

Can We Stop Arguing About Speaking in Tongues?

I have had a private “prayer language” since I was 18 years old. No one taught me how to pray in tongues. I was raised in a church that didn’t teach about the spiritual gifts mentioned in the New Testament. In fact, the first person I ever heard speaking in tongues was me, at the moment Jesus baptized me in the Holy Spirit.

I don’t think of myself as superior to anyone because I have this gift. Most people have never heard me pray in tongues because I do it in my private devotional time. But because I’ve written about it and preach about it often, some people have questioned it or even accused me of promoting false teaching.

One prominent fundamentalist leader published a book in 2013 in which he claims that the gift of *glossolalia* was only valid in New Testament times. This same leader (whom I consider a brother in Christ) mocked my experience and accused me of heresy. In his theology, all supernatural manifestations of the Holy Spirit described in the book of Acts stopped after the Bible was compiled.

People will probably argue about speaking in tongues until Jesus comes back. Meanwhile, we have a world to win for Christ. Don’t we need all the spiritual power heaven has offered us?

Paul the apostle, who wrote a huge percentage of the New Testament, didn’t apologize for speaking in tongues. He told the Corinthians: “I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all” (1 Cor. 14:18, NASB 1995). He also emphasized that he prayed in the Spirit privately. The gift of tongues was not a badge Paul wore to prove he was super-spiritual; it was not to

be flaunted, showcased, misused or abused. But neither did Paul ignore it or downgrade it.

For Paul, the gift of tongues was a source of inner strength, and I'm sure it was one of the secrets of his success in carrying the gospel to the whole known world. Here are three of the primary reasons we desperately need this gift today:

Praying in the Spirit recharges you. You would probably never go far from your house without your phone charger. Why? You will be disconnected if your battery dies. Praying in the Spirit is God's provision for the strengthening of your "inner man." Paul said: "One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself" (1 Cor. 14:4a). The Greek word here for "edifies" means "to restore, rebuild or repair." How blessed we are that the Holy Spirit gives us a means to regain new strength when we are weary, overwhelmed, depleted or simply in need of special help.

Praying in the Spirit releases God's wisdom and direction. Paul said that one who speaks in a tongue "speaks mysteries" (1 Cor. 14:2). We don't know what we are saying, yet God reveals His truth to us as we pray. In Romans 8:26, Paul says when we pray in the spirit, "the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words."

I can't count the number of times God has given me inspired solutions to problems while I was praying in tongues. I didn't know what I was saying, yet thoughts popped into my head that I knew were not my own. Why would you want to lean on your own understanding when we have a means to directly receive God's thoughts and plans when we pray?

Praying in the Spirit unleashes extra power. On the day of Pentecost, the disciples prayed in tongues, and I am sure they continued praying in that manner. The flames on their heads did not remain visible, but the fire continued to blaze inside them. We should never quench the fire of Pentecost; it should

be a perpetual flame that we stoke every day. This is why Paul warned the Corinthians: “Do not forbid to speak in tongues” (1 Cor. 14:39b).

Paul prayed both in tongues and in his native language. He wrote: “What is *the outcome* then? I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also” (1 Cor. 14:15). Paul didn’t limit his prayers to one track; his prayers had what we might describe as a one-two punch. His prayers had double impact because of the added spiritual dimension of a heavenly language.

Like Elisha, we receive a double-portion mantle when we are filled with the Holy Ghost. Why be confined to natural limitations when we have been invited to step into a supernatural dimension? Pray in the Spirit often. Stay refilled and charged. Take advantage of every spiritual gift God has given us so the world can see a demonstration of His power. {eoa}

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