

# Dartmouth

## Bible Notes



Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: Spiritual Gifts and Spiritual Maturity (Lesson 9),

Scripture: Acts 2; 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 14

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### What Are the Gifts? (Part 5)

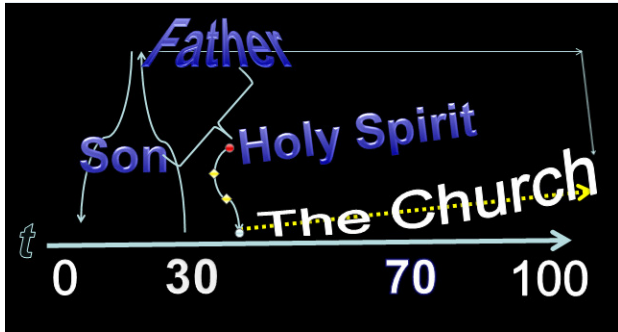
#### Acts 2:1-12 (NASB95)

<sup>1</sup> When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup> And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup> And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. <sup>4</sup> And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance. <sup>5</sup> Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven. <sup>6</sup> And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language. <sup>7</sup> They were amazed and astonished, saying, “Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans?” <sup>8</sup> “And how is it that we each hear *them* in our own language to which we were born?” <sup>9</sup> “Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, <sup>10</sup> Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, <sup>11</sup> Cretans and Arabs—we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God.” <sup>12</sup> And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, “What does this mean?”

#### 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 14:1-19

<sup>1</sup> Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual *gifts*, but especially that you may prophesy. <sup>2</sup> For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands, but in *his* spirit he speaks mysteries. <sup>3</sup> But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation. <sup>4</sup> One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church. <sup>5</sup> Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but *even* more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying. <sup>6</sup> But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking in tongues, what will I profit you unless I speak to you either by way of revelation or of knowledge or of prophecy or of teaching? <sup>7</sup> Yet *even* lifeless things, either flute or harp, in producing a sound, if they do not produce a distinction in the tones, how will it be known what is played on the flute or on the harp? <sup>8</sup> For if the bugle produces an indistinct sound, who will prepare himself for battle? <sup>9</sup> So also you, unless you utter by the tongue speech that is clear, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air. <sup>10</sup> There are, perhaps, a great many kinds of languages in the world, and no *kind* is without meaning. <sup>11</sup> If then I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be to the one who speaks a barbarian, and the one who speaks will be a barbarian to me. <sup>12</sup> So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual *gifts*, seek to abound for the edification of the church. <sup>13</sup> Therefore let one who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. <sup>14</sup> For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. <sup>15</sup> What is *the outcome* then? I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also. <sup>16</sup> Otherwise if you bless in the spirit *only*, how will the one who fills the place of the ungifted say the “Amen” at your giving of thanks, since he does not know what you are saying? <sup>17</sup> For you are giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not edified. <sup>18</sup> I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all; <sup>19</sup> however, in the church I desire to speak five words with my mind so that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue.

**Introduction** We return today to the study of spiritual gifts. I wonder if you are getting bored with this series yet, or not? I hope that you are not and in fact I REALLY hope that you are excited and not too hasty to finish this. This is the toolbox for ministry with each other. But let's review a little theology first...



The Son of God came to earth around the start of what we call the first century. Then after His resurrection, He went back to the right hand of God the Father, but the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from both the Father and the Son came to the Church, and remains here until Jesus returns...

and so the Holy Spirit is with the Church as it grows all over the world. This we believe by faith, and SEE evidences of it all the time.

Our goal is to ALL keep growing. If someone stalls, someone else needs to come along and help them re-boot their walk. If someone gets confused or discouraged, someone needs to come along and shore them up or maybe correct their thinking. If someone comes to Christ by faith for the first time—and we want to see a lot of people like that—someone needs to come alongside and teach them the Bible, and how to think biblically and how to see things from God's perspective. Now, some people are actually *gifted* to do that. If someone needs to be trained in how to share the Gospel of Christ, or how to teach children, someone ELSE needs to come along and train them! Our gifts are the tools that set us up to build each other up. I hope that doesn't bore you, and I *really* hope that you see that process as so important that you are careful in its study and interested in detail! Here are the gifts (in 5 messages) we have considered so far:

Today we arrive at this gift called "TONGUES" Let me ask you,

Does God still show up? To me, this is one of the great pressing questions that confronts both believers and not-yet-believers who are seeking God. Does God interact with this world in direct, identifiable ways? The Bible is full of examples of God showing up

and doing amazing things. But does He still do anything visible today? I know—you're going to say, "He changed my attitude about my brother-in-law." Or, "He made me feel better about waiting for that new job," but I mean something more dramatic than just how He works invisibly through our faith. Does God equip

- apostle
- prophecy, evangelist, pastor (shepherd)
- word of wisdom, word of knowledge
- faith, healing
- tongues

believers some times, or, at ANY time with a means of hearing directly from Him or a special means of talking TO Him?

If so, why wouldn't anyone want to get in on it?

If not, why would we want to go anywhere *near* something that invents the voice of God? It's a touchy subject. I think if God was zooming in on people today and saying stuff to them, He would do it all over the place. His message would be for all believers, wouldn't it? Near the end of the first century, for instance, Jesus communicated **to the angel of the church in Ephesus, write...** (Rev.2:1) and He was communicating to a whole church, through a specific individual (whoever and whatever is meant by "the angel.")

There are two critical N.T. passages directly on how this worked in the first century: Acts 2 where the disciples spoke supernaturally in known languages, **as the Spirit gave them utterance**. It was a one-time event, in Jerusalem, and it was a critical moment. And as Luke tells us, it was "as the Spirit gave them utterance." That instance of the disciples talking strangely was to get THE NEWS ABOUT JESUS to Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Mesopotamians, Judeans, Capadocians, people from Pontus, Asians, Phygians, Pamphyians, Egyptians, Libyans, Cyrenians, Romans, Cretans, Arabs and Jews—all of who were in Jerusalem for Pentecost. So Peter speaks Egyptian, let's say, and James finds himself able to speak Parthian and Matthew can talk in the language of Libya. And they talk about Jesus—they testify that Jesus was in fact Israel's true Messiah. He was crucified, died, was buried and then became UNdead. He rose from the dead. And He appeared a bunch of times before just a few days earlier departing back to heaven finally.

But even with a miracle of supernatural translation happening right before their eyes, some people still didn't believe their ears and interpreted the disciples as just being drunk. So even with a supernatural boost, the Gospel took root in just some of the people.

The other passage of length that talks about "speaking in tongues" is found in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthian 14 and it is a long, 19 verse passage. This is maybe 25 or 30 years later (from Acts 2)—and is a response to questions they had written to Paul and asked about. Some Bible interpreters would say that we cannot get away from this passage actually referring to some kind of ecstatic, other-worldly communication, trance-like perhaps and ethereal. This is really the only passage in the New Testament that deals with this at length, and the length of the discussion Paul makes is extraordinary. But does what Paul says here demand the interpretation that there really IS a heavenly prayer language of some kind that people can perform, even if they don't understand what they are saying? I am unconvinced that it does. There is such a strong presence in this chapter of Paul reasoning with people who are in a strong PAGAN environment where

babbling to the gods was very common. We do not have this in our culture—instead what we have is large numbers of established Christians who are insisting that a heavenly prayer language is exactly what Paul was promoting, or at least regulating. This argument of insistence would make Paul on the one hand saying that tongues is inferior to prophecy and any gift, really, which edifies the whole body—and on the other hand promoting the very thing he is really minimalizing. Doesn't it make more sense that in fact, he is promoting the use of gifts which build the body up and using tongues, whatever kind of speaking it was, to be a contrast? I know that we might have some disagreement on this, but clearly Paul is focusing on the Corinthians getting used to valuing things which build the body up!

Let's consider that for a minute, because that is what ALL spiritual gifts are given for. What builds the body up here, and what tools that people have will assist in that process of encouraging and strengthening people? Let me mention just a few things:

1. Teaching which changes or informs people's minds about God.
2. Encouraging words and actions which give courage.
3. Providing real needs and giving time to people who need it.
4. Being a third voice in each other's families which corroborate or support what the first two voices in a home are saying/
5. Singing which teaches, emboldens, reminds and gives hope.
6. Coming along side people individually in a training and coaching way.
7. Competent management of the body's assets.
8. Worship leading which points people to Jesus Christ as the focus.
9. Demonstrating mercy in ways that remind people of God's mercy.
10. Challenging and demonstrating how to creatively share the Gospel

Whatever you CALL it when people do one or more of those things, the body or some portion on it, is built up. People are soothed to think, "Hey, maybe I will continue ON with this spiritual life in Christ!"

You will notice if you study 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 14 though, that clearly Paul downplays the value to church body of being able to communicate towards heaven in a supernatural way. In fact, he goes OUT of his way to say—"Yo, prophesy, teach, sing and build up the body in ways that make sense TO the body." "If you can talk to God, well, I can too and more than you." This is the sense of the entire 14<sup>th</sup> chapter of First Corinthians.

And no, certainly the Bible has no support whatsoever for the Assemblies of God<sup>1</sup> item #8 of their Fundamental Truths:

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<sup>1</sup> The largest Pentecostal denomination in the world, organized in 1914.

WE BELIEVE... The Initial Physical Evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit is ‘Speaking in Tongues,’ as experienced on the Day of Pentecost and referenced throughout Acts and the Epistles.<sup>2</sup>

Which follows their item #7 which says that the baptism of the Holy Spirit “experience is distinct from and subsequent to the experience of the new birth.”<sup>3</sup>

I think what bothers me more than the claim some make that they can talk to God in ways others of us cannot, is that some make it a test of spirituality. The test of spirituality given to us by Paul when he talked about tongues is, “How is the body being built up?”

When I was in seminary I knew some fellow students who were whizzes at learning biblical Hebrew and Greek. I struggled to remember the rules of grammar and the vocabulary, and how to apply them to the text of the Bible and other students seem to capture all that *effortlessly*. I knew that didn’t make them better Christians. I knew that each of us had our own strengths—in seminary mine was church history, not biblical languages.

- The “bottom line” was NOT *what* did I have, BUT HOW DID I USE WHAT I HAD? And did I use what I had in love to build believers up?
- Were others blessed by my spiritual gifts?
- Did I use my spiritual gifts to honor the Lord ultimately or to make myself feel good?
- When I did use my spiritual gift, did it make me feel part of a team or like someone trying to win a competition?

I never did get spectacular grades in Hebrew and Greek but I will tell you this: I have used my Hebrew and Greek for 29 years now. And I love what I DO know about those languages!

All of the gifts—whoever has them—are intended to be used to build up the body of Christ. If you are a Christian you have at least one spiritual gift and the Lord will ask us, I believe, how we used what He gave us to build up the body of Christ? And sometimes when we use our spiritual gifts it even benefits non-Christians! That’s when we are salt and light. This world needs us to use our abilities and our spiritual gifts to bring honor to the Lord Jesus Christ. The body needs whatever gift you have to build it up. We need every member of the body of Christ to be serving the Lord Jesus Christ as fervently as if He were actually standing among us. May He light a fire under us to take what He has given to us very, very seriously. And we will praise Him when we see the results. His name be glorified!

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<sup>2</sup> [http://ag.org/top/Beliefs/Statement\\_of\\_Fundamental\\_Truths/sft\\_full.cfm#8](http://ag.org/top/Beliefs/Statement_of_Fundamental_Truths/sft_full.cfm#8)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.