



“My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (I Corinthians 2:4).

Gifts for Public Speech

Central Truth: God uses public speaking gifts to instruct the church and win the lost.

L387. Date: April 1990. **Text:** I Corinthians 2:1-8.

Topic: Holy Spirit: Gifts of.

Consider the power of the spoken word. It is so powerful that God chose to use the gift of speech as His primary means to win the lost and instruct the saved. Sometimes He uses public oration (as in Acts 2) and sometimes He uses private conversation (as in John 3, 4). But by the spoken word He communicates the gospel.

Speaking to people about the things of Jesus is so important in our Christian ministry that Jesus calls us witnesses. (A witness is one who gives a firsthand account of what he has seen or experienced.) We are under His Great Commission to be His witnesses so that every human being might know of God.

Someone imagined that when Jesus returned to heaven He was met by the archangel who asked, “Lord, when will You send the heavenly hosts to earth to tell people what You have done?”

He replied, “I will not send the angels.”

“Then how will people know that You have provided salvation for them?” the angel inquired.

“I left a few believers there and told them to take the message to everyone,” Jesus explained.

The angel asked, “But what if they do not. What other plan do You have?”

Jesus said, “I have no other plan.”

That is why spiritual gifts of speaking are so important in the Christian economy.

We are not left alone to do the best we can in human effort. Spiritual gifts of speaking have been given to make our witness effective.

I. PROPHECY

A. Prevalence — Prophecy is mentioned more often than any other of the spiritual gifts. It is included in all four lists of spiritual gifts (Romans 12:6-8; I Corinthians 12:8-11, 28-30; Ephesians 4:11). It is expanded in a discussion of its relative value when compared with the gift of languages (I Corinthians 14). The conclusion is that it is far greater than the gift of languages by a ratio of five to ten thousand (I Corinthians 14:19). God set the ministry of prophecy as an office gift in the churches and provided gifted men to fill that office.

B. Definition — *Prophecy* is to “forthtell” and not just to “foretell.” It is to speak forth by divine direction the message one has received from God. The essential element of prophecy is to proclaim. Exodus 7:1, 2 explains the nature of prophecy. God spoke to Moses; Moses spoke to Aaron what God said; Aaron spoke to Pharaoh what Moses said. Moses was the prophet (spokesman) of God, and Aaron was the prophet (spokesman) of Moses (Exodus 7:1). A prophet is one who speaks for another. The New Testament prophets were men who spoke for God the message of Jesus Christ.

C. Demonstration — Jesus is the ideal Prophet. He was the one whom God sent and who spoke the words of God (John 3:34). He gave us the words that God had given Him (John 17:8). He was recognized by His peers as “*Jesus of Nazareth, . . . a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people*” (Luke 24:19).

John the Baptist was a prophet, a man sent from God, who spoke God's call to repentance. The disciples of Jesus were prophets in the prediction of future events (Acts 11:27-30; 21:10-14) and in the proclamation of present messages from the Lord.

The gift of prophecy is changed today from the original gift of the New Testament. At first the prophets in the Christian churches gave extrabiblical revelatory messages from God. (They spoke divine truths which had not been written in the Bible at that time.) But when the Bible was written, prophecy became the declaration of God's message contained in the Bible and explained in view of current needs. The gift of prophecy remains today

in the sense that God directed preaching is still practiced. Preachers who see the world in the light of God's Word and speak the message of God to the present generation are God's prophets today.

II. TEACHING

A. Primary — The spiritual gift of teaching is the basic of all the spiritual gifts. It is essential to evangelism, for “*faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*” (Romans 10:17). It is essential to spiritual growth, for the Bible is the pure milk by which we grow (I Peter 2:2).

Jesus was a teacher. He is called “*Teacher*,” “*Rabbi*,” “*Master*” many times and is seldom called a preacher. His disciples were commanded to teach for evangelism and for the spiritual growth of converts (Matthew 28:18-20). The teaching method of making and instructing converts is so effective that false teachers use it also (II Peter 2:1). Teaching is a primary spiritual gift.

B. Definition — To *teach* means “to give instruction, to present truth systematically, to cause one to learn.” Christian teaching is to impart the will of God with instructions which order relationships between God and man and between man and man. One has not taught unless another has learned. The teacher imparts knowledge and skills by individual attention to the learner. There is a person-to-person exchange in teaching.

C. Marks — A person with the spiritual gift of teaching will have a great desire to know the Word of God. He will be impatient with superficial dealing with the Word and will thrill at insights he receives. Not content with knowing, the teacher has a desire to communicate what he knows. He will practice and require obedience to what is learned from the Bible. Although he is not as emotional as some, the teacher loves God sincerely and is not content unless he seeks out and shares treasures of God.

D. Function — The spiritual gift of teaching is present today and is needed today. The church must honor her teachers and receive their ministry. The pastor who labors in the Word and doctrine should be counted worthy of twice the salary he receives (I Timothy 5:17). A tragedy in churches today is that many who teach do not have the spiritual gift of teaching and some who have the gift are not in the teaching ministry.

III. EXHORTATION

The Greek word *paraklesis* is translated “exhortation” in Romans 12:8 and is listed as one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Notice the spelling of the

word. It is a compound word made up of a preposition (*para* means with) and a verb (*kaleo* means to call). Hence, the word means to call to be with; to call alongside. It pictures two people talking together, the one counseling and encouraging the other.

The spiritual gift of exhortation is best related to the present ministry of counseling, either group counselor or private counsel. It means to stir up through speech, to admonish, to exhort, to direct to a needed course of action. Comfort looks back to past trials, while exhort looks forward to future action.

The disciples practiced exhortation. Barnabas was nicknamed “*the son of consolation*” or “the Son of Encouragement” (Acts 4:36). Paul made it a point to visit believers and exhort “*them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord*” (Acts 11:23).

The Bible recommends exhortation. All preaching has an element of exhorting. All teaching has an element of exhorting. But some of God's people are able to see a problem and know how to give practical step-by-step guidance in accord with the will of God. Thank God for the exhorters, counselors, and admonishers among us.

We need that ministry today. It may be expressed in a parent/child, pastor/member, or counselor/counselee relationship. It maybe done in the home, the church, the school, at work, or wherever God provides the opportunity. It sees where a person is spiritually (including mind, emotion, and will) and gives steps on how he moves on from there. The Bible must be our guide in all counseling. One who needs the help of a professional counselor should go to an evangelical Christian whom God has gifted with that ministry. Secular counsel is profitable in some areas, but only Christian counsel is safe.

IV. TONGUES

A. Definition — The Greek word *glossa* is used fifty times in the New Testament. It is translated “*tongue*” in our English versions. Those fifty usages have four different meanings. (1) Fourteen times it refers to the physical organ in the mouth, as in Mark 7:33. (2) One time it describes an elongated shape, like the human tongue in Acts 2:3. (3) Twice it is a figure of speech describing one's manner of speech, as in Acts 2:26. (4) Thirty-three times it refers to a distinct human language spoken by people in a certain locality, as in Acts 26:14. Of those thirty-three references to tongue as a distinct human language, there are seven in the book of Revelation, four in Acts, and twenty-two in I Corinthians 12—14.

The spiritual gift of languages (tongues) is the God-given ability to speak fluently in a distinct human language one has not known or spoken before. It is not the result of exceptional human ability, but it is received as the Holy Spirit enables utterance (Acts 2:4).

B. References — The gift of languages was one of five miracle gifts which Jesus promised would confirm the message of Christians (Mark 16:17-20). It is reported at four different locations in the book of Acts: in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4); in Caesarea upon the conversion of Cornelius (Acts 10:44-48); in Ephesus at the conversion of about a dozen men whom Paul led to Christ after they heard of the preaching of John the Baptist (Acts 19:1-7); and in Corinth, which was a crossroads of the world in commercial enterprises at that time (I Corinthians 12-14).

Tongues are listed as a spiritual gift only in I Corinthians 12. They are called “signs” in other locations. They are so much inferior to intelligible speech in the church that it is better to speak five words that are understood than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue (I Corinthians 14:19).

C. Purpose — The gift of languages was an evangelistic tool in New Testament times. It was “*a sign. . . to them that believe not*” (I Corinthians 14:22). They were not needed for a prayer language, a means of praising God, a badge of spiritual superiority, or a proof that one had received the Holy Spirit. They had one purpose: that every person might hear the gospel of Jesus in his native language or dialect (his “heart language”) in order to understand it clearly and be saved.

The interpretation of the gift of languages was mentioned only in Corinth. That was probably because that city was an international center of trade. People from language groups all over the civilized world passed through there. In a crowd of people there may have been several languages represented. Skilled interpreters were not always present. So God enabled some to hear the sounds of a language they did not know, to recognize its words and to speak their message in the native language of another person. That way every person could hear in his own language and understand clearly the message of God.

The spiritual gift of tongues is not given today. What is called the gift is a psychologically conditioned emotional overflow. The gift ceased with the completion of the Bible.

God has given us the ability to speak that we might communicate with Him and with one another. Sanctify your lips to speak as the oracle of God. If He has given you one of the speaking gifts, develop it and use it to His glory.

Questions

1. How is speech God's primary way to win the lost and instruct the saved?
2. What is the gift of prophecy?
3. How might that gift manifest itself among Christians today?
4. How do you define the gift of teaching?
5. Why is that gift important in the church today?
6. How would the gift of exhorting manifest itself today?
7. What is the gift of "*tongues*"?
8. What was the original purpose of that spiritual gift?
9. What is the explanation of the claim of that gift today?
10. What speaking gifts are exercised in your church?