

# Is speaking in tongues the answer?

Leslie M. Grant

## Is speaking in tongues the answer?

We must surely sympathise with every honest exercise on the part of the saints of God who have been distressed by the woeful lack of godliness, spiritual growth and of knowledge of the Word of God on the part of professing Christians generally. There is no shadow of doubt that Christendom has been guilty of ignoring the reality of the living presence of the Spirit of God in the body of Christ, the true Church of the living God, and is sadly ignorant of the many various operations of the Spirit of God and their significance in the present dispensation of grace. Individuals have felt this lack in themselves and in Christian testimony, and the longing for something better has led them in various directions, some of them completely contrary to others. This divergence itself is a serious consideration and would warn us that the lack should be not only recognized, but that we should be concerned to meet it only in God's way, for there are many fair appearing substitutes by which people are too easily influenced. As we are on the very verge of the coming of the Lord, soon to stand before His judgment seat to give account of the deeds done in the body, how deeply solemn is the responsibility of being found thoroughly subject to His authority expressed in His precious Word, not seeking great things for ourselves in the midst of a ruined testimony of the professing church, but seeking honestly only that which honours the name of the Lord Jesus.

One very grave danger is that Christians are too likely to be influenced by their feelings rather than clinging to the Word of God. Some books deal exclusively with subjective experience, producing numbers of testimonies of how people have felt in connection with the experience of speaking in tongues, effects on themselves, etc. It is sad that these experiences and feelings are so strongly emphasized and set forth as the most important matter a book considers, when in Scripture we read not the slightest word of how people felt and what ecstatic effects they experienced when they spoke in tongues? On the other hand, the Scriptures are full of the testimony of the Spirit of God to the objective facts of Christianity. Yet these objective facts are the only real basis of the true Christianity, the only proper basis of subjective experience. Without them experience will be faulty and very likely deceiving.

When the Lord Jesus speaks of the Spirit of God, He says, 'He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you.' (John 16:13-14). Therefore, when one is filled with the Spirit of God, then it is the Lord Jesus whose glory and grace delights his heart. The person of the Lord Jesus Christ in His eternal glory with the Father, His marvellous incarnation in Manhood form, His life of pure faithfulness, love and grace, His words of infinite truth, His sacrifice for sinners on the cross of Calvary, His burial, His bodily resurrection, His ascension to the right hand of God, His glory there as Head over all things and Head of His body the Church, His High Priesthood, His advocacy, then His coming again for His saints, His judgment seat in glory, His judgment of the nations, His kingdom and glory established over all the world, His millennial reign, His sitting on the Great White Throne as Judge of 'the dead small and great,' and His infinite glory displayed for eternity in the new heaven and the new earth,-these are those things to which the Spirit of God delights to bear witness. Yet too many leaders (or misleaders) pass over all these things and speak instead of mere men and their wonderful experiences. It is not men whom the Spirit of God delights to honour, but the Lord Jesus Christ, and the believer is led by the Spirit only when Christ is the living Object of his heart and life. Indeed, he will be so engrossed with the Lord Jesus that he will not be thinking of any effects upon himself or feelings of his own heart at all, for these effects he will consider of no importance compared to the fact that his Lord is honoured. Certainly he will have feelings, but these should be very sacred, precious matters, to be enjoyed between his Lord and himself, not to be presented as an object or a criterion to others. Is it proper for the intimate

feelings existing between a husband and wife to be emblazoned before others as a criterion for them? But in fact, when Moses' face was shining, he did not know it (Ex. 34:29). When Stephen was filled with the Spirit, he was not thinking of himself at all, but of Christ, to whom he bore clear witness (Acts 7:55-60).

Many of these faulty leaders insist that no believer has ever received the Spirit of God unless he has spoken in tongues. This is totally false. Scripture does not speak this way at all. Men have assumed this because in Acts there are four cases (if we concede that Acts 8 is likely so) of groups of believers receiving the Spirit and speaking in tongues. Moreover, in these cases it is clear that they received the Spirit after they believed. But we must be careful to consider that Acts is a book of transition, that is, it deals with the gradual change from the dispensation of Judaism to that of Christianity, accomplished by the Spirit of God. Why only four cases of the Spirit being given with manifest signs? Because these cases involve four different classes of people:

First, Jews at Jerusalem, God's earthly centre of dealing (Acts 2). It is not difficult to understand that God would publicly accept these Jews by this great demonstration of the power of His Spirit.

Second, Samaritans (Chapter 8). Jews had no dealings with them, and considered them unclean. But God received them publicly, filling them with His Spirit and evidently sending signs of it, thereby uniting them also with Jewish believers.

Third, Gentiles, Cornelius and his household and many others gathered in his home (chapter 10). Could God do the same for them? Yes, they too were given the same Spirit, uniting them with Jewish and Samaritan believers.

Fourth, disciples of John at Ephesus (chapter 19). These were Jews outside of their own land, where God had never in the Old Testament promised them blessing of any kind. But they too were publicly received by God in the gift of the Spirit. All these cases were to be publicly acknowledged and witnessed to.

But observe, that every one of these cases required the presence of at least one apostle. Also notice that in each case there were a number of people, all receiving the Spirit at the same time. This is the true baptism of the Spirit, 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 Cor. 12:13). This is the only doctrinal statement in Scripture of what is actually accomplished by the baptism of the Spirit. He baptises all believers into one body. This was accomplished in the time of the Acts, so that the body of Christ is one by virtue of this baptism. The baptism of the Spirit is not individual, but accomplishes the corporate forming of the body of Christ. Of course, the indwelling of the Spirit, the filling of the Spirit, the earnest of the Spirit, the sealing of the Spirit, the unction (or anointing) of the Spirit, are all personal blessings resulting from receiving of the Spirit of God, but the baptism of the Spirit and the unity of the Spirit necessarily involve the entire body of Christ, not merely individuals.

But these four occasions of the coming of the Spirit mentioned above show that every class of mankind is provided for in the baptism of the Spirit, and all who are saved by grace are thereby baptized into the one body, producing a vital unity of Jewish and Gentile believers as one in Christ Jesus. This is the true Church of God. Acts gives us the history of this wonderful accomplishment in completing the unity of the body of Christ, but does not give the doctrinal teaching concerning the Spirit nor concerning the Church. The epistles do this.

*to be continued*