



SESSION 3: Supernatural Lifestyle 1

Within days of being baptised in the Holy Spirit thousands of people in Jerusalem were being converted and added to the church. The experience of being filled with the Spirit transformed lives and communities.

The baptism in the Holy Spirit in Acts

- After his resurrection, Jesus told his followers to wait for the power of the Spirit (Acts 1:4-5)
- The Holy Spirit would give them power to be witnesses for Jesus everywhere (Acts 1:8)
- The early Christians were first baptised in the Spirit at Pentecost, when they first spoke in tongues (Acts 2)
- Peter promised the same experience to all who would repent and follow Jesus, and that day 3,000 people were converted to Christ (Acts 2:38-39)
- There are at least 5 occasions in Acts when people were baptised in the Holy Spirit

After being baptised in the Spirit the believers were filled with boldness and spread out in obedience to the orders Jesus had given them. Within a few weeks loads of people were getting saved and being added to the church. Then, within just a few short years new churches were being formed throughout the then known world, and we learn from some of the letters in the New Testament, that the people who formed those newly planted fellowships were living 'supernatural lives'.

Read 1 Corinthians chapter 12 verses 8-11

In these verses the apostle Paul gives us a glimpse into what supernatural living might look like for those who have been filled with the Holy Spirit. Three of these spiritual gifts or special abilities relate to spoken communication – communicating with God, hearing from God, and sharing what we hear with other people. The gifts of tongues and prophecy, sometimes accompanied by the gift of interpretation of tongues, are all

involved in this idea of talking to God, hearing from Him, and responding to what we feel He is saying.

The gift of tongues

- Why do you think that God chose the gift of tongues as part of the launch of the Christian church and its life down the centuries even right up until today?

Away of worship: Acts 2:11 *'...we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!'*

Many who speak in tongues find that it really enriches their worshipping experience as they allow the Spirit to adore the Lord through them, sometimes in speech but also in singing. The Apostle Paul said that he used to sing in the Spirit a lot! (1 Corinthians 14:15).

A powerful prayer tool

1 Corinthians 14:2 Paul says that when speaking in tongues people were speaking to God and uttering mysteries in the Spirit. The apostle also explains that praying in tongues bypasses our understanding with all its questions and fears. Read Romans 8:26 where Paul explains this a little further. So, praying in the Spirit is something that works when facing needs beyond our understanding, even transcending the language barrier!

A way of building up our spiritual life. 1 Corinthians 14:4 *'So a person "speaking in tongues" helps himself grow spiritually.'*

Well-known pastor and writer R. T. Kendall tells in his book 'In Pursuit of His Glory'¹ that once, when he was passing through a really tough period in his life and ministry, he felt that God was calling him to stir up the gift of tongues he had received many years before and so he started praying in tongues privately again. This is how he describes what happened as a result.

'Things did not dramatically improve overnight, but I was soon to witness the sweetest sense of God I had known [for many years]. The joy was indescribable. I have been speaking in tongues ever since. It began with my making an effort; it led to effortless peace and joy. I have never looked back'. **R. T. KENDALL**

The gift of interpretation of tongues

In some churches there will also be an occasional message in tongues, either in the main services or perhaps in a small group, and in these circumstances, as Paul teaches in first Corinthians 14, there will need to be an interpretation so that everybody present can profit or be encouraged by what they hear. This means sharing the burden of what the Holy Spirit is saying through the person speaking in tongues rather than translating it word for word. Like with the gift of prophecy, which we will consider next time, tongues

¹ R T Kendall, *In Pursuit of His Glory* (Hodder & Stoughton, London, 2002) 153-154

with its accompanying gift of interpretation, is a special way of groups of believers building each other up and sensing the presence of God through His Spirit.

Hearing from God – The gift of prophecy

Read: 1 Corinthians 14:3 ‘*..the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort.*’

Prophecy in the New Testament seems to fulfil a slightly different function to the one that it did in the Old Testament, where much prophecy was focussed on foretelling the future, or declaring the judgement of God. In the Early Church it seems that prophecy had become a way of hearing God speak in ways that help and build others up – maybe forthtelling rather than foretelling.

We can hear from God when Spirit-filled men and women teach and preach from God’s Word, but it can add such a sense of the presence of God when others prophesy and share words and pictures they are receiving from the Spirit too. Paul encouraged this use of the Holy Spirit’s gift of prophecy so that ‘everyone may be instructed and encouraged’.

For discussion

- Why do you think God chose the gift of tongues as a sign of the fulness of the Holy Spirit?
- What does the gift of tongues mean to you?
- What are three main goals of the gift of prophecy given by Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:3?
- In what ways does the New Testament gift of prophecy seem to differ from its use in the Old Testament?
- How should we respond if a ‘word’ is given, or prophecy shared that seems to contradict the clear teaching of Scripture?
- Read: 1 Corinthians 14:31 – does it seem to you that Paul is encouraging the use of the gift of prophecy here? If so, with what purposes and/or restrictions?