

THE GIFT OF TONGUES

"For to one is given by the Spirit...divers kinds of tongues" (I Corinthians 12:10)

WHAT IS "THE GIFT OF TONGUES"?

1. A supernatural utterance by the Holy Spirit in a language never learned by the speaker, nor necessarily always understood by the hearer.
2. "It is a manifestation of the Mind of the Spirit of God employing human speech organs. It has nothing to do with linguistic ability, nor with the mind or intellect of man" (Harold Horton, pg. 132, The Gifts of The Spirit)
3. It is a gift of God; to be exercised in public church gatherings, always accompanied with an interpretation of the message in tongues, for the specific purpose of God wanting to speak a message to those in that service.

WHY TONGUES?

"For with stammering lips and another tongue will He speak to this people" (Isaiah 28:11). Paul quotes this as he explains the gift in (I Corinthians 14:21) "With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people..."

Plain and simple: God wants to speak and convey a message to His people and one of the ways He has chosen to do so is the gift of tongues. "The gift of Tongues plus the interpretation is equal to prophecy, which is always God speaking to the people (I Corinthians 14:3)" (Dennis Bennett, Pg 85, The Holy Spirit and You)

THE THREE PURPOSES OF TONGUES

1. Speaking with tongues is the Scriptural evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit.
 - a. In Jerusalem at Pentecost, when they were filled with the Spirit they, "began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4)
 - b. In Caesarea eight years later, on the Gentiles also "was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost: for they heard them speak with tongues" (Acts 10:46)
 - c. In Ephesus twenty-three years after Pentecost "the Holy Ghost came on them, and they spake with tongues" (Acts 19:6). Without this sign there was no scriptural evidence at all that one had received the Baptism in the Spirit; and so today, the first purpose of tongues is that it provides Scriptural evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit.
2. Speaking in tongues in the Divine means God has given for the believer to edify themselves in private prayer. This is for our private devotional language which all believers should enjoy daily.

"He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself" (I Corinthians 14:4) (or build up your inner man). "I would that ye all spake with tongues" (I Cor.14:5)

While not all Baptized-in-the-Holy-Spirit believers will minister the gift of Tongues in a public meeting (I Corinthians 12:30), all Spirit filled believers can and surely should speak in tongues daily in prayer in communion with God (He that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God" (I Cor. 14:2).

"We must not forget that speaking in other tongues is not only the initial evidence or sign of the Holy Spirits' infilling, but it is also an experience for the rest of one's life to assist in the worship of God. It is a flowing stream that should never dry up, but will enrich your life spiritually" (Howard Carter).

YES, YES, YES...

...Let's not be too concerned about ministering the gift of tongues in public. Let's be primarily concerned with receiving the Baptism in the Holy Spirit and then maintaining our devotional gift (praying in tongues daily) to assist us in our worship of God.

3. Speaking in Tongues (followed by the interpretation) is a supernatural gift from God to communicate His message in a public gathering. This is "the gift of tongues" spoken of here in I Corinthians 12 and 14.

(over)

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS GIFT?

#1. To Be A Sign To The Unbeliever

"Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not" (I Corinthians 14:22). How? A manifestation of tongues in a church gathering establishes to the unbeliever the fact that:

1. God is Alive
2. God is Real
3. God is Present
4. God is Speaking
5. God is concerned about them
6. God is to be believed
7. God is to be obeyed

Whereas the gift of tongues is not a sign to the believer (since he doesn't need a sign to believe) it may be a sign to the unbeliever causing them to look to, and accept the Lord Jesus Christ. Some people will respond to visible and audible signs when unable to be convinced by faith alone. Only God knows!!

#2. To Bring Edification To The Believers (I Corinthians 14:12-17)

"Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret... for the other is not edified" (I Corinthians 14:13,17)

Paul makes it plain, that, the gift of tongues plus the interpretation will be a prayer, thanksgiving or praise to God that will encourage the congregation.

The gift of tongues and interpretation may be a specific message from God to bless, edify, exhort, comfort and profit the whole church body. Yes, God at times wants to encourage His faithful people!!

LOVING CORRECTION - AN ABSOLUTE MUST

While the gifts of the Spirit are perfect, the exercising of spiritual gifts can be imperfect. Paul never questioned the genuineness of the Corinthian gifts, he (under God) did have to, however, correct the abuses in Corinth. We must hold firmly as well to God's instruction, lest we be found with confusion in the Body of Christ.

THE FOUR ABUSES CORRECTED

- #1. There was too much speaking with tongues in the public meetings (I Cor. 14:23,27)
Correction: Speaking in tongues was to be limited to two or at the most three at any one meeting of the assembly. (v.27)
- #2. There was speaking with tongues in the assembly without the interpretation (I Corinthians 14:5,9).
Correction: Audible speaking with tongues in public was ruled completely out of order unless there was interpretation, and such interpretation was to proceed on orderly lines. (v.27,28)
- #3. There were those prophesying who claimed that their inspiration was beyond criticism. (v.29-31)
Correction: The prophets were sternly reminded that their utterance could and should be "judged" by the others in the meeting. (v.29)
- #4. There were those speaking in tongues out of order in the name of the Lord, claiming they "were moved by the Spirit" and "could not help themselves". (v.28 - "keep silence", v.30 - "hold your peace")
Correction: The believers were reminded that, "the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets" (v.32) We never have to interrupt the worship or the Word!!!

I MUST ALWAYS REMEMBER THAT...

1. It is absurd to think that God will work against Himself and inspire a commandment or order and then move believers to disorder.
2. God will never work against Himself by an operation of gifts that draws attention to the one who is exercising them rather than to the Lord.
3. God will never operate His gifts to provoke fear, disgust or distraction in His service.
4. God would have me always speak with the utmost concern for the welfare of all, never with selfish motivation to be seen or heard.
5. God is a God of order and I must always "seek to excel in the edification of the church" (I Corinthians 14:12)
6. God expects me to exercise the gifts with maturity, order and love so I will never cause an unnecessary stumbling block to anyone.
7. God never stated that speaking with tongues is to be forbidden; all He is pleading for is order and proper balance.

A LEADING PENTECOSTAL SCHOLAR

"A great many abuses of spiritual gifts spring from mere selfishness, and this applies perhaps especially to the gift of tongues. In public assembly meetings the one who has a gift must always remember, with a practical love, the presence of other people; and he (or she) must always have an eye to the effect, helpful or otherwise, the exercise of their gift will have upon them. There is a golden rule governing the right exercise of spiritual gifts; it is found in I Corinthians 14:26, "Let all things be done unto edifying" (Donald Gee, pg. 88,89 "Concerning Spiritual Gifts")

CONCLUSION: ARE YOU AVAILABLE?

While every believer should receive the Baptism in The Holy Spirit and pray in tongues daily in private communion with God, not all will minister the gift of tongues in a public meeting (I Corinthians 12:30). Are you open for God to use you? If so, keep the following suggestions in mind:

1. You will know when God is prompting you to exercise the gift of tongues in a service (you will have a definite quickening or witness of the Holy Spirit within).
2. This witness doesn't mean you have to do anything impulsively (just talk to the Lord quietly and prepare to be used when opportunity affords itself).
3. Never interrupt when another person is speaking (this distracts instead of building up the Body).
4. Be sure to speak loudly enough to be heard by all (but don't scream excessively and frighten people causing them to doubt the genuineness of the gift).
5. Pray and be prepared to give the interpretation in case no other person present is yielded or prompted by God to do so.

Love,

Pastor