

PNEUMATOLOGY: DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

PART 12

SPIRIT BAPTISM, PART 4

I would grant that the Oneness Pentecostals may be on the extreme edge of Pentecostal theology, but I would also suggest that to some degree this thinking is present throughout the various Pentecostal denominations. If tongues is evidence of some super spiritual life, isn't it likely that people who haven't experienced the gift of tongues would feel less than Christian especially when compared to their tongues speaking brethren in their church? And isn't it likely they would be looked upon as somewhat less than Christian? Certainly, they would be considered deficient in the power of the Holy Spirit. If people are continually exhorted to seek the baptism as evidenced by speaking in tongues and it never happens, what does that do to their faith and to their assurance? In the Assembly of God denomination, they seem to indicate that the baptism of the Spirit is a separate act following regeneration, but they also "observe where the baptism of the Holy Spirit becomes seen as nice but not necessary, there the baptism in the Holy Spirit ceases to exist" [Horton, p. 388]. They officially say it is not necessary for salvation but my observation is their practice seems to demand it in order to be considered a true Christian or at the very least a Christian empowered for service.

I don't want to say that Pentecostals display hostility to Systematic Theology but I will say that it is not a priority with them except when it concerns the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the use of spiritual gifts. The Assemblies of God Theological Seminary has only two Systematic Theology classes. In their catalog, under the heading "Theology classes" they have only eleven classes and six of them deal directly with Pentecostal/Charismatic issues such as the baptism in the Holy Spirit, the practice of spiritual gifts and the theology of signs and wonders. By comparison, Tyndale Theological Seminary has 17 undergraduate and 26 graduate level courses in solid theological areas.

The Pentecostal idea of theology is to reflect "on the various *loci* in the context of scriptural witness, the history of the Christian tradition, and a particular contemporary ecclesiastical and/or cultural context....Such works [theology texts written outside Pentecostal circles] were characteristically abstract and encyclopedic in nature, with little or no appeal to experience through testimony or devotional reflection. Throughout the process of developing Bible doctrines, the more experiential and oral theologizing continued among pentecostals through testimonies, sermons, and devotions, without any recognition of the fact that there existed tension between this way of doing theology and the emerging 'Bible doctrines' genre" [Burgess and Van der Maas, p. 1123]. Pentecostals are very big on ecumenical cooperation and on adapting their theology to cul-

tural circumstances. In this sense, they are no different than the Roman Catholic Church.

It is quite clear to us that knowing sound, biblical doctrine is very important; it is crucial for one's spiritual well-being. The people in the UPC Dr. Boyd described are suffering serious spiritual harm and torment simply because they have not properly studied the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, specifically the doctrine of the baptism of the Spirit. Sound doctrine matters and every believer is responsible for knowing it and teaching it to those for whom they are spiritually responsible. The antidote for the harm being done by the Pentecostal doctrine of the Spirit is to adopt literal hermeneutics and reject experiential interpretations of the Bible, but until that happens I am cautioning you to avoid any pastor who is teaching from any sort of Pentecostal perspective.

Obviously, I am very critical of the hermeneutical perversions evident in the Pentecostal/Charismatic/Word of Faith theological systems and of their emphasis on the experiential. Their theology is built on serious departures from literal hermeneutics. In the extremes found in the Word of Faith movement which is the prosperity or health & wealth gospel, I believe they are preaching a false Christ and are, therefore, not believers in the Christ of the Bible. Ultimately, I think their desire for the experiential which is based on the presuppositions of their theology rather than on the Bible is a prelude to the deception that will envelope the world when the antichrist and his false prophet perform authentic, but false, miracles during the Tribulation. These people are so deceived into desiring the miraculous and into relying on the experience of the miraculous that they will completely abandon the truth of the Word for the lie of Satan which has already started in these theological systems. We have already seen how easily people are deceived by the falsehoods inherent in the Toronto Blessing and the Brownsville Revival. Remember, the false miracles of the antichrist are false only in who they are authenticating and not because they are tricks or deceptions. They will be real miracles; they just won't point to God but instead they will point to Satan. Pentecostal theology is so lacking in discernment in this area that many people are being set up to be deceived in this future period. By this I mean that those people who are immersed in this type of theology today but who are unsaved will enter the Tribulation period and they will be prime targets for deception by the antichrist and the false prophet through signs, miracles, and wonders. Any person whose spiritual orientation is toward the experiential rather than the scriptural is ripe for deception both now and then.

This is a major battlefield in the spiritual warfare being waged here and now. Remember, Satan's first attack against God and man was through the questioning, the perversion, and ultimately the denial of God's Word. Any victory he can win in this area, no matter how small, is a victory in his war against God and man. Eternal life hangs in the

balance. I am suggesting that Satan has won a great victory within Pentecostal theology by moving the emphasis from the Word of God to human experience and emotion. I'm going to close with a quote from the Assembly of God church and I want you to notice how many times they use the word "experience" in this quote as justification for their charismatic theology. Also note all the theological conclusions they reach without any Scriptural justification for those conclusions.

"Further, Pentecostals contend that indeed the experience of being baptized is repeated distinctively with the evidence of speaking in tongues following the Day of Pentecost. In the Book of Acts they point to the other four incidents (Samaritan converts, Paul, Cornelius, Ephesian disciples) discussed above, especially the latter two cases where tongues is clearly evident. Also, since this is a question of the availability of the experience for today, Pentecostals point out that during the twentieth century the Acts type of distinctive experience, including speaking in tongues, has been repeated in the lives of millions of Christians around the world. After all, contends Menzies, 'it should not be thought improper to include personal experience and historical accounts at some point in the process of doing theology.' Biblical truth 'ought to be demonstrable in life.' For this reason, Ervin notes, '[I]t is axiomatic to Pentecostals, that the baptism in the Holy Spirit did not expire with Pentecost, nor even with the close of the apostolic age. They believe, and their experience confirms, that it is the birthright of every Christian" [Wyckoff, p. 446].

The Pentecostal doctrine of tongues completely ignores the scripturally identified purpose for tongues which is a sign to unbelieving Jews. Their second doctrinal problem is treating the book of Acts as a normative model for church doctrine throughout the history of the church. The third problem is their reliance on experience which, while they might deny it, does, in fact, trump Scripture in their systematic theology. The fourth problem with their doctrine is their inclusion of culture and tradition into their theology which also includes an ecumenical emphasis of cooperating with doctrinally aberrant theological systems as long as they affirm the Pentecostal understanding of Charismatic gifts. The fifth problem is their misrepresentation of the position of those who oppose their understanding of the baptism of the Spirit. We do not say the baptism of the Spirit expired with Pentecost or at any time thereafter. We do deny that it is some sort of event that happens some period of time after the new birth. Instead, it is a baptism that occurs at the moment of the new birth and it is not evidenced by speaking in tongues. Finally, simply because someone experiences something does not validate that experience apart from scriptural support.

We have noted that biblical tongues are a real human language spoken in situations that make them a sign to unbelieving Jews. Human experience is not a reliable indication of truth. Tongues is not some sort of private prayer language that is uttered in unin-

telligible speech. There are only two explanations for gibberish passing as tongues. One is from a person seeking to avoid embarrassment for not speaking in tongues or a person seeking to be embraced into the tongues speaking community in which case they make it up. The other reason for gibberish is far more sinister. Pagans throughout history have spoken in this type of gibberish. If a person is truly granted the ability to speak in this manner from a spiritual source, that source originates in the demonic realm and it is not from God.

The bottom line is we reject tongues as practiced today by Pentecostals and Charismatics as a valid form of biblical tongues speaking.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Spiritual gifts are distributed by the Holy Spirit to the individual members of the body of Christ for the edification of that body. Edification, οἰκοδομή, means building up the house, making more able, a building up, strengthening; to increase the potential of someone or something with focus on the process involved. It is from οἶκος meaning a house, dwelling, and home. In context, it is about strengthening the entire body of Christ as each member works not for individual gain but for the collective good of the whole body. Gifts are not for personal aggrandizement or honor or glory. Things that edify the church are things that increase its potential to serve and glorify the Lord. It is not about us as individuals; it is about glorifying Christ. That's why believing people who depart from the local body harm the entire body by their absence. They have removed their Spirit granted gifts from the body and no longer serve to build it up. The only valid reason for leaving a local body is due to false, inaccurate, or unbiblical teaching. From teachers such as that, we are to flee. It is unbiblical to remain in a place that is not teaching sound, biblical doctrine based on literal hermeneutics. Scripture clearly tells us to depart from these people.

Romans 16:17-18 ¹⁷Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them. ¹⁸For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting.

2 Timothy 3:5 ⁵holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.

2 Timothy 2:16-19 ¹⁶But avoid irreverent, empty speech, for this will produce an even greater measure of godlessness. ¹⁷And their word will spread like gangrene; Hymenaeus and Philetus are among them. ¹⁸They have deviated from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and are overturning the faith of some.

¹⁹Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, having this inscription: The Lord knows those who are His, and Everyone who names the name of the Lord must turn away from unrighteousness. [HCSB]

1 Timothy 4:6–7 ⁶In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following. ⁷But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness;

As we examine the doctrine of spiritual gifts, we will see that much of the teaching in the church today on this issue in the Pentecostal, Charismatic, and Word of Faith congregations causes dissension and is contrary to sound biblical exegesis and that it is a form of godliness that claims to have much power but in reality has no power whatsoever because it is founded on untruths and it therefore becomes godlessness. It is a movement that disdains literal hermeneutics. These movements are saturated with irreverent, empty speech and their words have indeed spread like gangrene throughout contemporary American "churchianity." These doctrines are nothing more than fables and as such they are unrighteous. Paul goes on to say that the people he is referring to in Romans 16:17-18 are serving their own appetites and deceiving people with smooth talk and flattering words. They are Satan's angels of light who appear to be people of righteousness but are rabid wolves in sheep's clothing tearing the flock apart. If this isn't a picture of the modern Word of Faith, prosperity gospel, then what is it? This is why it is imperative that each one of us be solidly grounded in the truth of the Scriptures which results in understanding, discernment, and adherence to sound doctrine. The form of godliness Paul refers to is the super spirituality of the Charismatic movement, among others such as the Roman Catholic Church, that seems to be so pious and godly but is in reality a denial of the truth of the Word of God and often even a contradiction of it. My point is there is a lot of dangerous teaching in our world today that involves false teaching, and for our purposes in this study about spiritual gifts, the type of which we were warned against almost 2,000 years ago. Due to the saturation of this sort of false doctrine in Christian media, it has crept into what are otherwise doctrinally sound churches through Christian people who have not recognized the deception. Paul counseled Pastor Timothy that being a good servant of the Lord involves continually being nourished on the words of faith and on sound doctrine. By so doing, he would vaccinate people with the Word of God which is our vaccine against aberrant, false doctrines. When the pastors and the teachers are sound in their doctrine, they will teach that sound doctrine to the brothers and sisters so they will not fall prey to these charlatans in the prosperity gospel, these angels of light who masquerade as pastor/teachers and disguise their true intent which is to satisfy their own ungodly desires to accumulate wealth for themselves. Faithful pastors and teachers will also assist their flock in understanding the true meaning of the exercise of spiritual gifts within the local body which

even in the most conservative of Pentecostal denominations has missed the mark. Pastors are not only responsible to teach sound doctrine but also to warn the flock concerning false doctrine. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of every believer to know sound doctrine so they are enabled by God to discern false doctrine and to turn away from those who teach the lie.

2 Corinthians 11:4 ⁴For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully.

2 Corinthians 11:13–15 ¹³For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. ¹⁵Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.

People have become so biblically ignorant today that they willingly embrace false teachers, false prophets, and false apostles who are Satan's minions, filling pulpits, and leading people away from the truth. Many men and women in the Charismatic and Word of Faith movements are today falsely calling themselves "apostles" and "prophets" in order to further their deception. They present a completely world centered message of health and wealth that is completely devoid of biblical truth. They are a large segment of churchianity. But this is nothing new; Paul wrote about and warned against these things 2,000 years ago.