

PRAYING IN TONGUES 1 Corinthians 14

- ³⁹ Therefore, my brothers and sisters, be eager to prophesy, and **do not forbid speaking in tongues.** ⁴⁰ But **everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.**
- God has given us a new spiritual language in order to communicate with Him spirit to spirit.

We will see that there are multiple varieties and expressions of tongues, and all with their own particular benefits.

Scripture reveals 3 kinds of tongues:

1. When believers speak to God. (Unknown tongue, personal prayer language).
2. When God speaks to believers. (Unknown tongue, interpretation needed).
3. When God speaks to the lost. (Known tongue, no interpretation needed).

In **Acts 2** the believers spoke in the gift of known language tongues where God spoke to the lost.

- *Acts 2:1-6 “When the Day of Pentecost had 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 the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language.”*

In Acts 10 we see the new Gentile believers speaking in tongues and magnifying God. This was the believers speaking to God in their new prayer language tongues.

- *Acts 10:44-46 “While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God.”*

In Acts 19 we see twelve disciples being filled with the Holy Spirit who then spoke with tongues and prophesied. Their prophesying shows the direction of their tongues which was God speaking to people. This was most likely tongues with interpretation, which is prophecy or at least equal to it.

- *Acts 19:5-7 “When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. Now the men were about twelve in all.”*

In this chapter of **1 Corinthians 14** - we will see the apostle Paul bringing correction to the church regarding spiritual gifts and especially tongues. Why was that? **Because the Corinthian church meetings were out of control due to an excessive and inappropriate use of tongues.** Paul, as their apostolic spiritual father, had to correct them and bring order back to their services.

The problem with the Corinthians was that **they were using tongues (and other spiritual gifts) in an individualistic and self-seeking way**. This was not spiritual but carnal since *the intended purpose of the gifts is to edify and bless the whole church*. From the context, it appears that *many of the believers were getting up in the services and speaking in personal prayer tongues and then sitting down without any clarity or explanation*. On top of that, *there was no protocol for taking turns but instead all spoke over the top of each other which resulted in chaos and confusion with no mutual edification of the church*.

Now, Paul's response is not like most leaders in the church today who deal with an excessive misuse of the gifts. Many people will just ban the gifts for a while or forbid them altogether in church services. We will see that Paul is much more spiritual than that and **redeems the gifts through wisdom**. He merely makes a few corrections to see the gifts being used for their intended purpose and flourishing once again in the Church.

- *Verse 2-4: "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. 3 "But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men. 4 He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church."*

These verses highlight the nature and differences between **personal prayer tongues and prophecy**, and therefore why **prophecy is more appropriate** in a church service than personal prayer tongues.

The nature of these personal prayer tongues is that: **it is an individual speaking to God, in a language that is unknown to others (mysteries in the spirit), and which edifies that individual.**

The nature of prophecy is that **it is God speaking to people, in a language that is known and understandable, and edifies other people.**

The difference between tongues and prophecy:

- Tongues is people speaking to God, while prophecy is God speaking to people.
- Tongues is unclear to others listening, while prophecy is clear and understandable to all.
- Tongues builds up the individual, while prophecy builds others up.

Personal prayer tongues:

Verse 2 gives us the most insightful understanding about personal prayer tongues in all of Scripture:

- *"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."*

This is clearly not referring to the gift of known language tongue, as on the Day of Pentecost, where God is speaking to man. These are **personal prayer tongues** where man speaks to God. How do we know that? Because these kinds of tongues, "no one understands". If it were a known tongue, then people could understand them if they could speak that language.

Now the reason no one understands is because, **"in the spirit he speaks mysteries."**

To anyone listening “in the natural”, these tongues would not sound like any recognizable language but rather as though the person were speaking gibberish or gobbledygook! However, though it may sound strange, they are not speaking a language that is without meaning. It is just that the natural mind cannot understand it.

The word “mysteries” is the Greek word **mystérion** and it does not refer to something that is unknowable. It refers to **something that can only be known by revelation or by the Spirit.**

As new creation beings, who are now born of the Spirit and have become a new species of being, it makes sense that **God has given us a new spiritual language in order to communicate with Him spirit to spirit.** Our mind has a lot more limitations than our reborn spirit has, and **tongues therefore help us go further into the spirit realm than our mind can take us.**

Tongues are only strange to the natural mind because they are not a natural language but **a spiritual language.** They can only be understood in the spirit. That is why it says, “in the spirit he speaks mysteries”. We will never understand these tongues as long as we are trying to understand them with our natural mind. We have to understand them from our spirit, as Paul seeks to help us to understand in 1 Corinthians 2:

- *1 Corinthians 2:9-14 “But as it is written: ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.’ But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”*

Now **those that are spiritually discerning can accept and understand that tongues are the prayer language of our spirit communing with God.** Our mind will not understand what is being said, but our spirit can know by **revelation, unction and discernment**, what is being interacted between our spirit and the Holy Spirit.

Praying in tongues.

- *“He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself.”*

This is an individual experience where you spend time alone with God praying in tongues. The purpose is twofold: **it’s to spiritually build up your inner man/woman with God’s strength and help you to “get in the Spirit”.**

When you get **in the Spirit** you become **more aware of the Holy Spirit** and in tune with Jesus. You start thinking the way God thinks and believing the way God believes. You start seeing what God sees and hearing what God is saying.

- *Jude 1:20 “But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit...”*

If you want to hear God and know His will more clearly, simply spend more time praying in tongues and getting in the Spirit.

If you want to move in the gifts of the Spirit, then tongues are the key that unlocks all the other gifts! Praying in the Spirit will take you into the Spirit and the more you are in the Spirit the more you will flow in the gifts of the Spirit.

Intercession from GOD for you....and others in tongues.

- *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.”*

Intercession prayer is giving birth to the will of God in our lives or on behalf of others.

- *Verse 5: “I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification.”*

Paul is saying that in a church service it is better to give a clear prophetic word so everyone can understand and be encouraged rather than a personal prayer tongue that will be confusing to everyone.

Unless of course these tongues are followed by an interpretation. In this case these are totally different tongues. **These are now the gift of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:7,10) where God is now speaking to people.** Suddenly these tongues become equal to prophecy because now God is speaking to people, and it is clear so that everyone can be mutually edified. These kinds of tongues are acceptable and encouraged by Paul in a church service.

Now the fact that this kind of tongue requires an interpretation shows us that they are still an unknown tongue that requires a supernatural gift of interpretation for anyone to understand it. If it were a known language tongue, as on the Day of Pentecost, it wouldn't require a gift of interpretation to understand it because people who spoke that language would already understand, it as they did on Pentecost.

- *Verse 6: “But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you unless I speak to you either by revelation, by knowledge, by prophesying, or by teaching?”*

- Verses 14-15: *“For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. 15 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.”*
- Verses 18-19: *“I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all; 19 yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.”*