

“Miraculously tongue tied and twisted.” (8)

The last time we were together we talked about miracles, signs and wonders and we said that their purpose was to confirm the message of God until the written Word was available to everyone, so that we can all grow up in our salvation and become mature. We also saw that prophecies were going to cease, tongues were going to be stilled and supernatural knowledge was going to pass away. And Paul told us in **1 Corinthians 13:13** that when all these gifts disappear, we will be left with **3 things, faith, hope and love**. But what I want to do today is continue the theme of miracles and see if we can understand what is going on in the world around us today, especially when it comes to present-day miracles and tongue speaking.

I heard a story about a woman who had so many things that went wrong in her life that she thought she was a complete loser. So she started seeing a psychologist to work on improving her self-image. One morning she rushed into her psychologist's room shouting, **“I'm not a loser anymore, Doc. I just dropped my English muffin on the kitchen floor. Look, it landed butter side up!”** The doctor carefully examined the evidence and then with a sigh handed it back. **“Sandra,”** he said gently, **“you buttered the wrong side.”**

And the point is many people today will believe anything just to be a part of something that makes them **feel** good about themselves without carefully examining the evidence for themselves. You see for some churches they **feel** the need for an attraction to get people into their church. An attraction, which appeals to everyone, both young and old.

Some use musical instruments to attract the young and some use mind games to attract others in. And I use the words **“mind games”** with caution because people don't like to be told they are being deceived by powerful illusions. After all according to them, they have witnessed the miraculous, they themselves have been healed by divine healing.

Now divine healing is very popular today in the world that we live in and the reason it's popular is because nobody wants to be sick, nobody wants to suffer any illness of any sort. And so to a degree I can understand why people would want to go to these **‘faith healers’** for help. But the Bible tells us that the so called **‘divine healing’** of now a days has improper motives because we are supposed to endure hardships to prepare us for eternity.

Paul tell us in **Philippians 1:29** **“For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him.”** When Paul writes to Timothy he tells him in **2 Timothy 2:1-3** **“You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.”**

In other words if you want to grow in Christ-likeness, you need to walk like Christ walked. You need to talk like Christ talked. You need to pray like Christ prayed, but you also need to suffer like Christ suffered. Jesus never promised that being a Christian was going to be a bed of roses. He never once said, **“You become a Christian and you will never get sick again in your life.”**

But Jesus did say in **John 16:33** **“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”** In other words, He said that we would have trouble, whether that's persecution, whether that's health problems or a fatal illness but He also said, **“Take heart! I have overcome the world.”**

And so what He is saying is this, **“I know you are going to suffer because you want to follow me but I won't let you suffer alone, I won't let you go through that illness alone.”** He says, **“I understand when the doctor says you have MS but you need to understand that I will go through all the suffering with you.”** He says, **“I understand when you find out you have a brain tumour but you need to understand that I will go through all the pain and anguish with you.”**

I heard about a famous television faith healer in America who got a request to heal a young boy who was diagnosed with cancer. He said he would gladly do it only if the family believed and was willing to pay a contribution. The young boy's parents re-mortgaged their house and gave that man thousands of dollars.

A few weeks later he did whatever it was that he does to heal the young man and left it like that. Sadly two days after the so-called 'divine healing', the young boy died and his parents were left bankrupt. They wrote back to this man asking if they could get their money back because obviously the healing didn't work. He told them, "It was nothing to do with my faith, it was obviously you and your son who didn't have enough faith, that's why the healing didn't work." That little boy's parents never received one cent back from that man.

Now as strange as that seems, there are many people all over the world making these faith healers very rich because people are desperate. I even heard of one religious group who literally beat a young boy up because they claimed he was demon possessed and they said they were driving out the 'evil spirit'.

Now I would like you to show me one example of Jesus or His disciples beating someone up to drive out a demon in Scripture. But my point is this, people are desperate for help and so they think they are turning to God but really they are being conned by people who are hiding behind the name of Christian.

Matthew 7:21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"

Now Jesus has just told us that there are people in the world who will prophesy in Jesus name, they will drive our demons and perform miracles in His name. But He said they would have no part in the kingdom of God because He doesn't know them.

And the reason He doesn't know them is because they are not doing the will of the Father, all they do is talk about their gifts, but their lives don't reflect the Father's will. And what is the Father's will? For us all to grow into the likeness of the Christ and suffer like the Christ suffered. Now you might say, "Well it's not fair that my 3 month old child died of meningitis, it's not fair that my wife died of crone's disease when she was only 35 years old."

1 Peter 2:19-21 "For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps."

You see, I know and completely understand that something's happen is life which totally crush us. But I also know that suffering is part of what it means to be a Christian. Suffering is a part of life for everyone not just for Christians and the reason people suffer is because there is still sin in the world. Because it is sin that causes disease and death, its sin that causes sickness and illness. And as Christians we are sinless in God's eyes, but we are still living in a stinking sinful world.

After all was it fair that a totally sinless man be crucified on a cross? Was it fair that God should come to earth in the form of Jesus and take the place where only you and I deserved to go? No! But I'll tell you what is fair, it's God giving us the reward we truly deserve and that's to go to the place reserved for the devil and his angels.

And that brings me to my next point, God isn't the only one who is working in the world today. From the minute we become a Christian we become an enemy of Satan and very quickly we enter spiritual warfare. Now I know a lot of Christians who don't like to talk about spiritual things but the minute you were baptised, you are in Christ and you can't get any more spiritual than that. But my point is this, all Christians are at war with the one the Bible calls, "The ruler of the kingdom of the air."

Ephesians 2:1+2 "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient."

Loved ones, you need to understand this morning that Satan is very real, he is alive and working today, just as much as you and I are alive and here today.

He is real and powerful and he is the master when it comes to deceiving people, after all he's had just over 6000 years of practice. **Genesis 3:13** "Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

And please don't think he isn't deceiving people today, don't think for one moment he doesn't know the will of God. He probably knows the Scriptures better than we do, he tried to tempt and deceive Jesus in the desert by taking Scriptures out of context. But Jesus replied by saying what every true follower of Christ should reply with, **what does God say? What is my Father's will?** Because the devil will deceive us into thinking we don't need God, we don't have to be obedient, if we don't know our Scriptures that well.

Why do you think according to the world's religion there are many roads to heaven? Why do people think, "Well, I go to a church where we have a 900 membership and we get signs and perform miracles every week and so we are definitely going to be saved?" You see the devil has always been busy and he has convinced many people that they are safe from God's wrath. He has deceived many people into thinking they already have the right relationship with God. He deceives people by displaying all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders.

Paul tells us in **2 Thessalonians 2:9+10** "The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved."

Now if something is counterfeit it means, it may look, sound, feel or even taste like the real thing but it's not. **The UK has a major problem with counterfeit goods which are being sold as legitimate goods, everything from alcohol to clothing, but when you know what to look for you will quickly see that it's all fake.**

Just before Jesus died and He was prophesying what was going to happen to the temple and Jerusalem in **AD 70**, He predicted that many false people were going to come. He tells us in **Mark 13:22** "For false Christ's and false prophets will appear and perform signs and miracles to deceive the elect--if that were possible." In other words the devil is working through these people, convincing them that they are actually working for God.

Now loved ones, I believe that there are a lot of con artists in the world today but I also believe that there are some who can perform some kind of counterfeit miracles today. I'm not denying the miraculous but what I am questioning is this, **who is the one behind these miracles, are they of divine origin, whose authority is being used?**

1 Timothy 4:1+2 "The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron."

Now Paul says that people will be deceived, true Christians will be deceived and end up falling away from the faith. And the reason for that is, that they haven't got a firm understanding of the Bible and just like Satan done with Jesus, these hypocritical liars have twisted the Scriptures and done exactly what Satan wants everyone do to. He wants the true worshippers of God to abandon their faith.

Now will Satan do good things to get people away from God? Yes, I believe he will and I believe he still does today. You see Satan is twisted and his goal is to stop you from doing the will of God, so that he can have more company for himself in eternity. He asked Eve in the garden in **Genesis 3:1**, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

And he asks you and I today, "Did God really say, we must worship Him in spirit and truth?" He asks us today, "Did God really say, that there are wolves in sheep clothing, people who are impostors and wear the name Christian?"

2 Timothy 3:12+13 "In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived."

Have you ever wondered how some people can believe what they believe? Well, Paul has just told us how that is possible, He says that the people who are doing the deceiving are also being deceived. **But who's doing the deceiving?** The devil himself, He's the one behind all the false doctrines.

He's the one who wants the world's religions to think that they are all saved no matter they do and believe. He's the one who gives people a so-called new revelation from God, He's the one behind these modern day so called miracles, that what Paul told us back in **2 Thessalonians 2:9+10**. And so we can look at what's happening in charismatic world today with all their so called miracles, signs and wonders but we shouldn't be surprised because the Bible told us this was going to happen.

Now remember, a miracle was performed to authenticate the divine message. The miracle gave the divine stamp of approval on the message, and then the honest hearer would give full consideration to the divine message. But it was the message that created astonishment in the honest hearer to the extent that they believe. **Romans 10:17 "Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ."** People saw the miracle and then they were convicted with the message that followed.

Loved ones, the devil is still active today. Jesus fatally wounded him at Calvary and he's restricted in what he can do but he can still do what he does best, deceive people. I have been asked to go along to some of these meetings where they claim to have gifts from God that can heal people of their ailments. And I always say to them, **'give me a shout when you can raise someone from the dead, who has been dead for 4 days'**.

We've all know people who are seriously ill, we all know people who are having to spend the rest of their lives in wheelchairs and we would love nothing better for them to be completely healed. But if these people claim they can make the deaf hear and the blind see and make the cripple walk **why don't they go into the hospitals and save the NHS a fortune in treatment costs?**

I'll tell you why, they are fake, they are counterfeits and when you scrape away all the showmanship you will discover it's all about money. You can go to any faith healing service but you better take some cash with you because that is what it's really about.

I remember a couple of years ago there was an appeal on **Midlands Today**, but this was not an ordinary appeal. A group of people got together and said that they would give **£5000** to any who could perform a genuine healing. They said they would supply the person with the ailment and have documentation from the doctors to prove their ailments but not one single person came forward.

Now loved ones I know that this may sound a bit harsh but there are people dying because they put their faith in these people. People go with ailments, told they are healed, they stop taking medication and they die.

Audrey Reynolds, a **25 year-old** girl from **Clapham in London** suffered from epilepsy and went along to a faith healing service and she was told she was healed, sadly she drowned in her bath a few weeks later after abandoning her epilepsy medication, believing she was healed of everything. One young girl around **6 years old** named **Natalia** had cancer in the bones and in her blood and she was supposedly healed by a famous TV faith healer in the US but sadly she died a few weeks later.

Now those are true stories which are well documented and I shared them with you because people are dying because of the claims of these people. But innocent, God believing people still believe and go along to these people **why?** Well simply because people are so desperate either to be healed or for their loves ones to be healed and they will pay any price for that to happen, even their own lives. Now the bad news is that the Bible does not give specific instructions on how to recognize counterfeit miracles.

But we can look at the evidence, **how do these miracles compare to the miracles we find within the Bible?** **Was this person really suffering from an ailment in the first place? Six months later are they still healed and is there proof from their doctor?**

The good news is that the Bible does, however, give specific instructions on how to recognize counterfeit messengers. Now I'm not going to go into all of them but I will quote **Matthew 7:16** which tells us that **"You will recognize them by their fruits."**

Now loved ones whenever you start to question the authenticity of the miracle you will very quickly realise they end up miraculously tongue tied and twisted.

Which brings me to my next point, the gift of speaking in tongues is so misunderstood that even those who claim to have this gift don't understand what they are saying. Please turn your Bibles to Acts 2.

I heard a story about G. K. Chesterton and several other literary figures who were asked one evening what book they would prefer to have with them if they were stranded on a desert isle. One writer said without hesitation, "The complete works of Shakespeare." Another said, "I'd choose the Bible." They turned to Chesterton and asked, "How about you?" And Chesterton replied, "I would choose Thomas's Guide to Practical Ship Building."

And the point is when it comes to choice, some people don't want the Bible, they just want the practicalities of it. Now when we were together the last time we spoke about miraculous signs and wonders and we said that their purpose was to authenticate the message, which went with it. But what I want today is approach the subject of tongue speaking and ask the question, what was speaking in tongues?

Acts 2:1-4 "When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them."

Now the Greek word for tongue is the word glossa (glows`-sah) which means a language, a language not naturally acquired. And so here we find that Jesus' disciples were filled the Holy Spirit and it was Him who enabled them to speak in tongues. But we need to do what all good Bible students should do and that's read on.

Acts 2:5-11 "Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs--we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!"

Loved ones that is your answer to what tongue speaking was, tongue speaking was the ability to speak a foreign language, whether it was Parthianish, Judeanish, Scottish or Birminghamish. Now you might be thinking to your self, well, what is so miraculous about this gift? Well, the miracle was that these men were not able to speak any of these languages before that time. And what caused amazement in the Jews was that not one of these men had even studied the language of the Elamites or the Medes etc, and this gift enabled the Gospel to be preached all over the world. And the tongue speaking of 1 Corinthians 14 was the same, it was a known language.

In the world today there are many who claim to have this gift but they don't have a clue what they are saying. I remember asking one person who claimed to have this gift, why do you speak in a language, which sounds like gobbly-gook? He told me that he spoke like that so that, "the devil couldn't interpret his prayer to God." He said, "It was like a secret code that the devil couldn't work out."

Now that amazes me because the first thing I thought of was, "Well, maybe our God isn't all that powerful after all." Because if you follow that kind of thinking right through it doesn't fit in with the God that we all know and love. Your telling me that the God who spoke creation into existence, the God who can walk on water and raise people from the dead, the God who can heal the sick and feed the multitudes. You're telling me that our all-powerful, all knowing God can do all these things.

But He says to us today, "Listen loved ones, I'm sorry, I can do all these other things but I need you to speak to me in a secret code just in case the devil gets to know what I'm up to." God says in Isaiah 1:18 "Come now, let us reason together."

Loved ones don't be fooled; no one today has the New Testament gift of tongue speaking. You see, in the New Testament no one ever questioned the authenticity of tongue speaking, **why?** Because the speaker spoke a **known language**, which **could be understood** by those who **knew the language**. But those who were listening **knew** that the speaker had **not studied** that **language** before.

You see, tongue speaking was a **sign** to the **unbelievers** and so was to be done in **their** presence to convince **them** of the truth. **1 Corinthians 14:22** "Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers." **And how was it a sign to the unbelievers?** It was sign because the one listening would be amazed at the Gospel being preached in their own language. It would be like me, a Scotsman going to Zimbabwe today and preaching the Gospel in Shauna. It would be like Ernest, a Ghanaian, going to Scotland and preaching a sermon in Scottish.

And it never ceases to amaze me when people say that you're not a real Christian until you can speak in tongues. Really, then that would mean that half the church in Corinth weren't real Christians because Paul asks the question in **1 Corinthians 12:30** "Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?" And so the answer to that question is **NO**, **not everyone** could speak in tongues, and **not everyone** had the gift of interpretation.

Others had the gift of interpreting what was being said in tongues, in other words **translating the words into another language**, so that a visitor or unbeliever could understand what was being said in **their own language**.

1 Corinthians 14:6-9 "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."

Paul is asking, **what's the use of having and using the gift of tongues, if no ones knew what you were saying? How are you going to convince an unbeliever with the Gospel of Christ if they don't understand the language you're using?**

Because Paul goes on to say in **1 Corinthians 14:26-28** "What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church. If anyone speaks in a tongue, two--or at the most three--should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret. If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and God."

Paul is saying that unless you had someone present in your congregation who can translate what is being said into a language a visitor can understand, then you shouldn't be speaking in tongues at all. **Why?** Simply because the visitor wouldn't have a clue what you were babbling on about.

And if you have ever been to one of these meetings where they say they are speaking in tongues, you will see people waving around and babbling, and they say that the Holy Spirit is taking over their bodies. Well, according to **1 Corinthians 14:32** "The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets." You see the holder of the miraculous gift could control himself, the Holy Spirit **did not overwhelm** them so that they began to babble or flail about like many claim happens to them today.

Loved ones, don't be deceived by those who are tongue-tied and twisted, those who twist the Bible to suits their needs. Don't be fooled by those who claim they can miraculously heal our ailments, we're supposed to endure suffering to prepare us for eternity, its part of life.

James tells us in **James 1:2-4** "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."

The devil is just as busy as he has ever been, busy providing counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders in the world today, busy giving people a religion that suits their needs. The next time we were together were going to look at the subject of Holy Spirit baptism and see if we can understand who that was for and why.