

The Supernatural Element of Prayer:

Speaking in Tongues

1

1 Corinthians 2:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴But 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.

2

- The naturally minded man does not want to acknowledge that there is a supernatural element to prayer and sees such an idea as utterly foolish.***
- However, in reality the very essence of prayer is supernatural, because we are actually communicating with God. What can be more supernatural than that?!***

3

- Speaking in tongues is not the only supernatural element of prayer, but it is surely one of the most visible.***

4

- When we study the entire New Testament and specifically the Book of Acts we get a picture of how New Testament Christianity is to function. New Testament believers expected the supernatural to be part of their daily lives. The reality of God and the supernatural go hand in hand—to God the supernatural is natural.***

5

- As we read the Book of Acts and the epistles, it is clear that speaking in tongues was considered a normal and everyday experience for believers.***

6

- *Many here speak in tongues and others may not. This teaching is not meant to make people feel they must have this experience or that they are any less of a Christian if they don't, but simply to provide an opportunity to learn more about the subject of speaking in tongues from a biblical point of view.*

7

- *There are no second class Christians. We are all equally loved and valued by the Father whether one speaks in tongues or not—we are all His favourite children.*

8

- *We should not view speaking in tongues as some “badge of merit,” or a sign of spiritual maturity, or that one who speaks in tongues is more favoured by God than those who do not. Speaking in tongues can be comparable to a spiritual tool that if used properly will assist us in our spiritual walk.*

9

- *Some Christians avoid the subject of speaking in tongues, because it has been a source of conflict in churches and between denominations. However, the Bible addresses the subject of speaking in tongues in considerable depth, indicating that this subject is important for us to understand.*

10

- *There have been two extremes in body of Christ regarding tongues:*
- *Some say speaking in tongues is no longer available to the Church, but ended with the early church.*
- *The other extreme is an unhealthy emphasis on supernatural experiences to the point where discernment is no longer practiced and spiritual maturity is no longer the ultimate goal.*

11

- *When Christian apologists debate atheists it is fairly evident that the atheists stand on very shaky ground in trying to prove there is no God. However, when a Christian debates an agnostic the burden of proof falls on the Christian to show why what he believes is the truth.*

12

- *It is the supernatural manifestations of the Holy Spirit that confront people with the truth of the Gospel. "And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs." (Mark 16:20).*

13

- *The very pinnacle of proof that the Gospel is true is seen in no greater event than the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ Himself as He appeared to His disciples "to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." (Acts 1:3).*

14

- *The single event that changed the disciples' perspective the most and left an indelible impression on their hearts and minds was when they came face to face with their risen Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

15

- *In the West there was a misconception regarding the former Soviet Union and the church. Although the former Soviet Union had a well-deserved reputation for persecuting Christians, there was a mistaken belief that Christians were not allowed to gather together for religious meetings. Although not in itself true, in the Soviet Union, believers were strictly forbidden from participating in the following five behaviours:*

16

- *They were not allowed to share their faith with others.*
- *They were not allowed to teach about the return of Christ.*
- *They were not allowed to pray for the sick.*
- *They were not allowed to prophesy.*
- *They were not allowed to speak in tongues.*

17

- *It's an interesting paradox that an atheistic state felt compelled to forbid believers from engaging in supernatural activities, when they denied the very existence of the supernatural! The devil understands that through the miraculous and the operations of the gifts of the Holy Spirit the Church is strengthened and built up. The devil will go to great lengths to discourage believers from operating in those gifts.*

18

• *When Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 13:1, “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal,” he was not negating speaking in tongues—rather he was placing it in the proper perspective in light of the ultimate goal, which is love. The ultimate goal of our faith is not speaking in tongues or the manifestation of any of the other gifts of the Spirit. The goal is spiritual maturity and to be fully conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.*

19

• *Let's begin our study of speaking in tongues by looking at the supernatural nature of speaking in tongues from both a biblical and a scientific point of view.*

• *The Bible contends that the source of speaking in tongues is supernatural and does not originate from either the soul in general or from the person's mind specifically, but from the spirit. “For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful.” (1 Corinthians 14:14).*

20

• *The Bible also states that when a Christian speaks in tongues they are actually speaking a real language although it is unknown to them. This language can either be an angelic language or one of the more than six thousand languages spoken by men. “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.” (1 Corinthians 13:1).*

21

• *Since speaking in tongues originates from the spirit and not the soul the experience is neither initiated nor maintained through a stirring up of one's emotions. In fact, most of the time one can be very demonstrative outwardly when speaking in tongues, although inwardly there is usually a wonderful peace and calm that fills the person.*

22

• *Dr. Andrew Newberg, a Professor of Radiology at the University of Pennsylvania, is a leading expert in the field of neurotheology, which he describes as a “unique field of scholarship which seeks to understand the brain and theology, or more broadly, the mind and religion.”*

23

• *His studies involve measurements in the frontal lobes whose main activities include governing behaviour, problem solving, decision making, and motor skills among many other functions. The frontal lobe is also involved in language skills, and it facilitates the ability to speak fluently.*

24

• *Using neuroimaging, Dr. Newberg demonstrated that when subjects spoke in their native language, the frontal lobes of the brain were activated. However, when they spoke in tongues, activity in the frontal lobes was reduced. He concluded that what is happening in the brains of people who speak in tongues is similar to what they describe is happening to them spiritually—that they are unaware of the words they are speaking, because the Spirit is praying through them.*

25

• *One participant in Dr. Newberg's study said this: "When I heard about the study, I knew it would be proven that there is a part of the brain over which we have no control. When the Holy Ghost is interceding for us, we are out of control."*

26

• *Dr. Newberg examined the brains of Buddhist monks and Franciscan nuns as they prayed in their own language. The results were noticeably different from the results he observed in those praying in tongues. Activity in the frontal lobes of the monks and the nuns increased in intensity, because they were intensely focused.*

27

• *All our activities in life as believers individually or as the Church corporately can be grouped into one of three categories: Proclamation, Habitation and Revelation.*

28

- **PROCLAMATION** — *We are to be witnesses to the world. We are to declare the good news of Jesus Christ. God has called us to be salt and light.*
- **HABITATION** — *We are to grow and mature in our relationship with Jesus Christ. We are to be built up to be a spiritual house unto God, His holy habitation.*
- **REVELATION** — *God wants to reveal to us the mysteries of His will and to lead us by His Holy Spirit in every area of our lives. He wants to open our spiritual eyes to the wondrous things in His Word.*

29

• *Much of the confusion in trying to understand the various verses found in the Bible regarding speaking in tongues stems from failing to differentiate between the three main purposes of speaking in tongues namely: proclamation, habitation, and revelation. As we look at each of these three main purposes in relationship to speaking in tongues it will become clear how the different functions and reasons for speaking in tongues fit together and perfectly harmonize.*

30

- **PROCLAMATION** — *Tongues as a sign and a wonder. Speaking in tongues can be used by God to make a number of proclamations to both the world and to believers.*
- **HABITATION** — *Tongues as a prayer language is meant to build up and strengthen believers both spiritually and emotionally.*
- **REVELATION** — *Tongues as a spiritual gift which when working in conjunction with the spiritual gift of interpretation of tongues, is used by God to both speak to us and reveal mysteries similar to that of the gift of prophesy.*

31

- **SPEAKING IN TONGUES AS A SIGN – PROCLAMATION**

- *Speaking in tongues as a sign and wonder is a proclamation of a number of truths that God wants to declare to both the world and to believers. Speaking in tongues is a wonder to the world to wake them up to the reality of God. It is a reminder to believers that His continual faithfulness and presence is always with us.*

32

- *Speaking in tongues is one of the miraculous signs to confront unbelievers with the reality of the Gospel. “And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues.” (Mark 16:17).*

33

- *Speaking in tongues is a sign to unbelievers, “tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers.” (1 Corinthians 14:22).*
- *There are two ways speaking in tongues is a sign to unbelievers:*

34

- *i) Speaking in a language understood by the hearer, but not by the speaker. The best example is what occurred on the day of Pentecost when the unbelievers heard the disciples speaking in tongues, ““Look, are not all these Galileans? And how is it that we hear them, each in our own language in which we were born? ... we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.” ... so they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “whatever could this mean?”” (Acts 2:7,8,11,12).*

35

- *ii) The sheer wonder that an unbeliever experiences when confronted by the supernatural reality of someone speaking in an unknown tongue. The unbeliever is not only confronted by the supernatural nature of speaking in tongues, but also by the fact that what the Bible says will happen happens, “they will speak with new tongues.” (Mark 16:17).*

36

- *There are a number of things that speaking in tongues signifies to believers.*

37

- *Speaking in tongues is one indication that someone has received the baptism in Holy Spirit. "And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied." (Acts 19:6). Speaking in tongues may not be the evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, but it is surely one confirmation. Once a believer begins to speak in tongues we can definitely say he has been baptized in the Holy Spirit.*

38

- *Speaking in tongues is a sign of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and that He is alive and His Word is true. "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." (John 7:38-39).*

39

- *Speaking in tongues is a sign that God has united mankind in Christ, both Jews and Gentiles.*

40

- *As Peter preached to Cornelius, a Gentile and a centurion in the Roman Empire, and his family in Acts 10, God used the sign of speaking in tongues to show Peter and the other Jews that God has opened the door of salvation to the Gentiles. They heard them speaking in tongues and immediately recognized that they too had "received the Holy Spirit just as we have," because "they heard them speaking with tongues." (Acts 10:46, 47).*

41

- *At the tower of Babel, God confused the languages of the people, so they were no longer able to understand one another which resulted in the people being divided and scattered.*
- *At Pentecost, God used the manifestation of tongues in order that people of different languages all understood what was being said and it drew the people together to hear and receive the gospel message.*

42

- *At Pentecost speaking in tongues brought unity as opposed to the tower of Babel where it brought division and separation.*

43

- *At the tower of Babel the division of the different languages was the result of man's rebellion toward God. At Pentecost the sign of speaking in unknown tongues was the result of man's obedience and faith in God.*

44

- *Speaking in tongues is a sign and reminder to believers that it is not through self effort and our own strength that we can either serve God or please Him, but by simply believing in Jesus and obediently stepping out in faith as His Holy Spirit leads us and empowers us.*

45

- *Speaking in tongues is a sign and a reminder that we as believers are able to continually experience the supernatural presence of God as we simply abide in Christ and walk in the spirit.*
- *In those times when we feel overwhelmed by the pressures of life or struggling with doubts or fears we can open our mouths and the Holy Spirit will immediately fill our mouths with language that originates from Him.*

46

- *Speaking in tongues is a sign and a reminder that God uses the foolish things to confound the wise. "But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty." (1 Corinthians 1:27).*

47

- *Some believers ask, "Why would God want us to speak in tongues and say things we don't understand? The answer is simply, "He is God and He can do what He likes. He uses what appears to be foolish and weak in the eyes of man to manifest the perfection of His wisdom and power."*

48

- *To a skeptic and the naturally minded person speaking in tongues appears as gibberish and as a foolish and useless action, but in reality when we are speaking in tongues we are speaking mysteries in the spirit. "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." (1 Corinthians 14:2).*

- *Speaking in tongues is an affront to those who want to exalt human reason.*

49

- *Speaking in tongues is a sign and a reminder that we as believers can totally trust God's Word. Just as God can literally control every word we speak when we speak in tongues, He inspired those who wrote the Bible. Each word written in the original text of the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek of the Old and New Testaments can be fully trusted and were fully inspired by the Holy Spirit, "for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." (2 Peter 1:21).*

50

- *We have looked at speaking in tongues in relationship to Proclamation and as a sign and a wonder. Now we are going look at speaking in tongues in relationship to Revelation and in terms of speaking in tongues as one of the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit.*

51

- **TONGUES AS ONE OF THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT - REVELATION**

52

- *Tongues is listed as the 8th gift of the Spirit and interpretation of tongues is listed as the 9th gift of the Spirit, "to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues." (1 Corinthians 12:10).*

53

- *Apostle Paul posed these questions: "Do all speak with tongues?" "Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way." (1 Corinthians 12:30-31).*

- *It is clear from the context of the question in 1 Corinthians 12 that the question is framed from the perspective as tongues as one of the nine gifts of the Spirit and not in reference to speaking in tongues as a personal prayer language.*

54

- *When tongues is used as a gift it is always accompanied by the gift of interpretation, because God uses the gift of tongues and the gift of interpretation to give prophetic messages and thus it is equivalent to prophesy. "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." (1 Corinthians 14:5).*

55

- *The gift of tongues and interpretation is given for the edification of the Church.*

56

- *Many have misinterpreted the following passage as referring to praying in tongues. The context of these verses is in reference to the gift of tongues which is given to provide prophetic utterance in the church. "If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret. But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God." (1 Corinthians 14:27-28).*

57

- *When tongues are spoken in a public meeting as a gift, it should only operate when there is an interpretation.*

58

- *We have looked at speaking in tongues in relationship to Proclamation and as a sign and a wonder. We also looked at speaking in tongues in relationship to Revelation as one of the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit. Now we are going to look at speaking in tongues in relationship to Habitation as a personal prayer language.*

59

• **TONGUES AS A PRAYER LANGUAGE – HABITATION**

- *Praying in tongues originates from our reborn spirit and therefore it is an expression of the perfect prayer. "For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful." (1 Corinthians 14:14).*

60

• *Praying in tongues is a supernatural expression of our triune nature engaging all three aspects of our being. Our soul chooses to submit to the spirit and in an act of faith we begin to speak. The spirit takes control of our physical tongue and forms words in a language unknown to us. – Spirit, soul, and body. “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.” (1 Corinthians 14:15).*

61

• *When we pray in tongues we are expressing directly through the spirit the glory of God. “For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God” and “we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.” (Acts 2:11, 10:46).*

62

• *Praying in tongues strengthens us, edifies us, and builds up our faith, “He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself” (1 Corinthians 14:4), “But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit.” (Jude 20).*

• *Whoever speaks in tongues edifies oneself. The Greek word for edify can mean, “to strengthen, to make more able, to increase the potential of someone or something.”*

63

• *When we cannot express our thoughts and feelings because our inner joy is so great, or our inner struggles are so painful, the Spirit gives us the words. When we feel overwhelmed we can pray in tongues.*

64

• *Praying in tongues helps us to “pray without ceasing.” (1 Thessalonians 5:17.)*

65

• *Many Christians think that in Ephesians 6 there are only six pieces of spiritual armor, but they miss the last one. “praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.” (Ephesians 6:18).*

• *Praying in tongues is the seventh piece of our spiritual armor, so we can successfully engage in spiritual warfare.*

66

- *While praying in the spirit may not be restricted to praying in tongues it certainly includes it.*
- *Praying in tongues is God's secret weapon and it is the seventh piece, seven being the biblical number for completion, and the final piece of our spiritual armor without which we are incomplete.*

67

- *Praying in the Spirit is one of two offensive weapons, the first being the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. (Ephesians 6:17-18).*

68

- *Those who pray in tongues know that one initiates praying in tongues not based on any emotional experience, but by simply opening one's mouth in faith and speaking out words as directed by the Holy Spirit.*

69

- *Sometimes Christians, after receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit accompanied by speaking in tongues, pray in tongues infrequently. Sometimes it is because they fail to understand the importance that praying in tongues can have on one's spiritual walk.*
- *They mistakenly think that praying in tongues is "the least of the gifts," but in reality praying in tongues is the gift that God uses to personally edify us and build up our faith.*

70

- *The naturally minded Christian neglects to pray in tongues daily because they think, "How can this help me? I don't even know what I am saying."*
- *The carnally minded Christian neglects to pray in tongues daily because they are always looking for some emotionally exciting experience and instant gratification.*

71

- *Apostle Paul makes three statements regarding praying in tongues:*
- *"Do not forbid to speak with tongues." (1 Corinthians 14:39).*
- *"I wish you all spoke with tongues." (1 Corinthians 14:5).*
- *"I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all" (1 Corinthians 14:18).*

72

- *What can we learn from Paul's statements about speaking in tongues?*
- *Paul counted it a privilege to speak in tongues and he chose to pray in tongues frequently.*
- *Speaking in tongues is available to all believers.*
- *In the early church speaking in tongues was an expected part of being a Christian.*

73

- *An important question that arises in respect to the operation of speaking in tongues is this: "Where and when is the proper place and time for speaking in tongues?"*
- *For us to answer this question we need to first of all keep in mind the three purposes of speaking in tongues.*

74

- *Tongues as a sign to the unbeliever is appropriate to be spoken in the presence of an unbeliever. Otherwise it can't be a sign to them.*

75

- *Tongues as one of the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit is to function in combination with the gift of interpretation in order to edify the church. This is appropriate to be spoken during a church service or a gathering of believers during those times when prophetic words, testimonies, and other revelations are given.*

76

- *Tongues as a prayer language to edify oneself personally while praying and worshipping God. Praying in tongues can be during one's personal prayer and devotional time or during gatherings of believers either in prayer meetings or corporate church meetings during that portion of the meeting when prayer and worship is taking place.*

77

- *How do we know when speaking in tongues is functioning biblically?*
- *Everything is being done orderly and is not to be disruptive.*
- *Unbelievers are not to be distracted or confused by its practice.*
- *The focus is not on the manifestation of speaking in tongues, but on Jesus Christ, with the purpose of lifting Him up and glorifying Him.*

78

- *Praying in tongues in a public meeting is fully acceptable as long as it flows with the service and it is not disruptive or draws attention to the one who is praying.*

79

- *Tongues as a gift is given when all is quiet, so it can be heard by all. However, as a prayer language it is used when all are engaged in worship and prayer corporately so as not to draw attention to it.*

80

1 Corinthians 14:22-25 (NKJV)

²²Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe.

²³Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those who are uninformed or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind?

81

²⁴But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all.

²⁵And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you.

82

- *Apostle Paul brought balance in understanding how to use speaking in tongues as a sign to unbelievers. He first pointed out that “tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe.”*

83

- *However, he then reminded the believers to use sanctified common sense and not blindly go around speaking in tongues thinking this will convince the unbelievers that the Gospel is true. “Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those who are uninformed or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind?”*

84

- ***The different between tongues as a prayer language and as one of the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit:***

85

- ***1) As a prayer language it is for prayer and worship.***
- ***As a gift it is to give a message to the people.***
- ***2) As a prayer language it is us speaking to God.***
- ***As a gift it is God speaking to us.***
- ***3) As a prayer language it builds oneself up.***
- ***As a gift it builds up the church.***

86

- ***4) As a prayer language it does not need interpretation.***
- ***As a gift it requires interpretation.***
- ***5) As a prayer language it is for all believers.***
- ***As a gift it is only for those that the Holy Spirit wishes to give.***
- ***6) As a prayer language it can be operated at any time.***
- ***As a gift it can only operate as the Spirit leads.***

87

- ***How to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the accompanying sign of speaking in tongues.***
- ***You must be born again.***
- ***Don't strive to receive, but rest in His love for you.***
- ***Don't try to figure it out, but focus on Christ and His love for you.***
- ***Step out in faith and speak as the Spirit gives you words to speak.***

88