

THE PERSON AND WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (continued) - Tongues and the Interpretation of Tongues - 1 Corinthians 12:10 - "...to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues."

- 1) **THERE APPEARS TO BE A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CONGREGATIONAL TONGUES (THE GIFT OF TONGUES) AND PERSONAL TONGUES (PRAYER AND PRAISE FOR PERSONAL EDIFICATION IN THE SPIRIT)** - While this point has been covered before, it's important to remember some of the differences:

Personal tongues are available to everyone and seems to accompany the baptism with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit helps the believer in his own life of prayer and worship. The language is exercised at the will of the speaker. There is no need for an interpretation (**Acts 2:4, 10:44-46, 19:6-7**).

Congregational tongues are not a gift possessed by all believers - 1 Corinthians 12:11, 30 - "All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apports to each one individually as he wills....[30] Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?" Both of these verses find their context in the gifts of the Spirit as they are ministered **to the corporate church body**. And clearly, not everyone possesses the corporate gift of tongues for the edification of the church.

Congregational tongues must be are spoken for the **benefit of the church** and must always be accompanied by the **gift of interpretation**. **Personal tongues** were frequently exercised by all believers at the same time in the book of Acts. **Congregational tongues** must be exercised **one at a time**, followed by the interpretation (1 Corinthians 14:26-33).

- 2) **ALL TONGUES IS SPEAKING TO GOD** - The important passage here is 1 Corinthians 14:1-5 - "Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy. [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. [3] On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. [4] The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies builds up the church. [5] Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built up."

Note especially verse 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."

Prophecy and **tongues & interpretation** are **not** the same thing. What Paul says is prophecy and tongues **with** the gift of interpretation are **equal in terms of their capacity to edify the church**. But that doesn't make them the same thing. They are different gifts and serve two totally different purposes in the plan of God. **Prophecy** is an **inspired insight from God to people**. **Tongues & interpretation** are **inspired words from a person to God**. The **form these words can take** is the subject of the next point.

- 3) **NOTICE THERE ARE VARIOUS "KINDS" OF TONGUES** - Speaking in tongues is **not** simply a kind of emotional release for kooky Christians. Several passages mark out God's specific purpose for spiritual language:

- a) **Acts 2:11, 10:46 - Inspired praise and adoration** - "...both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God....[46] For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God...."

Notice that tongues is **not** used for the proclamation of the Gospel to foreign nations. This is sometimes said as an attempt to limit the purpose of tongues to the initial inbreaking of the Gospel to the gentile nations. However, there is nothing in these verses to even hint at a proclamation of the gospel. When the text describes the clear proclamation of the gospel it shows Peter preaching in his own language.

In all these passages tongues are used to aid the heart in glorifying the Lord. This fits in with Paul's clear teaching in 1 Corinthians 14:14-17 - "For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful. [15] What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also. [16] Otherwise, if you give thanks with your spirit, how can anyone in the position of an outsider say "Amen" to your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying? [17] For you may be giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not being built up."

True, Paul does point out the uselessness of speaking in tongues for edifying **others** without the accompanying gift of interpretation. But that's not **all** this passages says. Paul also **affirms** the capacity of tongues as a means of personal blessing in praise and thanksgiving.

- b) **1 Corinthians 14:2 - Communicating "mysteries" through the Spirit** - "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." This does not refer to strange, unheard of

doctrines. Rather, there will come the extolling of some facet of God's character **that was particularly in need of being remembered at that particular time**. Something of the **heart of God** is brought to the church by the Holy Spirit. There comes a more **pointed application** of divine truth.

- c) **Romans 8:26-27, Ephesians 6:18 - Supplication in the Spirit** - "Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. [27] And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God....**Ephesians 6:18**...."praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints...."

The Holy Spirit enables the believer to **break new ground in intercessory prayer**. The Spirit prays beyond the **mind's own limitations** of knowledge and understanding to **press into the will of God for difficult situations**. In this way a door is opened to pray, as Paul says in Ephesians 6, at "**all times**" - even when my own understanding doesn't know how to cover certain situations according to the will of God.

Perhaps there is need for just a word about the **mind** in such praying. Paul does say that the mind is "**unfruitful**" during such times of prayer (**1 Corinthians 14:14**). That is, the **specific verbal content of the prayer goes beyond the believer's mental perception**. The Spirit prays **through** the intercessor. However, just because the mind is "**unfruitful**" doesn't mean it is **inactive**. These two are not the same. My mind is still **engaged** when I pray in the Spirit in several ways: **First, my mind is involved in the choice to pray in the Spirit**. It won't come upon me like a seizure. **Second, my mind is involved in targeting a subject**. While I don't know the **content** of the prayer, my mind is fixed on a particular **need**. **Third, my mind is involved in determining the length of the prayer time - when to stop, etc.**

- 4) **THE ONGOING PLACE OF THESE GIFTS IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH** - Some important words are found in **1 Corinthians 14:26** - "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."

Paul makes it clear that **each person is to be fully involved in the worship service of the church**. Interestingly, of all the gifts of the Spirit mentioned, **tongues and interpretation** (and perhaps **prophecy**) are the only ones specifically mentioned in this verse. These were to be just as included in ongoing worship for the church as the singing of **hymns**.

- 5) **THE NEED FOR INTERPRETATION IN THE WORSHIP SETTING OF THE CHURCH** - Paul teaches on this in **1 Corinthians 14:6-33**. Something needs to be set straight about the use of the gifts in the Corinthian church. **Paul nowhere says that the gift of tongues was the problem in this church**. I tire of hearing this. It is nowhere stated in any of these passages. Rather, the problem was the **absence of the gift of interpretation**. There were simply **too many people speaking out** and there **wasn't any interpretation**. This is why Paul prays that if no one else interprets, the tongues-speaker should pause and pray that the Lord will enable him to give the interpretation himself.