

Gift of Languages

Key Verse: “*What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.*”

—***I Corinthians 14:15***

Selected Scriptures:
Acts 2:1-7,12;
I Corinthians 14:13-19

THIS LESSON COMMENCES

with a dramatic manifestation of God’s Holy Spirit bestowed upon the Early Church. “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. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as

the Spirit gave them utterance.”—Acts 2:1-4

This occurrence was in fulfillment of a promise made by Christ to his disciples following his resurrection and prior to his ascension to the Heavenly Father. He had appeared to them on several occasions to strengthen their faith by giving them proofs that he was no longer in the tomb. Additionally, they were to be “endued with power from on high,” which would enable them to carry out their mission of proclaiming the Gospel throughout the world. This privilege has continued to be exercised by faithful Christians even to this very day.—Luke 24:48,49

At the time this miracle occurred, devout Jews from various countries had made a religious pilgrimage to Jerusalem and were conversant only in the language of their adopted country. Nevertheless, as Christ's disciples testified concerning Jesus' resurrection and the Gospel of the kingdom, their hearers were amazed that as Galileans, these unlearned followers of Jesus had the ability to declare such a profound message, which they were each able to understand in their own language.—Acts 2:5-12

The Apostle Paul emphasized the importance of publicly expounding God's promises and purposes for mankind in a manner that would edify the hearers, as opposed to merely speaking in an unknown language to impress others that he had been favored with this special gift. Thus, any words spoken to others without interpreting them for the benefit of the listeners would be unprofitable, and an evidence of lacking in the proper spirit of love.—I Cor. 14:1-13

In our Key Verse, Paul underscores the fact that even the great privilege and necessity of public prayer should be done with a view to blessing others. This can only be achieved when the words expressed are understood and the listeners thus enabled to acquiesce to the spirit of the petition.

Although as an apostle, Paul was greatly used by God in declaring many aspects of the divine plan of salvation, he also gave appropriate utterance as to how his gift of language should be used. "Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue."—vs. 19

May we as believers similarly witness to others in a manner that will assist them in understanding God's glorious plan of salvation that will bless all the willing and obedient members of the human family. Let us strive to have all our words "excel to the edifying of the church."—vs. 12 ■