

so confirmed, and in each the preaching and confirmation of the Word is a part fact. These passages are Mark 16:17-19 and Hebrews 2:2-3.

Chapter 7

Thus it is concluded that gifts with special sign value have relevance only to the first Christian era.

THE SIGN GIFTS

The four spiritual gifts remaining to be discussed could possibly have been included in the previous two chapters. These four are themselves two speaking gifts, kinds of tongues and interpretation of tongues, and two serving gifts, gifts of healings and effects of miracles. But one dimension common to these four alone seems to distinguish them sharply enough for separate consideration. They are sign gifts.

Miracles are designated as signs in II Corinthians 12:12 (compare Acts 2:22; 8:13; Hebrews 2:4), healing at Acts 4:16, 22 (compare Mark 16:17-18), and tongues by Mark 16:17 and by I Corinthians 14:22. Interpretation of tongues, by virtue of its close relation to tongues, is grouped here as well. Now a sign is basically any indicator which points beyond itself to the greater figure beyond it. Thus that greater figure provides the authentication or validation of the event which is designated a sign.¹

Two passages of Scripture which relate spiritual gifts and signs seem to indicate that the purpose of signs, and presumably therefore of sign gifts, was fulfilled within the apostolic period of church history. In each of these passages, the sign gifts functioned to confirm the apostolic message, in each it is the Lord's apostles who bear the message

¹See Rengsdorf, in Kittel, VIII:240, on Acts 2:22; 4:22, and 258-9 on I Corinthians 14:22; II:12:12.

so confirmed, and in each the preaching and confirmation of the Word is a past fact. These passages are Mark 16:17-19 and Hebrews 2:2-4.

Thus it is concluded that gifts with special sign value have relevance only to the first century of the Christian era. (John 5:13; Acts 3:1-4:31), devil oppression and demon possession (Matthew 13:28; Luke 9:42; 13:32; Acts 10:28), a fevered ear (Luke 22:51), and dysentery with fever.

GIFTS OF HEALINGS

Healing is a sign gift, so called by inference from Mark 16:17-18 and by designation in Acts 4:22; cp. 4:16, 30. Healings is listed as one of the spiritual gifts at I Corinthians 12:9, 28, 30. Healings by supernatural power were known in the ancient world,² but occur with an unknown speed and thoroughness through the Lord and His followers in the New Testament.

All healing in the New Testament is by divine power. Jesus healed (Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 13:32; etc.), and God continues to heal even after Christ's ascension (Acts 4:30; 10:38; James 5:15-16). Otherwise only the apostles are known to have performed healing.³ The existence of physicians is acknowledged (Mark 9:12; Luke 4:23; Colossians 4:4); they are not at all decried, rather it is wherein the medical skills of the day failed that divine healing is any real contrast (Mark 5:26; Luke 8:43?). Gifts of healings may well have been one of the uniquely attesting signs of an apostle (II Corinthians 12:12).

Healing occurs among men in general and on behalf of believers, though in a prescribed manner. Various and diverse diseases may be healed

²For a thorough historical review, see Cepke in Kittel, III:195-203.

³This study is limited to healing as it occurs in the words iaomai, iasis, iama, iatros.

(Matthew 9:12; Mark 2:17; Luke 4:23; 5:31; 6:18; 9:1; Acts 4:14, c. 22). Some of those illnesses mentioned in particular include hemorrhage (Matthew 5:29; Luke 8:43), leprosy (Luke 17:15), paralysis (Matthew 8:6; Luke 5:17; Acts 9:34), dropsy (Luke 14:1-4), lameness (John 5:13; Acts 3:1-4:31), devil oppression and demon possession (Matthew 15:28; Luke 9:42; 13:32; Acts 10:28), a severed ear (Luke 22:51), and dysentery with fever (Acts 28:8). Wherever men suffer the consequences of the Fall, there God applies His healing touch.

All Christian believers partake of divine healing, for it may be spiritual as well as physical. (1) Spiritual healing is universal for believers, it is their initial salvation, for "Christ Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed" (I Peter 2:24). But there is also an occasional healing that is available to Christians, as often as they may need it, so that "the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed" (Hebrews 12:13). (2) Physical healing among believers is not universal, and there are no universal promises for physical healing which may be claimed by Christians. Hay observes:

That God still manifests His power in restoring the sick is unquestionable. But when He does, it is for a special purpose. In the later years of the Apostles' ministry, it is quite evident that not all the sick who sought the Lord in faith were healed. God refused to remove Paul's 'thorn in the flesh', and made known His reason to His servant. Paul accepted the reason as satisfactory. Paul advised Timothy to take a remedy for his stomach's sake (I Tim. 5:23). He left Trophimus at Miletus sick (2 Tim. 4:20).⁴

The directions for seeking divine healing among believers are laid down in James 5:14-16.

⁴ Hay, Church Order, 194.

True healing through specially gifted individuals in the New Testament is occasional (I Corinthians 12:9, 28, 30)⁵ and it is instantaneous (Matthew 8:13; Mark 5:29; Acts 3:6-7, c. 4:22, 30; 9:34; etc.). Healing requires faith, whether of the sick one (Mark 5:29; etc.), of others (Matthew 8:5-13; etc.), or of the church (James 5:14-16). Gifted healing may simply touch the sick (Luke 22:51) or perhaps merely speak an authoritative word in the name of Jesus (Luke 5:17; 9:42; 22:51; John 4:47; 5:13; Acts 4:30; 9:34). Or there may be prayer and the laying on of hands (Acts 28:8). Non-gifted men may see divine healing when there is confession of any sins, anointment with oil, and believing prayer (James 5:14-16). God cannot, however, be obligated to heal. Gifts of healings may not be expected to be operative at the present time as any kind of authentication of the Word or of its messengers, for there is no more need of signs to authenticate that Word. But God does continue to be very merciful. Many believers today have known the healing touch of the Great Physician.

In summary, it appears that the gifts of healings are God-given grace to perform occasional physical healings as a sign of the truth of the Word of God. This gift seems to be somewhat more restricted in its scope than is the gift of miracles. Some possible behavioral traits of a gifted healer are outlined in the appendices.

EFFECTS OF MIRACLES

"Miracles" is, literally, "powers" (dinameis), which are "the

⁵The probable reason for the plural forms.

outward expressions of power"⁶ (dunamis). As God exercises His great ability⁷ to perform in a supernatural manner, the results are the "effects of miracles"; when wrought by means of the spiritual gift of a believer, the power of God may be denominated "the gift of effects of miracles" (I Corinthians 12:4-6, 10).

Not many in the New Testament are identified as miracle workers per se. Jesus performed many miracles (Matthew 11:20, 21, 23; 13:54, 58, 14:2; Mark 6:2; 14:2), and later also His apostles (cf. II Corinthians 12:12) who had heard the Word from Him (Hebrews 2:3-4), including the Apostle Paul (Acts 19:11). Besides these only Philip the evangelist is mentioned by name (Acts 8:13), a man who had been commissioned by apostles (6:3-6) and who may well have been a disciple of the Lord Jesus. Evil men, workers of lawlessness also perform miracles, and in the name of the Lord at that (Matthew 7:22). But in the church, it is clear that not all can or are expected to work miracles (I Corinthians 12:29).

Ultimately, only God Himself works miracles, whether by Jesus (Acts 2:22) or by apostles (19:11) or by any witness to the Word of God (Hebrews 2:3-4). Even workers of false miracles do their wonders in the name of the Lord (Matthew 7:22). This is why miracles have such great sign value (II Corinthians 12:12), can be called powers of the age to come (Hebrews 6:5), and are designated specifically as "effects" (I Corinthians 12:10; cp. 12:6, 11). Miracles mean that God is at work.

⁶Arndt and Gingrich, 207.

⁷Grundmann explains, "Words deriving from the stem duna- all have the basic meaning of 'being able,' of 'capacity' in virtue of an ability; in contrast to ischu-, which stresses the factuality of the ability, the stress falls on being able. Thus far no convincing etymology has been discovered" (Kittel, II:284).

The signs and wonders performed by evil men through evil powers may be called miracles by men (Matthew 7:22) but not by the Word of God.

Miracles are normally accompanied by or characterized as "signs and wonders" (Acts 2:22; 8:13; II Corinthians 12:12; Hebrews 2:4), and occur only in relation to the proclamation of the Word of God (Matthew 13:54; Acts 8:12-13; II Corinthians 12:12; Hebrews 2:3-4). Closely related to the working of miracles is the Holy Spirit in the present economy. He Who works miracles in the church is also He Who provides the Spirit (Galatians 3:5). Distributions or gifts of the Holy Spirit have definite connection with miracles (Hebrews 2:4). In fact effects of miracles is itself one of the spiritual gifts, that is, a manifestation of the Spirit (I Corinthians 12:7, 10). Now, miracles cannot normally be expected to occur where there is little faith (Matthew 13:58). They have their greatest significance in the context of the church (I Corinthians 12:28). And in the church they occur only through the hearing of the Word of God with a believing response to that Word (Galatians 3:5). Miracles are relatively unconvincing to those who do not already believe; miracles are a confirmation of the Word of God for those who have already accepted it. and by the Apostle Paul (I Corinthians 14:22). The miracles of Jesus appear to have had a two-fold purpose: (1) to confirm His teachings for His disciples, who in fact did rejoice because of them (Luke 19:37), and (2) to secure the judgment of those who rejected Him and His teachings, that is, of those who did not repent (Matthew 7:21, 23; 11:20; Mark 11:21). In either case, God was giving attestation to Israel concerning His Son Jesus (Acts 2:22). In a similar manner, those who initially received the Word through those who heard Jesus had their salvation confirmed unto them through miracles

(Hebrews 2:3-4). That is a past fact (cp. 16:20). Today we know that the Word stands confirmed, and we have no more need of attesting miracles to confirm the Word of God, than we have need of Christ to rise again from the dead to authenticate who He is. This is not to say that God has left off operating miracles. But wherein the gift of effects of miracles existed for the purpose of a sign, it is no longer existent in the church today.

In summary, it appears that the gift of effects of miracles is the God-given grace to authenticate the Word of God in a supernatural manner. The gift of miracles should be kept distinct from the power of God which operates miraculously during all ages. Possible behavioral traits of the gifted miracle worker are listed in the appendices.

KINDS OF TONGUES

A number of helpful works are available today, which attempt to evaluate the current tongues or charismatic movements.⁸ This short article will simply be a brief re-examination of the Biblical data. Kinds of tongues qualifies as a sign gift, for tongues are specifically so called both by Jesus (Mark 16:17) and by the Apostle Paul (I Corinthians 14:22).⁹

With one exception (Acts 2:3), "tongue" refers either to that oral member of the human body (Luke 16:24; Revelation 16:10) or, by way

⁸ See, for example, Schaeffer, Super-Spirituality, Unger, Burdick, Johnson (Symposium), Radmacher, Gromacki.

⁹ Rengstorff, in Kittel, VIII:259, says that tongues are called a sign because "it shows that they are unbelievers and separated from God," i.e., the faithless.

of metonymy, to human speech. Even as the physical organ of the body, the tongue is frequently viewed as the instrument of speech (Mark 7:33, 35; Luke 1:64; Romans 3:13; 14:11; I Corinthians 14:9; Philipians 2:11; I Peter 3:10; James 1:26; 3:5-8). The speech produced with the tongue is implied in most passages to be quite comprehensible, and in some it is clearly so said: Mark 7:35, the man with tongue loosened "began speaking plainly"; Acts 2:11, men recognize what others are speaking in their tongue;¹⁰ Acts 10:46, the tongues were understood as exalting God; Romans 3:13, tongues are instruments of deceit; I Corinthians 13:1 tongues are the languages of men;¹¹ I Corinthians 14:9, this is speech that is clear; I Corinthians 14:19, even the kinds of tongues as a gift consist of "words."¹²

The gift of tongues itself is said to be kinds of tongues. That is, these tongues are classifiable, subject to identification.¹³ Thus when the apostles spoke in other tongues on the Day of Pentecost, these were simply different, foreign languages other than their own.¹⁴ There is no known evidence that the tongues spoken in the Book of Acts and in I Corinthians 12-14, as predicted in Mark 16, are any thing

¹⁰In Acts 2:11, as in 2:6, the phrase "in . . ." connects with "speaking," since the verb akouein, to hear, occurs only with the accusative and genitive of object. In 2:8 the phrase "in . . ." connects with "we each one (being)."

¹¹The only known languages spoken by angels were comprehensible to men.

¹²Logos, an intelligent unit for expression of thought.

¹³Genos is a race, stock, family (L. & S., Intermediate) and a class or kind, such as a species of animal or plant (A. & G., 155).

¹⁴A. & G., 315 on heteros.

other than real, intelligible, human languages. Now that is not to say that every one understands the languages of the gift of kinds of tongues, any more than a Senegalese peasant understands Tibetan. There are several passages where tongues are incomprehensible, but in each it is for an obvious reason: I Corinthians 14:2, "no one hears" is not to say that "no one can hear," but to emphasize the nature of tongues as another language which the tongues speaker himself cannot understand; 14:5, the tongue can be interpreted, as can any language; 14:6, tongues simply is contrasted with other ministries which are communicatory in nature, it and they employ language; 14:13, again, the tongue can be interpreted, even by the speaker himself; 14:14, the mind is unfruitful, but can be made fruitful through interpretation; 14:23, here it is a question of those who simply do not understand the languages which are being spoken, there being, hypothetically, a number of tongues spoken. None of the gifts passages state that tongues is any kind of unintelligible gibberish. To the contrary, a tongue is often the identifying mark of an ethnic or language group in the New Testament (Acts 2:11; Revelation 5:9; 7:9; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6; 17:15). And tongues are always able to be interpreted by those who understand them (I Corinthians 12:10, 30; 14:5, 13, 26, 27, 28; cp. John 1:38, 42; 9:7; Acts 9:36; Hebrews 7:2).

The tongue has a special place in Scripture in connection with praise which is to be uttered to God (Luke 1:64; Acts 2:11; 10:46; Romans 14:11; Philippians 2:11). But it also can easily become a tool for curses and for evil (Romans 3:13; James 1:26; 3:5-8; I Peter 3:10; I John 3:18). It is in keeping with the function of the tongue as a vehicle of praise to God that the kinds of tongues as a gift appears in the New Testament. For the content of tongues speaking is always that

of praise (Acts 2:11; 10:46), or prayer (I Corinthians 14:14, 15), of song (14:15), of blessing (14:16), or of thanks (14:16) to God. The gift of tongues is always man addressing God, never of God communicating to man (Acts 10:46; I Corinthians 14:2, 28). Revelations are spoken by the prophets (cf. I Corinthians 14:29-30), not through tongues.

The gifted tongues speaker does not himself understand the language through which he speaks to God, for it is strictly in the realm of his spirit, excluding his mind (I Corinthians 14:2, 12, 14-16), as the Spirit gives him utterance (I Corinthians 12:10; cp. Acts 2:4). Furthermore, most other people in his church will not understand his tongues either, as they will be foreign to most. Therefore it is necessary that the tongue be interpreted, since everything in the church is to be done unto edification (I Corinthians 14:5, 26). The tongues speaker himself may make the interpretation, if, through prayer, God should give him the ability to express his same praise and prayer, etc., "with the mind also" (I Corinthians 14:13-15). Or it may be done by another who happens to understand the particular language (14:26, 27). In fact, God has specially gifted some to make interpretations of the languages which they understand--the gifted interpreters do not understand all languages--(14:28). True gifted tongues speaking is not to be forbidden (14:39), but should there be no interpreter available in the church, the tongues speakers must remain silent (14:28).

Like all spiritual gifts, kinds of tongues are subject to misuse. Whereas they are given for the common good (I Corinthians 12:7), they can have the opposite effect. It depends on whether the gift is used rightly or used wrongly:

Used Rightly

Others understand the tongues
(Acts 2:6, 8, 11)

Evidence of the giving of the
Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4, 6, 8,
11; 10:45-46; 19:6).

The tongues speaker edifies
others (I Corinthians 14:4, 12).

The spirit prays, etc. (I
Corinthians 14:14-17).

All things are done for edifi-
cation (I Corinthians 14:26).

As a sign gift, however, the gift of kinds of tongues apparently ceased in history along with all necessity of signs. This seems to be in keeping with the prediction that tongues would cease by themselves (I Corinthians 13:8), some time before the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, at which time the remaining gifts will be abolished.

In summary, it appears that the gift of kinds of tongues is the God-given grace to speak to God in unlearned, human languages. This gift is given with the complementary gift of the interpretation of tongues. A behavioral description has been included in the appendices.

INTERPRETATION OF TONGUES

The gift of interpretation of tongues functions in close relation to the gift of kinds of tongues (I Corinthians 12:10, 30; 14:26, 27-28).

In this connection, to interpret is not simply to give a word-for-word rendition from the tongue into the commonly known tongue of a local

Used Wrongly

No one understands, including, of course, the speaker (I Corinthians 14:2).

Tongues have no sign value to believers, only to unbelievers (I Corinthians 14:22).

What profit is brought to the church? (I Corinthians 14:6).

The mind is unfruitful (I Corinthians 14:14) and the other man is not edified (14:17).

Outsiders and unbelievers will say that you are mad (I Corinthians 14:23).

church.¹⁵ Rather it is to explain, to give a clear sense to something otherwise not understood. Thus Jesus "interpreted" the Scriptures to the disciples when He "explained to them the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:27).

Not all are interpreters (I Corinthians 12:30). But since tongues speaking is not edifying to the church unless interpreted (14:5-6), it is required that some one interpret all tongues (14:27-28). But if no interpreter be present, then the tongues speaker must remain silent (14:28). However, it is permissible for the tongues speaker to provide his own interpretation, if he is able to do so (14:5, 13). But he is not to do so, if there is another able to do so, for interpretation in a public meeting is limited to one individual (14:27).

Now since the content of biblical glossolalia is communications to God "in the Spirit" (praises, prayers, songs, blessings, and thanks, cf. Acts 2:11; 10:46; I Corinthians 14:14-17), rather than from God to man (that is prophecy, cf. I Corinthians 14:29-30), interpretations are re-expressions of the spiritual movements of tongues speakers into intelligible terms. Behm, relating the term "interpreter" to its historical context, explains that it

does not correspond to the translator . . . who in the course of synagogue worship put the Scripture readings into Aramaic and also communicated out loud to the congregation the softly spoken sermons, but rather to the interpreter of divine oracles in Plato and Philo. . . . Yet while the reference in Plato and Philo was to the exposition of distinct oracles or revelations, here it is a matter of interpreting in the interest of general edification (I Corinthians

¹⁵Two verbs based on the same root occur, hermeneuo and diermeneuo. The first pertains to word-for-word translations by usage; the latter is used exclusively in the New Testament of explaining and giving the sense.

14:5, 25ff.) ecstasies who are speaking to God (v. 2, 28).¹⁶ The interpreter, therefore, is interpreting the tongues speaker's message to God, not God's message to the congregation; and only for the benefit of the church, for God needs no interpreter (I Corinthians 14:2, 28). To whatever extent the gift of tongues is a supernatural ability to express oneself in true human languages, it is likely that the interpreter is one who has a personal, intelligent understanding of the language of the tongues speaker. Then his gift is one of ability to articulate and explain in one language what he hears in another. The temple visitors on the Day of Pentecost each understood his own language (Acts 2:4, 6, 8, 11), as the Apostles were speaking in those languages (2:11, Gk.), but they offered no translations or explanations. To know two languages does not make one an effective interpreter. God gives a gift for that. This may also be why that on occasion no one is able to translate--the tongue may be foreign to all present (I Corinthians 14:28), including the gifted interpreters.

In summary, it appears that the gift of interpretation of tongues is the God-given grace to re-express, in plain speech, a tongues speaker's communications to God. A possible description of the interpreter's behavior is suggested in the appendices.

SUMMARY

The very Lord Jesus Christ whose ministry on earth was characterized by attesting miracles and wonders and signs (Acts 2:22), indicated before His departure for heaven that those who then believed

¹⁶ Behm in Kittel, II:665.

would be accompanied by certain signs (Mark 16:17-18). These were His apostles (16:14, c. 20; II Corinthians 12:12) who did indeed preach the Word, as God confirmed their message by the signs and gifts which He granted for that purpose (Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:2-4). The particular spiritual gifts which are specifically designated as "signs" are gifts of healings, effects of miracles, and tongues, and with tongues the complementary interpretation of tongues. Although God's ability to heal and perform miracles is active always, there is not any need of these gifts as signs wherever the Word of God exists. A proposed description of each of these sign gifts has been included in the appendices.

These gifted men are not themselves spiritual gifts as such, but they are given to the church. For that reason, and because each one also possesses his own spiritual gift, they are designated "the gifted men."

Four separate titles are listed for the gifted men in Ephesians 4:11, the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists and the pastor-teachers. Another title, not listed with these who equip saints, is that of Deacon (Philippians 1:1; I Timothy 3:8-12), one who serves the saints. This chapter will discuss only the first four, elaborating on the apostles and the evangelists, since the others received coverage under the gifts of prophecy, of teaching and of ministry.

THE APOSTLES

Whenever the term "apostle" is used in the New Testament, it