

Why Tongues and Interpretation Are the Crown Jewels of the New Testament

When many Christians speak of tongues, they call it a gift. But the word “gift” is not associated with tongues until the 12th chapter of Corinthians when Paul begins his discourse on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. We must differentiate between the private and the public use of tongues.

If you want to get technical about it, there is no such thing in the Bible as the gift of tongues. Now don't misunderstand me, generally speaking everything God gives is a gift, but specifically, no.

The initial physical evidence of receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit is speaking in tongues. These tongues are attached to the baptism of the Holy Spirit and are for our devotional use. They belong to every born again Christian, but the tongues is not the gift. The Holy Spirit is the gift (Acts 2:38-39).

The gift of tongues is first mentioned in 1 Cor. 12:10 and is called divers kinds of tongues.

There is much ignorance in the church world today concerning the topic and private use of devotional tongues and even more ignorance concerning the public gift and use of divers kinds of tongues. And yet if you think about it, diverse kinds of tongues with interpretation of tongues, are the only two gifts that were not operative in the Old Testament.

The prophets and those God anointed in the Old Testament moved in every other gift except those two. God manifested Himself in what has been termed as the revelation gifts (word of knowledge, word of wisdom, and discerning of spirits) and in

the power gifts (working of miracles, gifts of healing, and special faith), and in prophecy. You will find references and examples of these gifts being in manifestation throughout the entire Old Testament. But you will not find one reference or example of divers tongues and interpretation of tongues being in manifestation. What does this tell us?

It tells us that Jesus reserved these twin gifts for His glorious church. They are the signature gifts of the New Testament. They are the crown jewels of the bride of Christ. And yet many consider them to be the lesser gifts, when actually these two gifts should be in more frequent manifestation than any other. Why don't we see more manifestations of these two gifts? Once again, it is because there has been much ignorance concerning them, and God does not want us ignorant (1 Cor. 12:1).

It's also the reason Paul brought so much correction in these gifts (1 Cor. 14). But many pastors and preachers stay away from this chapter. Most don't understand it.

In our travels, as the Lord leads us, we've been exhorting churches, by precept and example, on the proper use of these gifts. Often we will give people an opportunity to exercise giving a message in tongues. I am convinced that this is the easiest gift for a Christian to exercise as long as you have an interpreter present.

Here is a marvelous testimony of one dear sister who gave a message in tongues for the first time in her Christian life:

Recently a couple that I know invited people to come and hear Bert minister.

I really felt the presence of the Lord during worship. To be honest, I didn't want it to stop—it was so wonderful (Carolyn was leading worship).

Bert started ministering and he started talking on a topic

that hasn't been talked about for a long time and that is speaking in tongues and having the interpretation of that tongue.

After he was finished, he asked for volunteers who have never had this gift used in their lives before. My hand shot right up—almost involuntarily. In times past, I would have never done anything like that because fear of looking stupid or being embarrassed have always kept me back—but not that night. My desire for more of the Lord overruled any fears.

Three of us came forward and I stood there in front of the people that were there and had no fear whatsoever. I was even willing to fail if that's what happened.

Bert handled us so well. He encouraged us and I felt very comfortable with him when it was my turn to speak. I just stood there with my hands held out waiting for something and then—all of a sudden—I felt the Holy Spirit on me. Bert said, 'there it is', and I started speaking in tongues. I could tell it was different from my devotional tongue. When I stopped, Bert had the interpretation of it. That was the first time in all of my 44 years of being a Christian, that I experienced that gift.

So two wonderful things happen to me that night—I was delivered from fear and received a beautiful gift.

I pray that this gift that was given to us by the Lord would come back into the church. I pray for my church—maybe the Lord could even start with me. S.M.