll change our minds before we leave here, so every word must be tested by the Word. We keep what is good, and we reject what is inconsistent. The mature prophet will test their words by the Word

before they ever give them, and a mature man or woman will take the tested word and retest and keep only what is good. This is how the gift of prophecy works.

That leaves us with the weird one, right? Tongues. One of the interesting things is when I tried to get to the bottom of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, particularly these miraculous sign gifts, I got back from India, and I just started going to every charismatic church and revival I could go to just trying to get to the bottom of it.

Literally, there were a couple of moments where everyone was slain in the Spirit in the room except me and the evangelist. I'm just like, "If it's real, I'll take it, bro, but I'm not falling. I don't think you're strong enough to shove me, so let's see what the Holy Spirit wants to do here." What I was constantly amazed at is how tongues in particular is like the litmus test to the Holy Spirit's power in a given location.

Many mainstream charismatics will look to the presence of tongues or utterances as a sign that the Holy Spirit is at work. They see it as an upfront ministry that is evidence of God moving powerfully, and that's a great idea if it weren't for the Bible, because the apostle Paul won't have that nonsense. In fact, these whole three chapters are a rebuke on how tongues is viewed and used in the church.

He doesn't see it as an upfront ministry at all, so he's not releasing the reins. He's pulling the reins in so that tongues might be put in its rightful place. He doesn't forbid it, but he certainly doesn't call it an upfront ministry. If you're like, "Tongues? I'm confused with what you're talking about." Tongues is used in two ways in the New Testament.

The first would be a person speaking a language they don't know that someone else hears and responds to that in a way where they marvel that these people are speaking a language they don't know. If you think of Pentecost, Acts 2, what happens is tongues of fire fall on the disciples. They begin speaking in tongues, but everybody there in Jerusalem is hearing the gospel preached in their own language, and they marvel at it.

That's one of the ways we see tongues playing out in the New Testament. I will also say I have heard stories from missionaries. I've never experienced it, but I have heard stories from missionaries who just were provoked in Spirit and began to speak, and other people were able to understand them in the country in which they were. I think that's amazing. I've never experienced it, but I have heard of it.

The second way tongues is used (this is where we see it in this text) is a type of ecstatic overflow of the Holy Spirit's presence that somehow loosens the tongue for the building up of the person where it is unintelligible to those around him. If you've ever been in that environment where somebody gets up on stage and is like, "Let's all speak in a tongue to the Lord. Let's praise the Lord with our prayer language, our tongue," what the apostle Paul is doing here is saying, "The gathering of the church isn't the place for that."

I know you're looking at me going, "Where does it say that?" Let's do it. I'm glad you asked because I prepped it. Let's look starting in verse 7. **"If even lifeless instruments, such as the flute or the harp, do not give distinct notes, how will anyone know what is played? And if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle? So with yourselves, if with your tongue you utter speech that is not intelligible, how will anyone know what is said?"**

For you will be speaking into the air. There are doubtless many different languages in the world, and none is without meaning, but if I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be a foreigner to the speaker and the speaker a foreigner to me. So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church."

What you'll find oftentimes is that those who say, "This is a gift of tongues, and I'm probably speaking a language you've never heard. Maybe somebody in Africa knows this language, but it has been given to me by God," Paul's argument still stands fast that if nobody where you are can understand it, it builds up no one but you.

It says, "You're like a bugle that sounds a single note." Do I retreat? Do I charge? What's the play? You have to be able to distinguish between notes for there to be any communication. If you just play one string on the harp, nobody knows what you're doing. That annoyed me, and it was like four seconds long. Right? We need distinction.

He says in this text, "Do you want to see the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in your gatherings? Strive to build up the body, not just to have yourself built up, but build up the body." In fact, he would be even more aggressive down in verse 19. Look at this. **"Nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue."**

I'm not great at math, but that's a significant gap, is it not? "I'd rather speak five words that you could understand that could instruct you than ten thousand words in tongues where you wouldn't understand what I was saying but I would be uplifted." Tongues is not meant to be an upfront ministry but simultaneously is not to be forbidden.

Its role in the church stays fast as we'll see in verse 39. Look at verse 39 of 14. **"So, my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues."** There it is again. Let's talk. Wouldn't it just be better if he just forbade it? Forbid the thing, and then we don't have this weirdness. Just forbid it, and then let's look in the Bible.

Yet, it does have a role. It has a role when there is an interpretation, and it has a role in the individual lives of believers in their relationship with the Lord and should never be forbidden. When it comes to knowledge, words of knowledge, it's everything from dreams and visions and other kind of promptings that the Holy Spirit gives us. Since these things do exist and are for our day and age, the question remains. How are we to pursue them? There are two ways we are to pursue them.

Here's the first one. If prophecy, tongues, words of knowledge, these things still exist and are still for the church, for the building up of the body into all God has for us in Jesus Christ, how are we to approach them? Here is the first one. With great, great, great humility. Why humility? Again, if you want to look back, starting in verse 11, we read this, that we are like children.

What are children like? Let's talk about what children are like. One, they are clumsy, and two, they don't remember so well. This is a reason for us to walk in humility with the words we believe we've been given by God. We're like children. I had to tell my son four to six times yesterday to put on a shirt and brush his teeth.

The first time, he literally left. He walked upstairs. I don't know what happened when he got there, but he turned around, came right back down without a shirt on, not having brushed his teeth. I was like, "Hey Reid, what are you doing, bro?" He's like, "Oh, I don't know." "What did I tell you to do?" "I don't remember?"

"Come here. I want you to go upstairs. I want you to put a tee shirt on, and I want you to brush your teeth. Then I want you to come back down so we can leave." "Okay." He disappeared. Some of you

think I'm a bad father. The fact that he's breathing today is a... Right? He comes back in later, no tee shirt on, looking around.

I'm like, "Reid. Buddy, look at me. What are you doing?"

"I don't know."

"What did I tell you to go to your room and do?"

"Well I got there, and then I forgot."

"I want you to go put a tee shirt on and brush your teeth. Say it back to me."

"Put a tee shirt on."

"And what?"

"Brush my teeth."

"Okay, I want you to go to your room and do that. Then come back. We have to go, buddy. Go do that."

He goes, and then he comes back down with a tee shirt on and a piece of breakfast still in his tooth. I was like, "Did you brush your teeth?" He was like, "Oh!" This is what kids are like. I don't care if you're mom and dad of the year. This is what children are like. The Bible just said you are like children when it comes to prophecy, tongues. You're like a child.

Children should never walk with a swagger. They just shouldn't. You better file that, "Thus sayeth the Lord," nonsense in a box, catch that box on fire, and then pour gas on that burning box before you spill acid onto the ashes of that burnt box. Your posture is never ever ever, "Thus sayeth the Lord." You had better always walk in an abject humility that says, "I believe that maybe the Lord is saying this. I have tested it against the Word of God, and I would like for you to consider. I felt compelled by the Holy Spirit to share this with you."

You don't get the feet, the foundation of, "Thus sayeth the Lord." You're like children. He goes on. It gets worse. Look at verse 12 then, that we see dimly. We're not just children; we're like children who can't see well. Look, he's going to finish it up in verse 12. Even though we're children who see dimly, even what we do see dimly is only part of what is actually all there. Right? We're like children who see dimly, and when we do see, we only see a part, not the whole.

What this should create is a legit amount of humility and not an over amount of confidence. Then your posture completely changes when you know this. Yesterday morning... My family and I left on Wednesday morning and went out to Cedar Creek Lake and had a blast and then got back in yesterday morning. That's where my son... I was like, "Please. Gosh. Why can't you put your shirt on? This is not hard. It's not math. It's just a shirt. Just put it on. How hard is this?"

Yesterday morning at breakfast, I was pouring a pot of coffee, and my brother-in-law walked up to me. They live in Taiwan, are missionaries over there. He just said, "Hey, Matt. I've been praying for you and the rest of the family this week, and one of the things I've been praying for is just asking the Lord to give me a word by which I might encourage you or encourage some of our other family members.

I've prayed, and here is what I think I've heard from the Lord. I have just a vision he put in my head. I just want to lay it before you. I just saw you... Again, you pray about this. You consider it. I saw you in a jeep. It was kind of a military jeep. It was going over all this rough ground. All of a sudden, out of nowhere, that military jeep just turned into a passenger jeep, and you were on a smooth road. I don't know what that means."

Listen. When he said it to me, I had no idea what it meant. When I got here last night to pray over the staff, we were sitting here, and there were several big issues in our staff. We had a staff member who had an endangered pregnancy. We had another staff member who had been trying to adopt a child, and it had just been going wrong and wrong and wrong. We've had all sorts of issues here. I had another big issue.

The last six to nine months have been extremely difficult months for me. Then this week, the Lord has just started so sweetly answering all of these prayers. PlanoSoft launched this morning, and then we had a great update on this family that will go in tomorrow to have the baby tomorrow night, Lord willing. The Roberts' adoption went through completely.

It's like now all of a sudden, the Lord encouraged. It didn't even hit me until last night, hours after it was spoken over me, that what the Lord has done is we're off of that bumpy road now. I found my heart flooded with gratitude in the presence of God in this season being merciful in how he has answered. I knew he was, but I wasn't dialed in as much as I am now.

He approached me not with, "This is what the Lord wanted me to tell you," but, "Brother, I was just praying. Here's what I think. Take this. I don't know what it means." I'm telling you, for six hours, I had no idea what it meant. He even acknowledged it. He was like, "It's always awkward. If you don't know what it means, I'll feel like an idiot." Then I got to circle back around with him last night and go, "Brother, I did hear from the Lord on that. Thank you for sharing." But we walk in humility.

Here's the second way we walk. We walk in great humility, and we walk as the church has ordered it. Here is Hebrews 13:17. **"Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you."**

I have a good friend who pastors a church in the northeast, a very charismatic church but a very serious, Bible-believing church. They have prophecy mics in the aisle. At any point during the worship, during singing, they can come up to the mic, and they can give a word. Here is what's great about that. If I had more time, I'd show you a picture.

In their sound booth, they have a red button that is there to shut down those mics at any moment. How awesome is that? If a guy came up and grabbed the mic and was like, "The Lord wanted me to tell all of you wicked sons of..." *Beep*. He's gone. Cut it off. No way that's happening. I look at that, and I kind of go, "Yeah, but not here." We're not doing that.

I don't think he's wrong for doing that. I just think we're not doing it here. We're a much larger congregation. We have strong relationships with most of our covenant members, but at any given moment, there are hundreds if not thousands of people who are attending our campuses that we know nothing about. We're not going to put prophecy tongue mics out in the auditorium.

You can try to get to one of these mics, and you're probably going to get tased. You'll have another experience of the Holy Spirit doing it that way. How then have we ordered since we do believe this is a gift? Even in our Membership Class, we make it clear. We're continuous. We believe the gifts of the Spirit are still available to those who are in Christ.

Here is how we would encourage you. One, if you have the gift of prophecy, I would encourage you to use that gift here and let the body affirm it in you. As you are praying, if you feel like you have been given a word for someone, God has shown you a picture, God has given you a vision, then I would encourage you in all humility to approach them.

I've already kind of laid down from the Bible. It's not, "I see this sin in their life." That's not a prophetic word; that's a biblical word where you need to point them to the Word of God and say, "This is a sin you need to repent of because sin leads us to destruction, and I love you brother. I don't want to see that happen." That you would walk in humility in this gift.

Maybe you feel as though you've been given a word for the whole church, like a prophetic word on the direction of the church. One, I do think that happens. Here is how we have always encouraged. I have current elders and former elders in here even today who would attest to this. If you come to me after the service and say, "I just really feel the Holy Spirit has given me a word for the church. I don't know what to do with that," I've always asked the same thing. Our elders will always asked the same thing.

"If you will write that word out, if you will write that dream out, if you will write that vision out and give it to us, we will seriously pray over it, consider it, and decide what to do with it." We will always loop back around. Sometimes it has just been, "Thank you very much. That was an encouraging word." Other times, it has found its way into a weekend message. Other times it has found its way simply into an edification of the person who brought the dream or vision, in thanking them for being obedient because it always feels weird to step out in faith in those areas.

I know that for some of you, that's not enough. You're just waiting for some other type of manifestation here. I'm not sure what that is, if it's us running around in circles, but the Bible says, "You want to see the manifestation of the Spirit? You seek the building up of the body," which occurs best when there is great unity.

For some of you, I know we're not going to be far enough. You want the prophecy mic. I love you. I don't think you're wrong for that, I just think you're in the wrong church. I'm not saying that in any way that is hateful or spiteful. I just think if you need that, there are places that love the Word of God that do that. I would encourage you to get there.

If you're waiting around for us to all be speaking in tongues... I wish I had more time. I would take you to the text where Paul said, "Do all speak in tongues? No. Do all prophesy? No." Desire, pursue, but not everybody is going to get to. Even those who do will do so in varying degrees of giftedness. We know this is true about every other gift, right?

There are guys who, when they lead worship and sing, there is a pronounced type of gifting and anointing on them that is not true about others. Would you be bold enough to agree? Yeah. There are guys who will get up and teach and are good, and there are some who are not as anointed as others. The same is true with these other gifts. It doesn't mean they don't practice and pursue. It just means it's probably not their primary gifting, and they shouldn't have a low self-esteem about it. They should just rejoice in how the Lord has wired them.

Let me say this. If you feel you've been gifted in this way, I see you and our elders see you as a gift to The Village Church. We're glad of heart that you're here and would ask you to continue to just operate in your gifting. As you come across and see those who are developing in their gifting that you might encourage them in this way. I want to instill confidence in you and release you to operate in your gifts. Please do.

If this all kind of makes you nervous and you're still in that, "If you make this place crazy, Chandler, I'll be so frustrated. We just joined." I just want you to breathe and let the Word of God be the Word of God. You're letting it be everywhere else. Surely you had to know the Word of God was going to meet you some place that made you uncomfortable. If it didn't, then it's not the Bible, and he's not God. He's the god of your imagination, the one that makes everything like you feel comfortable. It's just not the God of the Bible. Is this messy and dangerous? Like life itself.

Here's how I want to end. I've gone way too long. As we've talked about *Grace Made Visible*, I think the question we have to be asking ourselves right now is, "Where are we really dialed into otherness rather than just ourselves?" There are two questions I always ask myself that kind of reveal where my heart is.

Here is the first question. "Do I see in the world around me situations and scenarios in which I am to be served or, 'They could be better,' or, 'They could do this more effectively,' as an opportunity for me to serve, or am I seeing opportunities to make much of the name and renown of Jesus Christ by serving others?"

Let's take it out of the church world in a way that I think might help you. We just went out to Cedar Creek Lake for a few days, Wednesday through Saturday morning. My sister was there with her three kids. My other sister was there with her five kids. Her oldest and his wife and my parents were all there.

I could, if I'm not careful, go into that scenario going, "Whew. It's a great time for me to be served and for me to be taken care of, for me to have a good time. I'm going to get out on the jet skis. Forget those little punk kids. It's too dangerous out there. I'm going to take that turn on the jet ski, and if they want to be pulled on the float, God help them because I have come to play. I've worked hard. They haven't worked hard. It has been summer for them for weeks." How bad is that going to go?

I'm going to be frustrated and angry. I'm going to snap at somebody. They're going to get their feelings hurt. It's just going to be awful, but if I walk into that and go, "What an opportunity for me to love and serve my nieces and nephews. What an opportunity for me to connect with my sisters. What an opportunity for me to honor my parents." Now all of a sudden it turns into what it ended up being, a great time for us to rejoice despite the polar vortex making it 60 degrees outside.

In the same way in church, if you come in and, "Oh, this could be better. What about this?" Shouldn't your mind be turning to, "How can I help?" if you're really generous and have been set free rather than, "These are all the things that are wrong"? See, a generous heart looks for ways to help where a stingy heart simply critiques the problems.

Here is an awful question the Lord gave me years ago. I'm not frustrated because it has always produced good fruit, but it's painful. I always want to follow the road of my agitation. I have found that what agitates me almost always leads me to my own idolatry. If I'm agitated and trying to figure out why I'm agitated, I almost always get to the end of the road where I have been idolatrous and have built up an expectation that is all about me, my own comfort, what I want. "Forget the rest of you. This is what I want."

Agitation almost always, 90 percent of the time... When I try to renew my driver's license, that's not on me, but at home, at work, with friends and family, my agitation will almost lead me to my own idolatry where I want to be God. I want to be served. I want to be made much of, and I'm frustrated that I'm not. Those are great opportunities to allow the grace of God to be poured out upon me and Christ allowing me to repent of my sins, rejoice in God's unwavering affection for me, and to walk in the gladness that comes in those who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

Might The Village Church be a place where grace is made visible by the opening up of our hands to see that he is all we need, and all we have and all we have been given has been given to us by God for the glory of God and can be stewarded in such a way that our joy exponentially increases, and our freedom is experienced in ways that maybe today we can't imagine. May it be. Let's pray.

Father, again, thank you for our giftedness, whether those are natural, intrinsic giftings or these more supernatural sign gifts. You are good and gracious in giving them, so we thank you and praise you. We pray this morning where we've come in and are struggling with our doubts or wrestling with our hearts, I pray, Holy Spirit, that you might encourage a different kind of message this morning maybe to those who are unbelievers.

It is family business, and it is who we are as Christians, so we pray that they might see and understand more of you in that. We thank you even now as we turn our hearts toward the table for your broken body and shed blood that redeems us. Even these supernatural gifts, gifts of grace, natural intrinsic gifts, gifts of grace. You are a good and a giving God, so we thank you and praise you for that. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.