

TO MY SOUTHERN BAPTIST FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS

I know all of you in this second largest denomination in the United States profess a love for the Lord and a respect for His word. Most of you have a deep evangelistic zeal which cannot be denied. As a New Testament Christian, a member of the church of Christ, I must confess it is often “a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge” (Romans 10:2).

A case in point is the recent announcement by the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) that they will now accept candidates for missionaries who practice tongue-speaking or “a private prayer language.” I was amazed when I read this. I recall distinctly the old neo-Pentecostal/charismatic tongue-speaking movement of the 1960s & ‘70s which infiltrated many religious bodies in the United States causing mayhem and confusion. Like some sort of underground political movement they stealthily tried to take over. Eventually they were banished by most churches and joined up with their spiritual brethren in the older Pentecostal denominations who hold to this false doctrine.

You Baptists know that the “tongue-speaking” of modern times is not the speaking in an “unknown tongue” (1 Corinthians 14:2) or *glossa* of the New Testament. The Bible is clear that the miraculous gift of tongues was the ability to speak in a language the user had not learned (ie. “unknown”). In Acts Chapter 2 on the Day of Pentecost (A.D. 30) when the church of Christ was established the twelve apostles spoke in “other tongues.” (Verse 4) It was obvious to the audience present that the Apostles were speaking in other languages, not the emotion-driven gibberish of today’s religious phenomenon (Verses 7-11). The Apostle Paul makes this clear in 1 Corinthians 14:21 when he quotes Isaiah 28:11,12 in rebuking the abuse of *glossa* in the Corinthian church of Christ, “In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.” In the context of this verse the prophet Isaiah uses “other tongues” referring to the Assyrian language which was foreign to the Israelites.

Some who claim to speak in tongues say that their gift is a “private prayer language” reserved for themselves and God. They base this on the phrase “the tongues of men and angels” (1 Corinthians 13:1) used by Paul as a hyperbole or an exaggeration for effect. Besides, angels are spiritual beings, they do not have tongues. Whenever they communicated with people in the Bible it could always be understood

by the listener. The miraculous New Testament gift of tongues was to be understood by the audience through an interpretation or the speaker was to keep silent (1 Corinthians 14:9,13-16,27,28). Nowhere in the New Testament is *glossa* referred to as a prayer language.

You Baptists who know the Bible know this. You know that tongue speaking is a false doctrine. It passed away in the First Century A.D. along with all the other miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 13:8) because “that which is perfect is come” (1 Cor. 13:10) or the completion of the inspired, inerrant, changeless word of God - the Holy Bible (cf. James 1:25; Jude 3). The church does not need tongue speaking today because it has the confirmed word of God (cf. Mark 16:20).

With respect and love I would point out to you that if the denomination you hold dear is wrong in this area it may be wrong in many other areas. Consider the doctrine of salvation by faith alone. Where is this found in the New Testament? Salvation is by faith (Yes!), but not by “faith only” (James 2:24). What about repentance of sin? It is also necessary for salvation (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30,31). The SBC fails to emphasize it. And why does the SBC have a schizophrenic view of baptism? They rightly stress the importance of adult immersion but AFTER one is supposedly “saved,” not in order to be saved or “for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). Baptism is not some quaint ritual ones does to “join the church.” It is a command of Christ one obeys out of faith in order to come in contact with the saving blood of Christ (Romans 6:3-10; Colossians 2:12). No amount of feigned love for the Lord can remove this command. “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:15,16).

My Baptist friends, I could mention many more things about the SBC that are unscriptural. But instead I plead with you to leave this man-made religious organization and go back to the Bible. There you will find the words of life. “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63).

Sincerely,

Roelf L. Ruffner

<http://www.charismanews.com/us/49661-southern-baptists-change-policy-on-speaking-in-tongues> as of May 20, 2015.