

**Sabbath School Lesson #9 – The Great Controversy and the Early Church – 20-26
February 2016**

Christ has always been with His Church, He was with the Early Church, He is with His Church even today. One of the gifts He gives His Church is that of speech, which even the “unlearned” received. “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13). Focusing on just one part of the Lesson, ‘Pentecost,’ we herein examine how the gift of speech helped the Early Church in the Great Controversy – we too should earnestly pray to be enriched by Christ in speech.

On the day of Pentecost the disciples, not less than one hundred and twenty in number, were all together in one place, when suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, which filled all the house where they were sitting. Then appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like fire; sat on them. “They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:4).

Here, Pentecost was an evident miracle; and, like all the miracles of God, it was done to teach us of God’s working, and not merely for us to wonder at as a unique thing. Thus, the miracle of turning water into wine teaches us that it is God who makes all pure wine, the transformation of water into wine being ordinarily effected in the branches of the vine; but the Pentecost miracle differs in no essential thing from that done instantly by Christ, the true Vine. Likewise when Jesus fed the five thousand with five loaves, as well as when the Israelites were fed with manna in the wilderness, He showed that He is the bread of life; that all bread that we eat comes from heaven, and that we live only from and by Him.

So the miracle wrought on Pentecost was not alone for the sake of the disciples then present, nor for the sake of the multitude, but that we might learn from the record that the ability to speak in any language whatever is the direct gift of God, and that it is the Spirit of God alone that gives utterance. Whether a person is in a moment given the power to speak a foreign language, or whether the child learns in the course of months to speak the language of its parents, in both cases it is the Spirit of God alone that gives utterance. We learn therefore, through what happened on Pentecost, speech is the gift of the Spirit of God.

That this is not a mere opinion, may be seen by reading the story of the call of Moses: The Lord told him to go to Egypt with a message to Pharaoh and his people, and to all Israel. But Moses had been living the lonely life of a shepherd for forty years, and he said, “O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since Thou hast spoken unto Thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.” Then the Lord answered his objection by saying, “Who hath made man’s mouth? Or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD?” (Exodus 4:10-11). He who made the mouth is the One who provides the proper words for it; as the psalmist, in the well-known passage, says: “O Lord, open Thou my lips; and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise” (Psalm 51:15).

Take some other Scripture. Paul wrote by inspiration to the Corinthians: “I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; that in everything ye are enriched by Him, in *all utterance*, and in all knowledge” (1 Corinthians 1:4-5). Also Paul by inspiration wrote, “Therefore, as ye abound in everything, in faith, and *utterance*, and knowledge, ... see that ye abound in this grace also” (2 Corinthians 8:7).

Paul exhorts brethren to pray earnestly for all saints; he adds, “And for me, that *utterance may be given* unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the Gospel” (Ephesians 6:19); he was not here asking specially that he might be able to talk with other tongues, but that he might on all occasions speak the Gospel in the proper manner.

The Spirit of God was given that He might abide with us forever, not intermittently, but continuously. This is because we continually need the gifts that he bestows. The Spirit of God is given for our own profit, and not merely for use in a large assembly. We need the Spirit of God just as much when we are alone, or with one or two others, as when we have to speak to a multitude; just as much to be able to speak properly to a friend or a passing stranger, in our native tongue, as to a church, in another language. To glorify God, “If any man speak,” no matter when or where, “let him speak as the oracles of God” (1 Peter 4:11).

The word “utterance” in 1 Corinthians 1:5; 2 Corinthians 8:7, and Ephesians 6:19 is significant. It is from the Greek word meaning “word,” so that we might read, “In everything ye are enriched by Him, in all *word*, and in all knowledge;” or as the apostle Paul said, Pray for me, “that *word* may be given me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to speak the mystery of the Gospel.” It is the very same word also that is translated “oracles” in 1 Peter 4:11, “If any man speak, let him speak as the *oracles* [words] of God.” Also Acts 7:38, where we read that Moses “received the lively *oracles* [literally, “living words”] to give unto us.”

Now with this very thought in mind, read Isaiah 51:16: “I have put my words in thy mouth;” and Isaiah 59:21: “As for Me, this is My covenant with them, saith the LORD; My Spirit that is upon thee, and My words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed’s seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever.” Read also 2 Corinthians 5:19, that “To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath *put in us the word* of reconciliation” – thus the Greek text reads, as indicated here in *italics*.

We are ambassadors for Christ, to proclaim God’s message of reconciliation in Christ’s stead. God’s words were in Christ’s mouth (Deuteronomy 18:18 “I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put My words in His mouth; and He shall speak unto them all that I shall command Him”), and He spoke no other words; for He was God’s messenger every moment of His life. He was as much the messenger of God’s salvation when He was working at the carpenter’s bench in Nazareth as when He was healing the multitudes in Capernaum, or teaching them by the Sea of Galilee. Even so we are to be His ambassadors every moment of our lives, and not merely on public occasions. We cannot divest ourselves of this office, and assume it again at will. And the exhortation: “Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Colossians 3:17).

But we must remember that it is “the word,” – the gift of speech, reason, and not a mass of words, that God put into us. This is seen in the case of Adam. When God had made Adam, He brought to him all the creatures previously made, to see what he would call them; “and whatsoever Adam called every living creature that was the name thereof” (Genesis 2:19). God did not give Adam a list of names with which to label the animals; but He filled him with the Spirit, and the right words came forth. When we consider the perfect beginning of all things, we cannot fail to see that language, the power to utter correct words; is the gift of God; that is, it is a gift that comes from the Spirit of God that is given to dwell in us.

Go a step further. We have seen that God puts His word into us, so that we may carry on Christ’s work in the earth, and that we exist for no other purpose but to do that. We have also learned that “utterance,” in the texts cited, is from the Greek word meaning “word.” This is *logos*, the same that occurs in John 1:1: “In the beginning was the *Word*, and the *Word* was with God, and the *Word* was God.” Christ is the living Word, the expression of God’s complete and perfect thought. So it is from the study, not of words, but of *the Word*, that we learn proper language. It is from the living *Word* in the heart, that perfect speech comes.

Language is not a mechanical putting of words together, but is a *growth*, depending on experience. It is the unfolding of a seed, or a growth from a root. Every student knows that many words expressing widely different meanings, often come from a single root. Now Christ is the Root whence all true words come. When Christ dwells in His fullness within, we can think logically and utter thoughts properly; for *logos* is both reason and the expression of it. And so we have the inspired exhortation by the apostle Paul: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another” (Colossians 3:16).

The fact that all words come from a single, original root, – the Word, – teaches us “how forcible are right words!” (Job 6:25). God can express the whole range of Divine thought in a single word. How simple, therefore, and yet how infinite is our range of study! Hence the force of the statement and exhortation, “God is in heaven, and thou upon the earth; therefore let thy words be few” (Ecclesiastes 5:2). When the “Word” dwells in the heart in all wisdom, we shall speak fewer words, and they will have infinitely more effect than the multitudes that we now utter. “In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise” (Proverbs 10:19); “a fool’s voice is known by multitude of words” (Ecclesiastes 5:3). The gift of speech helped the Early Church in the Great Controversy, so will it help us today.