

Sign Gifts

12-92

Doctrinal Conviction of Pastor-Teacher Paul B. Phair and Elder Team Policy

The Holy Spirit has given at least one spiritual gift to every believer as He wills for the common good of the church (1 Cor. 12:7, 11). While the Holy Spirit is still giving most of these gifts today, the "sign gifts" usually are not; rather He designed them to be temporary. Miracles are not the divine order of this present age, but God may sovereignly choose to perform one at any time He chooses. In both the Old and New Testaments, miracles accompanied God's inspired messengers to authenticate their ministry during periods of revelation (Jn. 10:24-25; Acts 2:22; Acts 14:3; 2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:3-4). The gift of apostleship (Eph. 4:11) was unique to the first century (1 Cor. 9:1; 15:7-8). Ephesians 2:20 clearly teaches that apostles and prophets belonged to the foundational period of the church. Associated with them were miracles (2 Cor. 12:12). Once God laid the church's foundation and produced and distributed the New Testament Scriptures as the sure Word of God, (1 Pet. 1:17-19), then He allowed the apostolic office to pass away, and with it the miraculous events that had served as apostolic credentials. Hebrews 2:3-4 (AD 60-80) indicates that apostolic confirmations by special miraculous gifts were completed.

The gift of tongues as a normative gift ceased along with the age of miracles. Scripture mentions miracle gifts like tongues and healing only in the earliest

epistles such as 1 Corinthians. Tongues were a judicial sign to Israel because of Israel's unbelief (1 Cor. 14:22). The gift of "languages" signaled God's transition from Israel to the church (believing gentiles) and thus were no longer needed after the transitional period. Further, history indicates that tongues ceased at least for the first four or five hundred years.

The gift of healing was also a miraculous sign gift (Jn. 20:30-31; Acts 3) which has ceased as a normative gift. It appears that those who claim the gift of healing today do not have the *biblical* gift. Jesus and the apostles healed instantaneously (Mk. 5:29; Acts 3:2-8), totally (Lk. 4:39; Acts 3:2-8), and everybody with faith in Christ (Lk. 4:40; Acts 5:12-16). They healed people of organic diseases rather than just functional disease and rose the dead (Lk. 7:11-16; Acts 9:36-42). This gift was passing away even during the apostles' day; it is therefore evident that it is not God's will to heal every faithful Christian (Phil. 2:25-27; 2 Tim. 4:20; 1 Tim. 5:23; 2 Cor. 12:7-9). Though God does at times heal today, the deliverance of the Christian's body from sickness and death awaits the consummation of our salvation in the resurrection (Rm. 8:9-11, 18-25).

Pastor Phair does not believe our church should practice modern day tongue speaking and does not

encourage its private practice among our people for the following summary reasons:

1. Because the biblical gift of tongues were known human languages, while much today is only ecstatic utterances (Acts 2; 1 Cor. 12-14).
2. Because the Bible says the purpose of tongues was primarily a sign to unbelieving Jews and a validation of apostolic authority (1 Cor. 14:21-22; 2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:4; Rm. 15:19).
3. Because tongues are not an indication of spiritual maturity (Gal. 3:22-23; 1 Cor. 13).
4. Because tongues was a comparatively insignificant gift (1 Cor. 12:28) which was not possessed by every believer even in the first century (1 Cor. 12:30).
5. Because God did not intend to make the gift of tongues a continuing evidential sign of an individual's baptism or filling of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12: 13, 30; Gal. 5:22-23).
6. Because of its common association with the gift of prophecy, thus implying that Biblical revelation is not complete (Jude 3; Heb. 1:1-2; Rev. 22:18-19).
7. Because in its private use it only edifies the individual. The Holy Spirit does not give any spiritual gift for the purpose of self-edification, but for the building up

of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 14:4; 12:7; Eph. 4).

8. Because in its private use it implies that prayer is more effective if spoken in tongues. The Bible says that such praying is an unfruitful experience (1 Cor. 14:14-17; Mt. 6:7).
9. Because tongues speaking as a spiritual gift for this age is of questionable Biblical interpretation (Heb. 2:3-4; 1 Cor. 13:8-10).
10. Because the believer is nowhere commanded to speak in tongues.
11. Because of its dangers of fostering pride and emphasis on living by emotional experience rather than the Word of God (Prov. 16:5; 2 Tim. 3:13-17; 2 Pet. 1:19-21; 2 John 8-9).
12. Because of its divisive nature in many congregations (Eph. 4:3).

(For a fuller presentation of the doctrine of sign gifts, consult *What About Sign Gifts* by Paul B. Phair or his sermon tape by the same title. Another recommended source is *The Charismatics* by John MacArthur, Zondervan)

Elder Board Policy

We do not require that everyone in our church fellowship agree with the above doctrinal conviction. We welcome the fellowship and membership of those who may believe that they have the gift of tongues. While we do not encourage it, such individuals may privately speak in tongues. However, for the sake of

unity, we do require that such individuals not practice tongue speaking in the presence of others in our church (regardless of the setting) nor encourage others to speak in tongues. If a brother or sister cannot comply with these requirements, in order to maintain peace, the elders will admonish him/her

in love to ally himself/herself with a church that is receptive of such teaching and public practice. We desire to work and pray without ceasing to "*maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*" (Eph. 4:3).

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