

Tongues – The Sign or A Gift

By Paris Reidhead*

It will be profitable for each one who reads this article to realize that this is the second in a series of messages dealing with the “charismatic revival” occurring at the present time. In the earlier article the position of The Christian and Missionary Alliance was made clear. The Alliance has faithfully declared through nearly eight decades that there is for every believer, subsequent to regeneration, a crisis experience of being filled with the Spirit. Likewise, it has been accepted as a valid right of the Lord Jesus Christ to give to whomsoever He wills whatever gift He wishes, including the gift of tongues.

What we are considering is the question whether tongues is to be viewed as a gift or as the sign of the baptism of the Spirit. Those who teach that tongues is the sign of “the baptism of the Spirit” insist that every Christian filled with the Spirit will speak in tongues.

The position I am presenting and shall endeavor to prove is that the experience of speaking in other tongues is a gift of the Spirit of God and never was intended to be viewed as the sign, or proof, or the demonstration, or even the certification that one is baptized with the Spirit.

First, let us remember that the doctrine of tongues as the sign of the baptism of the Spirit is a very new teaching. Never in the history of the church was tongues set forth as the proof, or the sign, or the evidence of the baptism of the Spirit until Charles F. Parham and William J. Seymour invented this idea, established it as a doctrine, and communicated it following the great visitation of God at the turn of the 20th century. Those who embraced this novel teaching made it a test of fellowship.

I shall present to you several reasons from the Word of God why I consider speaking in tongues to be a gift of the Spirit of God and that it was never intended to be viewed as the sign of the baptism of the Spirit nor expected that all Christians will have this experience, or even should seek it.

The first thing to consider is that our Lord Jesus Christ did not speak in tongues. There is no evidence, from anything stated in prophecy or spoken about Him or by our Lord Jesus directly, that He had this gift. We are certain that He had all that the Father intended to be His; but we are equally certain that it was not in the will and plan of the Father for Him to have the gift of tongues, otherwise it would have been prophesied and He should have been given this gift. He presented His body to the Father as a living sacrifice at Jordan, and in Luke 3:22 we are told that the Spirit of God came upon Him: “And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, ‘Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.’ ” In the fourth chapter (verses 18, 19), He relates what transpired as the result of the Spirit of God coming upon Him. It is quite wonderful, therefore, to see what He says: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.” It is my conviction that had it been in the mind and will of the Father that every Christian was to expect to speak with tongues as the sign of his being filled with the Spirit, then our Lord would have spoken with tongues in order that we might have authority for this position.

The second reason I believe that tongues is a gift, not the sign, is found in Joel 2:28-32. You find this quoted by Peter in Acts 2:16 - 21:

“But this it that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; they shall prophesy: And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

In this passage God has explicitly stated what would be the consequence of the Spirit of God being poured out upon His people. In Acts 4:31 you see that Peter's quotation from Joel is literally fulfilled:

“And when they had prayer, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.”

The believers had been threatened and told to stop preaching; so they and gone to the Lord and had asked that they might with all boldness speak His Word. This speaking with boldness, with authority, with love and with effect was the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy. It was the consequence of their being filled with the Spirit. This is exactly what had taken place on the day of Pentecost:

“And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance... Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confound, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. ...we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?” (Acts 2:4, 6, 11, 12)

The first effect of the coming of the Holy Spirit then was that with boldness they spoke the wonderful works of God in the language of all the people. This was a supernatural gift indeed. The believers were given gifts of preaching and teaching exactly as Joel had said.

Thirdly, it is explicitly stated in the Word of God that speaking in tongues is a gift. This satisfies me; I trust it will satisfy you. Tongues are a gift given by the Spirit of God to whom He will, and not the sign to accompany the initial filling of the Spirit. I repeat that on the basis of the Scriptures concerning the matter it is not to be expected that all will speak with tongues nor that all are even to be encouraged to do so but that tongues is gift given by the Spirit of God to whom He will.

The Word of God clearly teaches that speaking tongues is never a sign to believers. This is clearly set forth in I Corinthians 14:22:

“Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not:...”

The fact is that speaking in tongues is for a sign – to unbelievers, not to believers, however. Dr. T. Z. McCrossan, in his book, Christ's Paralyzed Church X-Rayed¹, relates that in Seattle, Washington, there was a meeting to which nine Filipino sailors, who had been invited on the street, had come. In the course of the evening, when opportunity was given for sharing, a lady arose and gave a message in tongues. This was followed immediately by an interpretation, at the conclusion of which these nine young men rushed to the altar and threw themselves down. They were from a remote island in the Philippines, and this lady who had spoken in tongues had fluently spoken their language, had almost, identified them, and had pressed them to come to Christ. Then the translation had been expertly given. The sailors knew that there was no reason to suppose that anyone in the meeting could have been acquainted with their language. At the time Dr. McCrossan wrote of the incident, all the sailors were going on with the Lord, and two of them had become preachers. Speaking in tongues was a sign, certainly; but it was a sign to the unbelievers. There is nothing to indicate that tongues are, in any sense, a sign to a believer, a Christian.

Again, the Word clearly states that not all will, nor should all expect to, speak in tongues. In I Corinthians 12:28 - 30 we have a very clear statement of this fact:

“And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. 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 T. J. McCrossan, B.A., B.D., Christ's Paralyzed Church X-rayed, Clement Humbard, 1937, p. 186

Each of this series of questions begins with the little Greek particle μη. If affirmative answers had been expected, these questions would have begun with the particle Ου. However, the laws of Greek grammar here demand a negative response. Are all apostles? μη, or “No.” Are all prophets? No. Are all teachers? No. Are all workers of miracles? No. Have all the gifts of healing? No. Do all speak with tongue? No. It is no more reasonable to suppose that all will speak with tongues than it is to suppose that all will work miracles, or that all will have gifts of healing, or that all will have any of the other gifts. To say that all will speak in tongues, or that all can expect to speak in tongues, is to brand Paul false teacher; and no one who accepts the Bible as the rule of faith and life would wish to do that.

Fifthly, it is the sovereign prerogative of God to give gifts as He will. I refer you to I Corinthians 12:7 - 11:

“But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.”

In the eleventh verse of this chapter, we find that He gives to man not as the man wills, but as He wills. To press this mean “as the man wills” does violence to the whole tenor and intent of the passage. God gives one gift to one and another gift to another.

Since many hold the position that there is a distinction between the gift of tongues and the sign of tongues and since this position is honestly held, it deserves full inquiry into the Word of God. Almost invariably, someone of this persuasion will say, “I was baptized with the Holy Ghost according to Acts 2:4.” This is a key Scripture, and it belongs to all believers, not just to one group. Notice what it says:

“And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

It is argued that this was the sign and not a gift, that it occurred once and was not repeated. If this contention could be sustained through the Word of God, then obviously the point of view I am defending would be wrong and would have to be abandoned. After all, the Word is the rule.

Dr. McCrossan² has carefully observed the fact that those who developed the idea that speaking in tongues is a sign as distinct from a gift must not have understood the laws of Greek grammar; for if they had, they would have clearly seen that this could not be viewed as an event that happened and was not repeated. The Greek is a very exact language. If this had been a unique occurrence and not repeated, it would have been expressed in the aorist, or with an adverbial modifier to make it sufficiently clear. The aorist tense implies that what happened was completed and was not repeated again. In contrast to the aorist tense is the imperfect which has the meaning of repetition, or continuance.

Notice Acts 2:4. “And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” The imperfect tense is used here. As He gave and as He continued to give, they continued to speak; for He did continue to give. Now, to imply that He gave once - there, then and not again - is to disregard completely the laws of Greek grammar and to establish a translation which would, be in violence of those laws. He gave, and He gave again and He continued to give. The impression that it was something that was done once and was finished could only be arrived at by a complete wresting of the text out of the tense in which it is given to us the Lord. Right here, at this very point, the distinction between sign and gift is destroyed; for He gave and kept on giving. It was not that He gave once and ceased; He gave and continued giving. Thus, according to Acts 2:4, speaking in tongues became a repeated and usual practice; if you please, it became a habit for them.

² Ibid., p.189-191

Now I want to support this. I am not a Greek grammarian, by any means but I am uninhibited about going to where I can get the help I need in the many things I do not know. Goodell³ was a Greek grammarian and he had the courage to write a grammar. This is what he said: "The imperfect presents the action either as continuing or as being repeated again and again in the past." This is just what I have been pointing out. Kuhner⁴ also wrote a Greek Grammar in which he states, "The imperfect describes an action in its continuance and progress, not merely a single act, but a series of acts."

Since the Holy Spirit used the imperfect tense in Acts 2:4, He must have wanted us to understand, that what happened was to be a continued practice and not just an event. Thus, the idea that the sign is distinct from the gift just is not sustained by Scripture.

In Acts 4:31b is to be found the same use of the imperfect: "... and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness." They spoke and spoke, and spoke and kept on speaking. To these people God had given the gift of preaching, and teaching, which gifts they faithfully used.

The same rule is in operation in Acts 10:44 - 46 in the account of the Spirit of God visiting the home of Cornelius:

"While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God."

Here again the word is in the imperfect. They heard them speak, and keep on speaking and continue to speak until it became a habit of speaking. It was not something that was finished at the moment, but, rather, was continued.

It surely seems clear that the teaching that there is a distinction between sign and gift is not borne out in the Word of God at all. Rather, it is an indefensible point of view which must be regarded as false. Obviously it is unbiblical and unwise to tell earnest Christians who are seeking the Lord that they should expect to receive the gift of tongues. God has flatly said that speaking in tongues is not a sign to the believer, but to the unbeliever. Nor should Christians be told that it is the privilege of every believer to have this one gift, or any particular gift, when the Word clearly states that He divides to every man severally as He will.

In Acts 11:15-17, Peter is giving an account of what had happened shortly before in the home of Cornelius:

"And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?"

Those who believe that speaking in tongues is the sign as distinct from a gift usually say that "the like gift" has reference to the Holy Spirit. Does it? I believe it does not refer to the Holy Spirit, but to the gift of tongues. The first word in this phrase of three words is the accusative, singular, feminine article, which is in the Greek την. The second word is ισον, which is again the accusative, singular, feminine of an adjective which means "the very same, equal in every respect." Literally, what Peter said was, "Forasmuch then as God gave them the very same gift, or the gift equal in every respect to that given to us..." "The Holy Ghost fell on them," he said (verse 15). Then (in verse 17) "God gave them the like gift." It would have been redundant to have repeated what he had already stated. He is saying that in every respect, similarly as it had been with them, so it was upon these, that the Spirit of God fell, and they spoke with other tongues as had they, in every respect and similarly as the disciples had. Peter himself thus calls that which was received at Pentecost a gift, "a gift similar to the gift we received," and not the sign.

3 Thomas Dwight Goodell, A school grammar of Attic Greek, D. Appleton and Company, 1903, p. 171

4 Raphael Kühner, Grammar of the Greek language: for the use of high schools and colleges, 1879, p. 348

In Acts 19:6 the imperfect tense is again used: "...the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied." Here, also, the word "spake" means "spoke and kept on speaking." They did not speak just once as a sign. It was a continued matter. So it is that they prophesied and kept on prophesying, because the word "prophesied" is in the imperfect tense also. It was not something that was done at a point and then left. Here two gifts are given. Some spoke in tongues; some prophesied. They spoke and they continued to speak. They prophesied, and they continued to preach and to teach. Thus, again it is clearly declared that the gift of tongues is a gift given by the Spirit to whom He will, and is not to be viewed as the sign. The Scriptural record of the people who were filled with the Holy Spirit does not sustain the teaching that tongues are to be viewed as the sign and therefore sought or expected. It is a gift, given by the Spirit of God to whom He will.

It will be profitable to view briefly the Scriptures which we have previously considered in order to summarize what we have seen. In Acts 2:4 we have seen that the believers spoke in tongues, but there was no laying on of hands. The Spirit of God was poured forth as they were waiting before the Lord in worship and in prayer. Again, they were all filled with the Holy Ghost (Acts 4) and there is no record of anyone at that time speaking in tongues. Now, let us view a further reference in this study. It is Acts 8:14-17:

"Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost."

There is no record at all here that they spoke in tongues. However, one still encounters enthusiastic supporters of an indefensible position who declare something like this: "Yes, but when Simon saw that through the laying on of hands..." One cannot see words spoken; he must hear them. Simon saw something. It would be just as reasonable to suppose that the people upon whom the apostles laid hands turned green, or polka dot, as to believe from this Scripture that they spoke in tongues. Simon became convinced by what took place that this was the manner by which the people were filled with the Spirit, so he said, "Sell me this power." This much the Scripture declares, but it does not speak of tongues. There is a law of argument which declares that silence proves nothing. One can prove both sides equally well from silence. There is no record in verse 17 that anyone spoke in tongues. Therefore, to suggest that they did is simply to pass beyond the Word. In Acts 9: 17, 18, it is recorded:

"And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized."

Ananias put his hands upon Paul, indeed, and he was filled with the Holy Spirit, and received his sight; but there is no record whatever that he spoke in tongues. Truly, later on he said, "I speak in tongues more than ye all" (I Cor. 14:18): but there is no record here to prove that this gift commenced at this time. It would be an inference not supported by the text. The Spirit of God did not want us to assume it. Had He wanted it to be held that Paul spoke in tongues at this time, He would have stated it.

In Acts 10:44 - 46, to which we have referred previously, Peter was preaching, the Spirit of God fell upon Cornelius and those gathered with him, and they did speak in tongues; but there was no laying on of hands. The only two instances on record thus far where all involved spoke in tongues were when the Spirit of God sovereignly fell without any laying on of hands.

In Acts 19:6 we read of an incident in Ephesus when there was the laying on of hands and when those upon whom the Holy Ghost came spoke with tongues:

"And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied."

They spoke with tongues and continued to speak. They prophesied and continued to teach and to preach.

The conclusion one will draw from these Scriptures is as follows: Uniformly, the initial crisis of the Spirit's fullness is vitally real. I have quoted so many times the statement of Dr. A. W. Tozer in which he sets forth three rules regarding the Spirit-filled life: "Everyone filled with the Spirit knows it; everyone filled with the Spirit knows when he was filled; and everyone filled with the Spirit was filled instantly." The Scriptures we have studied further teach that God is not limited to man's ministry in filling with His Spirit, even though He often uses men.

Charles Finney⁵ declares that the day after he was converted he was seated alone in his little law office in front of the fireplace, with the Word before him and his face turned back in adoration and love of his new-found Lord, when the Spirit of God came upon him. He states that for the space of forty-five minutes to an hour, he was inundated by the Spirit presence. Finney's ministry thereafter was the ministry of preaching with the great anointing. He received a great gift and a great empowering.

Pastor Hsi⁶ of China is reported to have received a mighty anointing from the Lord. The Spirit of God covered him filling him with the fullness of God. From that day he found that he had from the Lord a new discernment of the presence of evil spirits at work in the lives of people and an authority by which they could be cast out. His ministry from that time on was the discerning of spirits, and the exorcising of spirits, so that he signed his name Pastor Hsi, Master of Demons.

Surely the history of the events of all ages makes it clear that God meets people when they are alone with Him as well as with others are praying for them. The preponderance of instances in the New Testament show the experience of believers being filled with the Holy Spirit to be a church matter, as in the case of Paul in the church at Samaria and in the church at Ephesus. Undoubtedly the church has much to learn about this, and there is much that the Lord wants to teach His church right here.

It is clear that these Scriptures teach that when filled with the Holy Spirit, some will receive the gift of tongues along with other gifts which the Spirit of God wishes to impart. In such a case, let that one not think himself spiritually superior, nor let him in any wise look down upon another, at least until his ministry surpasses that of Charles Finney, Pastor Hsi, or many others who could be named. All the gifts of God are blessed gifts, clean gifts and needed gifts and are to be received with thanksgiving. None of the gifts is to be despised, and no one gift is to have a premium put on it to the point that it outweighs the others. Paul said that the gift of prophecy was more to be desired than the gift of speaking in tongues (I Cor. 14:5). It is fact that many of God's greatest servants and most devout saints throughout the centuries did not speak in tongues.

It is necessary to consider some of the effects of the teaching that speaking in tongues is the sign of the fullness of the Spirit, and to be sought by all.

First, a good result would be that such a climate may be the instrument of helping some who have not been given adequate instruction, or encouragement, or insight, or fellowship to come into a vital experience with the Lord. This must be recognized as indication that this is, as in the case of Peter and John at Antioch, a matter of concern to the entire church. Such an emphasis as we have disclaimed may serve, for those who have had proper teaching and background, as a means of their entering into real experience of the fullness of Christ.

However, there are negative results which must also be considered. Where it is generally taught that tongues are the sign of the baptism of the Spirit, even though the weight of evidence is not sufficient to sustain this novel teaching, it has an undermining effect upon the authority of the Word of God. Too frequently there is a tendency to minimize repentance, regeneration and the recognition of the Lordship of Christ. Because of the attention attached to a second experience, there is produced an "easy believism" in respect to salvation.

The exalting of one gift above all the others tends to make such a gift a panacea for all ills and needs. As a case in point, I would mention the following: Just recently one related how that pastoral advice suggested that the gift of tongues would be the relief

⁵ Charles G. Finney, Memoirs of Charles G. Finney, 1876, p. 20

⁶ Mrs. Howard Taylor, In The Far East, The Story of The China Inland Mission, One of China's Scholars, R. & R., Clark, Limited., 1903

of psychological frustration and pressure, completely pushing this gift past all that God intended it to be. This is wrong. It is just as wrong to exaggerate the place, importance or use of a truth as it is to reject and, deny that truth.

Often where the teaching has been that speaking in tongues is the only sign of the fullness of the Spirit, it proves divisive for it produces two groups, the “haves” and the “have nots.” Thus, one phenomena, one experience, regardless of whether any of the criteria of maturity are evident, create a group of “haves” and isolates them from the “have nots.” This is divisive! This schism has been tragically real involving husbands and wives, families, friends, and even members of churches. Whereas, if one accepts the teaching of the Word that this experience is a gift and views it in its Biblical perspective, it is not distorted, it does not divide and it does not create schism.

When it is remembered that this doctrine is new in the church, not yet 75 years of age; that it never has been known in the past; that, by its very teaching it excludes the greatest of God’s servants and saints through the centuries; and that it cannot be sustained by the Word of God, it is realized that to divide the body of Christ as this teaching has done is serious indeed. This is especially true in the light of I John 1:3 where John wrote, “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” John mentions nothing of the Spirit, for it is only by the Spirit’s, gracious presence and work that we have fellowship with the Father and with the Son, Jesus Christ. Frequently, however, when tongues as the sign of the Spirit’s fullness is rejected as a doctrine, it is countenanced in practice. There are those who will say, “Yes, we quite agree with you. Tongues is not the only sign,” but they proceed in their ministry as though it were the only sign. With lips they serve the fact of Scripture; in practice they follow a fallacy which they have denied. This is not only troublesome but dangerous; for when ones beyond the clear Word of God and exceeds its authority at one place, the tendency always is to do it elsewhere.

It was stated by an observer present in a meeting in Western Canada that the leader said, “God told me that it would be all right in this service for everyone to speak in tongues at once.” If God tells His people to violate His Word in one place, why should it not be violated in other portions? Since the leader had gone beyond the authority of the Word with the concept that speaking in tongues is the evidence of the Spirit’s fullness, it was not difficult for him to go beyond the authority of the Word in some other direction. Going past the Word in any area is as water running from a dyke; it will soon escape elsewhere.

I have recently heard of one pastor who had been applying I Corinthians 12, and especially chapter 14, to public service. This pastor, contrary to the Word, which says, “...forbid not to speak with tongues,” forbade his people to speak in tongues in the public service. However, he told them that I Corinthians 12 and 14 did not apply to private meetings in homes; there anything would be acceptable. Such a statement implies either ignorance of church history or willful disregard of it; for at the time Paul wrote there was no building for public service. A rented room, a hired house, or a private home was the place of meeting. The church in the New Testament was three slaves in a corner with their heads bowed worshiping the Lord. Such an idea of public and private worship as expressed by the pastor to whom I am referring is contrary to the Word of God. In the early church, all church meetings were private meetings to which I Corinthians 12 and 14 surely did apply.

The teaching that tongues is the sign of the Spirit’s fullness to be sought and expected by all results in some instances in spurious experience. A friend of mine who was associated for a time with the ministry, to which I have referred, left it because of the negative results. He stated that the reason he left the group was that he discovered that over fifty per cent of the people who had thought they had the gift of tongues because they had been instructed in a formula and had been told they had spoken in tongues, denied it within few months and were in a worse bondage than they were before. His statement was to the effect that there is the genuine, but that so much that is purported to be genuine does not have the Biblical evidence of genuineness.

Most distressing is the fact that so many times enthusiasts for tongues have woefully little insight into, or emphasis upon, the nature whose voice fills the universe can speak loudly enough in the heart so that you can know. How do you know anything? “For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?” (I Cor. 2:11) The part of man that is filled with the Spirit of God is his spirit. You know because you know you know. Self-evidencing is the presence of the Living God.

You know immediately; for the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man. In what manner? To be filled with the Spirit of God is to be released to praise Him in a measure you have not known before. A new understanding of His Word will be granted as well as well as new heart of submission to His Word to deal with that which He reveals through it to you. There will be a new freedom and a new liberty in prayer. Above all, there will be a new measure of the fruit of the Spirit.

I Corinthians 13, coming between chapters 12 and 14, makes it clear that God does have a more excellent way. This way is to be filled with the fullness of God, the self-certifying presence of the Spirit of God who produces in one's life the fruit of the Spirit.

“I may speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but if I have no love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal; I may prophesy, fathom all mysteries and secret lore, I may have such absolute faith that I can move hills from there place, but if I have no love, I count for nothing; I may give up my body to be burnt, but if I have no love, I make nothing of it.”
(I Corinthians 13:1-3, Moffatt)

As important as the gifts of the Spirit are – and we shall not minimize them for a moment – they are never to be equated with the fruit of the Spirit wherein alone the Father is glorified. In John 15:8a, our Lord declares, “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.” It is, however, not a matter of either gifts or fruit, but rather of both gifts and fruit. The gifts of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit are both clearly taught in the Word of God.

Surely God is looking for a people to whom all His Word is as important as any of His Word. His people will certainly want the Word of God, that which has to do with gifts as well as that which has to do with graces and that which has to do with responsibility as well as that which has to do with privilege. Let our prayer be: “I want the Word. I want all the Word, nothing more, however, nothing less, and nothing else.” There is safety, certainty and enjoyment in staying in the Word of God with open hearts and open minds accepting the Word to be the rule of our lives.

Let us not take any teaching, no matter how popular it may be and how strongly supported it may be, until it is tested by His Word. Let us discerningly move in the Word of God and stay on that central ground which He has ordained as the ground of blessing, the whole of His truth.

* Reference such as: Witten Article for the “Alliance Witness” Magazine, New York City April 17, 1963 by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.