

Gifts of the Spirit

Part 4

“The Nine Gifts—Utterance Gifts”

1 Cor. 12: 1; 4-6; 8-11 “Now concerning spiritual *gifts*, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant...4 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....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. 11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.”

So far we’ve looked at 6 of the 9 gifts of the Spirit mentioned in our text. We’ve noted that they can be broken down into 3 categories—Revelation gifts, Power gifts, and Utterance gifts.

So having studied the Revelation gifts (word of wisdom, word of knowledge, discerning of spirits), and Power gifts (gift of faith, gifts of healings, miracles), this time we’re going to explore the Utterance gifts. They are Prophecy, Tongues, and Interpretation of tongues. So let’s begin with:

The gift of PROPHECY

Prophecy comes from the Greek word *prof-ay-ti'-ah* which means "divinely-empowered *forth-telling* (asserting the mind of God) or *foretelling* (prediction).

In the OT, prophets were those who would *tell forth* the Word of God by speaking His word into a situation, such as when Jeremiah spoke God's mind to Judah regarding their sin. Or *foretelling*, as when Jeremiah foretold Judah's coming captivity right down to how long they would be in Babylon. Jeremiah both foretold and "forth-told" the Word of God.

In the New Testament the ministry of a prophet is not so much one of "foretelling," though it may include that, as it is "forth-telling" the Word of the Lord. A New Testament prophet was someone who spoke a "now" word to the Church. So prophecy is more times than not a proclamation, not a prediction.

That said, we do find in the Book of Acts a man with the gift of prophecy named Agabus who foretold a famine that was coming on the whole land.

"Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, 26 and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch. 27 During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. 28 One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) 29 The disciples, as each one

was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea. 30 This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul" (Acts 11:25-30).

So Agabus was used of God to foretell a very traumatic approaching famine that allowed the church to prepare for the difficult time to come. But most NT use of the word "prophecy" is in forth-telling—preaching a now word to the church.

The Bible teaches that the gift of prophecy is given for edification, exhortation, and comfort (1 Corinthians 14:3). This WILL BE the effect when God speaks a fresh word into a situation.

And the Bible says that every Christian should desire this gift! "Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy" (1 Corinthians 14:1). Why? Because "He who prophesies speaks edification, and exhortation and comfort to men" (14:3).

It strikes me that Paul commands the church to, "desire spiritual gifts." In the original language this is very strong. It means "to burn with zeal, to be deeply committed to something, to set one's heart on, to be completely intent upon." The Greek word is *zēlóō*. It imitates the sound of boiling water—to bubble over because so hot.

I wonder when the last time was that most Christians burned with zeal like boiling water for the gifts of the Spirit, particularly to speak God's word into a needy situation?

So that is the first utterance gift—the gift of prophecy.

The second utterance gift is, no question, the most controversial of the nine gifts:

The gift of Tongues

“to another (is given) *different* kinds of tongues...” (12:10)

The word “tongue” is from the Greek word *glóssa* meaning “the tongue, a language.”

We first find the phenomenon of the gift of tongues on the Day of Pentecost. When the Spirit of God fell on the 120 gathered in the upper room, He manifested as tongues of fire sitting above each of their heads.

“And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:4).

Now we know that the tongues they were speaking were earthly dialects understood by the multitudes gathered for Pentecost.

“And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. 6 And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. 7 Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, “Look, are not all these who

speaking Galileans? 8 And how *is it that* we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?....we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God." 12 So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "Whatever could this mean?"

It says they heard the disciples speaking in their own language. The word *language* is translated *dialektos*, which means "conversation, speech, discourse, language, the tongue or language peculiar to any people."

So the first manifestation of the gift of tongues was in the form of earthly languages formerly unknown to the disciples. It was totally supernatural!

Now, there is a 2nd kind of tongues that is at the center of the controversy surrounding tongues called "an unknown tongue" found in 1 Cor 14:2:

"For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries."

This type of tongue edifies you (I Corinthians 14:4; Jude 20), assists you in prayer (Romans 8:26-27), stirs up the prophetic ministry (I Corinthians 14:5), refreshes your soul (Isaiah 28:11-12), gives victory over the devil (Ephesians 6:18), and helps you worship in the Spirit (I Corinthians 14:14-15; Hebrews 2:12).

Notice, this can't be an earthly dialect because Paul says "he does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him."

So this can't be talking about an earthly language. It is a prayer language for the believer's edification: "He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church" (14:4).

Now, those who teach against this personal devotional gift contend that every time the phrase "spoke in tongues" is used in the New Testament it is referring to the same thing that happened at Pentecost—speaking in earthly languages formerly unknown to the speaker.

But when we look at a couple of examples in Acts this doesn't make sense. For instance, when the people who were gathered at Cornelius's house to hear the gospel from Peter had received Christ, the Book of Acts records:

"While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. 45 And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. 46 For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God" (Acts 10:44-46).

Now, why would the recipients need to speak in the tongues of other languages to this gathering when they all spoke the same language?

If the purpose of tongues is to speak to people in their own language, there was no need here.

And in Acts 19 we find Paul arriving at Ephesus where he found some disciples of John the Baptist. Paul asked them if they had received the Holy Spirit to which they responded they'd never even heard of the Holy Spirit. Paul leads them to Christ and baptizes them in water and laid hands on them. Acts 19:6-7 records "And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. Now the men were about 12 in all."

Now, these 12 men all spoke the same language. Paul had likely preached to them in either Aramaic or Greek. So why would the gift of speaking in other earthly languages be needed here? They all understood! No one was there that needed to hear the message in their own language. Was the Holy Spirit confused? Of course not.

This is why we believe that 1 Cor. 14:2-4 informs us there is a private prayer language that edifies the believer and that no man understands. It is a heavenly prayer language that edifies, comforts, and strengthens the believer.

Now, some say that you can't be filled with the Spirit without speaking in these kinds of tongues. I don't see that in Scripture. The Bible asks rhetorically, "Do all speak with tongues?" The answer is no. Can you speak with tongues? The Bible says to earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, so yes.

When Peter preached at Pentecost and 3,000 were saved, did they all speak with tongues? Or when he preached again in Acts 4 and 5,000 were saved? The Bible doesn't record that. The true evidence of being filled with the Spirit is spiritual fruitfulness as recorded in Galatians 5:22-23.

If you're going to contend that one must speak in tongues in order to be Spirit filled, you must also take the position that some of the greatest world shakers for Christ in history were not Spirit filled, for there is no record of many of them ever speaking in tongues.

So far we've looked at the utterance gifts of prophecy and tongues. There is one more, that is:

The gift of Interpretation of Tongues

The Interpretation of tongues is a supernatural verbalization and subsequent interpretation to reveal the meaning of a tongue. This gift operates out of the mind of the Spirit rather than out of the mind of man.

The gift of interpretation of tongues is clearly not talking about tongues as an earthly language because that would be a translation, not an interpretation.

So it's important to distinguish between "interpretation" and "translation" of tongues, for the interpreter never understands the

tongue he or she is interpreting. For example, the message in tongues may be long and the interpretation short because the interpretation only gives the meaning.

On the other hand, one may speak a short time in tongues and then given a lengthy interpretation. Yet still, at other times, the interpretation is almost word for word.

Paul writes regarding tongues and corporate gatherings, "If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret. But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God" (1 Cor. 14:27-28).

So if a tongue is spoken in a corporate church gathering, there should be an interpreter or, as Paul says, "there come in those who are unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind?" (14:23).

And the gift of Interpretation can also be used in a person's private prayer time. Again Paul writes, "13 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" (1 Cor 14:13-15).

So in closing, the Utterance (vocal) gifts are prophecy, tongues, and interpretation of tongues.

NEXT TIME: We will deal with what we'll call Motivational Gifts!

