

Interpretation of Tongues

by Chuck Smith

Chuck Smith explores the role of the Holy Spirit in believers' lives, focusing on the interpretation of tongues and its significance in the church.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 6:19

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Spiritual Gifts"

Description

Chuck Smith discusses the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers, emphasizing that the Holy Spirit not only dwells within us but also empowers us to be vessels through which God's love and power flow to others. He highlights the importance of the interpretation of tongues as a spiritual gift that complements the gift of speaking in tongues, stressing that interpretation should edify the church rather than serve as a message from God. Smith explains that while the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is essential, the outflowing of the Spirit is crucial for impacting the world around us. He encourages believers to seek the gifts of the Spirit while adhering to biblical guidelines to avoid confusion and abuse. Ultimately, he calls for openness to the genuine work of the Holy Spirit in the church.

Transcript

We have been looking at the subject of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer and as we have pointed out, the Holy Spirit dwells in us, conforming us into the image of Jesus. Everyone who has received Jesus Christ as their Savior has the Holy Spirit indwelling him. As Paul said,

What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

Paul exhorted the Ephesians to "not be drunk with wine wherein is excess, but to be continually filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18). This is the marvelous work of the Holy Spirit within our lives as He gives us victory over the flesh life and He conforms us into the image of Jesus Christ. Paul wrote to the Corinthians,

But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, [even] as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Corinthians 3:18)

So this is the glorious work of the Holy Spirit within the life of the believer. But there is then that out-flowing of the Holy Spirit from the life of the believer.

Years ago when I was at a pastors' conference at Forest Home where many pastors had gathered from all over the Southern California area--to show you how many years ago it was, I was one of the youngest pastors there at the time--but we had a noted speaker who was telling us that the highest capacity of man was the ability to contain God. And it was a very inspirational talk. He had actually written a book on the subject.

And he went on to declare how we can have this treasure in earthen vessels. Our bodies can be the temple of the Holy Spirit. We have the capacity of containing God, which he said is the highest capacity of man. Through the years I have thought of that message, but I have wondered about whether or not that is indeed the highest capacity of man. Is the highest capacity the ability to contain God or is the highest capacity when God flows forth from my life? When I am a channel through which God can pour forth His love and His power to the needy world around me.

In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." But this spake he of the Spirit. (John 7:37-39)

It seems to me that this is what Jesus was pointing His disciples toward. It is not just the indwelling of the Spirit within our lives, as marvelous as that is, but the releasing of the Spirit from my life. This is where He begins to pour forth out of my life like a torrent of living water, so that the world around me is affected by what God has done in me.

The one is subjective. It is marvelous and it is necessary--that subjective work of the Holy Spirit within my life. But it is always toward the objective that my life might be the instrument through which God can touch a thirsty, needy world around me.

In his letter to the Corinthians, chapters 12 through 14, Paul is describing some of the gifts of the Spirit. He is describing some of the ways by which the Spirit of God is manifested in our lives and manifested through our lives. First of all in the early part of chapter 12, he gives a listing of some nine various manifestations which he declares the Holy Spirit divides to each man severally as He wills. Not all of us possess all of these manifestations. As he closes out the twelfth chapter, Paul asks the rhetorical questions:

Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? (1 Corinthians 12:29-30)

And the answer is obviously, "no." But the Holy Spirit divides to each man severally as He wills. So put it all together and you have the whole body of Christ functioning as God would have the body to function.

But in a body, as Paul points out, we have many different parts and not all of the parts fulfill the same function. However, they are all necessary for the total body to function, so you cannot really declare that you do not have any need for the rest of the body. You are not complete in yourself. The ear cannot say to the eye, "I have no need of you," because where then would be the seeing? (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:21). So it is the Spirit gifting us with various gifts. When they are all put together, you have a functioning body which becomes a powerful witness to the world around us.

Now as we have moved through the first eight manifestations, we have come to the ninth one which is the interpretation of tongues. Paul said, "To another the interpretation of tongues" (1 Corinthians 12:10).

Now this is a companion gift to the gift of speaking with tongues. It is, interestingly enough, the only gift that a person is told to pray for specifically. And that is, as Paul said, "If a person speaks in an unknown tongue." That would be a reference to speaking in church or actually before the church, in an unknown tongue. He is speaking to God, but before the church in an unknown tongue. Then he needs to pray that he might interpret in order that the whole church might be edified by his praise and giving of thanks.

Now I do not believe that this verse applies to the private use of the gift of tongues. And as we pointed out in the last three studies, when we studied in detail the subject of speaking in tongues, we pointed out that definitely the Scripture is encouraging the use in a believer's personal devotional experiences. But it limits and restricts the use of the gift of tongues in the church. It can be used in the church, preferably when just the church is gathered together with no unbelievers present. But if it is exercised in the church then it is under definite restrictions and limitations.

Paul said that he personally would rather not use his gift of speaking in tongues in church. He reserved it for his own personal, private devotions, preferring to speak five words in a known tongue, than ten thousand in an unknown tongue when he is gathered together with the body of Christ. So in the use of tongues in your own private devotions, there is no need for interpretation. The only time the need for interpretation arises is if there is an exercise of tongues within church.

The Greek word that is translated interpretation is *hermeneia*, from which we get our word *hermeneutics*. This is the science of scriptural interpretation. *Hermeneutics* or *hermeneia* is the interpretation. Now this same Greek word *hermeneia*, in other places is translated translation. But it would seem that the gift is properly referred to as an interpretation. Now we realize that there is a difference between a translation and an interpretation. A translation is a word-for-word kind of a transferring from one language to the other.

Now I have had translators working with me who sought to be interpreters. I would make just a short remark and sometimes they would take a couple of minutes interpreting the remark that I made. So they were not just translating for me, they were interpreting for me. And I always wondered what they were saying or how they were interpreting what I said. And quite often I discovered that they were misinterpreting me because they did not understand what I was saying.

When I was in Korea several years ago, I had a fellow who was translating for me and I was speaking in a large Presbyterian church in Seoul. And I opened up with one of the best jokes I have. I wanted to just sort of warm the people up and let them know that I was human and had a sense of humor. And so, I came to the punchline and they all just sat there and looked sort of dumbfounded. And I thought, this is going to be tough. These people do not respond. And so after the service I got hold of some people and I said, "What do you think I said?" And the problem was the translator did not get the joke at all and he missed the punchline. I mean he just totally messed it up. And so from then on, I made a practice--if I was going to tell any jokes or whatever--to tell it to the translator first. If he laughed, then I would use the jokes. If he did not laugh then I would just shelve it.

But sometimes interpretation is going a little further. It is giving the meaning (the understanding) or sometimes a sort of an explanation. And I have heard sermons that I thought needed some kind of explanation too. That is why I do not think that the interpretation must exactly correspond to the utterance in tongues, in terms of length. There could be a short utterance in tongues and a rather prolonged interpretation as the explanation is being given, and sometimes vice versa.

There have been times working with a translator, when I would be talking and I would get sort of carried away and I would talk for maybe forty-five seconds. Then I would remember I had to have it translated, so I would stop. And then he would give a couple of words and then sort of nod to me to go on. I thought, He really condensed it!

Paul definitely states that in the exercise of the gift of speaking in tongues, a person is not speaking unto man--"Howbeit in the spirit, he is speaking unto God mysteries" (cf. 1Corinthians 14:2). Or as I think Weymouth says, "divine secrets." Now if, when a person speaks in tongues, he is not speaking unto man but speaking unto God, then it would naturally follow that the interpretation would not be addressed unto man but that the interpretation would be the interpreting of what was declared to God. Whether it be the prayer or the praise or the giving of thanks, it would be an interpretation addressed to God.

Now I have observed in Pentecostal circles, that quite often they will give an utterance in tongues and then the person who is supposedly giving the interpretation begins with: "Thus saith the Lord, 'My children if you will hearken to Me and lift your voices and praise Me, then I will bless you and I will pour out My Spirit upon you.'" And it is more or less exhortation to the church. That is not an interpretation of the utterance in tongues. They usually refer to it as a message in tongues, but that is totally unscriptural terminology. God does not speak to the church in tongues. He speaks to the church through prophecy, but not through the gift of tongues even with the interpretation.

Growing up in a Pentecostal church, quite often on Sunday morning the message would be interrupted by an utterance in tongues--two, three, four times. They called it a message in tongues and so as a child I thought that God was speaking to us in this. I thought it was a message from God in tongues with the interpretation. And I remember inviting my friend to go to church with me. His name was Ed Hanky. He was a big German kid and he later played defensive end for San Francisco Forty-niners. We were close friends. We went everywhere together after school. He had a foul mouth. But I was witnessing to him.

So he went to church with me this Sunday morning and this lady sitting in front of us started the heavy breathing and I knew that preceded an utterance in tongues. And I bowed my head and I started praying, "God, please do not speak to us in tongues today." I knew that Ed would never understand it. And I knew that there would be embarrassing questions afterwards that I did not have answers for. But I guess God did not hear my prayer.

But quite often in the Pentecostal circles there is a message in tongues and then the interpretation, which is God's message to the church. Now as I have sought to analyze this, I believe the people are sincere and they love the Lord. And I am certain that they have genuine experience with God and I do not discount that. But I think what I was observing and what you will commonly observe in the Pentecostal or charismatic circles when an utterance in tongues is given--rather than being followed by a genuine interpretation--it is followed by the gift of prophecy.

But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort. (1 Corinthians 14:3)

And if you will notice the content of the supposed interpretation --which I believe to be a prophecy--the content is generally edification, exhortation or comfort. And thus, I think that the people actually believe that they are experiencing the gifts of tongues with interpretation, when in reality it is tongues and prophecy. And what I believe takes place is that when the utterance in tongues is given, a person with the gift of prophecy is emboldened by the utterance in tongues to then stand up and give an utterance of

prophecy to the congregation.

I think that, as Paul said in Romans,

Whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith. (Romans 12:6)

So I think that the faith is more or less built through the utterance in tongues for the person to then give a prophetic utterance to the church.

Now Paul declares that if a person feels anointed to give an utterance in tongues--unless there is an interpreter present in the church--they should not then give the public utterance, but speak unto himself and speak unto God. This to me brings out a very important point, and one that again the Pentecostals seem to miss. So often among the Pentecostal circles there is that thought or idea that I have no control over the speaking in tongues and that somehow the Spirit takes over. I have lost control and the Spirit just--I try to speak in English but I am speaking in tongues.

I remember a lady who is a dear saint of God--and I am not really putting her down--I am just seeking to point out what I feel is sincerely erroneous. And I am not saying they do not love the Lord. I do not say that they are wrong or whatever. But I remember her giving her testimony of having received the gift of tongues and the next day when the gas meter reader came by to read the meter at her house, she went out to ask him about something and she started to speak to him in tongues. And he got frightened and went off. The thinking behind this was "I had no control over it."

But Paul definitely teaches that the spirit of the prophet is subject to the prophet. You do have control. You do not have to speak out. If there is no interpreter present, let him speak unto himself and unto God. You do not have to speak out.

Then also Paul in referring to the use of the gift in his own life, he said,

I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all: Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue. (1 Corinthians 14:18-19)

And then he says, "What shall I say then? When I pray in an unknown tongue my spirit prays though my understanding is unfruitful. What will I say? I will pray with the Spirit" (cf. 1 Corinthians 14:18-19). In other words, it is the exercise of will. I will pray with understanding also. I have control over it. It is not something that I do not have control of. The Spirit of God is subject unto the prophet.

A lot of times we like to blame Satan for things that I do not believe he is necessarily responsible for. Sometimes it is just our own stupidity. And I think that many times we have blamed the Lord or blamed the Holy Spirit for things that the Holy Spirit is not really responsible for. But we do not want to take responsibility for some foolish thing that we did, so that we then say, "Well the Holy Spirit prompted me or the Holy Spirit--I just could not help myself." No, I cannot buy that.

How does the gift of interpretation operate? Now the Bible says there are diversities of gifts and diversities of operations. So the gift of interpretation may operate in my life in one way. You may have the gift of interpretation and it operates in your life in another way because there are diversities of operations. I love it that God is diverse. He does not do things in a patterned way, so that we begin to pigeonhole God by saying, "This is the way He does things." I think He does things in diverse ways so that we will be open to

other ways by which God may choose to work in a given situation.

Notice the blind people that He healed. With one man, He spit in his eyes and said, "Can you see anything?" With spit in your eye things would be blurry. He said, "I see men walking like trees." And so Jesus laid His hands on him again and then man then saw clearly. But in Jerusalem He spit on the ground, made mud, put the mud in another man's eyes and said, "Now go down to the pool of Siloam and wash your eyes out." And when he did this, he was able to see.

In Mark 10, we have Bartimeus there in Jericho and Jesus just spoke to him and he was healed of his blindness. So you have three blind men who were all healed of their blindness, but not in the same way. Each one was healed in a little different fashion. There are diversities of operations.

So I can tell you how the gift operates in my life, but that does not mean this is the way it is going to operate in your life. I think that we make a real mistake in listening to people's testimonies when they are testifying of their particular experience and how they related physically or emotionally to this particular work of God in their lives. And we then think, "Oh well, that is the way it is going to be.

Finney said when he was baptized in the Holy Spirit he felt like there were just waves of liquid love coming over him and over him. So a person would think, "My, that is what you feel." And so they think, "Lord, I want the waves of liquid love. Just let the waves flow over me, Lord." Well, that was the way that he related to it but it is different with different people.

Someone might say, "I felt like someone was just pouring warm oil all over me from the head and it just went all over my body." And others might say, "I had this tingling sensation." And so, "Lord, let me tingle." But we are trying to emulate someone else's experience and it does not always work that way. There are diversities of operations.

And so, God is not patterned. And I wanted to preface the remarks on how the gift operates, because I can share with you how it operates in my life, but it is not necessarily the way it would or does operate in your life, if you have the gift of interpretation.

As a person is giving an utterance in tongues, it is as though I understand what they are saying. It is as though they were saying it in English. The thoughts, the praises, and the thanksgiving just come into my mind. And quite often they go on for a few minutes and I cannot always remember immediately. But I start off with the thoughts as they first came. And then they come back again. As I am speaking them, it just begins to flow and it is the interpretation of what was said.

Now I do not always get an interpretation every time I hear someone speaking in tongues. And I appreciate that fact because it helps me to realize that it is a gift from God and it is not just something that is there. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit.

There is an anointing of the Holy Spirit that a person can experience, especially as he is ministering the Word of God or teaching the Word of God. And you know when you have it and you sure know when you do not have it. And sometimes the teaching and the preaching of the Word can be the easiest and most exciting experience because it just flows. There is just a beautiful flow. There are other times where it is just a struggle. The thoughts are not coordinated. They are not coming together. You are stumbling. Even in your mental processes, it is just not flowing. And I really think you would be better off just to say, "Folks, come back next week," rather than trying to push your way through it, when it is not there.

Now if, when a person is giving an utterance in tongues or speaking in tongues and I do not receive an interpretation, it does not take away from the validity of their gift. It just means that God did not give an understanding or interpretation to me of what they said.

Now is there any manifestation of this gift in the Old Testament? I do think that a gift that is somewhat similar, but not exactly the same, would be the gift of interpreting of dreams. And there were those, such as Joseph and Daniel, whom God had gifted with the interpreting of dreams. With Joseph we remember his own dreams, but when he was in prison, the baker and the butler both had dreams that he interpreted. And his ability to interpret dreams ultimately brought him before the Pharaoh where he interpreted the dream of the Pharaoh and was then raised to a high position in Egypt.

And the same is true with Daniel having the gift of the interpretation of dreams. Now with Joseph, he attributed it to God. His capacity to interpret the Pharaoh's dream, he attributed to God. With Daniel, it was the reputation of Daniel that the Spirit of the Holy God dwelt within him and he could interpret dreams and solve mysteries. And he was noted for it in the palace. The queen mother spoke of him as the man in who dwelt the Spirit of the holy gods, or the Holy Spirit.

Now in that one occasion when Belshazzar was having his big feast with a thousand lords and he had the gold and silver vessels that his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem. And they began to drink the wine out of these sanctified vessels, praising gods of gold and silver, when suddenly upon the plaster of the wall there was a form of a hand that was writing strange words. "Mene mene tekel upharsin." He called in his wise men (his counselors) to interpret for him the meaning of the writing on the wall, which they were unable to do.

And that is when the queen mother said, "There is a man who, during your grandfather's reign, was a tremendous assist to him in that he could interpret dreams and solve riddles. You ought to call him in." So Daniel was brought in and he interpreted for him the writing on the wall. However, that would not parallel the gift in the New Testament, in that this was a message of God to the king. And it was definitely God's message to the king in that instance.

Now when you come to the New Testament it is interesting that, to my knowledge, we do not have any recorded cases in the New Testament of the exercise of this gift of interpretation. All we have is teaching on the subject by Paul in 1 Corinthians and that is very limited. But that is all we have concerning this particular gift of interpretation. We do not have any actual incidents where the combined gifts were used with the interpretation. So that really leaves us without much to go on.

In G. Campbell Morgan's commentary on the Book of Acts, he suggests that on the Day of Pentecost, when they all began to speak with tongues, the people from the various linguistic groups heard them speaking in their own languages or dialects. This was the wonderful work of God and G. Campbell Morgan believes that the miracle was in the fact that they heard in their languages. He implies that he believes that they were all probably just speaking Greek but the miracle was in the hearing. They all heard in their own languages in which they were born, as they declared the marvelous works of God. I do not know where G. Campbell got that, but it is an interesting concept. I do not agree with it, but I just thought I would share with you so you would know that there is another thought on this.

Back in 1968 or 1969, somewhere in there--we had moved from the little church that we had started in Costa Mesa. We were sharing the facility of the Lutheran church in Newport Beach there on Cliff Drive. They had their morning service and then we rented the facility and had our services in the afternoon. We

were waiting for them to vacate the premises, so that we could then take over that facility completely. As it worked out, we outgrew the facility before we had a chance to take it over and then we built our church over on the next corner.

But on Sunday evening we were meeting in the clubhouse in East Bluff. I cannot remember if it was '68 or '69, but we were meeting on Pentecost Sunday. And at that time there was probably 45 to 50 of us on Sunday evenings. And we were able to have a much more informal Bible study. I just sat with them and we just shared the Scriptures. We were going through the Bible, even then, but it was in a very informal way. And at the end of the study, because there was just a very small group of us, I said, "You know this is Pentecost Sunday, the Sunday that we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the church."

And we had a lady in our fellowship whose name was Lynn, who had a remarkable gift of tongues. Whenever she spoke in tongues, she spoke in French. And so, I said, "You know, let us just worship the Lord. And Lynn, just exercise your gift that God has given to you of speaking in tongues because it is just us here and it is Pentecost Sunday. We will have sort of a memorial since this is Pentecost Sunday."

So Lynn began to speak in tongues (speaking in French), and I can understand enough of French that I knew that she was giving thanks to God for a beautiful song. Now because I could intellectually understand some of the French words, I did not make any endeavor to exercise my gift of interpretation. I was afraid of trying to interpret when, naturally, I knew some of the words. I had sort of the gist of what she was saying naturally, and I was afraid of some kind of a natural or supernatural hang-up. I might get out into nah-nah land and not come back between the two. So I did not make any endeavor to interpret.

However, my wife began to interpret. And it was very beautiful as she was thanking God for the beautiful new song that He had put in her heart, which was her love song to Him. And she spoke of the joy and the blessing of singing of her love for Him. Of course it was rather significant because she had been singing in nightclubs and did have a beautiful voice. And so it was quite significant that she was rejoicing in a new song that God had given to her, a song of praise and love unto Him.

We closed the meeting and we had a fellow who was going with this girl in Palm Springs and she was having some problems and he brought her down that night so that I could counsel with her after the service. So as we sat down to counsel, she said, "Before we start talking about the things that I need to talk to you about," she said, "I am curious as to what was going on here tonight at the end. The woman who spoke to the group in French and the other woman who translated for the group." And I said, "Would you believe that neither of those women know French?" She said, "No, I would not." And I said, "Well, it is true." I said, "Neither of them know French."

And I took her to the Scriptures and I showed her the gift of speaking in tongues and the gift of interpretation. And I said, "What you saw was what Paul is talking about here in Corinthians, where one speaks in an unknown tongue and another interprets." She said, "Well I lived for five years in Paris." She said, "She was speaking the most beautiful French." She said, "She was using an aristocratic pronunciation." She said, "It was not just the common French. She had an aristocratic pronunciation." I said, "Well, what would you expect from the Lord." And she said, "The other lady translated it perfectly." I said, "Well, I know that she does not know French. That is my wife!" She said, "Well, before we go any further, I have to receive the Lord." And so we had the joy of leading her to the Lord as the result of that experience of seeing the genuine exercise of the gift. And here is one of those cases where tongues did become a sign to an unbeliever, as she saw the gift of tongues and the interpretation.

It used to be that I spent my vacations in Williams, Arizona, conducting youth camps. That was the only way I could afford a vacation because they would give us our lodging and our food. And so, we would go over and I would conduct these camps in Arizona and it gave the family a great opportunity to be up there in the beautiful mountains of Arizona, around Williams. We would go over to the Grand Canyon. So every summer I would take my vacation conducting and directing their youth camps there.

And we were getting ready to go over because it was summertime and I was going to take my two week vacation over there. And so, this particular year our daughter Jan, who had five years of French (she took French at UCI) and is quite fluent in French. She was going to be a girls' counselor at that camp. And so, it was after Sunday night and of course that was before we even moved out of the little church, so we had even less people that night. There were maybe 30 or 40 of us six months or so after we had started Calvary Chapel. So our family went down and the church gathered around us; laid hands on us and prayed for us; that God would be with us; that God would use us and bless us in the ministry to these young people in Arizona. And Lynn happened to lay her hands on Jan and began to pray in the Spirit for her.

Now of course the interesting thing was that Jan could understand it because she was praying in French. And she was praying that God would help Jan to be a very beautiful witness to these young girls. She was praying that God's love would just pour forth from Jan and would make her a great blessing. And that the impressions that these girls received would be lifelong impressions as a result of her ministry to them.

And as she was going on praying for Jan, Jan said, "Dad I just felt, just sort of trembling all over, because I realized that this is what the Holy Spirit was praying for me." As Paul said, "The Spirit makes intercession according to the will of God" (Romans 8:27). And she realized that Lynn did not really know what she was praying because she was praying in an unknown tongue to her. Yet to Jan, she understood it and said, "What a thrill to realize this is what the Holy Spirit was praying for me--interceding for me." And she said, "Oh, it just was so glorious to know that this is the Lord's desire and prayer for me."

So there has been a lot of abuse in the use of these gifts and that is actually why Paul was writing to the Corinthians. For the most part, his Corinthian Epistle was a corrective epistle. They had all kinds of problems in the church in Corinth. They had problems with factions that had developed. They had problems with immorality in the church that they were tolerating. They were feeling some kind of a spiritual superiority in that they could tolerate the evil within the church. They had problems with the Lord's Supper and the manner in which they were partaking of the Lord's Supper. And then they had problems with the exercise of the gifts of the Spirit. And finally they had problems with their understanding of the resurrection. It was really a problem church.

However, if they did not have these problems we would not have any instruction on the subject. So it is probably good that they had the problems, because it brought to us a lot of clarification and instruction on some of these important subjects, as Paul dealt with them in his letter to the Corinthians. But it is sad that these problems do continue even to the present time. There are so many abuses of the gifts of the Spirit, that the work of the Spirit is oftentimes held in ill-repute because of the abuse of the gifts. And as the result, many sincere Christians have neglected the gifts of the Spirit or denied the gifts of the Spirit because all they have observed is the abuse and they have not observed the genuine exercise of the gifts.

I think that it is a mistake to just close the door completely. I think that what we need to do is to be open to the exercise of the gifts of the Spirit, using the guidelines that are in the Bible for their exercise. We are to

be regulated by the rules that are laid down in the Bible, so that things are done decently and in order and the exercise of the gifts does not create confusion. God is not the author of confusion. But let us not just throw out the baby with the bath-water because the bath-water is dirty. Let us throw out the dirty bath water and let us keep the baby.

Shall we pray?

Father, our hearts long for the genuine manifestation of Your Holy Spirit in our lives--the lives of believers. And Lord, we desire to be open to You, so that You might be able, Lord, to do those things You desire to do within Your church. Lord, we thank You for the gift of the Holy Spirit. We thank You for the dynamic that it brings to our Christian experience. And so, Lord, tonight again we want to offer to You our bodies, yielding them to You as instruments of righteousness, that You might fill us with Your Spirit, that You might guide us by Your Spirit, so that we will be led by the Spirit. And Lord, we desire to walk in the Spirit. And even as the Corinthians church did not come behind in any spiritual gift, so Lord, we would pray that we also would not come behind in any spiritual gift. That You will be able to do all that You want to do within Your body, the church. No closed doors. No restrictions, Lord, but open to You. But in the same token, Father, we pray that You will help us to put the guard against any fanaticism or any spurious manifestations that are not from You. Give to us as You did in the church of Ephesus, the capacity of discerning, Lord, when a person comes in and declares they are a prophet and he is not. Lord, give us that discernment and guard us and guide us in the things of the Spirit. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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