

Speaking by It!

Over the last five weeks we have been talking about power, Holy Ghost Power. The enduement of spiritual power through the believer by the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. This power is manifest through the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit that we read of in 1 Corinthians chapter 12. The Apostle Paul said, “¹ concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant...” Much of the modern Church is ignorant and many times just outright rejecting of these gifts. It is my desire that we would be neither ignorant of nor rejecting of these gifts. They have been placed in the Church by God. They are the Promise of the Father to empower the disciple of Jesus Christ. Jesus told the disciples to wait upon the coming of the Promise, and the power it would bring, to enable the Church to fulfill its calling.

This is God’s design for the Church. To fight against it, is to fight against God Himself. That will never end well for the challenger. Over the past weeks we have traced the promise and outpouring of this gift through the pages of Scripture. In the Baptism of the Holy Spirit we have, what we referred to as a partnership with the Holy Spirit. The early believers waited on this partnership. It fell upon them on the Day of Pentecost and it was radical! We have read about that day and its events.

Then we continued on to see that this partnership with the Holy Spirit brought: Restoration, Revelation and Release in and through the believers. Along this journey we have talked about the nine gifts revealed in 1 Corinthians 12. Look at them with me, we will begin reading at verse 7.

(1 Corinthians 12:7-11)

“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. ¹¹ But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.”

These gifts are often placed into three categories to help us understand them.

1. Revelation Gifts: Word of Wisdom, Word of Knowledge and Discerning of Spirits.
2. Spoken (Vocal) Gifts: Tongues, Interpretation of Tongues and Prophecy.
3. Power Gifts: Faith, Healings and Working of Miracles.

We have looked at most all of these gifts in the recent weeks. However, I would like for us to revisit the Spoken Gifts today: Tongues, Interpretation of Tongues and Prophecy and see what the Lord has for us.

Of all of the manifestations of the gifts, the Spoken Gifts, stir the most controversy. When the power of God begins to be verbalized it cuts to the heart and divides the soul and spirit; joint and marrow. A spiritual gift that is vocal, discerns and lays bare the thoughts and intentions of men's hearts. It is no wonder that religious men on earth and the demons of hell have joined forces to cast disparagement on these gifts in particular. I believe, that this is why many churches do not want the gifts to manifest. If you go to a church and they tell you that the gifts are fine, just practice them at home and not in the church service, there is trouble there and there is something that does not want to be exposed.

But that is a lesson for another day. Let's move on and talk about the Spoken Gifts. The first gift we will talk about is tongues. Tongues is a supernatural utterance, a spoken word, statement or vocal sound; through the power of the Holy Spirit in a person that manifests as spiritual language. It has been described as the Holy Spirit energizing the tongue of the Spirit Baptized believer.

The gift of tongues (as well as your prayer language) is a product of both God and man. Every believer has a part to play in speaking in tongues for the Spirit gives you utterance, but you do the talking. The Holy Spirit does not talk with tongues. You will be doing the talking. The Holy Spirit inspires or energizes the gift, but you must put into practice.

The gift has three manifestations that are mentioned in Scripture and this causes some confusion. Often, people will pick out the manifestation that is most comfortable to them and neglect or deny the other manifestation. Then there are some who desire to control those who manifest the gifts and because their hearts are wicked they try to hinder the use of the gifts. We must see the multiple manifestations of the gift in Scripture or we will forever be wrapped in controversy over a specific manifestation and that is not edifying.

1 Corinthians 14:2 says, “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 is one manifestation of tongues. It is an unknown language unto God. We have spoken about this when we talked about restoration. We pointed to verse 4 which says that this manifestation edifies the one who speaking. We sometimes refer to it as a personal prayer language. It assists the believer in prayer, refreshes the soul, leads one into personal victory over the work of the enemy, brings you into a deeper intimacy with God, and opens new dimensions of worship.

Another manifestation of this gift is recorded in the events of Acts chapter 2. When the gift manifest on the Day of Pentecost, the disciples where given a supernatural ability to speak in languages not learned by them but known among men. Verses 5 – 8 describe the scene (Acts 2:5-8):

“⁵ Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶ When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. ⁷ Utterly amazed, they asked: “Aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸ Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language?”

People from all over the known world gathered together, all with their own language and each hears the wonders of God in their own language. This type of manifestation was foretold of by the Prophet Isaiah and pointed to by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:21. His conclusion is that this manifestation is a sign for the unbeliever, where the other manifestation was for the individual believer.

These are two very different manifestations but there is a third manifestation, as well. 1 Corinthians 14:5 speaks of this third manifestation. Paul links this form of manifestation with the second of the Spoken Gifts: Interpretation of Tongues. I want to read verse 5 for you, but understand, we will not deal with most of what verse 5 deals with. The relationship between tongues, interpretation and prophecy is far beyond the scope of our defining the gifts today.

(1 Corinthians 14:5) “⁵I 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.”

The gift here is not for the self-edification of the one speaking, and it is not understood by those who hear it directing them to God. It is directed to the church and when joined with the gift of interpretation it is for the edification of the Body.

In order to understand this, we must understand the Gift of Interpretation of Tongues. It is a supernatural verbalization and subsequent interpretation to reveal the meaning of an unknown tongue. This gift operates out of the mind of the Spirit rather than out of the mind of man.

The “interpretation” of tongues is not a “translation” of tongues. Sometimes, people will write down an utterance in tongues and then try to find a translation. That is not what this gift is. The interpreter never understands the tongue he is interpreting. The point being that this is not a work of human linguistics but Divine inspiration.

That is why the message in tongues and the interpretation may or may not match in length. The interpreter only gives the meaning of the message not a word for word translation of the message.

The third of the Spoken Gifts is Prophecy. Prophecy is a Divinely inspired and anointed utterance; a supernatural proclamation in a known language. It is the manifestation of the Spirit of God, not the intellect of a man. It is a calling forth of words from the Spirit of God.

There are some that will lay out a long case that prophecy is really just preaching, I think I'll just start calling them gift deniers. The words preach, and prophesy come from two entirely different Greek words. To "preach" means to proclaim, announce, cry, or tell. Jesus said, "Go ye into all the world, and PREACH the gospel..." (Mark 16:15). He didn't say to prophesy the Gospel. The word prophecy means to "bubble up, to flow forth, or to cause to drop like rain." Teaching and preaching are preplanned, but prophecy is not. You could say that it is a bubbling up and flowing forth of a Divinely inspired message. It's kind of like getting caught in an unexpected rain shower.

I Corinthians 14:3, says ³ "... he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men." Therefore, the function of the gift is to build up, and strengthen the Body of Christ by edifying the hearers. Lord, let it bubble up! Let it flow forth! Let it drop on us like rain!

Some believe that a message can only be edifying if it says that all things are butterflies and puppy dogs. A message that edifies speaks to the heart of where a man is standing and challenges him to move away from worldly entanglements and towards God. It is the ministry of the Holy Spirit to convict of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come (John 16:8-11). Therefore, an edifying prophecy will convict of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come as necessary.

The Bible tells us in I Thessalonians 5:19-21, ¹⁹ "Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰ Do not despise prophecies. ²¹ Test all things; hold fast what is good." When a prophecy is given, we are to test it, hold on to what is good and in line with the Written Word of God and then we are to respond to it. Far too often, God delivers a message through prophecy or tongues and interpretation for that matter and we shrug it off. If God felt it important enough to give utterance to a man should we not believe it important enough to respond?

Paul, in 1 Corinthians 12:4-7 tells the Church, “⁴There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. ⁶And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. ⁷But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all...” God wants to give you gifts for the profit of all. So, with the Apostle, I say, “³¹ ... earnestly desire the best gifts.”