

Speaking in Tongues

"He that speaketh in a tongue edifieth himself ...
I would that ye all spake with tongues." I Corinthians 14:5

I. What is speaking in tongues?

A. It is the spirit of man (not his mind, will or emotions) praying to God.

I Corinthians 2:11

"For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God."

I Corinthians 14:14, 15

"For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. 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."

B. It is the Spirit of God interceding for man. Man prays (forms the words, etc.), but utterance is given by the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:26, 27

"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."

Acts 2:4

"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

I Corinthians 14:2

"For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries."

I Corinthians 14:14

"For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful."

C. Primarily, it is a sign that Jesus said would follow "them that believe."

Mark 16:17

"And these signs shall follow them that believe: In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues ..."

II. What is the purpose of speaking in tongues?

A. It is a sign to unbelievers.

I Corinthians 14:22, 23

"Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe. If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?"

B. When given with an interpretation, it may be for the edification of the church (assembly) .

I Corinthians 14:5

"I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying."

C. It is for self-edification of the believer.

I Corinthians 14:4

"He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church."

1. Building up of our faith.

Jude 20

"But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost ..."

2. Spiritual rest and refreshing.

Isaiah 28:11, 12

"For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing..."

3. Yielding of self to God.

James 3:3-8

"Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire ..."

4. Assistance in prayer.

Romans 8:26, 27

"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."

I Corinthians 2:10-11

D. It is evidence of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Acts 10:45-47

"And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?"

III. What is the place of speaking in tongues in the assembly?

A. Two or three messages may be given in tongues, with one interpreter.

I Corinthians 14:27

B. Unless an interpretation is given, however, it is better in the assembly (for the edification of others) to speak with the understanding (mind, or soul).

I Corinthians 14:6-13, 19, 28

C. But all things are to be done decently and in order, for the building up of the body of Christ. "God is not the author of confusion ... "

I Corinthians 14:26, 33, 40

IV. In the early church, speaking in tongues was accepted as a common occurrence among believers. What was Paul's attitude toward the gift?

A. The book of Acts makes several references to speaking in tongues, relating it to the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:4

"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

Acts 10:45-47

"And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished ...because that on the Gentiles also was poured

out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God...which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?"

Acts 19:6

"And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied."

B. Paul approved of speaking in tongues, and he encouraged the Corinthian church to excel in it. His epistle to the Corinthians reveals how extensively he exercised the gift in his own prayer life.

I Corinthians 12:31

I Corinthians 14:1

"... desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy."

I Corinthians 14:5

"I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied..."

I Corinthians 14:18

C. Scripture says that all may speak in tongues.

I Corinthians 14:5, 23, 26

D. Operation of the gift is not to be forbidden.

I Corinthians 14:39

"Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues."

I Thessalonians 5:19