

The Holy Spirit Gifts

There are a number of different understandings about the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Some believe that the miraculous gifts made available to the first century church are still offered to believers today. Some believe the gifts were only offered to the believers of the first century and are not manifested today. There are questions about what the gift of tongues actually meant and why did some of the first century believers have the ability to shrug off the effects of poison and even return the dead to life, yet these miracles are never evident in our present society. Some Christians believe the baptism of the Holy Spirit makes water baptism unnecessary. We should apply the lessons we have already learned on how to determine accurate conclusions from the Bible to find the truth of this matter.

The Original Promise of Holy Power

Jesus tells his disciples just before he leaves them that they will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.

Acts 1:4-5 *And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.*

The record of how this Holy Spirit baptism played out is presented in **Acts 2:1-3.**

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

The first miraculous gift exhibited is the speaking in "tongues." This means that these believers could immediately communicate in publicly spoken languages for which they had received no training. This conclusion is clear from the continuing context (verses 4-11 ... they all heard them speaking in their own languages... or tongues). The immediate value of this miraculous gift of instant communication was the expressing of the gospel message without language barriers. This unique ability would also offer a miraculous validity to the message being offered... which would never have been the case if these "tongues" were simply unintelligible gibberish.

The promise of the Holy Spirit was also extended to others as presented by the Apostle Peter in Acts 2:38-39. However, Peter limits the availability of the Holy Spirit to two generations of Jewish and Gentile believers. This promise will be considered under the question: "To Whom Were the Spirit Gifts Offered."

The Procedures for Receiving the Spirit Gifts

1. Direct Dispensation

There are only three recorded events when God directly poured out his power onto believers. Each of these three events is quite unique and highly significant.

- A. The baptism of Jesus Christ where the spirit descended on him in the form of a dove (Luke 3:21-22)
- B. The beginning of the church after Jesus left his disciples and went to heaven to be at the right hand of his Father (Acts 2:1-4)
- C. The invitation to the Gentiles (non-Jews) to be included into the church. Prior to this the gospel had not been preached to Gentiles. In fact, Jesus avoided preaching to Gentiles and explains he was commissioned to preach to the house of Israel (Matthew 10:5-7). This Gentile invitation takes place at the house of Cornelius, a Roman Centurion, as recorded in Acts 10:44-47. It should be noted that

"they of the circumcision" refers to Jews. It should also be noted that Peter required water baptism for those upon whom the Holy Spirit had been poured out (Acts 10:47) confirming the necessity for water baptism despite the unique honor of this direct heavenly dispensation of the Holy Spirit.

There is no other recorded event anywhere in the New Testament where the power of the Holy Spirit was poured out on believers. The only other way to receive the power of the Spirit so that one might perform miracles was by indirect dispensation by particular individuals.

2. Indirect Dispensation

Acts 8 records the first time the Spirit gifts were conferred upon anyone other than those present on the day of Pentecost. The Apostles appear surprised that the power had not "fallen" on any of the new believers from Samaria

Acts 8:14-16 *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).*

It is only when Peter and John (and no one else) lay their hands on these new believers that they received the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul also is spoken of as having this ability to pass along the power of the Holy Spirit, but only by the laying on of his hands (Acts 19:6; Romans 1:11; 2 Timothy 1:6). Note in Romans chapter one that Paul knows he must be personally present if the Roman believers are to receive a 'spiritual gift'.

Romans 1:10-11 *Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you. For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift.*

Once the initial pouring out of the Holy Spirit took place, it is evident that a believer could not receive the power of the Holy Spirit without an apostle laying his hands on them for that express purpose. Once the apostles died, the Holy Spirit gifts would not be available. This timeline coincides perfectly with the time-limited promise of the Holy Spirit the Apostle Peter references (examined in the section entitled: To Whom Were the Spirit Gifts Offered).

Why Were the Holy Spirit Gifts Given

One verse we have looked at hints at this answer (Romans 1:11 *For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established*). Here Paul desires to pass along to the Roman believers some spiritual gift so that they might be "established." Paul expressed this reasoning more forcefully to the believers at Ephesus.

Ephesians 4:8-14 *Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.*

In these verses Paul quotes from Psalm 68:18, explaining that the Holy Spirit gifts that Jesus had given to the early church were provided for specific reasons. He comments on the range of applications for these gifts of enhanced and miraculous abilities... apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. Paul also expresses the purpose for these gifts being given to those performing the various duties in the early stages of this new organization of believers. He states these gifts were for the perfecting (maturing is the meaning of the Greek word) of the saints as well as the work of the ministry (preaching) and the edifying (building up and strengthening) the body of Christ (the group of believers).

After Paul comments on the limited timeframe for the spiritual gifts (by using the conditional word **until**) he continues with the reasons for the gifts being offered. He states they were to encourage unity and a spiritual maturing. We should remember that God had changed the standards in spiritual worship. Rituals such as baptism into the death and resurrection of the Messiah and eating the broken bread and wine of the memorial service had not been part of the divinely appointed worship pattern prior to this time. Additionally the laws and worship rituals within the laws God had given to Moses that had been observed for over 1,500 years were now being eliminated. These changes were challenged within God's community of believers. The Holy Spirit gifts acted as a validation from God to these changes. The purpose for these miraculous powers was strictly transitional.

Paul emphatically declares the limited availability of these gifts by saying they would be available **until** the body of believers achieved a unity of knowledge and were directed towards being a perfect (the word means mature, not flawless) man and a measure (partial, not complete) of the full stature of Christ.

The Apostle Paul is explaining to the brothers and sisters of Ephesus that the miraculous Spirit gifts were given when Christ ascended on high for the purpose of establishing & strengthening the early church and facilitating the development of that body of believers to a certain level of spiritual maturity. However, these gifts would end at that point. That point of unavailability of the spiritual gifts is identified more clearly by Paul in other letters (such as 1st Corinthians chapter 13, to be examined under the section entitled 'That Which is Perfect').

To Whom Were the Spirit Gifts Offered

Peter expresses the promise of the Holy Spirit in these terms: "... *ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is unto you and to your children and to all that are afar off even as many as the Lord our God shall call* [Acts 2:38-39].

There are three groups identified here.

1. *To you*: This identifies the generation of the Jewish community Peter was addressing
2. *To your children*: This identifies the next generation of the Jewish community
3. *To those afar off*: This actually identifies the Gentiles (the uncircumcised), not any succeeding generations.

The further qualification (*even as many as the Lord our God shall call*) limits the promise of the Holy Spirit availability specifically to those that the Lord God would call within that two generational period. Peter only offers the promise of the Holy Spirit to two generations of Jewish & Gentile believers. This understanding aligns perfectly with the limited method of receiving the Holy Spirit being the laying on of the hands of specific Apostles and the Spirit gifts serving as a transitional validation tool for the dramatic changes in divine worship.

The phrase "*those afar off*" in Peter's promise can be identified as referring to the Gentiles without question. If we do a Bible search for the word "afar" or the phrase "those afar off" we will eventually be

brought to Ephesians 2:13 and 17. These verses identify the Ephesians (Gentile believers from Ephesus) as those who were "afar off" and the Jews as those who were "near."

Ephesians 2:11 *Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh ... (The church at Ephesus was made up of Gentile as opposed to Jewish believers)*

Vs.13 *But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.* The Gentile believers were previously "far off" but changed their status to "nigh" (near, as opposed to far off) when they were brought near by their association with the blood of Jesus Christ.

Vs 17 *And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.* Preaching was directed to the far off Gentiles as well as the nigh Jewish community. The Gentiles had been distant from any relationship with the God of heaven and earth. They had been "afar off." The promise of the Holy Spirit had been made to two generations of Jews and the far off Gentiles, but only as many of them as the Lord God would call.

It is interesting that the limitation of the availability of the Holy Spirit gifts to two generations of Jew & Gentile believers coincides perfectly with the understanding that when the apostles died off there would be no way to receive the gifts. The apostles would have been able to lay their hands upon their generation of believers and the sons and daughters of that generation... two generations of believers... but no more.

However, there is more evidence from Paul concerning what specifically would herald the unavailability of the gifts by replacing the availability of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit with something even greater.

What Is "That Which Is Perfect"

Paul addresses the problem in the Corinthian church of the abuses of the Holy Spirit gifts in chapters 12 through 14 of his first letter. Believers were mis-using the ability to direct miracles by displaying them at inappropriate times and ways for purposes of self-promotion. In 1 Corinthians chapter 12 Paul exhorts these believers to understand that the church should think of itself as the body of Christ and not to degrade others as less significant than oneself due to the inability to display as dramatic (or self-glorying) a miraculous gift as themselves. In chapter 13 Paul goes on to explain that if one does not have love then all the Holy Spirit powers and all knowledge is absolutely valueless. In chapter 14 Paul gets down to brass tacks and addresses the specific abuses of the gifts. These believers did not understand the purpose of the gifts and were using their enhanced abilities to promote themselves, jockeying for opportunities of self-glorification.

In chapter 13 Paul again explains that the availability of the Holy Spirit gifts would end when something greater took their place.

Corinthians 13:8-10 *Charity (love) never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail, whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.*

The Apostle Paul, inspired by God to write these words, tells us that the Holy Spirit gifts are simply a temporary measure. He tells us something greater (*that which is perfect*) will replace the gifts and lead believers into greater understanding (verses 11-12 *When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known*). The obvious question would be: What is "*that which is perfect*" which God appointed to replace the Holy Spirit gifts for the purpose of further maturing His body of believers?

Our instincts may suggest that Jesus Christ would be the only thing that could possibly qualify as that which is perfect for which we wait. However, this is an impossible conclusion. When Christ returns we are told repeatedly that the Holy Spirit will be poured out abundantly and miracles will abound. Therefore the appearance of Jesus Christ cannot be the answer for what the "perfect" thing might be that replaces and marks the end of the availability of the Holy Spirit gifts.

In order to determine the answer we should consider the original Greek word. The word "perfect" from 1 Corinthians 13:10 can be found in any Bible Concordance. We will find the original Greek word is *teleios* (Strong's number is 5046). This word is presented as meaning mature or complete.... but not flawless. Using the word perfect in our current society may suggest the understanding of being flawless (as in a 'perfect' diamond). However, that was not the meaning of the Greek word *teleios* in the original Bible manuscripts.

Using the Lexicon included with the concordance we find this word *teleios* is also translated "of full age" and even "men." The word *teleios* which is translated "perfect" in 1 Corinthians 13:10 is translated "man" in the very next chapter:

1 Corinthians 15:20 *Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children. But in understanding be **men**.*

The original Greek word *teleios* (translated men in this verse) clearly presents the understanding of maturity. Paul is exhorting the Corinthian believers not to be little children when it comes to knowledge, but to be fully grown... to be mature... to be *teleios* (perfect, mature, of full age).

Returning to the use of this word in 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 we can more easily determine what would replace the Holy Spirit gifts, thereby encouraging an even greater spiritual maturing of the body of believers. Let's consider the same verse with the greater understanding afforded from the Concordance and Lexicon.

1 Cor. 13:8-10 *Charity never faileth, but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail, whether there be tongues, they shall cease, whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is finished (perfect) is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.*

What could possibly be greater than the Holy Spirit gifts and have the capability of leading the body of believers to greater level of spiritual maturity whose appearance would coincide with the exclusive two generation promise of the Spirit gifts and the unavailability of the Apostles to pass on Holy Spirit power by the laying on of their particular hands?

The Holy Bible... The Finished Word

The answer is clear and unchallengeable. It is the finished word of God... the complete Bible. The only scriptures that Jesus taught from during his ministry were the Old Testament. The New Testament was written over the next few decades following his resurrection, ending with the Revelation as written by the Apostle John as he was exiled to the Isle of Patmos historians place at 96 AD.

When the word of God was fully mature... when it was finished... when it was *teleios*... then Holy Spirit Gifts would no longer be necessary. They would be superfluous and redundant. They would have served their purpose as a temporary educational tool validating the sweeping changes God had made.

The consistent pattern of evidence is mounting. Let's review.

- A) When the apostles died there would be no way to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
- B) The gifts were originally offered through Peter to only two generations of Jewish and Gentile believers that were called by the Lord.
- C) When the Bible was completed the gifts of prophecy and tongues and knowledge, etc. would "fail, cease and vanish."

Each of these independent references to when the transitional gifts of the Holy Spirit would no longer be available all point to a two generation period. It was less than 70 years from the time the Holy Spirit Gifts were uniquely poured out on the early church in the upper room in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost to the time when John wrote the final part of God's word (The Revelation).

The Appointed Silence Drought Following the Pouring Out of the Spirit

We should also understand that God warned us of an extended period of silence where there would be no word from Him. Men would desperately search the world over for new revelations and prophecies and visions, but there would be none. This prophecy is confirmed by two prophets.

Amos 8:11-12 *Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD; that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it.*

Micah 3:6-7 *Therefore night shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a vision; and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them. Then shall the seers be ashamed, and the diviners confounded, yea they shall all cover their lips; for there is no answer of God.*

There may be some disagreement concerning identifying the timeframe for God's silence. This potential problem can be answered by identifying the time when God's long silence would end. We can parallel Micah and Amos's words with Isaiah's prophecy for the events identifying the end of His silence.

Isaiah 42:13-14 *The LORD shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies. I have long time holden my peace; I have been still, and refrained myself: now will I cry like a travailing woman; I will destroy and devour at once.*

We read of a period of prolonged silence from God. There would be no new revelations, no open vision, and no prophecies. Yet that period would end with God roaring like a charging soldier and as a woman giving birth. These are both parallels God uses in scripture to describe the coming earthly kingdom He will restore. In fact, if we simply read the previous verses of Isaiah 42 we will see this is exactly the context of God ending his long silence (verses 10-12 *Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; the isles, and the inhabitants thereof. Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar doth inhabit: let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains. Let them give glory unto the LORD, and declare his praise in the islands*). God will end His period of prolonged silence dramatically by crying out like a charging soldier and like a woman giving birth. He will do this through His Son Jesus Christ when Jesus returns to earth to claim the throne of his father David that he was promised before he was born.

This period of divine silence is expressed as ending when God reveals Himself in dramatic military fashion, giving birth to a new age. It would be impossible for the Spirit gifts (that the first century believers enjoyed) to continue unabated until the time when God reveals Himself as God tells us that He would

have been silent for an extended period prior to His shouting. This is simply further evidence that the Holy Spirit gifts were divinely offered for a limited time. It was a transitional period. The Mosaic Age had ended. The Ecclesial Age (church) was beginning. The new was replacing the old. The Spirit gifts served as a temporary educational tool to facilitate this transition into a new age with new laws and worship rituals until the more permanent and authoritative and entire word of God would be completed. The Spirit gifts would no longer be needed when God's word was finished.

The Two "Ages" of The Holy Spirit Gifts

Jesus makes reference to the two periods of time when the activity of the Holy Spirit would be publicly unveiled and undeniable. This second age would therefore presume the ending of the first age. There would also have to be a period of absence for this visible display of God's power and then that absence would have to be followed by another age of visible activity. A continuous flow would not qualify as two distinct ages.

The context of this reference in Matthew 12 is that Jesus had healed a blind and dumb man. The Pharisees, not denying the miracle, identified the source of his power as evil, thus blaspheming the Holy Spirit. Jesus responds with this comment:

Matthew 12:32 *And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this **world**, neither in the **world** to come.*

The word "world" that is highlighted does not mean this planet but a specific age. The Greek word is *aion* which means age... a bordered period of time. Jesus says that those who identify the unveiled power of God displayed publicly before men as vile and evil will not be forgiven in that present age or during the age to come. This tells us the undeniable and unshielded activity of the Holy Spirit would be again revealed at a later age. This further confirms the understanding that there had to be a period of cessation... a period of silence from God when He would not work miraculously through prophets and apostles and miracle workers.

Lies and Self Glorification

In fact this brings us to a significant but often misunderstood feature of the Holy Spirit gifts. Possessing the Holy Spirit did not ensure gospel accuracy or righteousness. Believers had the capacity to use the miraculous powers of the Holy Spirit inappropriately for self promotion and self glorification.

Jesus speaks of rejecting at the judgment seat believers who had claimed to have performed mighty miracles in his name.

Matthew 7:22-23 *Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

Performing miracles did not ensure that anyone was righteous in the eyes of their judge. That is a false presumption, opposed by God's word.

Paul explains that it is impossible to forgive those who have tasted of the powers of the world to come if they fall away.

Hebrews 6:4-6 *For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.*

Those who were made partakers of the Holy Spirit and tasted the powers of the world (*aion*/age) to come would not be forgiven if they abandoned the true gospel and did not continue to the end, as re-

quired by Christ. Being able to consciously direct miraculous divine power did not validate anyone's personal righteousness or that they were absolutely preaching the truth.

God's Prophets Could Be False Teachers

The test of a prophet (under the divine law given to Moses) was not simply that a prophesy actually came true or not. It was that he spoke the truth about God. God's law demanded the execution of a lying prophet

Deuteronomy 13:1-3 *If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.*

Since we are no longer under the Mosaic Law we certainly don't execute false teachers (as verse 5 of this chapter would indicate). However, we should understand that just because someone seems to be able to perform miraculous feats, that alone is not a guarantee they are teaching truth. It is the word of God that is the final standard, not showmanship. The doctrinal truths of the Bible are more significant than some show of power... real or not.

The possession of The Holy Spirit with power was no guarantee. It was only a tool. It was a tool that was replaced by an even greater tool... the whole word of God.

The Gift of Tongues

There are a number of self-defined Christians in our society claiming to possess the gift of tongues that is referred to in scripture. The gift of tongues mentioned in scripture refers to the ability to instantly speak in established national languages for which one has never received any training. This ability was arresting to unbelievers and was sometimes responsible for converting the unenlightened pagans to Christianity. Yet this is never the application exhibited currently in our society. What is always presented is an unintelligible gibberish that is effortlessly mimicked by nonbelievers and impresses no one except themselves.

A Tongue Is a Language

'Tongues' is a word used throughout the Bible that is synonymous with 'languages.' In Acts 2:4-11 when the power is first exhibited the two words (tongues and languages) are used interchangeably. In Revelation 9:11 we read of the Hebrew tongue and the Greek tongue (indicating 'language'). We see the term used several times in Revelation, always indicating a known language (Revelation 5:9; 7:9; 17:15).

The dedication page in the front of the King James translation of the Bible displaying the crest of King James says "The Holy Bible containing the Old and New Testaments translated out of the original tongues." These 'tongues' were Hebrew and Greek. In fact the dedicatory of the King James version (4th paragraph, 2nd sentence) reads: "out of the original sacred tongues... there should be one more exact translation of the holy scriptures into the English tongue." It is clear the translators of the Bible clearly understood the word "tongue" to be synonymous with 'language.'

Unknown Tongues

What does Paul mean when he says in 1 Corinthians 14:2... *for he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: For no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries?*

Does this reference allow for the belief that unintelligible gibberish qualifies as speaking in tongues?

Personally, the Italian tongue is unknown to me... as well as Inuit, Swahili, Norwegian and hundreds of other tongues. While I have some training in German, French and Spanish; all other tongues are just so much gibberish to me. When a Corinthian brother or sister (who had that gift of tongues) spoke in a language during a church gathering, a tongue for which the rest of the membership were unfamiliar, the only one who would understand is God.

This was the problem with the Corinthian believers the Apostle Paul was addressing. They were exercising their gifts in church meetings so as to glorify themselves and not edify the body.

1 Corinthians 14:23 *If therefore the whole church be come together unto one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?*

Paul makes this emphatic statement as a follow-up to the previous verse where he explains that the gift of tongues was not intended to be limited to believers. The intention of the miraculous gift of languages was intended to impress and teach non-believers.

verse 22: *Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believeth not, but for them which believe.*

The Corinthian believers were jockeying for opportunities of self-glorification and had to be told that if they could not resist the temptation to speak in tongues within the meeting of the brotherhood (for whom the miraculous gift of languages was **not** intended) then they had to speak one at a time and wait their turn or be totally silent.

Verses 27-28 *If any man speak in an unknown (notice that the word "unknown" is in italics, telling us that this word is not present in the original Greek text) tongue, let it be by two, or at most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God.*

This feature of Paul's inspired writings also tells us these gifts were not 'ecstatic.' In other words, God did not force the gifts through people, as is suggested by Christian charismatics today. The exercising of these gifts was entirely at the discretion of the possessor of the gift. They had the capacity to express the gift or refrain. It was not driven through them against their will. Paul makes this perfectly clear.

Verse 32 *And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.*

The apostle Paul concludes his commands and his reasoning by saying "*Let all things be done decently and in order.*" [verse 40]

It is very simple to determine if the tongues and interpretations being practiced in some churches today are from God or not. Simply record the "tongue speaking" and play it back for any quantity of "interpreters." If the gift is from God the interpretations will be exactly the same. However, in fact you would find there will never be two interpreters offering the same translation. What conclusion are we left with?!

The miraculous Holy Spirit Gifts were offered at the introduction of the Ecclesial Age. Previously the body of believers was strictly Jewish with a national constitution and submitted to Mosaic Law. Gentiles (non Jews) were being actively solicited to join the believers, contradicting the previous policy of separation and exclusivity. Dramatic changes required dramatic authority. The Holy Spirit Gifts acted as that validating tool for these divinely appointed sweeping changes. Once the complete word of God was finished the gifts would have outlived their usefulness and that 'age' would end. A long period of divine silence would follow before the second 'age' would begin, identified by the Creator shouting

like a charging soldier and as a woman giving birth. The second age when the very public, miraculous display of Holy Spirit power would begin and be demonstrated through believers. The claims for Holy Spirit possession in charismatic Christian churches today completely contradict scriptural definitions. No one is being brought back from the dead like the first century believers. No one can survive drinking poison or shrug off the bite of deadly serpents as happened to Paul and promised to those who possessed the Holy Spirit (Mark 16:17-18). No one can instantly speak in many languages for which they have received no training. We are still living within the prophesied time of God's silence. We wait for the second pouring out of the Holy Spirit, the "latter rain" of the Holy Spirit... at the last trump.