

Gifts of the Spirit 05

with Dr. Bob Abramson

The Gifts of Tongues and Interpretation of Tongues (The Second and Third Vocal/Utterance Gifts (#8-9))

Let us review the Scriptures we began with in the first session.

1 Corinthians 12:1 (NKJV) "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant..."

*1 Corinthians 12:4-10 (NKJV) "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. {5} There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. {6} And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. {7} But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: {8} for to one is given the **word of wisdom** through the Spirit, to another the **word of knowledge** through the same Spirit, {9} to another **faith** by the same Spirit, to another gifts of **healings** by the same Spirit, {10} to another the **working of miracles**, to another **prophecy**, to another **discerning of spirits**, to another **different kinds of tongues**, to another the **interpretation of tongues**."*

Tongues

What is the gift of tongues?

"The gift of tongues is *"an ability given spontaneously by the Holy Spirit to an individual to speak in a language unknown to the speaker"... It can be exercised and expanded.*"¹

"The realm in which the gift of tongues operates is **not** the human mind.... The mind is primarily a spectator to the events, and it neither frames the utterances, nor does it premeditate or arrange them."²

Public Use of the Gift of Tongues and Interpretation (A Study from 1 Corinthians, Chapter 14)

When used in private, the gift of tongues is for personal edification. When spoken in public, it should be for the profit (or good) of those listening. Verses 6-11 of 1 Corinthians 14 explain that tongues have four applications for public ministry. Each contains a communication directly from God.

¹ Clinton, Spiritual Gifts, P.65-66.

² Holbrook, The Holy Spirit, P.161.

Nowhere in the Scriptures are the nine gifts specifically defined as they would be in a dictionary. They often overlap and operate together.

Be careful not to put such tight labels on the gifts that you hinder your ability to be used by God. Keep an open mind and be led by the Spirit.

*1 Corinthians 14:6-11 (NKJV) "But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you unless I speak to you **either by revelation, by knowledge, by prophesying, or by teaching?** {7} Even things without life, whether flute or harp, when they make a sound, unless they make a distinction in the sounds, how will it be known what is piped or played? {8} For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle? {9} **So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air.** {10} There are, it may be, so many kinds of languages in the world, and none of them is without significance. {11} Therefore, if I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be a foreigner to him who speaks, and he who speaks will be a foreigner to me."*

Here are the four applications of the gift of tongues. (1) to provide revelation; (2) to give knowledge and understanding from God (3) to prophesy God's message; (4) to teach.

Verse 9 tells us that without interpretation of the tongues with words that are easy to understand, there is no communication. You will be unsuccessful trying to communicate God's message to them. The result will be frustration and disconnection. Verses 16-17, below, tell us that without being able to understand the tongues, the listener is **not edified**.

*1 Corinthians 14:13-17 (NKJV) "Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. {14} For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. {15} What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding. {16} **Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say "Amen" at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say?** {17} For you indeed give thanks well, **but the other is not edified.**"*

Tongues are the initial evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit.

*Acts 1:4-5 (NKJV) "And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; {5} for John truly baptized with water, **but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.**"*

Acts 2:1-4 (NKJV) "When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. {2} And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole

house where they were sitting. {3} Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. {4} **And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.**"

This event on the Day of Pentecost is the New Testament pattern for Baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Today, the testimony or proof of this baptism remains that the Spirit-baptized believer speaks in other tongues. There are many other evidences in a believer's life, but tongues are the first that manifest in a believer! In the Book of Acts, there are at least three instances of believers being baptized in the Holy Spirit, and then speaking in tongues.

1. Acts 2:1-4
2. Acts 10:44-46
3. Acts 19:1-6

Some believe that speaking in tongues will always occur at the instant of Spirit baptism. However, many experience a period of time (hours, weeks or even months) before this initial evidence manifests. There may be barriers to speaking in tongues that must be broken. Some of these are fear, unbelief, misunderstanding, feelings of unworthiness, etc.

My testimony in my car a couple days later

Tongues are a way to pray and worship for the believer.

Kenneth Hagin says this: *"This utterance gift of tongues is an important gift in that tongues is the door to the supernatural."*³ Tongues are not the only door to communion with God, but they are a door that is always open and inviting. Tongues are supernatural in their qualities and give a depth of prayer and worship that charismatic believers find to be priceless.

1. Tongues may be publicly spoken for edifying the listeners.

*1 Corinthians 14:5 (NKJV) "I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, **that the church may receive edification.**"*

1 Corinthians 14:18-23 (NKJV) "I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all; {19} yet in the church I would rather

³ Hagin, The Holy Spirit and His Gifts, P.149

...speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

Paul wrote about the superiority of prophecy over tongues. He said that he wished all believers spoke in tongues. He qualified this wish by saying that publicly spoken tongues ought to be interpreted. This is because when interpreted, they will edify the body of Christ.

2. Tongues may be privately spoken.

- a. Privately spoken tongues are an expression of spiritual sacrifice. Privately spoken tongues send this message: *“God, I want to be close to You. I want to remind myself to communicate with you. You are most important to me, regardless of what I am doing any time of the day or night.”*
- b. Tongues allow us to pray continuously, even when we have no words to express our hearts to God. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 says we are to pray without ceasing. This means that tongues can accompany us throughout the day, anywhere we are and regardless of what we are doing.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 (NKJV) “...pray without ceasing,”

- c. When we do not know how to pray about a particular need or situation, the Holy Spirit does the praying through us. Then, we can be confident of perfect prayers.

Romans 8:26 (NKJV) “Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”

3. Tongues are a sign to unbelievers.

1 Corinthians 14:22 (NKJV) “Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers...”

1. How will the use of tongues draw unbelievers to Christ?
2. Can tongues confuse them, causing them to conclude that the meeting is full of people who are out of order, or even out of their minds?
3. Will we, as believers, be sensitive to the presence of the unbelievers, and do all that we can to help them find God?

Interpretation of Tongues

Interpretation of tongues is the only gift of the Spirit, listed in 1 Corinthians 12, that depends on one of the other gifts.

Some work together with each other, but this gift depends completely on the manifestation of the gift of tongues.

The purpose of this gift is solely to interpret what has been uttered in tongues. Then, those that hear it will understand what the Holy Spirit is saying.

Private Devotions and Prayers

There are times when the gift of interpretation of tongues is intended for private, personal devotions. We speak in tongues without any idea of what we have said. However, God may want us to know what the Holy Spirit said to us when we spoke in tongues. He may also want us to know what we said to God in our tongues. It is at times like these that God will allow us to interpret our own prayer language.

Interpretation of Tongues in Public Ministry

1 Corinthians 14:27 (NKJV) "If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret."

In 1 Corinthians 14:27, Paul writes that two or three may speak in tongues. Then, someone can interpret them as God's message. This instruction has the effect of maintaining order. Paul's knew that the Corinthians had improper excesses in their public ministry. There was much confusion from everyone shouting out a message in tongues. It needed to be corrected. These excesses were bringing disunity and discord. The question for us then, is...

Are Paul's instructions to the Corinthians valid instructions to us today? (They were originally given to address a contextual (local time and place) problem in the Corinthian church. The answer is that we believe the instructions on interpretation of tongues are "normative" for today.

The local pastor, or ministry leader, who is the spiritual authority of the meeting, will determine the details and set the rules for how this is to be done.

The interpretation of the message in tongues may be given by the person speaking the tongue. However, it may be given by another person who follows the tongue with the interpretation.

At times, God will use two or three people to interpret.

- God will **not** give competing or different interpretations to two people.
- God will sometimes use more than one person to interpret a complete message because we only prophesy in part. →
- When more than one person tries to interpret the same utterance, there can be confusion. This occurs for a variety of reasons, such as inexperience or a carnal desire to interpret the tongue. God is not confused and His word to us is not to be confusing.

Reference
TCI Bible
school and
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1 Corinthians 14:33, 40 (NKJV) "For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints... Let all things be done decently and in order."

Judging the Interpretation

We can judge if the interpretation is good by whether it edifies and brings the potential for blessings to those listening. Even a word that may be difficult to accept (or may hurt) can bring opportunities for the hearers to act upon it and draw near to God.

- If our spiritual walk is out of order in some way, we are often not able to judge the word properly. It is vitally important to be listening in the spirit and not the flesh. This will help us not to be led astray by a false interpretation.
- Only the Holy Spirit can witness to us whether the interpretation is correct. We must walk humbly before Him with fear and reverence, so we can clearly discern His words.

Romans 8:5(NKJV) "For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit."

Interpretation, **Not** Translation

There is a difference between interpretation and translation.

- Interpretation is a paraphrase of what has been uttered.
- Translation is an exact representation in a second language of what has been said.

Interpretation of tongues is **never** a literal representation or translation of what was spoken. The interpreter uses his or her gift to interpret, not to translate.

- The interpretation may be longer or shorter than the utterance. Do **not** try to compare the length of the utterance to the length of the interpretation.
- Remember that the interpretation is only spoken as part of the message. Remember also, that the interpreter cannot explain the interpretation. That is between you and the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion of the Study of the Nine Gifts of the Spirit

We have studied all nine gifts of the Spirit. First, we learned about the three Revelation Gifts. These gifts are given to reveal something supernatural (word of wisdom, word of knowledge and discerning of spirits). Then we studied the three power gifts (the gift of faith, gifts of healings and working of miracles). These gifts were given to do something supernatural. Finally, we have studied the three vocal/utterance gifts (prophecy, tongues and interpretation of tongues). These gifts are given so that we might say something supernatural.

Through these nine gifts, God has provided all we need to minister the victorious Christian life. Ask God for your gift. He will never give you a stone!