

These Things I Learned From My Project

A Biblical View

By: David C. Mills

Let me say first, that while I understand that all believers are given biblical spiritual gifts and are to exercise those gifts according to biblical principles and the Holy Spirit's direction, I cannot recognize and agree with the unscriptural abuses of these gifts. I also cannot identify with the incorrect idea that the possession of certain gifts is an evidence of spirituality.

I do believe that God through the Holy Spirit himself is the source of spiritual gifts and satisfaction rather than some spiritual experience. We should begin with truth from the words of God and not experiences or testimony. John 8:31-32 explains this to us very clearly: "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." It is not the experiences of something that will set us free, but God's truth.

Another important point to be made is that when one is born again and receives Christ, it is then that the Holy Spirit indwells them. I believe that it is permanent and it is then that they receive their spiritual gifts, although they may not realize it until later in their Christian maturity. At the point of salvation, "ye are complete in him" (Colossians 2:10). We see also in 1 Corinthians 12:7 that "the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal". Notice that it "is" given, not that it will be given at a later date.

In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise Eph 1:13

With that said, What is the biblical view of the tongues movement? The gift of tongues is biblical, that is, they are in the bible. However, as they are currently being used in the Charismatic movement, they are clearly unscriptural.

The definition of a spiritual gift, as defined by Dr. H.L. Willmington, is that "A Spiritual gift is a supernatural ability given by Christ through the Holy Spirit to the believer at the moment of his salvation."ⁱ

The first thing that we should remember is that all that we do and say should glorify the Father, which is in heaven, *(Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. Matt 5:16)* this is also the primary purpose of any and all spiritual gifts.

Secondly, the spiritual gifts that we receive by God through the Holy Spirit are to edify the church: (Ephesians 4:13-16) to perfect, strengthen and mature the body of Christ.

And thirdly, not all gifts are everlasting. We see in 1 Corinthians 13:8 that "Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away." We see that Charity will never drop away, however prophecies will be

entirely unnecessary (Gk: katargeo) and tongues shall completely stop (Gk: pauo) when “that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. v.10” That which is perfect has come, God in the flesh, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

In all 33 times that the word tongue or tongues (Gk: glossa) are used in the New Testament, it is referring to a spoken languageⁱⁱ. Another sixteen times we find the Greek word glossa used as the literal tongue and once in Acts as “cloven tongues like as of fire”. That’s 50 times in all, and not one time in all the Bible does “tongues” mean a heavenly language that only God understands. How then does this movement claim to speak in any thing other than an understandable spoken language? The answer, repeatedly, they claim many times is that they are speaking in the tongues of angels.

We see in the book of Daniel Chapter 8 and verse 13, that he heard the saint speak, and in Chapter 9 and verse 22 he was talking with the angel. The fact is, that each and every time that an angel has spoken, they did so in the tongue, or language, of the person they were addressing. What then is this language of angels that they are speaking?

I have personally spoken with individuals who claim that although they do not have the gift of speaking in tongues, they do claim to have learned to “pray in tongues” (for self-edification). Charles Caldwell Ryrieⁱⁱⁱ has stated that, “uninterpreted tongues, especially a private prayer language, is unfruitful simply because the one praying does not know what he or she is asking for.”

For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful -1 Corinthians 14:14

It is important to remember that the Gifts of the Holy Spirit were clearly given to us, and is not a process of learning or earning. How much clearer can this be made than in Acts 11:16-17, as it is stated that “Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. Forasmuch then as *God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?*”. God gave the gift to John as he did, or has given to each and every believer. Also we read in Romans 5:5, “And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.”. Again, which is “given” to us, and not earned or learned.

As tongues can neither be earned nor learned, it is also important to note that neither can they be asked for. In Acts 2:3-4 we read that, “And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” Notice that “there appeared unto them” and they were filled. There is no mention of them asking to be filled with the Holy Ghost.

They simply “were” filled. Also we see that they “all” were filled, not some, not a few, not many, but all.^{iv}

Another false teaching that is very prevalent today within the Charismatic movement, is the teaching that speaking or praying in tongues is a sign of salvation, or at least a sign of spirituality. This teaching which is also being tied to the baptism by the spirit is simply wrong. Paul says that, “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. - 1 Corinthians 12:13”. We know that not all the Corinthians spoke in tongues, but we do see here in v.13 that all the believers were baptized.

This grace-plus theology is clearly unbiblical. Have they forgotten Ephesians 2:8-9?

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. Ephesians 2:8-9

Are spiritual gifts biblical? Yes, indeed they are, as we read in 1 Peter 4:10 that “every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” As long as they are not abused, and as long as the focus is upon Christ and the purpose is according to God’s direction. God had a purpose for everything that He created and He has a purpose for everything he sustains.

We need to always keep in mind that we should begin with God’s Truth, and allow the His Truth to provide and fuel our experiences, and not allow our experiences to define His truth. Curtis Hutson makes it clear as he has stated in his book, *The Tongues Confusion*, that “If one’s experience does not agree with the Bible, the experience is wrong, not the Bible. Experience is not the principle; the Bible is. And Doctrine is not settled by one’s experience but by what the Bible has to say.”^v

And last but not least, we must always keep in mind that the Holy Spirit never takes anyone out of control.

Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led. 1 Corinthians 12:2

Once again we see the focus of those involved in this movement being upon the flesh, their general focus being, flesh-satisfaction and self-edification. As the 1922 hymn by H.H. Lemmel says, we should “turn our eyes upon Jesus... and the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace.”^{vi} As in many of the false teachings and practices we see in these end times and

as we've seen in the past, it is primary derived from lack of respect and authority for the scriptures.

With the complete and finished work of Christ, the precious blood shed at Calvary, why do "Christians" continue to try and add to the wonderful Grace of Jesus? That which is perfect has come!

ⁱ Dr. H.L. Willmington, *Willmington's Guide to the Bible*, pp. 660

ⁱⁱ Strong's Concordance, 1100, 1673, 1447, 1258

ⁱⁱⁱ Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, pp. 430

^{iv} Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, Electronic Database

^v Hutson, Curtis, *The Tongues Confusion*, pp. 2

^{vi} H.H. Lemmel, *Hynms for the Family of God*, pp 621