

**Q & A - Sermons
Cessationism
Selected Scriptures
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LANCE: Well, let me first say we want to welcome you to our evening service. In one sense this is what we do every Sunday night at 6:00 p.m. But it has been a little different with the high school choir. Let's give Blayne and every one else a hand. (audience claps) And normally at this time is when we open up the Word of God and exposit the Scripture.

But tonight we're going to step away from that and we've invited our wonderful pastor, Pastor Tom, to be put on the hot seat tonight. To ask him several questions about Cessationism. How many of you guys were able to view the film earlier at 4:00 p.m. in the chapel? That's great. That's wonderful. Praise God for the air conditioning flowing in here!

Well, Tom thank you for being here tonight. We've got several dozen questions that were submitted for our time together and ...

TOM: And how many of those do you realistically expect us to get through?

LANCE: I could probably count on one hand.

TOM: There we go. Ok I just wanted to be sure we were all clear.

LANCE: Sure. So I'm going to toss some questions your way for the next 45 minutes or so and we're going to sort of log away the other questions and find some time in the future to be able to

get to those and let you speak on those. So, let me just start by throwing you a softball or two here. Last year around this time your book, *A Biblical Case for Cessationism* came out and since then you've spoken on several podcasts and been interviewed, YouTube channels, etc. We just watched the film this afternoon, the *Cessationist* documentary. You're preaching at a Cessationist conference coming up here in just a couple of months, early October.

So, let's start by, I want you to explain the importance of this doctrine but at the same time explain why this isn't just a hobby horse of yours or even our church's?

TOM: Well, I mean you folks who are part of our church family, you know we don't ride hobby horses. Basically we teach through the Scripture. We let the Lord Himself determine the next text and what we're going to deal with. And I'm excited about Matthew coming up. So that's what I do and that's what faithful pastors do is they attempt to teach through the Scriptures and explain it to the people who are part of their church. But if you love the truth, you have to hate error. Right? I mean if you're a gardener and you love plants you have to hate weeds. And the same thing is true when it comes to the truth. If you love the truth then you hate everything that argues that it's the truth that really doesn't have any basis in the Scripture. So for me that's where it starts. It's because of our church's commitment to the Scripture as the only authority that I feel like we have to speak to this issue that's in the wider Christian culture and that many of you have been influenced by.

Just out of curiosity how many of you have either been in Charismatic churches at some point in your life or have certainly been, you feel influenced in some way, by Charismatic theology? Let me just see your hands. I mean it's a huge issue. And so it has to be addressed. Because we love the truth we need to deal with it. It's not a hobby horse. I would say the other sort of reason sort of expounding on that truth, is we love the Scripture. And anything that would undermine the Scripture we want to attack. We want to make clear that this is not what God intends for us to champion. And so, and I would add to that we love the Holy Spirit. We've been accused of replacing the third member of the Trinity with the Scripture. You know, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Scripture. That's what some have said about the position we hold. But the truth is we love the Holy Spirit. And so we love what the Holy Spirit has given to us. First Corinthians

2, right, Paul says these are the words of the Spirit spoken through the Apostles and the prophets. And so this *is* the work of the Spirit. And that's why we love it and champion it.

LANCE: Well, that's great. Let me give everyone here sort of a roadmap on where we're going tonight. We've really broken down the questions into three categories. We're going to look at definitions and misconceptions. And then we'll talk about some of the seven arguments. And then we'll get to the more practical, the application side of things, and how we want to interact with these realities on a day to day basis.

So, Pastor Tom, if you'll kick us off to make sure we're all playing on a level playing field here, could you define Cessationism and also define what a Continuationist is? Help set those categories for us.

TOM: Well, I think it starts by understanding that what we're talking about is not the Holy Spirit. We're talking about what is the role of the Holy Spirit specifically pertaining to the miraculous gifts that were present in the New Testament church. The gifts we read about on the pages of the New Testament. The question is have those gifts, those miraculous gifts - the ability to work miracles, the ability to perform healings, the ability to speak in languages you've never studied, to interpret those languages someone else speaks - have those miraculous gifts ceased, Cessationism, or are those miraculous gifts supposed to continue as a normative thing in the life of the church today? That's Continuationism. So, either they ceased with the age of the Apostles or they've continued. And so that's really what it comes down to is what do we believe the Scriptures teach about the miraculous gifts? Have they ceased? You're a Cessasionist? Have they continued? You're a Continuationist.

LANCE: Alright that sets the stage now to move into the misconceptions that always come up in these discussions. So, one of the misconceptions is that Cessationists do not believe in the miraculous, do not believe in the supernatural. Speak to that misconception.

TOM: That's an absolute lie and misrepresentation. Because the truth is I look out at this audience and I see a lot of people who are miracles. Because if you are new in Christ, if you have been

regenerated, if you have experienced the new birth, you are a miracle. You are a walking miracle because how can a dead person live? And the answer is only by the work of the Holy Spirit. And so, starting there at the most basic level, our Christian life begins with a miracle. But I would say beyond that, of course we believe God works miracles. That also is sort of a smoke screen, a false argument that set out that Cessationists don't believe in miracles. And the truth is we believe that God works miracles every day. Every time I said, a person who's regenerated from spiritual death, that's a miracle. But also in other ways. We believe God still heals.

I know people in my life experience, I think of one lady in particular that I knew at Grace Community Church in California, who the medical community had completely given up on, they had said that she was going to die. And not only was it terminal but it was imminent. And within several weeks of that the doctors did a scan and they said we have no idea what happened but all of your cancer is gone. How did that happen? They had no idea. It wasn't her body it was God miraculously intervening. So, of course we believe. Why do we pray for God to heal? Right? If we don't believe in miracles? So, of course we believe that God still still does the miraculous in a lot of different ways. But that is not the question. The question is does God also give people the capacity to work miracles today? That's the question. And the answer to that biblically is absolutely not. Does God work miracles? Of course He does. But He does so directly without human means. But He doesn't give men and women the capacity or power to work miracles.

LANCE: Sure, so we're not even arguing against the supernatural.

TOM: Absolutely not!

LANCE: Against the miraculous.

TOM: No. Again of course we believe in the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is in the Scripture. And He's the one who gave us the Scriptures and He's the one who does everything. I would argue that every time anything eternal happens in my life or in yours, it's the work of the Holy Spirit. So, He's constantly at work - the reason I'm a Christian, the reason I'm not the person I used to be, the reason I've grown, thank God, from the person I was into the person I am. But I'm not happy with

where I am. And I look forward to the day when He transforms me into the complete image of Christ. All of that is a work of the Holy Spirit. And so our entire Christian life is the work of the Spirit.

So, it's really a misrepresentation to say that we just diminish the work of the Spirit. Again, put it this way, nothing eternal ever happens. You never understand the Scripture without the work of the Spirit. I never speak and use my gift effectively without the work of the Holy Spirit. You never obey the Scripture that you've come to learn without the work of the Holy Spirit. You never grow in likeness to Christ without the Holy Spirit. You never endure trials, biblically, responsibly, without the work of the Holy Spirit. So He is integral to everything that happens in our lives as believers.

LANCE: Yeah, that's great. Another misconception, and this is one of my favorites, is that the Cessationists believe in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Scripture. Right? That we have somehow moved the Holy Spirit out of lockstep with the Trinity and we've inserted the Bible, the Scriptures. So, could you speak to how, one, that's a misconception but also in reality when we uphold the work of the Spirit we're upholding His Word as well.

TOM: Absolutely. Yeah, it's obvious, you've already heard me speak to the issue and I know that you all believe in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We believe in a Triune God who is co-eternal, consubstantial, who every member of the Trinity is equal in every way and we believe that about the Holy Spirit. But the question is what has the Holy Spirit said about Himself? Not what do I say about the Holy Spirit's role but what has the Holy Spirit said about Himself. And in the Scripture He's told us that this is what He's about. He is the one who gave us the Scripture. So when we exalt the Scripture, rather than diminishing the Holy Spirit we're exalting the Holy Spirit; the very Person in the Trinity whose breath this book is the product of.

LANCE: Tom, so could you speak to the reality of the Charismatic movement, maybe Pentecostal movement, Assemblies of God? They actively seek the miraculous, actively seek the supernatural. So there's this misconception that those of us who are Cessationists, that we don't pray asking for God to do a miracle. Or that we don't pray for God to heal someone in the hospital or those things.

Would you say that's a misconception or how would you represent our position as it relates to prayer?

TOM: Yeah, you know early on in my ministry here at Countryside, I had a vivid illustration of that. I was at Baylor Grapevine Hospital, a member of our church had suddenly grown ill, was in the ICU there at Baylor Grapevine and I was there with the family in one of the waiting areas. And just behind me, literally like a chair to my back, there was a female pastor from a local Charismatic church and the difference between how we were seeking to minister to the people in our congregation was stark. My role was to comfort them with the Scripture, to remind them who God is, to pray with them for the healing of their loved one. That's what Scripture prescribes. The female pastor behind me said, and I heard her with my own ears, she said to this family, this dear grieving family, she said, "God told me this morning that your loved one was going to be healed." And first of all, I was tempted to turn around and say, "That's absolutely wrong. You're a false prophet. Because God didn't tell you that." But my heart felt for that family because if that didn't happen, then where were they going to go? Their conclusion was going to be "Why did God let us down? He said He was going to do this? And He let us down." And in truth He didn't say that.

And so I think that's a great illustration of the difference. In our case we say, you can be comforted in the midst of your illness through what God says about in the Scripture. AND you can pray for God to heal you. You just can't demand that He heal you. Right? I mean we have to pray like Jesus, "Not my will but Yours be done." So I pray all the time. Many of you are testimony of this. You've had surgeries or you've had illnesses and I've called you or come by the hospital and prayed with you. And my prayer is always for God to heal. We believe God heals. But we don't believe God always heals. Or nobody would die. Right? I mean that's just the bottom line. That is not always God's purpose. And we have to admit that and we have to express our prayers in believing that He can but not demanding that He will. You know, faith, and I would just say this, a lot of people think faith is believing what I want is going to happen. No, faith is two things. Faith is believing that God is ABLE to do whatever I ask Him. And that He WILL do whatever He's promised in His Word. That's faith. It's not, you know, if I just believe enough I'm going to be healed or my loved one is going to be healed.

LANCE: Yeah, Tom, so let's say that God does respond to your prayer and miraculously heals that person. Could you sort of clarify the difference in that particular healing. You aren't going to come back next Sunday morning and begin claiming that you now have the apostolic gift of healings. So, explain sort of the nuance between the two.

TOM: Yeah, I mean when you look in the New Testament, those of you who were in the film you heard this set forth very well, you look in the New Testament particularly the ministry of Jesus. You look at His ministry of healing and He had the power to heal with a touch, with a word, from a distance. But His healing was immediate and it was complete and it was undeniable. He had the power to heal. I don't have the power to heal. No other human being has the power to heal. Only God now has the power to heal; that's why we pray. So if I pray, and here's a personal illustration, many of you prayed for me after my cardiac arrest. And you prayed that God would raise me up. You know, the doctors told me, what was that ten or eleven weeks ago, the doctor told me that with the cardiac arrest I had, the V-fib event, that I had a 95% chance of either dying or being in a nursing home for the rest of my life without a fully functioning brain. Some of you may argue that maybe that's where I should be, but no the Lord raised me up. I believe with all my heart that He did that in answer to your prayer. But none of you have the capacity to work a miracle and neither do I. But God worked a miracle. And I wouldn't say honestly it was a miracle, it was His providence in sustaining my life, but you get my point. I don't have the power, you don't have the power to work a miracle. Instead we pray for God to work a miracle. And if He answers that prayer, I'm not the miracle worker. He is.

Lance: Yeah, that's great. Praise God that you look good, too.

Tom: Thank you.

Lance: I'm glad you're here.

Tom: I look better from a distance. By the way. I guess that's good.

Lance: Ok. So let's get into the biblical arguments. In your book, *A Biblical Case for Cessationism*, you put together seven arguments to make a case that these miraculous sign gifts ceased in the first century. Now we agree, and so do the Continuationists, that there is not one explicit verse or a chapter verse that says the gifts have ceased which is why you put together seven arguments to demonstrate that they have. So could you explain, sort of, in a Bible study tangible way, that just because the Scripture doesn't explicitly say it doesn't mean you can't build the case on the concept.

Tom: Well I think when you look at that argument it cuts both ways, right? Neither is there a verse that says the miraculous gifts will continue. So, that is, you have to start there, and say there isn't an explicit statement in Scripture that the miraculous will continue or that they will cease. So you have to look then at the larger context of the Scripture. I think one of the best ways to think of it is this: those Continuationists, those who believe the miraculous gifts have continued, they argue that you know, there's the church age, that's what we're in and so whatever happened in the New Testament era should still be happening. That sounds on the face of it believable. But think about that for a moment. If anything substantive changed from the New Testament apostolic era to today then there *has* been a significant change and very well could be a significant change when it comes to the miraculous gifts. What is the one thing, think about this with me - put on your thinking cap for a moment - what is the one significant thing that has changed from the age of the Apostles to today? There are no apostles.

Now here's the problem; no where in Scripture does it explicitly say that the gift of apostleship would cease. But it did. And we can look at other portions of Scripture and see that the criteria for an apostle, Acts 1, lays down those criteria, and those criteria cannot be met today. Not one of us have seen the resurrected Christ. Paul was the last one, 1 Corinthians 15, "... last of all He appeared to me." So, he's the last one qualified to be an apostle. There are no apostles today. And yet the New Testament doesn't say that the gift of apostleship would cease but it did. And so, the New Testament makes it clear as you look at it, as you take it apart, that there doesn't have to be a clear cut statement that they would cease. But I would argue that at the same time there are passages and maybe you're going to get there, there are passages that certainly imply that, even though they don't explicitly say the miraculous gifts will cease.

Lance: Yeah, that's good, Tom. So even though the word "cessationsim" isn't used, that shouldn't be something that scares us off from embracing the totality of the Scriptures on this issue.

Tom: Yeah, you know I mean we do this with the Trinity, right? There's no statement in Scripture that says that God is a Trinity. And yet we believe in the Trinity. Why? Because when you put the different declarations that Scripture makes together you're left with the Trinity. Scripture says God is one. Deut. 6 and 1 Corinthians 8:6, "God is one." We learned that Jesus is God in so many places in the New Testament. That's why we're believers. And then we learn elsewhere that Jesus isn't the Father. You put those three together what are you left with? The doctrine of the Trinity. There's one God, eternally existing in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

So the fact that the word Trinity doesn't appear in Scripture or that there isn't a statement that says, God is a Trinity, doesn't keep you from believing that. Why? Because you deduce it from what the Scripture does clearly teach. And Christ, I would argue, commands us to do that. Right? How often does He say to the Pharisees, have you not read? You err not understanding the Scriptures. And He pulls together theological arguments that fit together to make His case. And so, just as we do with the Trinity, that's what we do when it comes to the cessation of the gifts. We look at what the Scriptures teach and when you look at the arguments that are laid out in the book and other places, you heard it in the *Cessationist* film, when you look at the arguments they bring us to this position; that the miraculous gifts have ceased.

Lance: Right and just to punctuate this point and then we'll move on - you know there isn't one verse that necessarily makes the arguments rise or fall. There's a lot from the Continuationists' side that will try and point to this particular verse and an interpretation of that verse. And they're sort of "gotcha" verses, right?

Tom: Right. Like 1 Corinthians 13, right? "When the perfect comes..." and you know they argue from that verse. The irony of that is if you look at church history, and I have a whole stack of books in my office where through church history they use that same passage, the Cessationists, use that same passage to argue for the cessation of the miraculous gifts. And so it is a passage that has, I forget now, at one point I looked into it, it's like twenty different possible interpretations. And yet, they build a lot of case on that verse.

Lance: And I bet when you preach 1 Corinthians that you will go through every one of those messages.

Tom: No, not every one of them. Some of them don't deserve to be heard. But the ones that do, the ones that really, you know, have some substance to them I certainly would.

Lance: So there's seven arguments in the book and those are the primary arguments that are really laid out by any Cessationist but you spend two chapters talking about miracles and how God has used miracles during three different epochs of biblical and redemptive history. So, sort of define those time periods for us and then I want to send the question in sort of a case study right after that.

Tom: Ok. Well first of all, very important to make this distinction. I'm not saying that God directly working miracles only happened in these three time periods. You see God directly intervening in human history and working miracles at various points. Not every day but at various points throughout the history of the Scripture. What we're talking about are those periods of time when God gave miracle working power to people. He endowed them with the capacity to work miracles. Now, you ask the average Christian and you say, how many periods in biblical history were there like that. Many Christians will say, oh it happens all the time, it happens like on every page. It doesn't. I challenge you to look at it. What you'll find is in reality there are only three short periods in biblical history where God gave men the power to work miracles. You know, people will point to like Samson. I had that response after I preached the message at Strange Fire. They'll say, what about Samson? Samson didn't work a miracle. God gave Samson super human strength and he exercised it. He never worked a miracle. We're talking about God giving people the power to heal, power to raise from the dead, the power to perform miracles. Only three periods of time in biblical history.

The first one is in the time of Moses and Joshua. When you look at that time period, it's a period - if you do the math - it's a period, I won't go through all the details, you can read about it in the

book, but when you do the math it's a period of about 65 years. Fast forward then to the second period.

The second period in which God gave men the power to work miracles was during the time of Elijah and Elisha. Again, when you look at the time frame it's a period, ironically, and I didn't make this up. This is just the way it is, of about 65 years.

When is the next, the third era, in biblical history when God gave men the power to work miracles? It's the time of Jesus and the Apostles. And that starts obviously with Jesus' ministry. I believe the time frame was probably about 26 or 27 A.D. and Jesus died in 30 A.D. I know some of you may disagree with that time frame, you may bump it to 33 A.D. But regardless the point is somewhere in that time frame miracles began and then by the time the last apostle died, that's certainly the end of the miraculous. That's John at the end of the first century. But really before that, even as you heard in the *Cessationist* movie, the miracles declined significantly and I think even go away prior than that. But even if you take the entire period - Jesus through the death of John - you're looking at a period of 65 to 70 years. So in all of biblical history, in all of human history, only three approximately 65 year periods did God give people the power to work miracles. It's not a common thing. And so of course that raises the question, why? Why would He only do it in those time periods. And I don't know if you're going to get to that or not.

Lance: I plan on getting there.

Tom: Ok. I'll leave it alone then.

Lance: Let's do a case study because a lot of the pushback that you will find online specifically some You Tube channels that have hundreds of thousands of followers, they want to say that Cessationists are disingenuous about their position as it relates to miracles. And then they want to cite all of the supernatural work that God does in the book of Genesis. So, if you could talk about and compare and contrast what's going on with God working supernaturally and divinely, maybe miraculously in Genesis? And then in Exodus with Moses, if you could talk about those two

Tom: You want to give me a specific example from Genesis?

Lance: Yeah, some will mention that in Genesis 12 at the giving of the Abrahamic Covenant, it's a divine supernatural giving of the covenant. When you look at Genesis 19 and Sodom and Gomorrah it's divine judgment, it's miraculous intervention. So compare that with what we see in the early chapters of Exodus and Moses and those things.

Tom: Again, the key is the point I've already made. And that is there is a big difference between God directly performing a miracle and God giving a man or a person the power to work a miracle. When you look at Genesis all of those things are miraculous. I mean when God rains down fire on Sodom and Gomorrah and destroys it, I mean there are those who argue, well maybe it was some natural occurrence or whatever. Regardless, God violated the natural order to make it happen on His time and when He wanted it to happen to destroy those cities. And so, even if you go there God was intervening directly. There was no person who was making that happen. You know, it wasn't Abraham or his descendants who were causing those things to transpire. It was God acting directly. And the same thing is true for the other examples she cited in Genesis. GOD is performing miracles. But when you get to Exodus, Moses is performing miracles. God gives him the power to work miracles and he, as God's instrument, now performs the miracle rather than God doing it directly without Moses. That's a huge difference! And so I would - you're going to hear this, if you're going to get into this debate at all you're going to hear this often - make sure you are careful to discern the difference. Because that's a smoke screen. There's a huge difference between a person performing a miracle and God performing a miracle.

Lance: That's great. So you've got Moses and Joshua, Elijah and Elisha and Jesus and the Apostles. Now why those three time periods, why miracles then, miracle working men then, and not other times?

Tom: You know, I think it is crystal clear when you go back to the first time that God gives man the power to work miracles. You go back to Exodus 4 and the end of Exodus 6 and the beginning of Exodus 7 and God makes it very clear. Moses, he's called, and I love Moses' response. I love it because it's a lot like us, right? Well, can't you send somebody else? What about this and what

about that and God keeps responding. But one of the things that Moses says was legitimate. Moses says, what if they won't believe that I'm truly Your representative? And God says, what is that in your hand? And He gives him the power to work miracles. Moses throws the staff on the ground, it becomes a snake, he picks it up and it becomes a staff again. And then you see the amazing miracles in the plagues in Egypt. God gave Moses the power to work those miracles. Why? He told him. It's to validate you as My messenger. What if they won't believe me? And God says, oh, they'll believe you. I'm going to give you the power to work miracles. That's true in the time of Moses.

You fast forward to the time of Elijah and Elisha. You see that same truth unfolding. Now they will know, Elijah says, that You are God and that I'm Your prophet. You fast forward to the New Testament. Look at Jesus. Go through the book of John. Again and again Jesus says if you won't believe Me, believe the miracles that I perform. God is confirming that. He's confirming that I am who I claim, Jesus said, by the miracles He's letting Me perform. You remember what Peter says in Acts 10. He says to Cornelius there, he says, you know about Jesus. You've heard about Him. A man attested to by God through miracles. That was the reason Jesus worked miracles. Yes, there was compassion in His heart to heal. Of course. That's the heart of God. But the reason God gave Him the power to work miracles was to confirm His identity and His mission. Go the Apostles, the same thing in the book of Acts, again and again it says that reality. Go to Hebrews chapter 2 where it says that the writer of Hebrews is saying, the Lord brought the message of the gospel. He gave that to His apostles and His apostles were confirmed. Their word was confirmed through the miracles that they performed.

So every where you go, in those three epochs, where men are given the power to work miracles it's always for the same purpose. It's to confirm that they are messengers, prophets, sent from God to speak on God's behalf. And really, you and I have talked about this, Lance, but really that goes back to Deuteronomy, right? I mean Moses was a prophet nobody could deny it. I mean God called him up on top of Mt. Sinai, there was thunder, there was lightening, God spoke the Ten Commandments from the mountain. Nobody doubted that Moses was the man of God and that what he was speaking was God's Word. But then Moses says, let me tell you how to identify

moving forward, a true prophet. And in Deuteronomy 13 and Deuteronomy 18 He lays down those three criteria for a true prophet. How do you know if a man is a true prophet?

Well, everything he says is always going to come true. If he's wrong once, he's a false prophet because how could God be false? That's illogical. Secondly, He said he's going to speak, Deuteronomy 13, he's going to speak in keeping with previous revelation. There Moses says look, if a guy comes and he can work miracles, but he doesn't speak in keeping with what's already been revealed, don't believe him. He's a false prophet. And so, he had to speak in keeping with previous revelation. And then in Deuteronomy 13 and in other places, it substantiates that God may choose to give that true prophet the capacity to work miracles to confirm that he is in fact representing God. That's always the purpose for miracles when they're given. That is, when men are given the power to work miracles.

Lance: That's great. So, we've talked about miracles, you've touched on healings. Let's shift gears to talk about the gift of tongues. Could you define the gift of tongues and then give us really the primary reason that gift was exercised in the first century and why it's just not necessary for today?

Tom: Yeah, I mean when you look at it, when you listen to Continuationists, you listen to Charismatics, they will try to pit Acts 2 and Pentecost against what's written in 1 Corinthians, particularly 1 Corinthians 14 and they'll argue those are two different things. But think about this with me for a moment. Think about first of all, when the books were written. The book of 1 Corinthians was written in the mid 50's A.D. About six years later Luke, Paul's traveling companion, wrote the book of Acts. Obviously that means Luke knew about the Corinthian letter, he knew what was happening in Corinth, and yet when he writes about the gift of tongues he couldn't be clearer. Look at Acts 2. He says in Acts 2, in fact, turn there. Let's just look at it together because I want you to see this. In Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost, verse 4, "They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues..." other languages "... as the Spirit was giving them utterance." How do I know that's other languages?

Well, first of all the Greek word for "tongue" is used in two ways primarily in the New Testament. One of those is for that muscle in your mouth. And the other is for languages. But he goes on, he makes it clear.

And now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered... (watch this) ... because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language. They were amazed and astonished, saying, “Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we each hear them in our own [dialect] language in which we were born?”

So clearly what’s going on at Pentecost is not ecstatic speech, it’s not prayer languages, it’s not gibberish. Instead it is the power to speak in a language that you didn’t grow up with and didn’t know. It’s the miraculous capacity to speak a language you’ve never studied. And that’s exactly what’s going here. And he goes on in verses 9 and 10 to list some of the places these people were from and the languages that they heard.

When you come to the second occurrence of tongues in the book of Acts, in the case of Cornelius in Acts chapter 10, there Peter says in Acts 10 and 11 - chapter 10 is where the event happened, 11 is where he gives the report. - he says, this is exactly what happened to us in the beginning. So he says that what’s happening to Cornelius in chapters 10 and 11 of Acts is exactly what happened in Acts 2. What happened in Acts 2? People were given the capacity to speak languages they had never studied. And there’s no reason to think that the third occurrence in Acts 19 is any different than that. There’s no indication there that it’s any different at all. And again remember that’s written *after* 1 Corinthians. And Luke knew what had been written there. And he clearly doesn’t think there’s any conflict between what’s written in Acts and what’s written in 1 Corinthians.

Lance: Tom, could you now explain how that has been redefined? And at the same time talk about how 1 Corinthians 12 through 14 does not teach two different kinds of tongues. All of this is wrapped together in this redefinition of the Charismatic movement.

Tom: Yeah, again when you look at Acts, the book of Acts it couldn’t be clearer. Look at every occurrence, it could be clearer. It’s the same thing that happened in Acts 2 and what happened in Acts 2 is we each heard them speak in our own dialect. That was a miraculous thing because these were uneducated Galileans. And so that’s what happened. But here’s what happens in the

Charismatic movement. They redefine it. If you were over in the film, in the screening of the film, you heard this but for those of you who weren't let me just say this, that even when the modern Charismatic began in the early part of the 20th century, it was really launched on January 1, of 1900. That's with the ministry of Charles Parham and a woman named Agnes Osmond who claimed to began speaking in tongues.

From the beginning the modern Charismatic claimed that it was speaking in languages that they'd never studied. They understood what the book of Acts teaches. They understood that the book of 1 Corinthians was teaching that. And so they claimed that they could speak in languages, real languages, they'd never studied. And many of them went to other parts of the world and tried it and of course failed miserably. Turned out it was just gibberish that nobody could understand. Well, what are you left with that that point? Either you say, this is not a work of the Holy Spirit. This is something that we made up and you return in shame and say, you know, don't believe anything we've said. Or you redefine speaking in tongues. And now you say what you've never said. You say that it's not *just* the capacity to speak languages. They'll admit that in Acts 2 that was true. But they'll say no, in Corinthians it was something else. It was a private - either it was the capacity to speak in ecstatic utterances in a public setting - or it's a private prayer language that's like the language of angels that you now are able to pray in. And so they redefined the book of 1 Corinthians 12 to 14, those chapters, to be this. But that is not where they started. It's a bait and switch and so you have to understand that.

Lance: Well, let's transition Tom - that was helpful - let's transition from the arguments to some application here on what to do with this in our lives. The Continuationists, they want to argue that there's ongoing revelation, there's ongoing prophecy, there's ongoing visions, dreams, even the language used sometimes, is impressions. So how do we respond to those that claim to have visions and dreams and how do Cessationists respond to those types of claims?

Tom: Well, I think there are several different ways. When I was over in the Middle East and I won't get specific because I don't want to sort of throw our missionaries under the bus there, but when I was over in the Middle East there were people who were in the conference where I was speaking who ministered to refugees from Syria. And they're Muslims. And in that context they

were saying to me, there are Muslims who have these dreams in which, you know, they've heard the gospel, they've heard all this explained, but there's a huge hurdle for Muslims to overcome. Basically, they are disavowed from everything in their lives. And so they're just struggling with this. And these pastors who are ministering to these Syrian refugees, told me, said you know, at times a Muslim will have a dream in which Jesus will appear and sort of affirm the decision to move forward and put their faith in Christ. What do you do with that?

My response is first of all, that's not a miracle. I have dreams all the time, so do you. IF in fact, there's any truth to it and I can't substantiate the truth to it, but if there is that's nothing more than a divine providence. I mean if God can keep an Old Testament king from sleeping in order to accomplish His will, He can certainly give somebody a specific dream in weaving together the thoughts in their brain just like He does in ours every night to accomplish His purpose. That's not a miracle, that's not a fresh revelation. That's a providence. A divine providence in which God's at work in someone's life. If in fact, that happens. And I'm not prepared to say it never happens. I do think a lot of it is overblown.

I think at other times and I know this is where you were going with your question, the dream is honestly either self-deception or deception. I mean, how often in Jeremiah 23 does God talk about the false prophets who create visions in their own minds. And speak them. And frankly you speak them often enough, and loud enough, and long enough and you begin to believe them. You know, that's why the New Testament says false teachers are deceived and deceiving. Because sometimes they are deceived. They've told themselves the lie long enough that they begin to believe it. In other cases, I think they know and they're just charlatans in it for the money or favors from women or whatever else is going to feed their flesh and that's 2 Peter, right, and Jude? And so I think when you talk about visions and dreams that's what I would say. I would think at some points God in His providence may allow a person to have a dream that is going to somehow shape their perspective or direction. But it's always going to be, if it's God at work, it's going to be ultimately moving them back to the Scripture not away from it.

Lance: Right. Now over ten years ago when you spoke at the "Strange Fire" Conference, the numbers sort of circulating that conference was that the Charismatic movement is upwards near

500 million people involved in that movement. In your book you make note of the fact that that number has increased from 500 million to 650 million people in the Charismatic movement. So I think that we could all attest to the reality that we either have family members, friends, co-workers, someone that we know that is still embedded in that movement. So maybe if you could sort of counsel us, or shepherd us on how to approach them, what to discuss first, and how to get them to move away from that particular doctrine into the Cessationist world?

Tom: Yeah, I think it's start with trying to discern where they really are. If you're dealing with a false teacher; somebody who purports to be speaking for God who's given this string of false prophecies - I mean if you were over again in the screening of the film you saw some of those guys. And some of them are charlatans. If they were in your world your treatment of them is going to be different. You're going to confront them, you're going to call them false teachers, you're going to plead with them to repent. That's different than your neighbor who goes to a Charismatic church and who thinks that that's biblical. That's all they know. Your approach is going to be entirely different there.

My encouragement to you would be, first and foremost, reach out to your neighbors as much as you can. Get to know them and be in their lives, have those discussions. But when it comes specifically, if you have a Charismatic family member or friend you don't want to be belligerent in trying to argue them into your position. You want to be gracious like Christ was gracious. You want to love them. You want to be concerned about them. And the thing that ought to come across to them isn't "I'm here to win an argument." But "I love you and I'm concerned about you." And then I think you bring them along to understand and appreciate the Scripture. A lot of people in those worlds, they've never heard that there are Christians who don't believe that. Some of you have told me that, coming out of Charismatic backgrounds, that come to our church. That's all you knew. And so it starts by just saying, "Did you know that the Charismatic movement is really a modern phenomenon? Did you know that the history of the Charismatic movement begins in 1900? And let me explain it to you. Would you consider our talking about some biblical arguments as to why that's problematic?"

So you approach it gently, graciously, but from the Scripture. And give them, refer them to maybe resources. Honestly that's part of the reason I wrote the book. I tried to write *The Biblical Case for Cessationists* with a tone that you can hand it to a Charismatic friend or family member and it's not like going to scorch their hands. Instead, it's listen, let's talk about this. Let's look at this from the Scripture. And if they're really in Christ they want to do that. And so you want to bring them along in that way.

Lance: Yeah, Tom. To sort of wrap things up I want to lay out a couple more questions for you. When trying to discern the will of God the Charismatic/Continuationist camp is often looking for prophecy. They're often looking for "Well, God told me this" sort of that still small voice. So, when we are to make our decisions and we are to make this choice or that choice why would you reject looking for and determining God's will based on those subjective realities as opposed to embracing what God has objectively said in His Word?

Tom: You know, I didn't grow up in the Charismatic movement. I grew up in conservative Cessationist world. But I also grew up in a mystical world where, it's like, you waited for an impression. You know, what does God want me to do? What is the feeling I have in the pit of my stomach? What's the impression I have. I just feel like God wants me to you fill in the blank. And that's how we were taught to live. That is not a biblical way to discern God's will. Let me recommend two resources for you. If you struggle with that at all, if you struggle with how to discern God's will, two resources.

One is sort of the Sparks Notes version. The other is sort of the full blown dissertation version. The Spark Notes is written by Kevin De Young. It's called, "*Just Do Something!*" And he deals with a biblical process for making decisions. The sort of longer version is called, "*Decision Making in the Will of God*" by Gary Friesen. I think we carry both of those usually in our bookstore. I refer people to them all the time because having grown up in that mystical world where it's like, how do I know what God wants me to do? That's how I lived. It's like I'm waiting for this feeling, I'm waiting for this impression. And then I came across, while I was still in seminary maybe even like college, I came across Gary Friesen's book and it revolutionized my world. The first third of the book is dismantling that whole idea of making decisions based on impressions and feelings. You know, trying to discern God's will like that. The second third of the book is laying down a biblical

model for decision making. And the final third of the book is the application of that to some real live circumstances. But I would just urge you not to live by, “I’m just waiting for God to tell me” or “God told me” or “I’m waiting for this impression from God to decide what to do.” Why? Because you have no idea where those impressions are coming from. You have no idea.

I had a man, he’s not here in the church still, so I can talk about him. No, I want you to know that I don’t do this freely but I’ll share this particular circumstance because I want you to know how desperately wrong this is. I had a man sit in my office, he was here in our church for a short time and well intentioned man. I believe a brother in Christ. But he had moved from the Northwest and I asked him, I said, “So what brought you here to Texas?” And he said, “Well God told me to move here.” And I said, “Really, you mean like audibly you heard God speak?” “Oh, no no. I don’t mean that..” he said. “I mean I just knew that God like spoke to my heart and I had this impression and I knew.” And I said to him, “How did you know that was God? How did you know that that’s not your flesh because it’s a whole lot easier to live for Christ in Texas than it is in the Northwest.” How do you know that’s not the pizza you had last night for supper. I mean, really, how do you know that that thought flitting across your mind is from God? And the answer is you don’t. That’s why Martin Luther, and I love this, he talked about the fact that we don’t look for God in some mystical feeling, this voice I hear in my head. The man, he said, who would hear God speak, let him read Holy Scripture.

The good news, folks, is God has spoken to us in what Luther called “the external Word.” It’s outside of me. It’s not something I’ve got to try to discern in my heart, is this God? Is this me? Is this my wife? No, here He is, black and white, words, sentences, paragraphs that I can digest with my mind and understand and I can KNOW that this is the voice of God. But I cannot know for a moment that anything outside of this book is the voice of God. And so that’s a terrible way to live. I would encourage you to get that language out of your vocabulary. Don’t even talk like God told me or you know, God spoke to me, or I believe God wants me to do this because He gave me this feeling. Get that out of your mind, out of your vocabulary and learn to make decisions in a biblical way. And I’ll just give you the thumbnail version. I probably don’t have time to do this but I’ll give you the thumbnail version.

Here's what the Scripture commands: God has a sovereign will. There's no question. I believe in the eternal decree that God has freely and unchangeably ordained whatsoever comes to pass. That's what the Scripture teaches. He works all things after the counsel of His own will, Ephesians 1 says. Absolutely true. And so in one sense your decisions are you know, God has that perfect will. But He's not going to tell you that beforehand. He's not going to write it in the sky, He's not going to give you an impression in your stomach, so how do you make decisions? The answer is you pray for wisdom, you look in the Scripture to see what it has to say about all the related issues of your decision, you seek counsel from wise people in your life who've lived a few years who can help you think this through, and then you make a decision and you act on it. That's the biblical process for decision making and it's not about something in your gut. So, there you go. Sorry.

Lance: No that's great.

Tom: I took some of our time with that because I think that is so important. I was absolutely in the early days of my Christian life, absolutely paralyzed by this, you know, I've got to wait for this voice from God, this feeling in my gut, this impression. It's like, no, that's not how God works. So, check out those books.

Lance: That's great Tom. Thank you for being here with us tonight and answering these questions. Thank you for ministry in writing the book and taking all of the heat. That way we don't have to. If you haven't read Tom's book yet, we've got copies of it down in the bookstore. I encourage you to pick up a copy and read it. Engage with it. Let us know what you think about it. Tom, will you close us out in a word of prayer?

Tom: I will. I just mention one thing because I don't want this to sound like a commercial. I don't get a dime from the book. Alright? It's about helping your church and so if you buy it, nothing's coming back to me. Alright? I just want you to know that. Let's pray together.

Father, thank You for Your amazing goodness to us. Lord, not only have You saved us and we give You thanks for the gospel, we give You thanks for Your Son, the Incarnate Word. But Father tonight especially as we reflect on this whole issue we give You thanks for Your written Word.

We give You thanks for the Holy Spirit who compelled the authors to write it, who illumines our understanding of it, who produces change through it in our lives. Father, we thank You for the external Word given to us by Your Holy Spirit. Father, help us to treasure the Word. Help us to treasure that role of the Holy Spirit that is foremost, that He would take of Christ and make it known to us through the Apostles in the written Word. Lord, we thank You and praise You for both our Lord Jesus Christ, the Word Incarnate, and for the written Word. Help us to love them both, treasure them, and follow our Lord's words throughout this life until we're in Your presence forever. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.