

The Gift of

Tongues

Acts 2:1-13, 1

Corinthians 14:1-31



When Jesus ascended, He instructed his disciples to tarry in Jerusalem until they received the Holy Spirit. In Acts 2, you see the fulfilment of that promise in the upper room. As the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples, they began to speak in other tongues, boldly proclaiming the gospel. All those that were around could hear each in their language. And this was the first record of tongues being spoken.

The letters to the church in Corinth are Paul's attempt to address issues that were experienced by those who lived there. 1 Corinthians 14:1-31 is Paul addressing the issue of speaking in tongues and giving a guideline for the church concerning tongues. Over the years, speaking in tongues is one of the gifts many believers seem to misunderstand, and as a result, there have

been many misconceptions revolving around it. Here are some:

(i) Speaking in tongues stopped with the apostles; we see that this is not true because Mark 16:17 says, "And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues." It immediately negates the idea that speaking in tongues started and ended with the apostles but suggests that it includes all those who believe.

(ii) Speaking in tongues is demonic.

(iii) Those who speak in tongues are more spiritual.

(iv) Tongues can be taught just like any other language.

(v) When you speak in tongues, you lose control over yourself [you become possessed by the Spirit of God].

(vi) You need to be deeply soaked and focused in prayer to get utterance to speak in tongues

(vii) Pray in tongues because the Devil does not understand tongues. The issue with this is that it feeds off fear and makes one feel insecure in prayer.

When it comes to tongues, it is a gift that is much more experienced than explained. You can not explain a doctrine from an experience, but you can explain an experience from a doctrine. Now tongues started with an experience [Acts 2] and the doctrine came later [1 Corinthians]. Hence, part of the reason why those with a logical mind have a hard time embracing tongues is because of the reverse in order. The human mind grapples with tongues because it does not understand it.

It is often said that speaking in tongues is the only indicator that someone is born again and has the Spirit of God, but it is not true. When someone receives Jesus into their life, they receive the life of God in their spirit. The Holy Spirit comes to awaken their dead spirits and live in them, and for the disciples, it was when Jesus breathed on them before He ascended into the heavens [see John 20:22]. Moreover, the Holy Spirit in you allows you to identify with Jesus, which then produces His character in you.

When the disciples received the Holy Spirit, it was packaged with the tongues and the other gifts, but it was dormant. Now, the event in Acts 2 was the Holy Spirit coming upon the disciples to awaken that which was dormant. When He is upon you, it is to empower and activate the gift for the mission. It is the Spirit that gives the gifts and enables their working.

Acts 19:1-7 tells a story of believers who were born-again [have the Holy Spirit] but did not speak in tongues. When Paul prayed for them, they spoke in tongues. That event confirms that sometimes receiving the Holy Spirit [when you are saved] and Him coming upon you can happen at different times, but there are other times when it happens simultaneously. Regardless of the order, always remember that He is in you to give you the nature of Christ and upon you to enable you to serve effectively.

When it comes to tongues, we get the tongues of man, which is an earthly language. It is unknown to the one who speaks and is a sign for unbelievers. Then there are also spiritual tongues; this is what Paul speaks of in 1 Corinthians 14:2 [NKJV]. It says, "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." And throughout the chapter, Paul addresses tongues and says that nobody should be forbidden from speaking in tongues.

The church in Corinth was carnal and disorganised, yet their gifts were functioning. So, do not let the manifestation of spiritual gifts be the indicator of your proximity to God; the Corinth church was carnal but experienced spiritual gifts. Never value the gift more than the one who gives it. Paul shows that there is a better way of expressing your spiritual gifts, and that is through love.

Lastly, the sign of the baptism of the Spirit includes but is not limited to speaking in tongues. It is possible to find someone baptised by the Spirit and yet not speak in tongues. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is not to give you tongues but to give you power in expressing the gifts.

