

Equipping the Saints

The Gifts of Tongues and Interpretation

Tongues: This is supernatural utterance in other languages that are not known to the speaker.

Mark 16:17

And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues

Jesus is foretelling, or prophesying, that a time will come when His Spirit will be poured out and signs and wonders will accompany and affirm the proclamation of the good news of the kingdom. Among these will be the supernatural gift of speaking in other languages, be they unknown human languages or the language of heaven.

1 Cor 13:1

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels

1. There are two categories of tongues.

- First, is the supernatural ability to speak in unlearned human languages.

Acts 2:4

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

Acts 2:5-12

Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. 6 And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. 7 And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? 9 Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, 11 both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God."

This is the kind of tongues that were imparted at Pentecost where there were Jews and Jewish Proselytes from all over the known world. The original gift of tongues seems to be distinct in the Greek parsing from the gift of tongues as mentioned in the rest of the New Testament. This was a distinct gift of known or existing languages meant for the proclamation of the Gospel.

glossa (gloce-sah') the tongue; by implication, a known language (specially, one naturally unacquired): It is the root word for glossary in English

For obvious reasons, this kind of Tongues needs no interpretation.

- Second, is the utterance of heavenly languages; including ecstatic languages of praise and prayer.

1 Cor 14:2

For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit.

musterion (moos-tay'-ree-on); from a derivative of muo (to shut the mouth); a secret or "mystery"; OR

Heteroglossos; which is rendered "strange tongues" in 1 Cor 14:21, (heteros, "another of a different sort"

This gift of tongues is for our personal edification, unless accompanied by interpretation.

1 Cor 14:2-5

For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries with his spirit. 3 But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort. 4 He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. 5 I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. He who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may be edified.

2. Tongues as evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit

While in many cases the gift of tongues accompanied the baptism of the Holy Spirit, there are several instances in the book of Acts and in the Epistles where there is no mention of the gift accompanying the baptism of the Holy Spirit

1 Cor 12:28-31

And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30 Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? 31 But eagerly desire the greater gifts.

The implication is that NO, all do not speak in tongues.

The Bible is clear that the evidence of the Holy Spirit indwelling in us is not the gifts, but the fruit.

Gal 5:22-24

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

3. Tongues in the corporate gathering

1 Cor 14:18-19

I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. 19 But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue.

- So do this mean that tongues should not be spoken in a corporate setting?

1 Cor 14:26-29

What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up. 27 If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret. 28 But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God.

- Interpretation should always accompany tongues in a corporate setting.

1 Cor 14:13-17

For this reason anyone who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret what he says. 14 For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. 15 So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind. 16 If you are praising God with your spirit, how can one who finds himself among those who do not understand say "Amen" to your thanksgiving, since he does not know what you are saying? 17 You may be giving thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified.

I have lived through a great many revivals and moves of God. I have seen many things that definitely would look really weird if not for the presence of the Holy Spirit.

I have also seen leaders overreact to what's going on and basically shut down the work of the Spirit because of the mess it seems to be creating. In essence, the want to throw out the baby with the bath water.

I believe that as Pastors, our job is to pastor a move of God, just like Paul is doing in Corinthians. We need to address the human excess while continuing to fan the flame of the Spirit.

1 Cor 14:39-15:1

So, my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. 40 But all things should be done decently and in order.

I welcome the day when people stand up and prophesy during the service. Those of us that went to the regional conference saw that very thing happen and it was powerful.

I also welcome the day when someone speaks in tongues during the service and it is followed with interpretation.

We welcome the Holy Spirit in our midst which why our constant prayer is “Come, Holy Spirit”