

-What does GBC believe and teach about the spiritual gifts (cessation vs continuation)

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The Bible makes clear each regenerated member of Jesus' bride, the church, is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and therefore has spiritual gifts. (1 Corinthians 12:1-12, 28; Romans 12:3-8) The Holy Spirit's use of the gifts in each individual regenerated church member are determined by the Holy Spirit Himself and each member has them in different measures and ways according to the grace given each. But it is clear each member must use their gifts to the building up of the body of Christ in love to the end the body is mature and fit for every good work. (1 Corinthians 12:6-7; 1 Corinthians 14:12; Ephesians 4:7,11-16)

The implied question at hand is, "Are these gifts the same gifts displayed by the twelve apostles (and some of the deacons) (Acts 6:8; Acts 8:6) in the New Testament? Did those gifts end or do they continue today?"

In the establishment and formation of the new covenant church, the Lord Jesus gave His appointed twelve disciples attesting/authenticating sign gifts which were to serve as a validation of the Gospel message they proclaimed (Heb. 2:3-4). Healing the lame, raising the dead, and doing supernatural miracles were all a part of this and they were signs from God that the people watching and listening to the preacher would do well to pay attention and to pay careful heed (obey) to their message.

One of the biggest displays of the Holy Spirit's miraculous works, besides God giving the Holy Spirit, was the gift of tongues. Beginning on the day of Pentecost, the Gospel, accompanied by various outpourings of the Holy Spirit, moved out of the Jewish believing community to Samaria and ultimately the Gentiles. At each stage of this expansion of the Gospel and the incorporation of a new believing fellowship into the flock of Jesus Christ, God made it clear to the original twelve Apostles they were genuine moves of God by giving each group that same gift they had experienced on that wonderful day of Pentecost, the first one after the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, the gift of the Holy Spirit (some of them with the gift of tongues). (Acts 1:8, Acts 2, Acts 8:17, Acts 10:44-46)

What was this gift of tongues? Was it unintelligible babbling like we see in so many charismatic churches today? No, not even close. The word we translate as 'tongue/s' is the (transliteration of the) Greek word 'glossa'. The word simply means language, and in Acts 2:4, the text says "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with *other tongues*, as the Spirit was giving them utterance." Attesting that these were miraculously given and real known languages. We read later in the same chapter, "So they were astounded and marveling, saying, "Behold, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? "And how is it that we each hear them in our own language in which we were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the district of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God." (Acts 2:7-11) You see, these were intelligible, known, spoken languages for the benefit of the hearers. We don't know from any text whether the speakers knew they were speaking in other languages. We know they were filled with the Holy Spirit and HE gave them utterance. We also don't know if these languages persisted throughout the rest of the lives of those speaking in tongues.

But the bottom line was the purpose: “we hear them in *our own tongues* speaking of the mighty deeds of God.”

Tongues was just one of these mighty and miraculous gifts given during the apostolic age for the establishment of the church. But do we see in Scripture these gifts ‘went away’, as the ‘cessationists’ claim? Yes. First, as the book of Acts progresses, you see diminishing occurrences of those apostolic miracles. Another example is by comparing the earlier and later lists of the gifts of the Spirit in Scripture, they seem to decrease in number. (‘earlier’ 1 Corinthians 12:1, 4-11; ‘later’ 1 Peter 4:10-11 – Peter only mentions two gifts and 1 Cor and 1 Peter likely aren’t separated by more than 10-15 years) By the end of the apostolic era, with the death of the last Apostle, John, and the closing of the canon of Scripture (with the Revelation of Jesus Christ), the NEED for the attesting sign gifts were deemed by God to be no longer necessary. (1 Cor. 13:8-10; Rev. 22:7, 18-19 [Deut. 4:2]) The completion of scripture removed the need for attesting sign gifts to authenticate the Gospel messenger as one being sent from God. The written Word of God was and is still sufficient. In fact, we say when you are reading the Word of God, it is as if the prophets and Apostles who wrote the words, as inspired by the Holy Spirit, are right there with you! And to disobey those words is the same as disobeying God Himself!

We do not see historical examples of similar sign miracles from any reputable source outside of a few non-orthodox sects (French Huguenot Protestants 16-1700’s, and Irvingites, Shakers, and Mormons in the 1800s and others in the “restorationism” movement as discussed below). In fact, the first widespread (as at Pentecost and during the formation of the church in the first century) example we see of these claimed gifts occurred during the Azusa Street “Revival” in California in 1906 which served as a catalyst for the Pentecostal and Charismatic church movements. There, it was claimed that there was a separate “baptism of the Holy Spirit” which was always associated with the gift of tongues (unintelligible babbling as it was demonstrated) and that while someone could be a believer in Jesus Christ and be baptized; they may not have been baptized by the Holy Spirit. This created a “tiered” Christianity; those baptized by the Holy Spirit and those not: thus, creating a sense of “urgency” for obtaining such gifts by those caught in the movement. This view is not supported by the rightly divided word of God.

The fact is many claim the attesting miracles and sign gifts found in the New Testament are still happening today. Those who claim the same apostolic sign gifts are happening today are known as ‘continuationists’. However, they cannot provide proof of real, bona fide, miracles taking place that were the authenticating, attesting sign gifts as demonstrated by the Apostles. When those claims are made, there really isn’t anything approaching the scope of the miracles found in the Bible. As pointed out earlier, one of the most egregiously abused sign gifts claimed today is that of ‘tongues’. The problem is these are not biblical tongues. Most of them are akin to pagan religions that also incorporate vain babbling in their liturgy. Sometimes those pagan religion babblings might also be demonically sourced or purposefully include spells arising out of the occult or witchcraft. At best, these “gifts” are displayed by well meaning believers caught up in an emotional movement who are subsequently told that their outbursts were signs of the “baptism of the holy spirit” (speaking gibberish, convulsions, fits of laughter, clapping and shouting, and various other displays are a far cry from the biblical example of the indwelling Holy Spirit).

Another word for continuationism is 'restorationism'. This is because a pseudo-religious movement from the late 19th and early 20th century believed God was 'restoring' the ancient gift of tongues. At least they realized that it was an ancient gift, implying they knew it had ceased. But these well-intentioned but poorly taught souls didn't understand the purpose of the 'ancient' attesting, authenticating sign gifts (already discussed above). I say well-intentioned because many of the early restorationists wanted to use this supposed restored sign gift to go on worldwide mission with God to reach the unconverted quickly (and easily). They thought having the miracle of speaking those foreign languages would help them preach the Gospel immediately upon setting foot in those foreign lands, many would quickly be converted, and thus the return of Jesus Christ would (somehow) be accelerated. Look at how they originally understood the gift of tongues, though: they knew they were real languages, rather than that which is commonly referred to as "speaking in tongues" today.

What happened and what changed? Why didn't this "charismatic" movement just dry up and blow away? Many early missionaries from this movement found that their "gifts", especially those of healings and speaking in foreign languages, were quickly exposed as frauds when demonstrated outside a like-minded, "friendly" audience. This led to great embarrassment and discrediting of those well-meaning missionaries. Upon their return from the mission field, they found that many other "missionaries" sent with their own newly restored tongues gift were finding out they had been misled and deceived by the movement's leadership. For many, this led to the shipwreck of their faith. But what did this movement do? Did they repent and declare they had erred greatly? No. Instead, the leaders pivoted and revealed the new tongues they had 'received' were "angel's tongues" or "prayer languages" and to be used in their private prayer closets. Yet another misinterpretation and misapplication of scripture. And thus from there, this movement did not stop but instead has grown worldwide to what you see today.

But this is not the biblical gift of tongues and instead brings great reproach and dishonor upon Christ, His church, and His Gospel in the eyes of the unbeliever and of those who have rightly divided the scriptures and submitted themselves fully to that which God has revealed in them.

Does God still work miracles today? Absolutely, and when this happens, although rare as they may be, we recognize He suspended the normal for the supernatural in order bring glory to Himself. But it is clearly God doing the work and not by the hand of any man. Is it possible that God may once again empower His people to use these sign gifts for His purposes? With God, anything is possible. We simply cannot ignore the absence of these gifts since the early formation of the church, and the complete lack of any credible, reliable examples being displayed by those claiming to have these gifts.

If you have not gathered already, GBC is a church which affirms the cessation of the apostolic sign gifts near the end of the first century, which are not restored (because we have the entire Bible).

One of the common traits of those who adhere to the charismatic movement (and continuationism) is a desire for more. While it sounds noble to say 'I want more of God', or '... of Jesus', or '...of the Holy Spirit!', the truth is we have received as much of God in the new birth as is possible. God has measured out for each of us our own measure of faith (Romans 12:3, Eph. 1:7 & 4:16). Did you know Christ Jesus is sufficient for you? Christ Jesus is everything you need. The One who gave you life, Who makes sure to provide for your every need, The One Who created the heavens and earth and holds it all

together by the word of His power, is all we truly need. So why do you want 'more'? Isn't His salvation enough for you? Isn't His word enough, sufficient, for you? By seeking 'more', did you know you could be seeking something that is outside of God's clearly expressed will, and you could be guilty of seeking that which is not God at all? See 2 John 9. The charismatic movement has a lot of 'more' that simply isn't found in Scripture, and has left the teaching of Christ, and as a result does not have God any longer. Do you really want 'more' when it will only lead to your spiritual ruin and the shipwreck of your faith? Dearly beloved one, if you have received the implanted word so as to be saved, then you need to rely only upon Him and His all-sufficient and inerrant Word. You have the MORE, the superlative, in Jesus Christ alone!