

Why is Speaking in Tongues So Controversial?

During a Holy Spirit conference, a pastor from a very conservative denomination sat in the front row. I could sense he felt out of place, but when he was presented with a clear Biblical presentation he was able to believe and receive that day. And his ministry was forever changed.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of praying in tongues, and the interpretation of tongues continues to be a topic of contention within the body of Christ. I believe this is because Satan is afraid of the supernatural power that is released when God's people activate the power of the Holy Spirit and pray in their supernatural languages. So, he constantly stirs up confusion and strife via the lack of teaching and training concerning these very powerful weapons of spiritual warfare that God has given to us. Let's clear up the confusion and see what the Bible has to say about this.

In the book of Acts before Jesus ascended into heaven He was teaching the apostles about things to come. He told them of another baptism, the baptism of the Holy Spirit that would soon come upon them (see Acts 1:5). He told them they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them (see Acts 1:8).

And in the second chapter of Acts we read of the day of Pentecost when suddenly a noise came from heaven like a violent rushing wind and it filled the whole house, and tongues of fire rested upon them and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving the utterance. (See Acts 2: 1-4.)

Most Christians believe that this took place, but many believe that mighty move of the Holy Spirit was for the early Church

and not for believers today. Let's look to the Scriptures for clarity.

The Apostle Peter declared to the onlookers of this amazing event (starting with verse 14) that what they witnessed is what the Prophet Joel prophesied about saying that in the Last Days a mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit would come forth on all people. Did the world end with the early Church? No. This was referring to a new dispensation of the Holy Spirit, which did not end, but just began.

Peter continues to teach and tells the listeners what they need to do (see verse 38). He tells them they need to repent, be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and that they will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. And he goes on to tell them in the next verse who the promise of the Holy Spirit is for. He says to them, "For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are far away, as many as the Lord our God will call" (Acts 2:39.). Peter includes us when he says, "and to all who are far away" in the promise to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Now that we laid the foundation, let's continue on and see what else the Word has to say about the baptism of the Holy Spirit, tongues and the interpretation of tongues.

The Holy Spirit:

- The Holy Spirit is a good gift from the Father, and not an evil one. It says in Luke 11:11-14, "If a son asks for bread from any of you who is a father, will you give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will you give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will you offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?"

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit:

- The baptism of the Holy Spirit is powerful and reserved for the believer in Jesus Christ only. It would literally destroy an unregenerated spirit. It says in Luke 5:37-38, "And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise the new wine will burst the wineskins, and it will be spilled, and the wineskins will be destroyed. But new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved."
- This baptism is for any and all believers in Jesus Christ. "For the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all who are far away, as many as the Lord our God will call." (Acts 2:39).
- Through His baptism we receive His power, Acts 1:8 says, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. And you shall be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."
- The initial evidence of being baptized in the Holy Spirit is that you will pray in tongues. As it happens in Acts 2:4, "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to speak."

Tongues and the Interpretation of Tongues:

- Tongues and its co-partner, the interpretation of tongues, are spiritual gifts given to us by the Holy Spirit, and not the devil. (See 1 Cor. 12:10.)

The Purpose of the Gift of Tongues:

- The Holy Spirit prays through us when we don't know how. "Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weaknesses, for we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God." (Rom. 8:26-27).
- Our spirit prays for the unknown. "For he who speaks in an unknown tongue does not speak to men, but to God. For no one understands him, although in the spirit, he speaks mysteries." (1 Cor. 14:2).
- To build ourselves up. "He who speaks in an unknown tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church." (1 Cor. 14:4).
- So supernatural power can flow through us. "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." (John 7:38).

The Purpose for the Interpretation of Tongues:

- When we are in a public setting we need the gift of interpretation of tongues to be in operation so that the supernatural message can be understood by all. First Corinthians 14:13 gives us instruction concerning this situation, "Let him who speaks in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret."

I believe, just like the pastor from the conservative denomination believed and received after he heard a clear Biblical presentation concerning the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the gift of tongues and the interpretation of tongues that many others from mainline denominations will be open to receive when they hear the truth presented with clarity.

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