

Test The Spirits

A Biblical guide to Healings and Tongues

By Stan Thompson

Prove All Things

"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but test the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). "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" (Ephesians 4:14).

The Last Days

"Now the Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils" (1 Timothy 4:1). "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them" (2 Timothy 3:13,14). "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Timothy 4:3,4).

Experiences

"Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24). "We walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7). "A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign" (Matthew 16:4). "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Galations 1:8). "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" (Matthew 7:15, 22,23).

The Word of God

"Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119:105). "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God" (Romans 10:17). "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16,17). "Thy Word is Truth" (John 17:17). "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). "Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine" (1 Timothy 4:13). "Earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).

Satan's Devices

Satan is "the god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4) and "the prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2). "We are not ignorant of his devices" (2 Corinthians 2:11):

- he is "the deceiver" (Revelation 12:9),
- he is "the father of lies" (John 8:44),
- he is able to perform "signs and lying wonders" (2 Thessalonians 2:9) like healing a fatal wound (Rev. 13:2-4),
- he is crafty (2 Corinthians 11:3),
- he disguises himself as "an angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:14),
- he misuses Scripture (Genesis 3; Matthew 4),
- he appeals to the lusts of the flesh (Matthew 4:1-11; Genesis 3; 1 John 2:16),
- he instills pride (1 Timothy 3:6,7).

"Faith Healers"

There is no questioning God's power to heal today through the ministry of prayer (James 5:14,15). The question before us is whether acclaimed "faith healers" are acting under the power of the Holy Spirit. To know this, we must compare today's claims with the manner in which Christ healed.

1. Christ healed out of compassion for the sick (e.g. Mark 1:42; 5:19; 9:22).

1. Christ healed with few words: The Lord's longest discourse during a healing was 18 (English) words (Mark 9:25). Sometimes He spoke only a word or two (Matthew 8:32; Mark 7:34; Luke 8:54). Often He simply touched the sick without even saying a word (Matthew 9:20,25; 14:36; 20:34). His method was always simple: "He took him, and healed him and let him go" (Luke 14:4).

1. Christ healed instantaneously: Fourteen times the word "immediately" or "straightway" describes the Lord's healing (Matthew 8:3; Mark 1:31,42; 2:12; 5:29,42; 7:35; 10:52; Luke 4:39; 5:13). Other words that describe His healing include "the same hour" (John 4:53), "the selfsame hour" (Matthew 8:13), "from that very hour" (Matthew 15:28; 17:18) and "as soon as He had spoken" (Mark 1:42).

1. Christ healed completely: Twelve times it is recorded that the Lord's healing resulted in the diseased becoming "whole" (Matthew 12:13; Mark 3:5; 5:34; 6:56; Luke 6:10; 7:10; 8:48,50; John 5:9,11) and twice it is emphasized "perfectly whole" (Matthew 14:36; 15:28). The healing of the blind man at Bethsaida (Mark 8:22-26) is no exception. First, the Lord heals the man's eyes completely and instantly. Second, the Lord instantly and completely gives the man the ability to interpret what he sees. It is not a gradual healing, but a deliberate two step process to show the Lord's understanding of and power over His creation.

1. Christ's healing resulted in men giving glory to God (Matthew 9:8; 15:31; Mark 2:12; Luke 5:25; 7:16; 13:13; 17:15; 18:43).

1. Christ healed everyone: He never failed. Not even one left feeling guilty for not having enough faith. "He healed them all" (Luke 6:19) "as many as touched Him" (Matthew 14:36; Mark 6:56). He "healed all that were sick" (Matthew 8:16). He never turned down an invitation to heal (e.g. Jairus' daughter, the Centurion's servant, the daughter of a Canaanite, the Nobleman's son). Scriptures that speak of Him healing "many" (Mark 1:34; 3:10; 6:13) do not imply that He attempted to heal some and could not. The parallel passages in other gospels report that He healed them all (Matthew 8:16; Luke 6:19). The verses in Mark emphasize the quantity of those healed by God's perfect, untiring Servant. The lack of faith among His own countrymen (Mark 6:5) closed the door for His services, but even then He responded to any that would have Him so that "he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed *them*".

1. Christ healed "all manner of sickness and disease" (Matthew 4:23; 9:35). He healed those who were beyond human help: the lame, blind, deaf, crippled, demonic and the greatest of ailments – death.

1. Christ went to where the sick were: The faithful Nazarene walked the dirt streets of Palestine to meet the sick in their distress. His healing journeys carried Him into such places as Cana, Capernaum, Jerusalem, Decapolis, Jericho, Magdala, Nain and Phoenicia.

Today's Claims

Dr. William Nolan, author of Healing: A Surgeon in Search of a Miracle (New York: Random House, 1974), witnessed many "healing services" and saw nothing miraculous about them. He attributed the temporary relief of symptoms to suggestion and hypnotism with no change to the underlying disease. He witnessed long lines of organically sick people leaving the services still in their wheelchairs. He searched the literature and found "no documented cures by healers of gallstones, heart disease, cancer or any other serious organic disease."

Dr. Arthur C. Hill, author of Divine Healing: examined by a Physician (Scarborough ON Canada: Everyday Publications, Inc, 1978), reports many instances in which patients were supposedly healed at a "healing service" only to return to their physicians for continued treatment.

Healers outside the Christian Community

Raphael Gasson, a former medium in spiritualism, affirms that "there are many many Spiritualists today who are endowed with this remarkable gift of power by Satan." He has witnessed numerous healings at his own hands and the hands of other Spiritualists resulting in thanks being returned to the spirits who are given credit for the work. (The Challenging Counterfeit, Logos Associates, 1987)

Tongues

The purpose of spiritual gifts in the church are "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12). The special sign gifts were for "confirming the word" (Mark 16:20). Tongues specifically served as a sign to unbelieving Jews (1 Corinthians 14:21,22) that their Messiah has been rejected and now the gospel of God's grace is going out in other tongues to all men: to the Jews (Acts 2), to the Gentiles (Acts 10), to the Samaritans (Acts 8) and to John's disciples (Acts 19).

The Scriptures give us a definite order for their use in the church in 1 Corinthians 14:

1. For the edification of the church (verse 26).
2. By two or at the most three (verse 27).
3. Each in turn (verse 27)
4. An interpretation after each (verse 27).
5. If no interpreter, then no tongues (verse 28).
6. No confusion (verse 33).
7. The women are not to speak (verse 34)
8. Decently and in order (verse 40).

The Spirit never leads contrary to His word. If the practice in the church opposes these guidelines then the practice is not of God.

The word for tongues means languages: "every man heard them speak in his own language" (Acts 2:6). In contrast, the "mystery religions" promoted a frenzied speech of unintelligible sounds. These "mystery religions" thrived in Corinth during the advent of the church.

The resemblance of the mysteries with the Corinthian confusion and today's claims is striking: "The appeal was to the eye, the imagination, and the emotions rather than to the intellect, the main purpose being to induce the initiate through the substitution of personality (by hallucination, hypnotism, or suggestion) to experience his identification with deity...Every serious ystes approached the solemn sacrament of Initiation believing that he thereby became 'twice-born,' a 'new creature,' and passed in a real sense from death unto life by being brought into a mysterious intimacy with the deity...men going out of themselves to be wholly

established in the divine and to enraptured ... resembling what Plato calls a 'divine frenzy.'" (The Mystery Religions by S. Angus, New York: Dover Publications, 1975).

As this counterfeit made inroads among the believers at Corinth, the apostle Paul in first epistle of Corinthians tried to stop it. Notice how he condemns the counterfeit by contrasting it with the real gift of tongues:

Real	Counterfeit
Speaks to men (6)	Speaks to God/or a god (2)
Everyone understands (6)	No one understands (2)
Speaks plainly (8)	Speaks mysteries (2)
Edifies the hearers (11)	Edifies self (4)
Known languages (6,8,11)	Uncertain sound (7-9)
Speaks to the heart (37)	Speaks into the air (9)
Reasonable (15-36)	Mind is unfruitful (14)
Supports the gospel (15-37)	Scorns our witness (23)

Here's a few reasons why this counterfeit cannot be of God:

1. The Corinthian misuse edifies self (1 Corinthians 14:4). It, therefore, opposes the purpose of spiritual gifts which were given for the "edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12).
2. It opposes the love principle which "seeks not its own" (1 Corinthians 13:5).
3. It opposes the Spirit's command, "seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church" (1 Cor. 14:12).
4. Five words of understanding is of more value than 10000 words in an unknown tongue (1 Cor. 14:19).
5. Corinth was the only recorded church that engaged in this activity, and the Spirit describes them as "fleshy" and "babes in Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:1-3).
6. Speaking an unknown tongue is childish: "be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men" (1 Cor. 14:20).
7. "Tongue-speaking does not look very uniquely spiritual to me after many experiences of watching people teach other people how to speak in tongues. I have observed the same routine everywhere I have been: (1) a meeting devoted to intense concentration on tongue-speaking, followed by (2) an atmosphere of heightened suggestibility to the words of the tongue-speaking leader, after which (3) the initiate is able to make the sounds he is instructed to make. It is the same procedure that a competent hypnotist employs." (John Kildah, The Psychology of Speaking in Tongues, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975)
8. "We know of a man who was raised in Africa, the son of missionary parents, who decided – rather cynically perhaps – to test the interpretation of tongues. He attended a tongue-speaking meeting where he was a complete stranger. At the appropriate moment, he rose and spoke the Lord's prayer in the African dialect he had learned in his youth. When he sat down, an interpreter of tongues at once offered the meaning of what he had said. He interpreted it as a message about the imminent second coming of Christ." (John Kildah, The Psychology of Speaking in Tongues, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975).

Tongues have Ceased

1. In 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 the apostle speaks of the duration of things. As to knowledge and prophecy, they will be done away or abolished when the perfect comes. The perfect being that time when we become "a man" (vs 11) and see the Lord "face to face" (vs 12). As to tongues, however, a different Greek word is used. Tongues will not be done away as knowledge and prophecy. Instead, they will stop. The verb tense is also different. The perfect abolishes that which is partial, knowledge and prophecy, but tongues will stop by themselves with no other outside influence. This is why tongues disappears from the text, but knowledge and prophecy continue on: "For we know in part and we prophecy in part" (vs 9).

1. Signs and wonders had a unique purpose during the apostolic age: "And they (the apostles) went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following" (Mark 15:20). "(The Lord) gave testimony unto the word of His grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands (the apostles)" (Acts 14:3).

This purpose was fulfilled: "(Salvation) at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him (the apostles); God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit" (Hebrews 2:3,4). "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders and mighty deeds" (2 Corinthians 12:12).

The apostles are gone. They were part of the foundation that was laid once (Ephesians 2:19,20). The Word of God has been completed so we no longer need the confirming signs.

3. Following the announcement that tongues would cease (1 Corinthians 13:8), they are never again mentioned in Holy Scripture. Also, in every case of sickness recorded in the latter years of the apostolic age, the gift of healing was not employed (3 John 1,2; 2 Timothy 4:20; 2 Corinthians 12:9; 1 Timothy 5:23; Philippians 2:27).

4. The early church fathers report the ceasing of tongues and other sign gifts (The Modern Tongues Movement by Robert Glenn Gromacki, Th. D., Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company: Philadelphia, PA, 1967):
Chrysostom (345-407 AD): Commenting on spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:1-2), "This whole place is very obscure: but the obscurity is produced by our ignorance of the facts referred to and by their cessation, being such as then used to occur but now no longer take place."
Augustine (354-430 AD): "In the earliest time, 'the Holy Ghost fell upon them that believe: and they spake with tongues,' which thy had not learned, 'as the Spirit gave them utterance.' These were signs adapted to the time. For there behooved to be that betokening of the Holy Spirit in all tongues, to show that the Gospel of God was to run through all tongues over the whole earth. That thing was done for a betokening, and it passed away."

5. "During the first four or five hundred years of the church, the only people reported to have spoken in 'tongues' were followers of Montanus who was branded a heretic. The next time anything regarding 'tongues' is found within Christianity is with a group called the Cevenol priests...They were branded heretics because their prophecies went unfulfilled. Another group that spoke in tongues was the Shakers, followers of Mother Ann Lee, who lived from 1736 to 1784. She regarded

herself as the female equivalent of Jesus Christ... From Montanus to Irving, instances of 'tongues' within the Church were never considered to be part of genuine Christianity." (The Charismatics by John F. MacArthur, Jr., Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI).

Other Tests

Love

In the midst of instructing and correcting the Corinthian saints as to the purpose and use of spiritual gifts, the Spirit of God devotes an entire chapter explaining the grand motive that should characterize believers: love. If the use of a spiritual gift is truly of God, then these characteristics will be shown:

1. Patience (verse 4)
2. Kindness (verse 4)
3. Courteous Behavior (verse 5)
4. Humility (verses 4,5)
5. Meekness (verse 5)
6. Truth (verse 6)
7. Long suffering (verse 7)

Fruit

"You shall know them by their fruits" (Matthew 7:16). That which is of the Spirit will display the fruit of the Spirit including peace, patience and self-control (Galatians 5:22,23).

Glorify Christ

The Lord said concerning the Spirit, "He shall glorify Me" (John 16:14). Any work then that is truly of the Spirit will bring glory to the Lord Jesus. If it instead brings glory to the worker or to the flesh, then it cannot be of the Spirit.

Common Misinterpretations

Who Heals all Your Diseases

This cannot be a blanket promise to heal every sickness within the church:

- The Lord did not remove Paul's "thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor. 12:7).
- Timothy, with "unfeigned faith" (2 Timothy 1:5), had "frequent ailments" (1 Timothy 5:23).
- Paul left Trophimus sick at Miletum (2 Timothy 4:20).
- Gaius was prosperous in soul but not in health (3 John 2).
- The Lord said that "they that are sick" need a "physician" (Luke 5:31).
- Sometimes illness may be God's dealing with sin (1 Corinthians 11:29,30).

Spirit Baptism

"For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13). Spirit baptism is not a "special experience" that happens to certain believers. It is what places all believers into the body of Christ.

I will pour out my Spirit

"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 prophecy, and your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams" (Acts 2:17 cited from Joel 2:28). The giving of the Spirit at Pentecost was a foretaste of a coming day when God shall pour out His Spirit upon "all flesh". The context in Joel speak of the northern army being defeated, the great revival of the nation of Israel, the sun darkened and the moon turned to blood. For the Spirit to be poured out in that day, He must first be removed (i.e. the rapture of the Church - 2 Thessalonians 2:6-9).

Baptism of Fire

"He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (Matthew 3:11). Verse 12 explains what the baptism of fire means: "He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." The baptism of fire is a baptism of judgment.

Filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18)

The Spirit indwells every child of God (1 Corinthians 6:19; Romans 8:9). He is given to us the moment we believe (Ephesians 1:13,14) "without measure" (John 3:34) and flows out of those who believe as "living water" (John 7:37-39). The following verses in Ephesians describe some of the things that characterize a believer who is filled with the Spirit: speaking, not in tongues, but "in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs (verse 19), giving thanks (verse 20) and submitting one to another in the fear of God (verse 21). Being filled with the Spirit, then, is not getting more of the Spirit; it is allowing the Spirit to get more of us. It is not an experience for the initiated; it is a life of dependence and obedience for every Christian.

Groanings too Deep for Words (Romans 8:26)

Interpreting this expression as tongues has several difficulties. (1) When tongues was used "every man heard them speak in his own language" (Acts 2:6). A language by definition is not too deep for words. (2) If it meant tongues, then the Spirit would only intercede for those with the gift. (3) The mind of the one praying would be unfruitful (1 Corinthians 14:14). (4) God does not need audible sounds to understand the mind of the Spirit or the thoughts and intents of the human heart.

Praying in the Spirit (Ephesians 6:18; Jude 17)

Does "praying in the Spirit" mean speaking in tongues? Not everyone was intended to speak in tongues ("do all speak with tongues?" 1 Corinthians 12:30). To interpret "praying in the Spirit" as speaking in tongues, one would have to conclude that the apostles charged all saints to do something that not all of them were meant to do! It is every believer's privilege and responsibility to pray in the Spirit, no matter what spiritual gift the Lord has given them.

Tongues of Angels (1 Corinthians 13:1)

Is the gift of tongues actually angel talk? In every instance when angels took human form, they spoke the language of those they appeared to (Numbers 22:22-35; Luke 1:8-38; Matthew 1:18-25; John 20:11-13). As spirits, angels have no audible language because sound requires physical media. The apostles spoke human

language in Acts 2. The apostle in 1 Corinthians 13 is using an exaggeration to make a point: "no matter what comes out of my mouth if I do not have love, I become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal." Speaking an uncertain sound that people cannot understand is the very thing the apostle is warning against. It is the very opposite of a "love language."

Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8)

This verse brings before us the eternal nature of our Lord Jesus. He is "the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end" (Revelation 1:8). Spiritual gifts, on the other hand, were not given until Christ ascended (Ephesians 5:7-12) and the sign gifts ceased (1 Corinthians 13:8,9). Though Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever, sign gifts are not.