Spiritual Gifts

Sign Gifts

1 Corinthians 14

November 8, 2026 HDBC

Today we wrap up the series on spiritual gifts. Reminder that **spiritual gifts are *supernatural endowments from God that enable us to carry out our God-given assignments.***

This morning we will look at the last category of gifts listed in the N.T. The Sign Gifts. ***Tongues, Interpretation of Tongues, Miracles, Healing.*** Most controversial and debated of all the categories. Focus almost all of our time in on **Tongues and interpretation.** And then just make a few comments about the gifts of healing and miracles.

TONGUES AND INTERPRETATION OF TONGUES

History of the modern tongues movement

Gift of tongues were rarely mentioned during the early centuries following the time of apostles, and almost always branded as heresy by the orthodox church leaders. Fourth century, John Chrysostom wrote commentary on 1 Corinthians and said that tongues had ceased long before his day and were no longer taking place, Other church fathers like Justin Martyr, Origen, and Augustine concurred with that statement.

Modern Pentecostalism, with emphasis on tongues can be traced back to the late 1800's, For half century it was primarily restricted to traditional Pentecostal types of churches, Late 1950's Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship International was started, with the stated purpose of bringing emphasis on spiritual gifts to mainline churches, with a primary focus on tongues. It was primarily through that movement that tongues began to appear in mainline denominations.

Six major questions about the gift of tongues

1. ***What is the gift of tongues?***
Word seems to be used in three ways in the New Testament.

1) **Real, but unlearned language**. This is the case in Acts.

Acts 2:6-8 Day of Pentecost – Known languages, but not learned.
And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were bewildered, because they were each one ***hearing them speak in his own language.***

Acts 10:44-48 – Cornelius was saved - Same word is used.
While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message, And all the circumcised believers who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon the Gentiles also, For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God.
Peter identified it with what happened at Pentecost.

Acts 19:1-7 - These were not yet saved, Same word used.
Paul came upon a group of people who claimed to be followers of Jesus. He asked them if they had received the Holy Spirit. They were not even aware that there was a Holy Spirit. They had been baptized into John's baptism. They were not yet saved. Had not received the complete gospel. They were then baptized as believers, received the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues.

And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying.

Some important observations from the Acts passages

1) All experiences were unexpected and unsought.
2) All were group experiences.
3) All involved real human languages, which had not been learned.
4) All occurred during a time of historical transition. Unity among the various groups as they were saved.

1 Corinthians 14 - Here it gets a bit more complex. Two meanings here.

1) **Prayer language**
   Used for intimate communion with God. 1 Cor. 14:2, 14

2) **Unintelligible utterance as a message from God**. (1 Cor. 14:26-28)
   An interpretation is needed. Thus the gift of interpretation.

So, what does it mean in the Bible?

1) Sometimes referred to the supernatural ability to speak a known language that the person has not learned,

2) Sometimes refers to a prayer language or message from God in an unintelligible language.

2. ***What happens when the gift of tongues is used?*** 1 Cor. 14 (3 things)

   1) **Edifies the person speaking**. (14:4)
      Corinthians were good at self- edification. *One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church.*

   2) **Edifies the church if there is one to interpret**. (14:5)
      Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying.

   3) **A sign to unbelievers** (14:22)
      So then tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe, but to unbelievers; Sign to unbelieving Israel that God was working in these followers of Jesus. For Israel, not for unbelievers in general.(23)

3. ***Is it an essential sign for salvation or spiritual maturity?***
   This is a claim by some in the charismatic movement.

The quick answer is ***no***. *Consider the following:*

Not mentioned in the early church gatherings in book of Acts.
Not associated with many of the key leaders. Stephen, Philip, Barnabas.
Not mentioned in 1-2 Timothy, Titus, Paul's other letters.

4. ***Is it one of the more important spiritual gifts?***
   No. In fact Paul makes it clear that it is one of the least important gifts.

   1) Always found at the end or toward the end of lists.
   2) It is worthless without love. But all the gifts are.
   3) It is inferior to the gift of prophecy. Most of 1 Cor. 14 states this.
      a. Prophecy encouraged/Tongues discouraged (1-2)
      b. Prophecy edifies church/Tongues edifies Self (3-4)
      c. One prophesying greater than Tongue-speaker (5)
      d. Prophecy is understandable/Tongues confusing (6-11)
      e. Overemphasis on Tongues is sign of immaturity (20)
      f. Prophecy convicts/Tongues confuses (23-24)

5. ***Are there guidelines governing the use of tongues?*** Yes

   1) No more than 2 or 3 during a given service. (14:27)
   2) Only one at a time (14:27)
   3) Must have an interpreter present (14:27-28) It is possible to control!
   4) Women not allowed to speak in tongues publicly (14:34)

6. ***Is it permanent or was it temporary?***
   There are Bible scholars who believe the sign gifts were only given during the first generation of Christianity. There is some evidence, particularly when it comes to the gift of tongues. The primary evidence is found in the wording that Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 13. He is pointing out that love is greater and more important than all the gifts. Without love they are essentially worthless.

   1 Cor. 13:8 reveals two key things:

1) **All of the gifts are temporary.**
If there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away. If there are tongues, they will cease. If there is knowledge it will be done away.

2) **Tongues is unique in the manner and timing of when it will end.**

End in a different manner from the others: (2 changes)

Change in Verbs (different words)
Be done away - To render inoperable, abolish, reduce to inactivity.
Cease - To cease, stop, to come to an end.

Change in Voice
First – passive voice - Subject acted upon by outside force. Something will cause prophecy and knowledge to end.

Second – middle voice - It refers to self-causing action. The cause comes from within; it is built in, Tongues came with a built-in stopping place, like battery that has only so much life; when used up the battery ceases to be operative.

Something will cause prophecy and knowledge to be rendered inoperable, but tongues will cease in and of themselves,

End at a different time from the others
Tongues mentioned along with prophecy and knowledge in the early verses, and again with them in verse 8. But in that verse it is said to have ceased. Now, look at verses 9-10. Prophecy and knowledge are mentioned again, but not tongues.

The perfect will cause knowledge and prophecy to end. Why would it not also cause tongues to end? Because tongues will have already ceased all by itself.

What is *the perfect*? Some believe it was completed New Testament.

They would say all gifts have ceased. Others believe it refers to the 2nd coming of Jesus. Others the eternal state in Heaven.

Tongues will cease in and of themselves at some point before the perfect comes. At that point all the other gifts will end.

Summary statements about the gift of tongues.

1. The gift of tongues was a legitimate gift of Holy Spirit in early church.
2. Tongues was a secondary gift. One of the least important.
3. Not for every Christian.
4. Not a sign of salvation or of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
5. It may have ended with the first generation of believers.

GIFTS OF HEALING AND MIRACLES

I'm only going to say a few things about these gifts.

1. They were clearly in operation during the first generation of believers.
2. They may have been intended only for that generation. Not sure.
3. God heals. He did then and He does now.
4. God does miracles. He did then, He does now.
5. I believe most faith-healers are charlatans.

TAKEAWAYS:

1. Spiritual gifts are intended to build up the church and glorify God.
2. Spiritual gifts are not the focus. God is.
3. Our discipleship pastor would love to help you discover & use your gifts.
4. Let's get busy, using our gifts, for God's glory.

Take out your phone. Look at a picture of loved one or nature scene. If you have an iPhone 16 you are actually looking at over 3 million pixels. Each one is tiny individual dot of light. One may seem unimportant. But when they are all put together in the right way, you have a beautiful picture. In the church, we each play our part and together God is glorified. You're an important point of light in God's church. *Shine for Him.*