

Faith Is Action

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THE GIFT OF TONGUES



Some Christian denominations teach that *speaking in divers Tongues—and all the Gifts of the Spirit have ceased*. But what does the Word of God actually say? Paul, in his letter of 1Corinthians 13:8-10, gave us the clear answer:

“...Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.”

Paul said that the gifts that have brought us **partial knowledge** shall cease **when the complete—perfect knowledge comes**. In verse 12, Paul said, *“For now we see through a glass, darkly...”*

The Greek word is ENIGMA—a riddle. We can’t see the image clearly now. *“But then face to face:”* But then—when the complete knowledge comes, we will be able to clearly see the complete true image. Right now we know in partial knowledge from the gifts, but when the complete

knowledge comes, *“I shall know even as also I am known.”*

This complete, perfect knowledge has not yet come. I do not know even as I am known. Now many things are still a riddle, just a dark image. When Jesus comes with the perfect knowledge, He will not have to speak to us through the gifts with their partial knowledge. We will see Him *“face to face,”* and He will bring us the full knowledge of His will and plans. Then *His knowledge will fill the earth as the waters cover the sea* (Ref. Hab. 2:14). Until then, we have to rely upon the partial knowledge that the gifts bring. Even now, in our prayer life, *“We know not what to pray for as we ought”* (Ref. Rom.8:26). We still must depend on *“praying in tongues and interpretations”* to understand the mysteries of God (Ref. 1Cor.14:2-15).

The gift of *speaking in “unknown” tongues* is the most beneficial for the believer, because it is given to him for his personal edification. The *gift of tongues* is as valuable to spiritual life as the heart



THE GIFT OF TONGUES

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is to the human body. It brings life and strength to the inner man, and as a gift it is always available to the individual. Its two primary benefits are: **He can speak directly to God, and he edifies himself:**

“For he that speaks in an unknown tongue, speaks not unto men, but unto God...” (1Cor.14:2)
“He that speaks in an unknown tongue edifies himself...” (1Cor.14:4).

The Gift is Given

The gift of tongues was the first gift the Holy Spirit gave to the Church. It was given first to Jewish believers on the day of Pentecost. Jesus appeared to them after His resurrection and told them: “And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high” (Lk.24:49).

Luke continued the account in Acts 1:8: *“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”*

There were 120 who obeyed Jesus’ command, and they continued with one accord in prayer and supplication awaiting the promise of the Holy Spirit: *“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing*

mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts2:1-4).

But this outpouring of the Holy Ghost with the gift of speaking in tongues was not unique to them. This phenomenon was repeated again and again, and *Tongues are still available for every believer!* It was the anointing that transformed Peter from a weak, cursing, denying disciple to a powerful apostolic evangelist.

“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call” (Acts 2:39-39).

Every believer today still needs to be endued with this same power from on high, the Baptism in the Holy Ghost with speaking in tongues as the evidence. We need the same spirit of boldness to effectively preach the Gospel in the fulness of its power. As a result of Peter’s dynamic sermon, 3,000 souls were added to the Church. What an explosion! If we expect to see the same results today, we must possess the same power, and the gift of tongues is the necessary endowment to produce it. We are not

to come behind in any gift. *“So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1Cor.1:7).

Paul told the Corinthian church, who questioned his apostleship, because they alleged that he was only a “milk” preacher, that he came to them in the demonstration of the Spirit and power of God, not in wisdom of words: *“And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power”* (1Cor.2:4-5).

Paul made it clear that the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power: *“But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power. For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power”* (1Cor.4:19-20). The kingdom of God is still in operation today. It has not ceased, and neither have the gifts and the power that energize them.

The First Gentile Recipients

The outpouring of the Holy Ghost was given to the first Gentile believers at the house of Cornelius, a Roman centurion at Cesarea. The Bible says that he was a devout man who feared God with all his house, and who gave generously to the people, and prayed to God always. While fasting, he had a vision from God in which he was instructed to send men to Joppa to Simon Peter to ask him what he should do further.

At the same time, Peter, while in prayer, also had a vision in which he was instructed to go to Cornelius’s house with the men, *“nothing doubting.”* For Peter this was a great step of faith, because up to this point, the Gospel had been strictly to the Jews. But Peter obeyed, and while he spoke to Cornelius and his house about Jesus, something happened:

*“While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. 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. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?”* (Acts 10:44-47). The door to the Gentiles had opened wide to the Gospel, and under Paul’s ministry, it spread to all the Gentile churches.

The Believers at Ephesus:

*“And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they **spake with tongues**, and prophesied”* (Acts 19:6).

The Believers at Corinth:

*“To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another **divers kinds of tongues**; to another the interpretation of*

tongues:” (1Cor.12:10). Paul explained the importance and purpose of speaking in tongues:

*“For he that speaks in an unknown tongue speaks not unto men, but unto God: for no man understands him; howbeit in the spirit he speaks mysteries. But he that prophesies speaks unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort. **He that speaks in an unknown tongue edifies himself; but he that prophesies edifies the church. I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesies than he that speaks with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying**”* (1Cor.14:2-5).

Paul said that the gift of tongues is so valuable that he spoke in tongues more than all the Corinthian believers! *“I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all:”* (2Cor.14:18). Furthermore, whenever Paul met new believers, he would ask them if they had received the Holy Spirit, as he did at Ephesus:

*“And it came to pass, that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, He said unto them, **Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?** And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John’s baptism. Then said Paul, John verily*

*baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and **they spake with tongues, and prophesied**”* (Acts 19:1-6).

Speaking in tongues was the evidence that they had received the Holy Ghost baptism. All of the churches that Paul founded were Holy-Ghost baptized with the evidence of speaking in tongues. Paul strongly commanded that we are not to forbid speaking in tongues: *“Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and **forbid not to speak with tongues**”* (1Cor.14:39).


The Value of Speaking in Tongues

Some Bible scholars claim that tongues is an *inferior* and *useless* gift. Can you believe that God would give an inferior and useless gift to anyone? The devil knows the value of speaking in tongues, and this is why he has a campaign against them. His helpers call tongues *gibberish*.

On the day of Pentecost, tongues came forth as the Spirit gave them what to utter. Do you think the Spirit would speak gibberish? No, to the contrary, the Greek word for utterance (AOPHTHEGGOMAI) is a very special word and is only used three times in the Bible: Acts 2:4, 2:14, 25:25. It means “to speak out

very high, weighty, and exalted oracles, full of meaning and power.” The Holy Spirit inspires words of power and exaltation.

The apostle Paul is the one who wrote most about speaking in tongues. In 1Corinthians 14, instead of finding any reason for **not** speaking in tongues, we find **7 reasons for speaking in tongues!**


 **1** Speaking in tongues gives us a direct communication between our human spirit and the Spirit of God: *“For he that speaks in an unknown tongue speaks not unto men, but unto God...”* (1Cor.14:2).

The word “*unknown*” in the KJV is *italicized* to show that it has been added by the translators. It does not appear in the Greek text. In fact, in no place does the Greek NT use any word meaning “unknown” when referring to speaking in tongues. In every case, the translators of the Scriptures inserted it with the intention of making the passage more meaningful. But to persons in whom the gift of tongues is operating, there is little need for the word *unknown*. Nor did Paul have a need to use it. Words uttered in tongues are generally *unknown to persons hearing them*, but they are not unknown to the Holy Spirit; nor to the *spirit* of the one speaking. In 1 Cor. 13:1 Paul stated, *“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels...”* Thus, the *unknown tongues* may be unknown to the speaker or hearer, but not unknown to others. Or

it could be the language of angelic beings that is unknown on earth.

When you are speaking in tongues in private, you need not be concerned whether the words you speak are known or unknown. All that need concern you is that *you are speaking to God*. It is the communication of something personal between your spirit and His Spirit, in which your natural understanding has little participation. But since your spirit is participating, you grow spiritually, both in wisdom and in faith. Both are products of the Holy Spirit working in your spirit. They will eventually find release toward your mind, and your understanding will grow also.

When our son Choch was born, he could not digest his formula. He was wasting away, and it seemed that even prayer was not helping. Becoming very desperate, Sister Hardy began to really pour out her heart to God for our baby in prayer. Suddenly she began to speak in tongues at length, and then the interpretation came forth. The Spirit of the Lord dictated a formula for the baby. She jotted it down and made the formula given by the Holy Spirit. From that time on, our baby boy began to grow strong and robust. Glory to God!

 **2** Speaking in tongues brings secrets of the Holy Spirit into our spirits: *“For he that speaks in an unknown tongue speaks not unto men, but unto God: for no man*

understands him; howbeit in the spirit he speaks mysteries" (1Cor.14:2).

This speaking of the *mysteries* (hitherto hidden truths) by tongues brings us understanding of God's secrets and purpose. By speaking in tongues, our spirits can enter into a deep fellowship with God's Spirit. Our human spirits perceive the things of God's Spirit, and enter into thoughts and areas that the mind alone cannot receive:


"For what man knows the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knows no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God" (1Cor.2:11-12).

Our spirits can also, by speaking in tongues, release to God deep thoughts and secrets of our own hearts, some which we cannot express clearly when speaking with the understanding of our natural minds. Our *spirits* are more perceptive than our *natural minds*. The human spirit can discern things before the mind receives them. It knows things about us that our natural minds do not know: *"But the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned"* (1Cor.2:14).

 **3** When we speak in tongues, we

work at building up our own spiritual strength: *"He that speaks in an unknown tongue edifies himself:..."* (1Cor.14:4).

This is why the gift of tongues is the greatest vehicle for the edification, building up, and advancement of the child of God. The word *edify* in the Greek (OIKODOMEI) means "to build up, to spiritually advance." We are lifted up, given soundness to our minds by being strengthened with the wisdom and faith of the Holy Spirit. The present tense emphasizes the continual action of that which is always true. Jude 20 says: *"But ye, beloved, building up yourselves, on your most holy faith, **praying in the Holy Ghost.**"*

 **4** Speaking in tongues in private may lead to the speaking forth of prophetic utterance that is profitable for others to hear in the church assembly. *"I would (It is my desire) that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied"* (1Cor.14:5).

The KJV seems to say that while speaking in tongues would be nice for everyone, it would be better for each one to prophesy *instead*. The intention of Paul becomes clearer when we examine the Greek words translated *"but rather that ye prophesied."* The Greek *prophesied* is an aorist subjunctive, and *that* is derived from HINA, which means *in order that*. When it accompanies a subjunctive, as it does here, it means

“It is my desire that you all spoke in tongues, **in order that** (or for the purpose), **you might prophesy.**” Paul was saying that *tongues* would be great for everyone, but not as an end. His desire was that *tongues* should lead to interpretations and prophesying in the church assembly.

What then is *prophesying*? It is from the Greek word *PROPHETEUEO*. In the NT, it means “to be a spokesman for the Lord God.” Paul said that *tongues should lead to the release of prophecy, or wisdom, or revelation, or knowledge from God*. The Holy Spirit can release these through the human spirit as a result of *speaking in tongues*.

Four Fruitful Utterances


In verse 6 Paul said, “*If I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine (teaching)?*” In this verse, Paul laid out four kinds of public speech that edify the church. *Speaking in tongues* can lead to:

1. Anointed *insight* into truth.
2. The *release of knowledge*.
3. Speaking forth of words *directly from the Lord*.
4. Insight and understanding of the Word when one is *teaching*.

The ministry of *revelation* is a full exposition of truth and can include both spiritual and natural applications. The Greek word, *APOKALUPSIS* is the title of the final

book of the NT: *Revelation*, and means “a disclosure or unveiling of some one or some thing.” As Paul used it here, he had in mind the disclosure of truth. It could be the unveiling of truth contained in the *Scriptures* that is not easily understood by a surface reading. It could be the disclosure of truth about a *person* or a *situation*. The revelation of truth can give one *guidance* that will prompt him to move in a certain direction, or even not to move. It can reveal unhealthy conditions in people in need of physical healing. The spirit of revelation can move in many directions. It is needful and beneficial for the individual and for the Body of Christ.

The ministry of *teaching* is also helped by the Holy Spirit, in the laying out of truth so it can be easily grasped. It is necessary for a teacher to have spent much time studying the Scriptures and waiting before the Lord for truth to become real and understandable in his own spirit. A teacher can more effectively expound truth to others with anointing and conviction when the Holy Spirit has had free course to work it into him *through much speaking in tongues in private*. The Spirit will enable him to present lessons that can be easily received by the hearers and be put to work in their daily living out of truth.

 The gift of tongues is beneficial for effective praying: “*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” (1Cor.14:15).

In keeping with the context of 1 Corinthians 14, we know that Paul was teaching about principles regarding **tongues**. To him “praying with the spirit” meant *praying with tongues*. Verse 14 makes this clear: *“For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful.”*


Paul gave more insight regarding this unusual kind of “praying in the spirit” in Romans 8:26-27, in which we find four important principles: *“Likewise, the Spirit also helps our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.”*

The term “infirmities” refers to weaknesses—not sickness. We all have a weakness, in that often we do not know what to pray for, but the Spirit will help us in our infirmities by praying for us and in us. Sometimes He does this *“with groanings which cannot be uttered,”* and He always prays *“according to the will of God.”*

In verse 26, *helps* is from a Greek word meaning “to take hold of a burden with someone.” Not knowing how to pray is a heavy


burden. When our situation is critical and we need answers, but we are baffled as to how to make our petition, the Spirit will take up the burden and do our praying for us. He may do this from within us with groanings so deep that they cannot be spoken. What could these *unutterable groanings* be?

After walking with the Lord for over 60 years, I’ve come to believe that the *gift of tongues* will work its way into the deep parts of our spirits and function much like the thinking of thoughts functions in the deep parts of our minds. Sometimes we are in situations when our natural minds fail to come up with solutions, or even to have enough understanding to know how to ask God for a solution. When our intellect is at a loss for words, divine intervention is needed, and this is when *our spirits* can team up with the Holy Spirit to make effective supplication.

 *Speaking in tongues* is a vehicle of worship that can release us to a wonderful form of worship above human words, that often are not enough to express the glory that we feel. Through tongues, we can sing with the Spirit: *“What is it then? ...I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also” (1Cor.14:15).*

Many times I have sung in tongues in worship to the Lord. I remember a particular occasion when our church had a special 30 day

prayer cycle in which I had a specific time to pray every day. After a while, I would always go into a period of praying in tongues. Then I would finish up singing and worshipping in tongues. One day after doing this, I came out of my prayer closet to find a brother in the Lord had come to my house. He had heard me singing in tongues, and asked me, “Do you know the song you were singing?” I said, “No.” Then he said that it was his school commencement song. “You were singing, *The Lord Omnipotent Reigneth*.” Hallelujah!

 **7** Speaking in tongues can refresh those experiencing spiritual fatigue and weariness.

In verse 21, Paul referred to the OT prophet Isaiah’s words: “*With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people...*,” and thereby made the connection between this prophecy and its fulfillment in *the gift of tongues*. When we examine all of Isaiah’s words, we see two vital purposes for speaking in tongues:

“Whom shall he teach knowledge? And whom shall he make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little: 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: yet they would not hear” (Isaiah 28:9- 12).

As we stated earlier, speaking in tongues is necessary for **receiving knowledge from God**, because “*now we only know in part and prophesy in part*” (1Cor.13:9). No one minister, apostle, prophet, etc., knows everything God is doing in the earth! He does reveal His secrets and what He is doing through His servants and prophets, according to Amos 3:7, but He sends it “*line upon line, precept upon precept—here a little and there a little...*” And Isaiah stated clearly that one way God will do this is “*with stammering lips and another tongue...*”

The second purpose Isaiah’s word gives for speaking in tongues: “*This is the rest—This is the refreshing wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest.*” As we have seen, speaking in tongues edifies—builds up the believer and causes his faith to increase, and this is true for the strongest, most spiritual Christian. Everyone can be further edified.

But it is especially beneficial to the one who is experiencing spiritual “burn-out”—who is bowed down under the weight of discouragement, fighting endless battles, and is in danger of “*becoming weary in well doing*” (Ref. Gal. 6:9).

The thing is, it is probably the last thing you may feel like doing when you are at a spiritual low. *You don’t feel like speaking in tongues*, and you may feel that you are even too “unspiritual” to speak in tongues.

But this is when you really need to!
This is what will bring the *refreshing*
to your *weary spirit*! This is what
will bring *rest* to your troubled heart!

You don't have to be on a
spiritual high to speak in tongues.
**God has given you this gift, and it
is for you.** You can utilize this gift
whenever you want to for your
personal, private edification. (I am
not referring to the public assembly
in the church where there is a
specific order.)

At first, you may feel like your
speaking in tongues is dry and
boring, but don't give up! Keep on
praying in tongues, singing in
tongues, and you will sense your
spirit responding and getting built up.
Soon your spirit will be refreshed by
the presence of the Holy Spirit who
will come along side of you as your
comforter and counsellor.

And because He knows "*what is
the mind of God and the will of God*"
(Rom. 8:25-26), He will energize you
to pray God's will and not your own.
This is one of the great advantages of
praying in the spirit in tongues—you
can bypass your natural mind. The
natural mind is more prone to pray its
own doubts and unbelief, which
cancel out the prayer of faith, which
is necessary for answers to prayer!

James wrote about "*the prayer of
faith that shall save the sick, and the
Lord shall raise him up,*" and he
exhorted, "*Pray one for another that
ye may be healed. The effectual
fervent, prayer of a righteous man
avails much*" (James 5:15-16).

In Greek, *effectual* is ENERGEEO,
the root of our English *energy*—to
energize. It is also in the passive
voice which means that *the one
praying is being energized*, and so
his prayer is very powerful in its
operation.

Who is doing the energizing?
Who else but the *Holy Ghost* moving
upon and speaking through the
human spirit, and this would surely
include *speaking in tongues*, because
this is the evidence of His
endowment. It is not surprising that
the devil does not want believers to
pray in the Spirit by speaking in
tongues! No good can come to him
and his efforts to hinder, discourage,
and block the moving of God's Spirit
when believers use this powerful,
effective, edifying, intelligence-
gathering tool against him!

Many people have not received
the Holy Spirit baptism, because they
have been taught that it is not for us
today, but as Peter said in Acts 2:38-
39, "*it is for all the Lord has called.*"
If He has called you unto salvation,
then this wonderful gift is for you!
All you have to do is ask God for it:

*"If ye then, being evil, know how
to give good gifts unto your children:
how much more shall your Heavenly
Father give the Holy Spirit to them
that ask Him?"* (Luke 11:13).

Others have never received,
because they have never been in a
meeting where the Spirit is invited to
move. Others have never received,
because they, like the people in Acts
19, have never heard whether there

be a Holy Spirit. Others have never received, because they have never opened their hearts to receive.

If you have never received, or if the gift in you has been neglected, find a Spirit-filled prayer group or anointed meeting. Press in like a hungry soul and ask for prayer from an anointed person: *“Wherefore, I put thee in remembrance that you stir up the gift of God, which is in you by the putting on of my hands”* (2 Tim. 1:6).

“...They sent unto them (Samaria) Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost...Then they laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost” (Acts 8:14-17).

If you cannot find a meeting or person, ask God privately, because He has promised to give the Holy Ghost to them that ask.