

SPIRITUAL GIFTS, Part 5

History of Tongues in the Church Age

While tongues ceased in the first century, it has “reappeared” spasmodically throughout Church Age history. Let’s look at its post apostolic era history.

The gift of tongues is not alluded to or found in any writings of the early church fathers. Clement of Rome wrote a letter to the Corinthian church in the year 95, which was only about four decades after Paul wrote First Corinthians. In discussing problems in the church, Clement made no mention of tongues. Apparently both the use and misuse of tongues had ceased. Justin Martyr, the great church father of the second century, visited many of the churches of his day, yet in his voluminous writings he mentions nothing of tongues. Nor does he mention it in any of his several lists of spiritual gifts. Origen, a brilliant church scholar who lived during the third century, makes no mention of tongues. In fact, he explicitly argues that the sign gifts of the apostolic age were temporary and were not exercised by Christians of his day. Chrysostom, one of the greatest of the post-New Testament writers, lived from 347 until 407. Writing concerning First Corinthians 12, he stated that tongues and the other miraculous gifts of the apostolic era had ceased. Augustine, in his comments on Acts 2:4, stated that tongues had been done away.

The historians and the theologians of the early Church unanimously maintained that tongues ceased to exist. The only exception was found in the movement lead by Montanus, a second century heretic who believed that divine revelation continued through him and his two priestesses.

Apparently no other tongues speaking was practiced in all of Christianity until the 17th and 18th centuries, when it appeared in several Roman Catholic groups in Europe, namely the Cevenols and Jensenists, and among the Shakers in New England. Seventeenth century French Huguenots claimed to speak in tongues. During the 18th century some British Quakers and American Methodists claimed they were speaking in tongues. The 19th century Irvingites of London were marked by unbiblical claims of revelations and by “tongues-speak”. Also members of the Catholic Apostolic Church in England claimed to speak in tongues, and in the U.S., Mormons claimed to speak in tongues.

At around the turn of the twentieth century, tongues became a major emphasis within the holiness movement, a large section of which developed into modern Pentecostalism. The charismatic movement, which began in 1960, carried the practice of tongues beyond the traditional Pentecostalism into many other denominations, churches, and groups, both Catholic and Protestant, filling the void of true spiritual living with false experience.

What do some churches teach about tongues?

Teachings by supporters of the tongues movement cite certain verses to support their case, blithely ignoring others that clearly show the error of their interpretation of the cited verses. They rely heavily on emotional experience to support these verses and their claims. But experience and emotion should never take precedence over Scripture.

Many charismatics cite Joel 2:28-32 as evidence of the gift of tongues being operational.

Joel 2:28 And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: 29 and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit. 30 And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. 31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of Jehovah cometh. 32 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be delivered; for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those that escape, as Jehovah hath said, and among the remnant those whom Jehovah doth call.

The problem with this is that we have no “pillars of smoke,” dark suns, or blood moons today or associated with the day of Pentecost in AD 30! This is prophecy of the Tribulation and Jesus’ deliverance of believers at His Second Advent, not Pentecost or the Church Age. Tongues were a warning to Israel of pending judgment that they could avoid only by accepting Jesus as their Messiah.

Some denominations support tongues as an “angelic language” spoken between the Holy Spirit and God the Father through the believer, and they

cite Romans 8:26 which says “the Holy Spirit makes intercessions for us with God with groanings that words cannot express”. “Groanings” means that the words cannot be spoken and are so low as to be totally inaudible. In other words, thoughts are what are communicated! It is preposterous, even laughable, to believe that the Holy Spirit needs a human agent to enable a conversation with another member of the Godhead? As one in the same essence, They need no human, no sound, and no words in order to communicate with each other.

One congregation of the Salvation Army recommends that *glossolalia* is not appropriate during public religious services, but is encouraged privately. This is exactly the opposite use for which tongues was intended! It was never intended for private edification.

The United Pentecostal Church claims to believe in salvation by faith. At salvation or more likely later, they will be baptized by the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues. The gift is considered proof of conversion. “You may have other evidences as well, but one evidence you will have is speaking in tongues.” They conclude that if you do not speak in tongues then you are not saved. That is not salvation by faith! That is faith plus tongues, and is not salvation at all!

The Assemblies of God denomination believes, “the baptism of believers in the Holy Ghost is witnessed by the initial physical speaking in tongues as the Spirit of God gives utterance.” In other words, if you do not speak in tongues you are not saved. Faith plus tongues!

The Church of God believes, “...that it is the initial evidence of the baptism of the Spirit.” Faith plus tongues!

The United Pentecostal Church International believes, “...speaking in tongues is an immediate, external sign” (of baptism of the Spirit and salvation). Faith plus tongues again!

The above doctrinal statements were pulled from their own statements of faith on their web sites. Most of the churches that embrace tongues either officially or unofficially teach salvation by faith plus something else. “Something else” is usually speaking in tongues, be baptized, or some other form of “works” as “proof” of salvation. This is not salvation by faith alone in Christ alone!

An evaluation of tongues by linguists.

Many who speak in tongues believe they are speaking an existing language, however it is not similar to any known human tongue. Others speculate that it is a “heavenly language” known only to God and angels, and is not similar to any human language. But, of course, we saw earlier that there was no support for that claim in the text or exegesis of the verses in question.

William Samarin used a linguistic approach to conduct studies of *glossolalia* during the 1970's. Samarin concluded that *glossolalia* was not a true language. Only a few consonants and vowels appear in it. He said, “When the full apparatus of linguistic science comes to bear on *glossolalia*, this turns out to be only a facade of a language – although at times a very good one indeed.”

The Linguist List, an academic internet mailing list focused on *glossolalia* in 1995. Some subscribers noted that *glossolalia* had a simple primitive structure, and exhibited much repetition of individual sounds. One commented that the words spoken within a given church tended to be similar, but unlike words heard in another congregation. Another commented that they “seemed to latch onto and repeat sounds that sound foreign to them, and intersperse the name ‘Jesus’ in between the sounds.”

Think about that last point for a moment. If they were speaking a “heavenly language,” I would have to believe that even the name “Jesus” would be in that same “heavenly language,” or at least, spoken in Hebrew (Jehoshuah), but certainly not in English!

In one study an individual's ecstatic speech was tape recorded and played back separately for individuals who believed they had the gift of interpretation. Their interpretations were quite inconsistent. One said, “The utterances referred to a prayer for the health of someone's child.” Another interpreted the speech as “praising God for a recent and successful church, fund-raising effort.”

Lehmann Strauss, one of my sources for the material used here, made a study of tongues. For two years he has asked as many leading Bible teachers and scholars, college and seminary professors, some of whom have a rich working knowledge of Hebrew and Greek, if they had ever

spoken in tongues. Only one of sixty asked this question has claimed to have spoken in tongues.

How do we account for the wide spread practice of tongues-speaking today? What are these people experiencing? Three possible suggestions:

1. Speaking in tongues can be self-induced. Peer pressure! “I want to be like everyone else.” “I’m not saved unless I speak in tongues!”
2. Speaking in tongues can be group-induced. Mob mentality and emotional gratification. They are caught up in the ecstatic experience of the group.
3. Speaking in tongues can be produced by the demon possessing the person. (Unbeliever only.)

What is so terribly wrong with speaking in tongues? A lot!

- Since speaking in tongues is not operational today, its “use” is function outside the will of God.
- It is a state of apostasy and, as such, it is a state of rebellion against God and is thus a sin. Is it different from any other sin? Of course not! Let us not forget that we are all sinners and fall short of the glory of God.
- Under these conditions (a state of carnality) it is impossible to be filled with the Holy Spirit.
- Therefore, the believer is not living the spiritual life as mandated by God, but is living a lie instead.
- Spiritual advance is, at best, severely hampered or, more likely, completely ceases.
- It is operation on the basis of emotion and not doctrinal content of the soul. The tongues-speaking believer thinks with his emotions and not doctrine.
- The believer speaking in tongues has been taken prisoner by Satan and has become part of the problem and not part of the solution.
- The unbeliever attracted to tongues is usually distracted into a system of salvation by works or faith plus (usually baptism or speaking in tongues), often believing they can do something to forfeit their salvation, and thus may not be true saved.
- Satan has succeeded in distracting tongues-speaking believers away from true doctrine and preventing their advance to spiritual maturity.

- “Speaking in tongues” today is placing oneself in danger of demon influence for the believer and demon possession for the unbeliever.
- The ability to “speak in tongues” usually becomes a source of pride.
- By making tongues such a divisive issue, Satan is attempting to divide the church against itself and gain a tactical victory for himself in the angelic conflict.

There is no Biblical or extra-biblical support for tongues in use today. The evidence is massive and compelling against speaking in tongues as a legitimate spiritual gift active today in the Church Age. Those involved in modern tongues are involved with a false doctrine perpetrated by Satan!

There is apostasy all around us. Just about every mainline religion and most of the nonaffiliated churches are involved in apostasy to some degree, some a lot worse than others. This happens to be one case where the apostasy is obvious, at least to many of us.

This does not give us a right to think ourselves better, but we should separate ourselves from it in the sense that we do not embrace it. And it does give us a right to be thankful that we were not sucked into these false doctrines. We are free to move forward to spiritual maturity unencumbered by this negative baggage holding us back like it did the Corinthian believers.

Nor should we run around condemning those who are involved in this or any other apostasy. That is God’s job. My job is to teach the truth as the Holy Spirit moves and guides me to do so. Your job is to take that doctrine in and convert it to *epignosis* for application to your spiritual life. Our job is to take that knowledge and avoid apostasy. If in the process we have an opportunity to witness to these people, then we have an obligation to give a good witness based on Scripture. Perhaps it will not change their mind right then, but we may have planted the seed that will eventually save them from whatever they are involved in.

Does the fact that these temporary special gifts that were so essential to the apostolic period mean that God does not perform miracles and heal the sick today? Of course not! God is alive and well and on His throne. He is still perfectly capable of performing miracles and healing the sick of body and mind according to His sovereign will. Everyday all over the world God is performing a miracle here and healing a sick person there. There

are things that happen every day that can be explained in no other way than that it was a miracle. And we as believers have the right to boldly approach the throne of God and ask in prayer for a miracle. And if it suits His divine plan, He will grant it. Nothing I have taught here should be perceived as a statement that God does not perform miracles and healings today. What should be understood is that man no longer has that divine gift.

Summarize Spiritual Gifts

While we previously stated that while our works are not required for salvation, which is appropriated by faith alone, that isn't quite the case after salvation. Ephesians 2:8 and 9 clearly state that works do not save, but verse 10 that follows says, "For we are his workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus for good works**, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

God has work for you to do.

We understand in the world of the Christian there are two kinds of works:

- One we called "human good," which are works done by man for the glorification of man ("filthy rags" according to Isaiah 64:6). In the case of human good, man is attempting to gain divine favor through things he does in the hope God will be impressed and bless his efforts. God cannot be bribed. This is the "works" mentioned in Ephesians 2:9 that can't save us.
- We defined the second kind of works as divine good or works done by the believer through the leading and enablement of the Holy Spirit for the glorification of God. These are the "good works" mentioned in Ephesians 2:10.

Every believer receives at least one spiritual gift at salvation (1 Cor 12:7). Some receive more than one, and they can operate simultaneously or sequentially. Spiritual gifts function much like the process of enduement in the OT. These special gifts come from the Holy Spirit to empower/enable the one gifted for certain ministries in the Body of Christ. They are given by the Spirit for "the common good" (1 Cor 12:7) and "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Eph 4:12).

Which gift(s) we receive is NOT our choice. The Spirit apportions them to us according to God's will and good pleasure (1 Cor 12:11). They are completely driven and empowered by the Spirit.

In Romans 12:4-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:12-26 Paul argues that the spiritual gifts of believers in a local church don't function alone but rather function together in concert to mutually support the whole body and further God's plan. Each gift is important for the functioning of the Church. Not everyone has the same gift, and none of the gifts are unimportant.

These gifts are not necessarily based on the believer's natural talents. You may have zero natural ability to execute your spiritual gift, but that is not a problem for God. The Holy Spirit will provide everything you need to execute whatever you are being called to do—**everything** that is needed for you to successfully execute your spiritual gift. You need only supply your faith and follow your calling.

There are two kinds of spiritual gifts: permanent and temporary. By permanent I mean the gifts that remain functional throughout the Church Age. By temporary, I mean that some were operational for a limited period of time during the apostolic era but have not been operational since.

The permanent gifts still active today include such as pastor/teacher, helps, giving, administration, evangelism, prayer warriors, worship music, and exhortation to name a few.

The temporary spiritual gifts include those such as apostles, miracles, healing, prophet, tongues and the interpretation of tongues. The gift of apostle was limited to the 12 and disappeared after John died. Miracles, and healing were gifts used for the apostles and early Church leaders to establish their "credentials" and that their message had a divine source. Prophet was a gift for revealing the mystery doctrines of the Church Age until the Canon of Scripture was completely revealed and disseminated. Once the Canon of Scripture was completed these gifts were no longer needed.

Tongues and its accompanying gift, interpretation of tongues, were gifts related to warning the nation Israel of impending discipline for their rejection of Messiah and blaspheming the Holy Spirit. Those two gifts

ceased to exist some time before Israel was destroyed as a nation in AD 70.

At the Bema judgment for believers, you will be called to give an accounting of how you used your spiritual gifts and the assets you were given to execute them (2 Cor 5:10). It is primarily your spiritual life that will be evaluated, not sins; they were judged at the cross. Human good will burn up as wood, hay, and stubble. Divine good will pass the fire test as gold, silver, and precious stones (1 Cor 3:10-15).

And don't get discouraged if it isn't obvious what your spiritual gift is. This will be revealed to you on God's timing when He considers you ready.

Meanwhile, study God's Word to "renovate" your thinking, grow spiritually, and look for opportunities to evangelize friends and serve in your local church or community if you feel so moved. **BUT** listen for God's guiding. He will open the door when it is time, and as crazy as that open door may look, you must walk through in faith. God will handle the details.

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

We have been looking at the ministries of the Holy Spirit, which are many and varied. All bring Him into direct touch with born again mankind. As believers, we tend to focus our attention on God The Father and Jesus Christ, and there is nothing wrong with that. We considered the little saying, "God the Father wrote the Plan. God the Son executed the Plan. God the Holy Spirit reveals the Plan." What we often do not realize is our interaction with the Godhead is through the person of the Holy Spirit. My hope is this study will make Him more real to us.

What has He done?

1. He supplies Efficacious Grace so we can understand the Gospel and place our faith in it.
2. Believers are regenerated and receive a new human spirit through which we have communion with the Holy Spirit.
3. We are made literal Sons of God.
4. We are sanctified — set apart as God's own.
5. We are justified and set free from the penalty of sin.

6. We experience the Baptism of the Spirit.
7. We are sealed in our relationship by the Spirit.
8. We are Identified with Christ.
9. We become members of the Royal Family of God.
10. The Holy Spirit indwells us.
11. Each of us receives at least one spiritual gift for the work God calls us to do.

We have taken a long look at number 11 and seen how these spiritual gifts function to support and build the Church, and how some are permanent, in that they are still functioning today some 2,000 years after Pentecost. We have seen how some were temporary spiritual gifts that had very specific, early, apostolic age functions that are no longer valid. These temporary gifts are not active today, and their false use is a distraction to spiritual growth and a fully functioning spiritual life.

There remains three activities of the indwelling Holy Spirit that we have not discussed in detail yet. They are:

12. The filling of the Spirit
13. He intercedes for believers and interacts with them personally.
14. He empowers the believer to have victory over sin and live a vitally alive spiritual life that glorifies God—the same life that Christ lived in His 33 years here on Earth.

By now, some of you have been thinking, “The subject of this study is supposed to be the Divine Dynasphere, and when exactly will we get to that?”

The short answer is, “We have arrived!”

All that has gone before has been building to that subject, but to get there we needed to fully understand this Third Person of the Trinity a little better. We are about to see Him in action and how we, as believers, interact with Him and how He interacts with us—in the Divine Dynasphere.

But that will have to wait until the next session.