

Gifts Can Be Misused



Foundations (Day 217)
by Derek Prince

Experience proves again and again that there is a special danger in misusing the three spiritual gifts which operate through the organs of speech – that is, tongues, interpretation and prophecy. This is confirmed by the fact that Paul devotes the greater part of the next chapter – 1 Corinthians 14 – to giving rules to control and regulate the use of these three particular gifts. If there were no possibility of believers misusing these gifts, there would be no need to give rules for their control. The fact that rules are given proves that rules are needed.

However, in interpreting the teaching of Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:1, it is necessary to pay close attention to the exact words he uses. He says:

> "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become as sounding brass or a clanging cymbal."

Note the phrase "I have become." These words indicate a change. The believer here pictured is not now in the same spiritual condition as he was when he was originally baptised in the Holy Spirit.

At that time, he had the assurance that his sins were forgiven and that his heart was cleansed through faith in Christ. He was willing to yield himself, as fully as possible, to the control of the Holy Spirit. In this condition, the initial manifestation of speaking with another tongue indicated that the Holy Spirit had come to indwell the believer and take control of his life.

However, in the period that has since elapsed, the believer here pictured by Paul has retained the outward manifestation but – through carelessness or disobedience – has not retained the same inward condition of cleansing and yieldedness to the Holy Spirit. Thus the process of speaking with tongues has degenerated into a mere outward physical manifestation without any corresponding inward spiritual reality.

To see this experience in its proper perspective, we must set side by side two facts which are confirmed both by Scripture and by experience.

First, at the time of being baptised in the Holy Spirit, a believer must fulfil two conditions: His heart must be purified

by faith in Christ, and he must be willing to yield control of his physical members – in particular, his tongue – to the Holy Spirit.

Second, the fact that the believer was cleansed and yielded at the time of his baptism in the Spirit is not an automatic guarantee that he will always remain in that condition, even though he may still continue to speak in tongues.

The supposition that God could withdraw the gift when abused is not supported either by logic or by Scripture. If a gift, once given, could thereafter be withdrawn at the will of the giver, then it was never a genuine gift in the first place. It was a loan or a conditional deposit, but not a free gift. A free gift, once given, passes out of the control of the giver and is thereafter under the sole control of the one who received it – whether to use, to abuse or not to use at all. Scripture confirms this point of logic: "For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (Rom. 11:29).

This word irrevocable used here of God, and not of man, indicates that once God has given a gift, He never withdraws the gift again. Thereafter the responsibility to make the proper use of the gift rests not with God, the giver, but with man, the receiver.

Devotional

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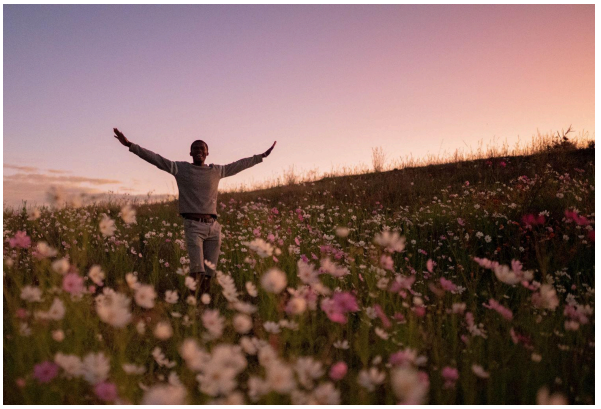

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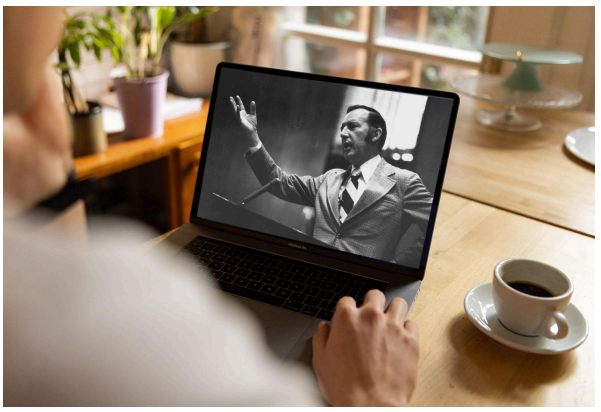

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