

The following “Official” position on The Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the Gift of Tongues was adopted by the International Assemblies of God Fellowship Executive Presbytery on 10 November 1996

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the Gift of Tongues

Introduction

In the early years of the 20th century, a revival swept through North America and other parts of the world that would rock the church as it people knew it. It was a revival of speaking in tongues and mighty works of the Holy Spirit. The effects of this revival can and are still being felt today as it has spread far and wide through the work of missionaries and advances in broadcast technology. It has crossed over the traditional boundaries of mainline denominations and has been a catalyst for much change in the same. This movement has had a broad scope geographically, culturally and socially. So it is not surprising that there has also been a wide variation in the experiences and degrees of involvement in this phenomenon, as well as in the acceptance or rejection of the people and groups who espouse this teaching.

The vast majority of “Pentecostal” denominations and fellowship teach and insist that the gift of tongues is the singular determining factor and evidence of the sign that a person has been filled (“baptized”) by the Holy Spirit. Some, who do not speak in tongues, teach and insist that the gift of tongues is not for this age, but was only for the time of the apostles and the birth of the church. Yet, there are others who find themselves somewhere in between.

The International Assemblies of God Fellowship believed the entire record of the Bible concerning the Person and work of the Holy Spirit, and the gift of tongues must be understood against this larger backdrop.

A Spirit Filled life will be characterized by BOTH, The Fruit of The Spirit and the proper use of The Gifts of The Spirit

Gifts can obviously be counterfeited. The words of Jesus in Matthew 7:21-23 are sobering: "Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'" If some of the greater gifts, such as prophecy, can be exercised so as to be regarded by Jesus as a work of iniquity, we should not be surprised when other gifts also become a counterfeit of Satan

While we recognize that the gifts of the Holy Spirit as taught in Scripture to be valid gifts for the church today, and there are several instances in Scripture where people spoke in tongues following the initial infilling of the Holy Spirit, we do not feel that the “only” evidence of the baptism (fullness) of the Holy Spirit is speaking in tongues, or the evidence of Christian maturity. Furthermore, to insist that speaking in tongues is the only evidence of the Holy Spirit's fullness invalidates the experience of all those believers

whose lives have given abundant evidence of the power of the Spirit but who have never spoken in tongues.

The Gifts of the Spirit Are for "The Common Good" in the Body of Christ

Every Christian has at least one gift. "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good" (1 Corinthians 12:7). Spiritual gifts are given by the Holy Spirit "just as He determines" (1 Corinthians 12:11). Christians should not expect to receive or to exercise any one particular gift, several gifts, or all the gifts. With this fact in mind Paul asked, "Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?" (1 Corinthians 12:29-30). It is clear, grammatically and contextually, that the intended answer to these questions is, "No." Therefore, Christians need each other.

Gifts are always related to service and are not to be used as a measure of Christian experience. We agree with A.B. Simpson when he said, "...our possession of these gifts does not affect our personal salvation and sanctification, and our standing with God as subjects of His grace."¹ Gifts are not to be exercised selfishly, but are for the profit of the whole body.

The Gift of Tongues Must Be Practiced with Orderliness, Unity and Love

Speaking in tongues is referred to in scripture both in corporate and private worship. The guidelines for speaking in tongues in a corporate setting are found in 1 Corinthians 14 and state 1) that no more than two or, at the most, three may speak in a tongue during a service, and 2) there must be one present who can interpret. Paul says that in the church, he would rather speak five intelligible words than ten thousand in a tongue.

The gift of tongues is not intended to be divisive. However, due to the passion people have for their positions, both the acceptance and the rejection of tongues... this has often caused division in churches, homes, and other groups. Pride and division in the Corinthian church created problems in the unity of the body. The instruction clearly shows that loveless Christianity, unbiblical judgment of others, rifts in a congregation, and refusal to listen to the teaching of Scripture are not of the Holy Spirit.

Christians Should Be Known by Their Fruit Rather Than by Their Gifts

This fellowship considers the biblical distinction between the gifts and the graces of the Spirit important. The gifts of the Spirit are clearly presented in 1 Corinthians 12. The graces of the Spirit are bound together by love (1 Corinthians 13), and the desire for spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 14:1) must be preceded by earnest pursuit of love. The graces of the Spirit are also identified as fruit (Galatians 5:22-23). It is evident that one may possess a gift or several of the gifts of the Spirit without enjoying the necessary graces of the Spirit. A gift, such as prophecy, can be exercised without the grace of love and thus be little more than noise. (1 Corinthians 13:1).

The graces or fruit of the Spirit make it possible for the Christian to exercise the gifts of the Spirit in a manner that will bring glory to God and will bring His blessing upon and enhance the testimony of the church of Jesus Christ. Since Paul presents love as "the most excellent way," it suggests that love is the true essence of all the graces of the Spirit

(1 Corinthians 12:31b). The truth of 1 Corinthians 13 indicates that this is so. All of the other graces or fruit spring out of love: joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

Christians should be known by their fruit rather than by their gifts. The most visible evidence of the fullness of the Spirit in the life of the Christian is love: Love for God, love for the body of Christ, and love for a lost world.

Summary

The believer must have a passion for the Person of the Holy Spirit, the Giver of gifts. The Bible clearly teaches that the Christian life is a relationship with a Person, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is made real to us by the Holy Spirit.

The IAOG believes that the consuming passion of the Holy Spirit is to present and glorify Christ (John 15:26). Anything that detracts from the central theme, Jesus Christ, lessens the effectiveness of the church. Like Paul, we are "resolved to know nothing...except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). Seeking manifestations more than seeking Christ is a danger to be avoided. To quote A.B. Simpson again, "When we seek anything less than God, we are sure to miss His highest blessing and likely to fall into side issues and serious errors."²

Pastors should teach the Spirit-filled, victorious Christian life-not as an option for the Christian, but as a necessity. Our congregations need to know the deepened experience of the grace of God in their lives. We must not lose sight of what God has already done for us or deny His past blessings. We counsel our people to be "led by the Spirit of God" (Romans 8:14) and "eagerly desire the greater gifts." (1 Corinthians 12:31, 14:39).