

THE INTERPRETATION OF TONGUES

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(Dear One... God bless you! The following is a rather extended lesson that we give to our teachers-in-training of the gifts of the Spirit. It is on the subject of the interpretation of tongues. Please read and receive this wonderful gift into your own life, and for the blessing of the Church. Love to all! KRP)

Perhaps the most abused and overlooked gift of the Spirit is the interpretation of tongues. But, it is a gift we must understand, appreciate and master. In this lesson we will look at this gift in our personal lives, in the Church, as a ministry, and how to receive it as a 'stand alone' gift and with its companion gift of speaking in tongues.

Interpretation of tongues is the ninth gift listed in 1Corinthians twelve, verse ten. Tongues and interpretation are the two gifts that are unique to our Church age. The other seven have all been available throughout the Old Testament.

Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. 1 Cor 14:13 NKJV

IN YOUR PERSONAL LIFE

God wants to talk to you, personally, uniquely, at times of His choosing, and also at times of your choosing. One of the great ways that He does this is through the gift of interpretation of tongues. Interpretation of tongues, just like prophecy, will always be encouraging, comforting and edifying. Consider this interpretation of tongues that was given to John G. Lake at 2am as he prayed. Each stanza was given in interpretation after speaking in tongues.

THE SECRET OF POWER

He is risen! He is risen! Hear the cry
Ringing through the land, and sea, and sky,
'Tis the shout of victory, triumph is proclaimed
Heralds of God announce it, death is disdained.

Shout the tidings! Shout the tidings! Raise the cry.
Christ's victorious, Christ's victorious, cannot die,
For the bars of death He sundered
Satan sees that he has blundered,
As the shouts of angels thundered, "He is alive!"

Catch the shout, ye earth-bound mortals, let it roll.
'Til it echoes over the mountains from the center to the poles
that the Christ of earth and glory death has conquered
Tell the story, He's the victor, He's the victor!
So am I.

For this reason that my ransom He has paid,
I've accepted his atonement, on Him laid,
He, the lamb of God that suffered all for me,
Bore my sins, my griefs, my sickness on the tree.

I am risen, I am risen from the grave,
Of my sins, my griefs, my sickness and the waves
Of the resurrection life, and holy power.
Thrill by being with His new life every hour.

Now the lightnings of God 's Spirit burn my soul,
Flames of His divine compassion over me roll,
Lightning power of God's own Spirit strikes the power of hell,
God in man, oh glory, glory! All the story tell.

I have proved Him, I have proved Him. It is true,
Christ's dominion yet remaineth, 'tis for you,
Let the fires of holy passion sweep your soul.
Let the Christ who death has conquered take control.

He will use you, He will use you
Zion yet has saviors still,
Christ the conqueror yet waiteth
For the action of your will.

Isn't that edifying! What a blessing! Notice that it came forth in his (Lakes) own vocabulary and style. I probably would have said the same truth in a slightly different English vocabulary. It was also in rhyme. Not all interpretation will come forth in rhyme.

Interpretation is the speaking forth in your mother tongue, in your own vocabulary and style of speech, of the essential truth of what has just been spoken in a tongue. It is not a literal translation of the tongue.

Consider this interpretation of tongues:

Thou art not far away, oh God, our souls tonight are enveloped in the eternal God. We feel Thee round about us. We feel Thy precious loving arm, and the beating of Thy heart, and the pulsing of Thy heavenly soul, and we are asking Thee, my God, that the truth of the Eternal shall be breathed into us until all our nature is submerged in God, buried up in God, infilled with God, revealing God.

This was a prayer in tongues and interpretation.

Whatever tongues can be, the interpretation of tongues can be. Tongues can be praise, worship, prayer, speaking a divine secret, intercession, a prayer or expression of thanks, or a warfare decree or prayer. Thus, however tongues comes forth, the interpretation will come forth as well. It is inspired utterance by zealous enthusiasm. The words may come as God brings scripture to your heart, or as He reveals and speaks a new thing.

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. John 14:26
NKJV

Now, in your private prayer life, you will be led to interpret tongues, and you will not know beforehand what you will say. With complete trust in God, give forth what He gives you in your spirit. Let it flow!

...do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. Mark 13:11 NKJV

You need this edification. You need this encouragement in your private prayer life. You need to know that prayer is a 'two way street.' You talk to God...God talks to you, by revelation, by prophecy, and by the interpretation of tongues.

IN THE CHURCH

Church cultures are such that in most churches the things of the Spirit are suppressed, or at least not encouraged. But this is not the way it was in the early Church. Tongues were to be spoken. Interpretation and prophecy were to be given forth, in love and for the benefit of all. God wants to speak directly to His people. If we as ministers begin to allow a little more grace, mercy and freedom in our services, and we teach the people to move by the Spirit, we will see much more of the move of God in our gatherings.

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. 1 Cor 14:5 NKJV

One of my aims, in every church service I conduct, is that the people leave with more faith than they came to church with. The only way this can occur is if they hear from God.

17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word (RHEMA) of God.
Rom 10:17 NKJV

RHEMA words, words that are given at the right place and time to the right people, build faith. The gift of interpretation of tongues is a RHEMA word for that moment. Teach the people to sense the move of the Spirit (remember, Jesus said that He only did what he saw the Father doing), and then be bold to speak out what God is giving them.

Let's also look at 1 Corinthians 14 as to the conduct and application of interpretation of tongues in the Church.

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

Tongues with interpretation in many ways is equal to prophecy, except that it has a specific purpose as a sign to unbelievers which we will see.

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?

7 Even things without life, whether flute or harp, when they make a sound, unless they make a distinction in the sounds, how will it be known what is piped or played? 8 For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle? 9 So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air. 10 There are, it may be, so many kinds of languages in the world, and none of them is without significance. 11 Therefore, if I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be a foreigner to him who speaks, and he who speaks will be a foreigner to me. 1 Corinthians 14:6-11

Verses six through eleven do not deny the benefit of speaking in tongues in a believers personal life. But in the Church service, everything must be done for the benefit of all. Therefore, tongues must be interpreted to bless the believers present.

12 Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel.

Believers are to be zealous...to want to be filled with the Holy Spirit, with gifts that will glorify the Lord and bless the others in love. If believers do not want to be filled, it is usually because they are spiritually sick. You must minister to that spiritual sickness before they can receive the Holy Spirit. A healthy believer will always be hungry for more of God.

13 Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret.

To pray is to ask. Ask God to give you the interpretation of tongues. Then act on your faith and speak out in your mother tongue as first words, then phrases, and then sentences come into your heart.

14 For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful.

You do the praying, and interpreting, as the Spirit enables you.

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. 16 Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say "Amen" at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say? 17 For you indeed give thanks well, but the other is not edified. 1 Cor. 14:15-17

In your private prayer life, tongues will be a great blessing, as well as interpretation. But in a public meeting, when tongues is given forth as a message, it must always be interpreted.

18 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.

20 Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature. 21 In the law it is written:

"With men of other tongues and other lips
I will speak to this people;
And yet, for all that, they will not hear Me," says the Lord.

22 Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe. 1 Cor. 14:18-22

The specific benefit of tongues with interpretation in the Church service is that it is to be a sign to young, not fully instructed believers, that they have more to learn and receive from God.

23 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? 1 Corinthians 14:23

Certainly, bold, enthusiastic tongues can come forth especially in the worship service, but the worship leaders should be aware of the new people and help them to understand what is happening.

24 But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all. 25 And 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. 1 Corinthians 14:24-25

This is the effect of true, anointed prophecy.

26 How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. 1 Cor. 14:26

Here is one of the great, central principles of any Church service: all things are done to build the faith of, to edify, all the people present.

27 If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret. 28 But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God. 1 Cor. 14:27 – 28 NKJV

In the service only two or three messages in tongues and interpretation are to come forth. This is not a strict rule, but rather a general guideline to help keep order and flow in the service. The one who speaks in tongues can interpret, or another can be led to interpret. The one who speaks in tongues should be praying to receive the interpretation as well. "But if there is no interpreter" could be translated, "But if the person lacks the will and anointing to interpret." In other words, the person who is led to speak in tongues should also be praying to get the interpretation as well. If they don't, God can give it to someone else.

These general instructions can help you to see how the interpretation of tongues can be a mighty blessing in the Church fellowships.

I have included in lesson twenty three specific instruction on how to lead a group of people into the gift of interpretation of tongues.

AS A MINISTRY

There is a ministry in the Church of interpretation of tongues.

28 And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? 30 Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? 31 But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way. 1 Cor 12:28-31 NKJV

This is NOT a 'designated interpreter of tongues' in the church fellowship. ALL of God's people are able to (and should be capable of) interpret tongues. A ministry of interpretation of tongues works effectively in revelation knowledge. For instance, an acquaintance of mine in India ministers healing by the interpretation of tongues. This is a ministry. One of our interns ministers healing very effectively by praying in tongues. This is a ministry of tongues. Every believer can speak in tongues, but not every believer will have a ministry in tongues. It is the same with interpretation.

Ministries of interpretation will have much broader application of the gift than others.

RECEIVING THE GIFT

Interpretation can come two ways – as a separate gift on its own, or with the companion gift of tongues. You may receive interpretation when some one else speaks in tongues, or when you speak in tongues. Interpretation can come by God's sovereign impartation, or by your asking for the gift. Zealous enthusiasm is a great key to receiving the gift.

12 Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel. 1 Cor 14:12NKJV

Ask, and learn to look in your spirit for the words. A key: don't make this harder than it is! Get alone and practice until you are flowing in the gift easily. Speak in tongues for a few seconds, then look in your spirit for the word in interpretation. Speak it out! Speak out the message fully. Practice daily until you are very confident in receiving the gift. You must receive before you can impart to others.

Please report to me what you learn and how you are doing. You need this gift, and so does the Body of Christ. Let's develop our ability to flow in all of the gifts of the Spirit!

Remember, dear ones, we must be about our Father's business...