

Tongues of Fire

And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. – Acts 2:3

The Holy Spirit's dispensational ministry through the Church was initiated at Pentecost and was first manifested by visible, cloven tongues like fire resting upon the apostles. Grasping the significance of the symbolism chosen by God in the use of these fiery tongues will embolden us to devotedly and courageously live out our purpose as believers.

These timid apostles had been waiting for this moment. It had been promised by the Lord Himself. But their obedience, while laudable, was also filled with the frailty of human fear. They were essentially outlaws at this point – wanted men by the twisted jurisprudence of the Sanhedrin. Thus, "waiting" and "hiding" were relatively symbiotic postures in the hearts of those early believers assembled in the room on the day of Pentecost. But this is exactly what God intended – His power filling fallible but willing people to advance the gospel and announce the Kingdom.

Why fire? Because fire consumes everything in its path and is unquenchable when it burns hot. Hearts aflame with God's power and love cannot be stopped and they cannot be extinguished by men or devils. A truly converted soul will shine brightly for Jesus, emanating His love for sinners and exhibiting great zeal for the things of God. Fiery witness in the here and now will rescue men and women from the fires of eternal Justice. Fire will capture men's attention away from the fleeting pleasures of this life. Fire will act as a beacon to lost souls. Fire will warm the hearts of sinners left in the cold and frigid residue of their destructive decisions. It is fiery devotion that is the divine imprimatur upon the church of Jesus Christ.

Why tongues? The tongue is the instrument of human communication. Believers are saved to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, reserved in heaven above, but we are left here on this corrupted earth to communicate that salvation to fellow sinners until God calls us home. Our words, our actions, our lives are all to work in concert to communicate the great message that mankind is in need of salvation, and that Jesus is the only Savior mighty enough to rescue them. We are citizens of heaven and ambassadors for Christ – schooled in His Word, prepared by His Spirit, commissioned for His cause. We must translate for lost souls their offense to Holiness. We must delineate for them the unsearchable riches of God's love for them. And we must warn them of the solemn repercussions of spurning His overtures of mercy and grace. Our lives must consistently be aligned with our words in order to present a monolithic communique from Heaven.

Why cloven tongues? Because God will not set aside our personalities in His great work but will use them for His intended end. He transforms our hearts, but He designed our personage. He has gifted each of us with a unique set of tools that He intends for us to use to reach those who cross our paths. The cleaving of the tongue reminds us that witnessing is a mingling of divine power and purpose with human emotion and frailty. It is simply amazing that the Holy Ghost uses faulty, earthen vessels like the apostles – and like you, and like me – to populate Heaven's blissful shores.

Is it any wonder that our tongues will forever sing aloud the praises of Him Who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light and commissioned us to His work. There is someone in our sphere today that needs to hear, fellow believer. Let us be filled with the power of the Spirit and the love of Christ to communicate to them the good news of our God. – D. Murcek