



Gifts of Spirit — True and False

**Berean Series
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**BEREAN BIBLE INSTITUTE
19 Ermington Place, Kew,
Melbourne, Australia, 3101**

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In the 2nd chapter of Acts the record is given of the Day of Pentecost, which followed our Lord's resurrection and ascension to heaven. On the fiftieth day from our Lord's resurrection, the Day of Pentecost, God acknowledged Christ's sacrifice on behalf of the human family by the gift of His spirit from on high, just as Jesus predicted to His disciples in John 16:5-7, when He said — "And now I go my way to him that sent me ... it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter (holy spirit) will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send it unto you." "It is expedient" — absolutely essential, that the Lord Jesus die as the sacrifice for the sins of mankind, be raised from the dead, ascend to heaven to the Father, that the Father may witness Christ's faithfulness unto death by the outpouring of the holy spirit. It was essential if there were to be a Church, a called-out people to be the Bride of Christ, that all this take place. So the power of God came upon the waiting disciples on the Day of Pentecost, as outlined in Acts 2. The opening verses of this chapter tell about the descent of the holy spirit. From verse 4 we read — "And they were all filled with the holy spirit, and began to speak with other tongues,

as the spirit gave them utterance.” The following verses describe what happened, and give a list of “Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven” — about a dozen nationalities are mentioned — who heard “the wonderful works of God” in their own languages.

In verse 4 the meaning of the Greek word translated “tongues” is “the tongue; by implication a language (specially one naturally not acquired).” The same Greek word is found in verse II — “We do hear them speak in our own tongues (languages) the wonderful works of God.” In verse 8 — “And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?”, we have another Greek word from which the word “tongue” is translated, and it means — “a (mode of) discourse, that is, dialect.” This same Greek word is found in verse 6, translated by our English word “language” — every man heard them speak in his own language.” Each of these nationalities heard the Apostles speak in their own language, so they could understand the Gospel message given out on that wonderful Day of Pentecost. That was an amazing experience for all the nationalities listed in those verses — “and are not all these men Galileans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue (dialect),

wherein we were born?" God was interpreting the glad message of the Gospel respecting the risen Christ through the Apostles in those "tongues" to the various nationalities there present.

A most important part of this record is the fact that all those people of so many nations heard in their own languages the **wonderful works of God**. That was the message that God was giving them by the holy spirit when Christ had ascended to the Father's presence. What is meant by the wonderful works of God? We have a sample of what it means from Peter's sermon on this same day, when he spoke to Israel in verses 22-24 of this same chapter — "Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know ... ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain. Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it." It was not possible that Christ should remain in death; He was raised the third day, and remained to associate with His disciples at certain brief times for 40 days, and then ascended to heaven.

The Apostle Peter's sermon continues in verses 30-33, speaking of David — "Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God ... would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell (the death condition), neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the holy spirit, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." Verse 36 — "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." What a wonderful message was there delivered to Israel! This was the message, the wonderful works of God, given to all those nationalities by the various languages used on that Day of Pentecost. That was a gracious arrangement provided by God, for when those devout Jews "out of every nation under heaven" returned to their own countries, they could expound to their fellow countrymen the wonderful message of the risen Christ. They had heard the glad message by the tongues of those Galileans. "We are all amazed", they said, "at these wonderful works of God."

Also at this same time were fulfilled the words of Acts 2:18 — “And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my spirit; and they shall prophesy.” God manifested forth His spirit upon His servants and handmaidens by the preaching in tongues to those present, at that early period of the Gospel Age. Verse 17 of this same chapter — “Saith God, I will pour out of my spirit upon all flesh” — is falsely claimed as being fulfilled now in our day; this is not so. Verses are not always in consecutive order for fulfilment in the Bible. How strange it would be for God to pour out His spirit upon all flesh while this present evil world is with us! But with Satan bound in the next age, and the resurrection of mankind under way upon the earth, then will be the appropriate time for God to pour out His spirit upon “all flesh.” Obviously, all mankind, all flesh, are not receiving God’s spirit today. “Darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the people”; “evil men and seducers wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.” God’s spirit is poured out now upon God’s servants and handmaidens only, during this Gospel Age, beginning with the Day of Pentecost, and only for a limited time were the “gifts” of the spirit given to the early Church for a special purpose when the Church was in its infancy.

It may be asked, Why did God arrange the preaching of the glad news of Christ's resurrection and salvation through Him by the speaking in tongues in the languages of many different Jews — "devout men, out of every nation under heaven" — as quoted in Acts 2:5? The answer would be that God desired those Jews to take the message of salvation through the risen Christ to their own countrymen, when there was no New Testament available. The Old Testament Scriptures only were then in existence, and few people could read anyway. God gave the devout Jews of various nationalities the thrilling message of the Gospel in their own tongues. When they returned home, they would gladly broadcast what they had heard — the wonderful works of God, that Christ had paid the penalty for all mankind, that He was then at the Father's right hand and there was salvation for all who gladly accept Him as their Saviour and devote their lives to Him. When the New Testament became available, and especially in these last days of the Gospel Age, when we have God's Word so easily procurable, we find Paul's words to Timothy, in 2 Tim. 3:14-17 of special interest and help.

From 2 Tim. 3:16,17 we read — "All scripture given by inspiration of God is profitable

for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." The meaning of "perfect" in the Greek is to be "complete" — "that the man of God may be complete." And "thoroughly furnished" in the Greek means — "to finish out (time); figuratively to equip fully (a teacher)." This same Greek word is translated "accomplished" in Acts 21:5 — "When we had accomplished (finished out, fulfilled) those days." The Apostle Paul is saying that the Holy Scriptures, inspired of God, are profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, fully equipped unto all good works. That being so, why would God add certain "tongues" in our day, as extra help, when the Apostle says God's Word is sufficient to complete, or fully equip His people. It is a great deception of the Adversary to try and convince mankind that they need additions to God's Word, certain "tongues" to enlighten them correctly.

We have seen why God used the "tongues" or "languages" of the various nationalities to convey the truths of His Word at Pentecost, when no New Testament was available to give

the clear message of salvation through Christ's sacrifice, but how different is the position today. God's Word is procurable in almost every language at such small cost, and as all God's truth is contained in His Word the supposed gifts of the spirit today are spurious, deceptions of the Adversary to flatter and puff up the minds of those deceived to imagine they are heaven's favourites. There can be no doubt that the Adversary provides a particular kind of deception to suit different minds in the human family. For instance, for the spiritualist there is the claim that he can communicate with his departed friends, when the Scriptures clearly state — "the dead know not anything." For the Christian Scientist he is exhorted to believe there is no real sickness, and is encouraged to lie to himself. For the average church-going person there is the claim that death is not real — that a person is immortal and really never dies — when the Bible clearly states — "As in Adam all die." For those who crave outward show, "a fair show in the flesh", there is the claim that it is necessary to speak in tongues to receive God's full blessing. Such people feel it is wonderful if they can use some "unknown tongue" which is unintelligible, and even if it were intelligible, no additional light is thrown on the Word of God. They think they are receiving the

“baptism of the spirit” when it is a counterfeit of Pentecost. Our Lord stated that there would be deceptive “signs and wonders” in the end of the age, that “if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect” — Matt. 24:24.

One thing is very noticeable in the Apostle Paul’s epistles; namely, that it is to the Corinthian church only that he mentioned the gifts of the spirit with special reference to the “tongues.” If speaking in other tongues would be a mark of development for the Christian, it is very strange that Paul did not exhort all the other churches to participate in this practice. There is no reference to speaking in tongues in his epistles to the Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus or Hebrews. The same can be said for the other Apostles, Peter, James and John in their epistles. The Apostle Paul commended many for their spirituality in the churches to whom he wrote, but the Corinthians as a church were not spiritually minded. They were clinging to the assistance given through the “gifts of the spirit” to the early church far too long, and apparently prided themselves in the outward show of the gifts instead of cultivating the inward fruits of the spirit. This is clearly

shown in 1 Cor. 3:1 — “And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.” From chapter 4:7 in this epistle the Apostle also shows that members in this church were grasping for honour and power, cultivating pride in their religion. Writing ironically in verse 10 he declared — “We are fools for Christ’s sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong.” Paul was really ridiculing this church for priding itself in the outward gifts of the spirit. That the Corinthians were seeking for outward show in their Christian lives is supported by 1 Cor. 12:31, reading from the Diaglott. This is a Greek and English translation, and gives a different meaning to the Authorized Version. It reads — “But you earnestly desire the more eminent gifts; and yet a much more excellent way I point out to you.” Paul is not saying — “Covet earnestly the best gifts”; but he is saying — “That is what you are doing.” You are seeking to shine with outward show in these gifts of the spirit; yet he would point out a much more excellent way — the development of the fruits of the spirit, which he elaborates in the next chapter. Paul was seeking to wean them away from the “gifts” which were appropriate for the church in its infancy. It is a mistaken idea to assume that

where the holy spirit is mentioned in the New Testament it always means the gifts of the spirit.

Gifts of the Spirit to Cease

The Apostle shows in 1 Cor. 13:8 that the gifts of the spirit were intended only for a limited time. We read — “Charity (love) never faileth; but whether there be prophecies, **they shall fail.**” What kind of prophecies is the Apostle referring to here? Undoubtedly the **gift of prophecy**, the ability to foretell coming events by the miraculous gift. “Whether there be tongues, **they shall cease.**” What kind of “tongues” is he speaking of? Without doubt the **gift of tongues**, the miraculous gift of speaking in another language apart from the one known by the speaker. They will cease, he says. “Whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.” What kind of knowledge is implied here? Surely not the knowledge of God and His truth. No, but the gift of knowledge, the miraculous understanding of knowledge, given only to the early church by the Lord.

An indication as to how the gifts of the spirit ceased is given in the account of Philip’s ministry in Samaria, as recorded in Acts 8:5-8,

14-17 as follows — “Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city. Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the holy spirit: (For as yet it was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the holy spirit.” It required the Apostles to bestow the gifts of the spirit upon members of the church in Samaria, because, while Philip as a deacon could perform certain miracles in this early church, he could not bestow the gifts upon others. Peter and John, two Apostles, were sent for this purpose. So, when the Apostles finished their earthly ministry, no further bestowing of the gifts could be made and they automatically ceased when those upon whom the Apostles had bestowed the gifts also passed away.

A text often quoted to support the claim that God's plan for tongues in the early church is still operative today is found in Heb.13:8. It is a very helpful verse when rightly understood — "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today and forever." This verse is often used to imply that what happened in our Lord's day, with certain miracles and in the early church with the tongues, would also apply today and for ever. But God's plan is not always the same for every age, or part of an age in the history of the human family, and the same applies to the long period of the call for the Bride of Christ, covering at least 2,000 years between our Lord's first and second advents.

Jesus' words to His Apostles in Matt. 10:8 are very revealing in this connection. He said — "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils; freely ye have received, freely give." We have instances of the Apostles actually raising the dead to life as a result of our Lord's commission to them, in addition to the other miracles performed by them through the power of God. This is shown in Acts 9:36-42; 20:7-12, as follows — "Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did. And it

came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: to whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber. And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them. Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber; and all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them. But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up. And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive. And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord." "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight. And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together. And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell

down from the third loft, and was taken up dead. And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him. When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed. And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted.”

The important point to note in the verses given by Jesus in Matt. 10, is the fact that the raising of the dead was equally within the power of the Apostles as any other of the gifts of the spirit, because it was God’s will in His Plan at that period of the church’s history. But who amongst the preachers of speaking in tongues would attempt to raise the dead to life today? Yet, if the claim that Jesus Christ is “the same yesterday, today, and for ever” meant that tongues and healings were God’s will for today, then the raising of the dead would also be in order at present. It is obvious that the Adversary can deceive so far, and no further. What the text in Heb. 13:8 really implies is, that our Lord is the same sympathetic overseer of His Church — as He was on earth, so He is in heaven — “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age” — were His words as He ascended on high — Matt. 28:20.

Another passage of Scripture often used in support of the gifts of the spirit operating today is found in Mark 16:9-20, which verses are not found in the best manuscripts, and are therefore spurious. Verses 16 and 17 are often quoted and verse 18, which is also not part of the New Testament, has led to some people losing their lives. There can be no doubt that the warning of the Apostle Paul in his day, found in 2 Cor. 11:13-15, also applies very definitely today — “Such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.”

Further, we have Paul’s warning respecting those who are deceived by various errors today, in this end of the age, as recorded in 2 Thess.2:8-12. The Apostle refers in this chapter to the great “mystery of iniquity” that was already working in his day, and is still working in our day. He says — “Then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his presence: **whose coming is with the working of**

Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. And for this cause **God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie;** that they all might be condemned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” That is a strong statement, that God would send people who desire these gifts, these tongues, etc., a strong delusion so they will believe a lie. They are so sure of their ideas, desiring their own will, that God allows them to be deceived in this matter, because they seek not the truth in the love of it. They have pleasure in making a great show before people, instead of seeking the lowly, quiet development of the fruits of the spirit in their hearts. God allows people to follow their own course, and they lose His spiritual blessing, though they will have the opportunity of being helped in the kingdom age on earth, when Satan is bound.

Yes, how different it will be when Satan is bound, to deceive the nations no more for the thousand years of Christ’s kingdom. Then “all shall know the Lord from the least unto the greatest”, and “they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain (kingdom);

for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” — Jer. 31:34; Isa. 11:9. And again — “In this mountain (kingdom) shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things ... And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth; for the Lord hath spoken it” — Isa. 25:6-8.

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