

Silverdale Baptist Church and the Charismatic

Through the years, people have visited a Silverdale worship service and noticed that our services are not very traditional. The songs are more contemporary and upbeat and often times the participants are more expressive in worship. So some have concluded that we are a Baptist Charismatic or a Pentecostal church. Let me state our position on this topic.

Unfortunately, the word charismatic has been hijacked by a denomination. Charismatic is the English transliteration of the Greek word "charismata." It just simply means "grace gift." The Bible says that God has given spiritual gifts to Christians and to the Church (Romans 12:6-8, 1 Cor. 12:8-11). Now most people do not have a problem with most spiritual gifts; but they wonder if gifts like prophecy, healing, and tongues are still in existence today. Modern day churches fall into one of two camps: Cessationists (gifts have ceased) or Continuationists (gifts continue even today).

The problem with many of the Continuationists is that they became extreme in their theology. They said that if you are truly a Christian then:

- You must speak in tongues.
- Speaking in tongues is a sign of the baptism or the fullness of the Spirit.
- Since you are filled with the Spirit, then you are always getting special words of knowledge from the Spirit.
- You need to prophesy those words over other people.
- Since healing is for today, then everyone should be healed.
- If you are not healed then you have lack of faith or there is sin in your life.
- Since the gift of discernment is for today, then you have the ability to discern the activity of demons. The next thing you know, there was a demon behind every rock and problem.

So much of the Charismatic and Pentecostal movement became so experience-driven that it became a Charismatic Chaos. It is little more than Christian Mysticism.

Subsequently, the worship services in many of these churches is more about emotional manipulation and working people into a frenzy. In some ways it is more pagan than Christian. The Pastor is more like a "medicine man" who talks about his vision while the people sing and dance and get themselves into an emotional frenzy. Now they may plug in the name Jesus or even use biblical concepts, but their emotionalism leaves little room for real biblical theology. And all of this is done in the name of being filled with the Spirit. Any teaching that focuses on the work of the Holy Spirit to the relative disregard of the incarnation, ministry, crucifixion, resurrection, exaltation and future return of the Son is dangerous and unbiblical.

Now the rest of Christianity saw this charismatic chaos and knew that it was extreme and biblically out of balance. So in a knee-jerk reaction we declared that anything that looked charismatic must be wrong. And a theology came about called cessationists. They declared that all spiritual gifts have ceased. And many churches went to the other extreme. Saying things like:

- If you speak in tongues you must have a demon.
- God is sovereign over sickness and He will heal with or without your prayers.
- Don't talk about Satan or demons because don't you know that they can't even touch a Christian?

- If you get too excited in worship and clap or raise your hands or get too happy, they'll come to you and say, "You are more concerned with emotional feeling than you are Jesus. This is no pep rally. Be still and know God!"
- They might say, "The only way God speaks to us is in the Bible." So their new trinity was God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Bible.

And just as many of the Pentecostal churches have moved into mysticism, many of these churches have moved into legalism.

As Pastors and Elders of Silverdale Baptist Church, we believe that both extremes are out of balance and unbiblical. When it comes to the work of the Holy Spirit it seems like some will either completely ignore the Spirit or exalt the Spirit above the other two members of the Trinity. One leads to a cold and formal religion and the other becomes hyper-individualized, experience-driven chaos.

So now, when someone asks whether Silverdale is charismatic, we must discern the meaning of the question. Are they asking if we believe that the gifts are available today? If so, we say yes. If however, they are asking if we support such doctrines as the necessity of tongues and a second baptism or the disorderly display of gifts, then we have to answer absolutely not.

Biblically, let us explain our position. Scripture nowhere explicitly states that the gifts have ceased. In fact, we have implicit evidence that they will continue until the return of Christ. ⁸ *Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away.* ⁹ *For we know in part and we prophesy in part,* ¹⁰ *but **when the perfect comes**, the partial will pass away ...* ¹² *For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then **face to face**. Now I know in part; then I shall **know fully**, even as I have been fully known.* (1 Corinthians 13:8-12, ESV)

When will the gifts cease? "When the perfect comes" and when we see "face to face" and when we "know fully." Some claim that this refers to the completion and canonization of the Bible. But this does not seem to be the best interpretation of this passage. We now have the Scriptures, but can we say that we "know fully"? Surely not. It seems to be a much more convincing argument that the coming of the perfect refers to the return of the Son of God. And since He has not yet returned, therefore, the gifts have not ceased.

And since spiritual gifts are still available today, we believe that the Holy Spirit desires to continually fill each believer with power to witness, and that He imparts His supernatural gifts for the edification of the Body and the work of ministry in the world. So Spiritual gifts should be desired by God's people (1 Corinthians 12:31; 14:1, 39) and carefully practiced according to the Scriptures. We must be careful to exercise gifts in an orderly manner (1 Corinthians 14:40), and to subject them to the Word of God (1 Corinthians 14:37). As long as gifts are exercised in an orderly and humble manner, subject to the Scriptures and done in a spirit of love, then we certainly encourage all members to pursue and practice them.

We encourage you to study more on this topic, especially the biblical passages we have included, and seek to serve one another in love. You might go through our PLACE study that will help you to identify your spiritual gifts and learn how to use them in the church. As you do so, constantly come back to the gospel. The gifts should continually push us back to the person and work of Jesus Christ.