

Adult Bible Institute
Fall Semester, 2003
Spiritual Gifts Class, Session #8
Topic: "The Charismatic Controversy" Part 1
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Introduction:

- A. History: The Pentecostal movement is only about 100 years old, beginning just after the turn of the last century. It was what its name reflects---a belief that the miraculous events of the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 should be reproduced in church in every age. This movement developed a doctrine that there was a receiving of the Holy Spirit, called "the Baptism," subsequent to salvation. The Baptism in the Holy Spirit came by the laying on of hands and was marked by the manifestation of spiritual power and often by speaking in tongues.
- B. History: The Charismatic movement began in the San Fernando Valley (Reseda, California) in 1970. It's major distinction from the Pentecostal movement that spawned it was that the receiving of the Holy Spirit is always marked by speaking in tongues and that every Christian should be seeking this gift.
- C. A commendable point---there surely has been a decreasing emphasis on the power of the Holy Spirit ever since the Protestant Reformation in the late 1500's. Christianity has become more and more an academic faith devoid of intimacy with God and vibrant experiencing of His presence and power. This has manifested itself in the belief by many Reformed Theologians that God does not do miracles today. Pentecostalism has addressed what I agree is a real problem---an almost desupernaturalizing of Christianity. There should be a greater manifestation of spiritual power and a greater emphasis on the Holy Spirit than there is in the church today.
- D. In addressing this problem, however, the Charismatic movement represents a swing of the pendulum too far to the other extreme, actually repeating many of the very errors that the Apostle Paul rebuked the Corinthian church for 2000 years ago.
- E. What are some of the problems of the Charismatic movement?

I. AN EMPHASIS ON PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OVER THE SCRIPTURES AS THE MAJOR VALIDATOR OF TRUTH.

- A. In Charismatic service, media and writings there is a tendency to accept any supernatural experience that one claims to have as being from the Holy Spirit

without seeing if this is confirmed by the Bible.

- B. Everything from out of control services to reports of people dying and ascending to Heaven and returning to tell of it, reports not only of faith healers, but of washing machines being healed by miracle power, dogs speaking in “unknown barks,” etc., etc.
- C. To question such things is declared to be blasphemy against the Holy Spirit and committing the “unpardonable sin” by many in the Charismatic movement (see Matthew 12).
- E. When experience is ungoverned by Scripture, chaos abounds. Catholic claims of appearances of Mary, Joseph Smith’s claims to have seen Peter, James and John the Baptist, Sun Myung Moon’s claims that Jesus appeared to him on Easter Sunday, 1936, none of these things are open to question.

II. A FAILURE ON THE PART OF THE CHARISMATICS TO UNDERSTAND THE KEY DISTINCTIONS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT IN THE ROLE AND PURPOSE OF THE MIRACULOUS GIFTS VERSUS THE MINISTRY GIFTS.

- A. There is a clear theology in the New Testament that the miraculous gifts, God giving individuals the ability to do miraculous things, were intended as “signs” to the people.
 - 1. Note the language in the following verses: Acts 2:22; 2:43; 4:30; 6:8; 7:36; 8:8; 8:13; 2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:3-4.
 - a. The working of miraculous gifts are always declared to be “signs.”
 - b. Note that the gift of tongues are very specifically said to be “for a sign” in 1 Cor. 14:22.
- B. What was the purpose of miraculous signs? Accreditation of the messenger and his message as being from God---see Exodus 4:27-31 (Moses); Acts 2:22 (Jesus).
- C. Who were “signs” primarily intended for? The Jews (see 1 Cor. 1:22; Matt. 12:38).
- D. These signs are primarily associated with the foundational ministry/age of the Apostles (see 2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:3-4).

III. A FAILURE BY THE CHARISMATICS TO RECOGNIZE THE REASON FOR THE UNIQUE DESCENDINGS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE BOOK OF ACTS.

- A. Acts 2---the birth of the Church.
- B. Acts 8---the hated Samaritans.
- C. Acts 10---the hated Gentiles.
- D. Acts 19---disciples of John the Baptist (a group that had a history of being competitive with the 12 disciples of Jesus---see John 3:22-26).
- E. There is a very clear explanation of the purpose of these sign gifts, particularly tongues, in Acts 11:1-18. The gift was a sign for the Jewish church leaders that the Gospel had gone to the Gentiles.
- F. Note the pattern of this movement by the Holy Spirit through the Book of Acts and how it clearly reflects Jesus' outline of the expansion of the Gospel in Acts 1:8. Once this foundational work is accomplished, the need for these miraculous sign gifts ceases (Eph. 2:20).