

A. PRAYER

Tongues is a prayer language unto the Lord, it is about Him! In I Corinthians 14:14-15 we read, "**For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding.**" Prayer to God can be in tongues at times, especially when we don't know what to pray for. But that is not the only way we are to pray. If we only pray in tongues, we wouldn't know when God answered our prayers.

But we can pray in tongues as Paul said in Romans 8:26-27, "**Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.**"

Thus, as we pray in the spirit, we pray unhindered by our flesh, so selfishness and other sinful attitudes are eliminated from our prayer. Think if it this way, as the fifteenth-century Italian reformer Savonarola put it, "When prayer reaches its ultimate, words are impossible."

B. WORSHIP

Tongues is about worship, the worship of the Lord. In I Corinthians 14:15-16 we read, "**What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding. Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say 'Amen' at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say?**" As we speak in tongues we are worshipping the Lord, our focus is Him.

C. GIVING THANKS

Tongues is also used to give thanks unto the Lord. In I Corinthians 14:17 we read, "**For you indeed give thanks well . . .**" When we speak in tongues we are giving thanks to God, something we should be doing not only in tongues! But the focus is on the Lord, it is all about Him and that truly is what this gift is about!

D. STRENGTHENS THE INNER MAN

Lastly, this gift does help to strengthen the inner man. In I Corinthians 14:4 we read, "**He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself . . .**" Tongues does not necessarily build up the church, for the words are unto God, but it does strengthen the individual who is exercising this gift. We read in Jude 20, "**But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit.**" That is not to say it can't edify the church, it can but prophecy is more edifying than tongues to the church!

NEW TESTAMENT EXAMPLES OF THE GIFT OF TONGUES

1. **THE DAY OF PENTECOST - ACTS 2:1-11**

In these verses we see the gift of tongues being exercised right after they were filled with the Spirit. They spoke known dialects perfectly. Even though they didn't know what they were saying, the other people were able to hear them in their own dialects speaking praise unto God for all His wonderful works.

2. **EMPOWERING BY THE SPIRIT - ACTS 4:19-20, 31**

What was the evidence here that they were empowered by the Holy Spirit? They spoke the Word of God with boldness. Yes tongues are evidence that a person is filled with the Holy Spirit, but it is not *THE* evidence as some like to teach.

3. **REVIVAL IN SAMARIA - ACTS 8:17**

Did you notice that when hands were laid upon them it doesn't say anything about tongues being exercised here? We know that something was different in their lives at this point because Simon the sorcerer wanted to purchase it with money. A common practice in the occult back then was to sell your secrets, your powers. Thus, there was something visible that was manifested in their lives, but we shouldn't try and imply that it was this gift of tongues. It could have been something else or even a combination of gifts being exercised by these individuals.

4. **GENTILES SAVED AND SPEAK IN TONGUES – ACTS 10:44-48**

As God's Word is given to these gentiles they get saved. After they were saved, the Holy Spirit came upon them empowering them for service. We see here that the gift of tongues is in operation and as it is, we see praise given unto God. If tongues were spoken, how did they understand what was said? It is possible that the gift of interpretation of tongues was also in operation and as the gift of tongues was used, so too was the gift of interpretation and they heard God being praised, magnified, as He should be!

5. **ENCOUNTER IN EPHESUS - ACTS 19:5-7**

Here they not only spoke in tongues but they also prophesied which shows us different evidences for the empowering of the Holy Spirit.

The gift of tongues is a beautiful prayer and praise language unto God. Don't be afraid of it. It is as Paul said, "**For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.**" I Corinthians 14:2. The gift of tongues!

What the Bible says about . . . Gifts of the Spirit Part 9

8. **GIFT OF TONGUES**

In I Corinthians 12:7-11 we see the gift of tongues or speaking in tongues spoken of, GLOSSA, (gloce-sah') in the Greek. This is a kind of personal prayer language given by God through which the believer can communicate with God beyond the limits of knowledge and understanding. It is this gift that has divided the body of Christ into two main groups with still others between those two groups. Let me explain.

On the one end of the spectrum there are what we would call the charismaniacs. They believe that anything and everything goes. Then, on the other end of the spectrum, you have those who we would call charisphobics. These people are terrified of the spiritual gifts and believe that most of them have passed off the scene.

Remember what Paul said in I Corinthians 14:40, "**Let all things be done decently and in order.**" The charismaniacs have the first part of what Paul said down pat, "**Let all things be done.**" And the charisphobics have the last part of what Paul said down pat, "**be done decently and in order.**" I think they are both wrong in their thinking, in what they believe. I see that there is a balance between them both and the Lord wants us to exercise these gifts and to exercise them as He has instructed us to, or as Paul said, "**Let all things be done decently and in order.**"

THE TWO EXTREMES REGARDING THE GIFT OF TONGUES

1. **CHARISMANIACS**

First we are going to look at the abuse of this gift, what we have called the charismaniacs. This group of people believes that the manifestation of being filled or empowered by the Spirit, is speaking in tongues. If you don't speak in tongues then the Holy Spirit has not come upon you or empowered you for service.



First of all, that kind of attitude can easily lead to spiritual pride. If you don't have this gift, there are all kinds of pressures placed upon you to manifest it, even to the point of faking it so you fit in with the spiritual elite. Yet that kind of thinking, that if you don't speak in tongues you are not empowered by the Holy Spirit, is not Scriptural. How do I know that they are wrong regarding this belief, that a sign that you are empowered by the Spirit is speaking in tongues? Because the Scriptures don't support it!

First, Paul tells us in I Corinthians 12:28, "**And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.**" Did you see that? Tongues are way down on the list of spiritual gifts. The way some talk you would think that tongues is the most important spiritual gift. Yes, it is important because God has given it to us, but lets not read into the Scriptures something that is not there.

Paul makes another point as he goes on in verse 29 of I Corinthians chapter 12, "**Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?**"

Paul is asking a rhetorical question with the answer being "No, not all speak in tongues nor do all interpret the message of tongues." How can that be if tongues are a sign that you are empowered by the Spirit of God, that the Spirit of God has come upon you to empower you for service? That is easy. As you read that you can easily see it is saying to us that tongues is not the sign of being empowered by the Holy Spirit. Yes we do see this happen at times in the book of Acts where the believers were empowered by the Holy Spirit and then they spoke in tongues, but as you will see in a few minutes, that is not how it always happened.

Also, understand that not everyone is going to speak in tongues. Don't feel that you are lacking because you don't. On the other hand we should not be afraid of this gift, as some are, because it is a beautiful gift that the Holy Spirit gives to us.

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2. CHARISPHOBICS

The second group is the charisphobics and this group generally believes that the manifestation of this gift of tongues passed off the scene at the close of the apostolic period when the New Testament cannon was completed. Many times they will go to I Corinthians 13:8-10 as their proof text, where we read, "**... But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.**"

It does sound like Paul is saying that tongues will pass off the scene and their rationale goes like this. They believe that Paul, in I Corinthians 13:10, was speaking of the completion of the New Testament when he said, "**... when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.**" Thus, the gift of tongues has ceased. The gift of prophecy has failed. The gift of knowledge is done away with. You see, we don't need them anymore because we have the Word of God.

It sounds good, but I don't believe that is what Paul is speaking of. I think their understanding of this text is flawed. You see, when Paul spoke of, "**... that which is perfect has come ...**" he was not speaking of the completed Word of God. I realize that I may have opened up a can of worms here, but I think it is important to understand what Paul is saying so we don't come to the wrong conclusion.

I don't believe it is that difficult to figure out. Listen to what the rest of what Paul has to say in I Corinthians chapter 13 beginning in verse 11, where we read, "**When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.**" I Corinthians 13:11-12.

Also, in II Corinthians 3:18 we read, "**But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.**"

What I want you to notice in these verses is the context. What is the context? It is looking at God dimly through a mirror and the mirror represents the Word of God. We don't have a clear or complete look at Him yet. We are being transformed into His image. But one day, when He comes back for His Bride, the Church, we will see Him face to face. We will have glorified bodies, they will be new.

We won't need the gift of prophecy for the Lord will be with us. We won't need the gift of knowledge for the knowledge of the Lord will fill the earth. And we won't need tongues for these corrupted bodies of flesh will be transformed and praise will flow from our lips unto Him. So Paul was speaking of Jesus at His second coming when he said, "**... that which is perfect has come ...**"

Also, within this group of charisphobics are those who believe this gift is totally a human invention of made-up sounds. Some feel it is some kind of emotional outburst as you are worked up into this state of mind and unknown sounds come out of your mouth. Some even go as far as saying that the people that practice this gift are opening themselves up to demonic spirits to speak through them. How ridiculous that is. God has given us this gift to be used in our lives today. This is not something outside the Scriptures, but clearly taught in the Scriptures!

As much as some would like to disagree with that, let the Scriptures speak for themselves. Let's not get stuck in our own personal biases. Jesus said in Mark 16:17-18, "**And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.**"

Who is Jesus speaking to? That is a very important question for us to answer because how we answer it will determine what Jesus is saying here. You see, when Jesus spoke these words it was not just to the apostles. It was not just to the disciples, but He spoke these words to "**... those who believe ...**" And the way I understand that is, Jesus is talking to all of us who believe! One of those gifts that Jesus was speaking of was the gift of tongues.

If Jesus spoke of this gift we don't need to fear it. We don't need to assume it has passed off the scene. We don't need to try to negate it. Just let the Scriptures speak for themselves and receive all that God wants us to have.

In saying all that, what is this gift called tongues? Simply put the gift of tongues is a supernatural ability that has been given to us by the Holy Spirit so that we can communicate with God in a language we don't know and don't understand. It bypasses the intellect. This can be a modern language spoken by others, but one you have never spoken. It could be some ancient dialect from a people that have long since passed off the scene, or it could be, as Paul tells us in I Corinthians 13:1, that it is an angelic language or a heavenly language. Let's look at some Scriptures to see a little more clearly what this gift is all about.

THE GIFT OF TONGUES

1. SPEAKING TO GOD

Here is an important issue regarding the gift of tongues. The gift is used to speak to God. In I Corinthians 14:2 we read, "**For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.**" As I have said, this is important for us to understand. When we speak in tongues we are communicating with God.

Prophecy is God speaking to His church. Tongues are man speaking to God in an unknown language. Thus the focus of what we say in an unknown tongue is God. We will deal more with this and the interpretation of tongues in our next study, but the focus is upon God.

We see this manifested in four different ways. They are ***prayer, worship, giving thanks*** and it will ***strengthen the inner man***. We will look at these four a little closer because this is all part of this gift.