

TONGUES AND INTERPRETING TONGUES
SPIRITUAL GIFTS #9
1209
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1 CORINTHIANS 12:8-10, 28-30; 14:1-28, 39

REACHING PEOPLE: Apostleship-Evangelism-Miracles-Healing-Mercy
MATURING CHRISTIANS: Prophecy-Teaching-Wisdom-Knowledge-Encouragement-Giving-Helps-
Distinguishing Between Spirits-Faith-Tongues-Interpreting Tongues
ORGANIZING THE CHURCH TO REACH PEOPLE AND TO MATURE CHRISTIANS: Administration-
Leadership-Pastoring

TONGUES

IS THE GIFT OF TONGUES CONTROVERSIAL?

Are You Kidding?

Julie: "Are you scared to be preaching on tongues?"

Roger: "No."

Julie: "Well, you should be."

The gift of tongues was a "problem" gift. In the Corinthian church it was divisive and was a strong factor in nurturing spiritual pride. Because of this problem Paul wrote an entire chapter on how to handle this gift. Because of its spectacular character, it often tends to make him a missionary of his own experience. More than some other gifts, it can easily lead to pre-occupation with oneself and with a subjective experience, instead of serving the church.

Don't like to start a sermon with a negative--but this needs to be said at the outset.

FEW GIFTS POLARIZE LIKE THIS ONE.

BILL WEBER AND DBA

If you are in a group that polarizes around the gift of tongues or the Holy Spirit, look around and recognize that the group is not becoming more spiritual, it is becoming more carnal.

Beware of majoring in the minors.

Isn't it revealing that Paul never mentions tongues in any epistle outside Corinthians, where he soft-pedals it and tries to correct its abuses?

In writing of the Spirit-controlled life in all his other epistles, Paul completely ignores tongues. We would never have learned that Paul himself spoke in tongues, had he not told us so in rebuking the excesses of this practice. If tongues-speaking were of prime importance, certainly the Spirit would have led Paul to write about it somewhere else.

WHAT IS THE GIFT OF TONGUES?

The gift of tongues is the ability to speak fluently in a previously unlearned language.

WHERE IS THE GIFT OF TONGUES MENTIONED IN THE BIBLE?

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 12:8-10, 28-30.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 14:1-28, 39.

READ ACTS 2:1-17.

Unsaved men and women might hear the gospel in their own languages.

READ ACTS 10:44-46.

Either the gift of tongues was "other" recognizable dialects, or Peter and his friends had the gift of interpretation for they heard them "magnify God."

READ ACTS 19:1-7

In each of the above incidents concerning tongues the primary purpose of the gift was to authenticate that new segments being added to the church were God's own work.

ARE THERE DIFFERENT KINDS OF TONGUES?

Learned scholars differ on the issue.

There are various kinds (12:10, 28; cf. 14:10); some are tongues of men and others of angels (13:1).

At Pentecost (Acts 2) the tongues was obviously known languages which could be understood without the aid of an interpreter (by those who could naturally speak that language).

At Corinth (1 Cor. 12-14) the tongues were ecstatic utterances which would be understood only through an interpreter who had the God given gift of interpretation of these utterances.

1 Corinthians 14:2 ("he utters mysteries with his spirit") is used to support this view.

ARE TONGUES FOR TODAY?

Some maintain that the gift was temporary to meet the special conditions of the early church and was withdrawn after the written New Testament.

Dispensational teaching

1 CORINTHIANS 13:8 appears to teach that tongues will cease of themselves while knowledge and prophecy will go on to cease at a later time.

The verb referring to prophecy and knowledge is in the passive and connotes the idea that prophecy and knowledge will be stopped by an outside source, ie God, when He is finished with them. The verb referring to tongues is in the Middle voice and connotes the idea that tongues will "automatically" cease of themselves.

On the other hand, it would take a bold man indeed to say that the Holy Spirit cannot or will not bestow the gift today.

1 Corinthians 14:39.

The Christian and Missionary Alliance has twice faced the tongues question in official capacity, in 1907 and again in 1963. Its position, put forth by A.W. Tozer, twice affirmed, succinctly summarizes a wise attitude, "Seek not, forbid not".

IS THE HOLY SPIRIT THE ONLY SOURCE OF TONGUES?

Pat Robertson show: Muslim convert: "Praise God, I got the gift of tongues before I even became a Christian!"

Tongues are not the exclusive domain of Christianity. Tongues-speaking has been reported from the days of Plato, known among the Zulus, practiced in Hinduism. Tongues-speaking has been heard among Muslims, Mormons, and spiritualist mediums. Unitarian Pentecostals, rejecting the deity of Christ, talk in tongues.

It Appears That There Are Generally Three Categories Sources For Tongues.

1. The Holy Spirit can give the gift.

2. Satan can counterfeit it.

3. It can be psychologically self-induced experience.

The forced repetition of unintelligible expressions or some form of temporary subconscious euphoria resembles spiritual ecstasy.

Teach persons how to produce nonsense syllables with the intent of learning to speak in tongues. The possibility of a psychologized state should cause us to be careful in attributing any tongues experience either to the gifts of the Spirit or to the power of Satan.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF TONGUES?

*Tongues were used to authenticate the addition of non-Jewish people into God's church (Acts 2, 10, 19) and thus to show that God's church was to be universal.

At Pentecost tongues-speaking attracted a crowd, provided a springboard for Peter's sermon, and helped win 3,000 souls.

The next major step in the spread of the gospel was preaching it to Gentiles at Cornelius' house. Tongues were used to convince skeptical Jewish believers that the Gospel was for Gentiles too.

At Ephesus when the gospel was declared to the followers of John the Baptist, tongues offered evidence of the reality of Paul's new message.

*Uninterpreted Tongues are a negative sign to unbelievers of judgment (1 Cor 14:22).

In the middle of Paul's instructions about the use of prophecy and tongues in the church he includes a six-verse admonition to the Corinthians (READ 1 CORINTHIANS 14:20-25), in which he says that they should not think in childish ways but should be mature, and then concludes by saying that they should seek to prophesy, because unbelievers will be driven away by tongues (without interpretation), but they will be convicted by prophecy.

The context of Paul's quotation from Isaiah 28:11-12 is one of judgement on unbelievers in Israel. The Lord has repeatedly warned his people but they had refused to listen. So he was warning them now that he would send on them foreign invaders (the Assyrians) whose speech they would not understand.

Paul understands very well that when God speaks to people in a language they cannot understand, it is a form of punishment for unbelief. It is one of the last in a series of divine rebukes. It signifies his anger and results in their turning farther away from him.

Therefore (v.23), if unbelievers come in and you speak in a language they cannot understand, you will simply drive them away--this is the inevitable result of incomprehensible speech.

You will be giving a 'sign' to the unbelievers which is entirely wrong, because their hardness of heart has not reached the point where they deserve that severe sign of judgement. So when you come together (v.26), if anyone speaks in a tongue, be sure someone interprets (v. 27); otherwise, the tongue-speaker should be quiet in the church (v.29).

*Interpreted tongues are used for edification in the gathered church.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 14:5, 22,26,27.

Coupled with one who has the gift of interpretation, tongues are supposed to relay a message directly from the Throne of God to the church on earth. In this sense it edifies the church.

1 nickel + 1 nickel = 1 dime

*Tongues promote personal-spiritual edification.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 14:4, 14-16a.

Tongues are not the Biblical method of Christian growth. In all explanations of spiritual life in the New Testament epistles, tongues-speaking is completely ignored. Sanctification is not a sudden acquisition of spiritual maturity by an exciting emotional experience. It is a growth process by which moral likeness to Jesus Christ is produced by the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit.

*Tongues are useful in prayer to express ideas and concepts which are deep in the human spirit.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 14:2, 14-15.

*Tongues are a tool for praising God.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 14:16a.

WHAT ARE THE RULES FOR THE USE OF TONGUES?

*Tongues in public worship are to be used only in the presence of an interpreter. Otherwise, the tongue speaker is to be silent.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 14:5, 16, 27-28.

We should not speak in tongues without interpretation, for that would be giving an inappropriate 'sign' of God's judgement on an unbeliever, driving him or her away.

The Scripture is clear that one who knows he has the gift of tongues should determine in advance of a public meeting whether or not one with the gift of interpretation will be present.

*No more than two or three are to speak in tongues during any one gathering.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 14:27.

*The entire church is never to erupt in tongue speaking simultaneously.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 14:23. This is confusion and not order; and God is the author of order not confusion. Any unbeliever there will think that all are mad.

*Those with the gift of tongues should pray for the gift of interpretation.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 14:13.

*Do not forbid speaking in tongues.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 14:31.

A. W. Tozer: "Seek not, forbid not."

* All spiritual gifts are to promote peace and harmony and maintain the unity of the Spirit--whatever has a divisive tendency is open to suspicion (Eph 4:1-8)

WHAT WE WILL DO WITH TONGUES AT CASAS. Same rules as always. Small group O.K. Not in public worship. If causes division in Casas I will personally ask you to leave.

DOES GOD INTEND FOR EVERY CHRISTIAN TO SPEAK IN TONGUES?

The gift of tongues is definitely not given to all.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 12:30. The Greek grammatical construction makes it obviously clear.

ARE TONGUES THE SIGN OF THE BAPTISM OR OF THE FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT?

Paul declares that not all shall speak in tongues, but that all are baptized of the Holy Spirit.

COMPARE READ 1 CORINTHIANS 12: 30 with 1 Cor. 12:13.

It is a very dangerous thing to elevate any spiritual gift and link it as a sign of the filling of the Holy Spirit--or to make the possession of any gift normative for a spiritual experience.

THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT occurs at conversion.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 12:13; 6:19.

Only 7 passages of scripture deal with or mention this "Baptism in the Holy Spirit". 6 of them deal with the historical event of Pentecost (Matt 3:11, Mark 1:8, Luke 3:16, John 1:33, Acts 1:5, Acts 11:16) They either prophesy about the coming event or look backward to it.

Only one passage deals doctrinally with this Baptism in the Holy Spirit in every believer. This is the only verse in the entire Bible that literally applies to Baptism of Holy Spirit for today. In this context Paul is stressing unity (many divisions in the church).

In what way is this Baptism received? Simply by faith in Christ. The Baptism follows automatically, positioning us in Christ (Col 2:12; 1 John 4:15).

It refers to the believer being incorporated into the body of Christ by a vital organic union effected by the Holy Spirit (he is now "in Christ").

This experience is permanent. The Baptism in the Spirit is not to be repeated. (Read Acts 2:38.)

There is no text in scripture urging believers today to seek for the Spirit's Baptism. How can we receive what they already have?

What the Bible does urge us to receive is THE FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

The key verse here is EPHESIANS 5:18: "Be not drunk with wine, but (present tense) Keep on being filled with the Spirit."

This experience can and should be continually repeated in the lives of every believer. Yet I dare say that many go through their Christian lives and never get filled with the Spirit.

HOW TO BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT

1. Confess sins to God (1 John 1:9) (must be empty and clean to be filled).
2. Desire to seek His fullness --prayer (Matt. 5:6-"blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness".) Many have no spiritual thirst. They're completely satisfied with the way they are. They'll never grow or be filled with Spirit. Must be seeking this fullness every day!
3. Must unreservedly yield to God--must give up self to let God have complete access to our selves (Luke 14:33; 9:24). More we give up to God, the more that He takes and gives right back to us.
4. Trust and believe that God has filled us--leave it to Him.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GIFT OF TONGUES

It would seem that this gift is not a gift which can be developed. It is given spontaneously. You either have it or you don't.

INTERPRETATION OF TONGUES

WHAT IS THE GIFT OF INTERPRETING TONGUES?

The gift of interpreting tongues is the spontaneous ability to translate the language of one who is using the gift of tongues into words which are easy to understand.

The gift of interpretation, when the tongue was a foreign language, would be the ability to translate by someone who did not know the language.

Presumably, if tongues are languages, one could speak in a certain language in public worship having the utterance translated by someone who had learned that language. But that is not exercising the gift of interpretation.

In either case, neither the words nor their contexts required an exact word-by-word translation of the message, but rather a revelation by the Holy Spirit displaying the meaning of the utterance.

It is not the *experience* of tongues-speaking which is in focus but rather the *communication* of God-given ideas through interpretation.

MUST THE GIFT OF INTERPRETING TONGUES BE CAREFULLY CHECKED?

If a tongues speaker does not have the gift of interpretation, and if an entire congregation is dependent on one interpreter to receive a message from God through tongues, it is a situation fraught with danger. When the pastor preaches, we can check his explanations by comparing them with Scripture and commentaries, but in a tongues message we apparently are at the mercy of the interpreter. One can see how such a gift can be misused.

Since interpretation is the key to meaning, it stands in a place of even greater importance than does the gift of tongues, though one without the other is meaningless toward the goal of edification.

BILL NICHOLSON AND WOMAN AND BUILDING DONATION.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GIFT OF THE INTERPRETATION OF TONGUES

It would seem that this gift is not a gift which can be developed. It is given spontaneously. You either have it or you don't.

The third Person of the Trinity is also the Spirit of unity. It is His nature to love the brethren. It is through Him the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts. Any lack of love on our part for the brethren, any "party" spirit, ("I am of Apollos," etc.) any spirit of divisiveness is not of Him. Any such spirit within us serves to quench the Spirit.