

Speaking in Tongues

The Holy Spirit¹ and speaking in tongues were promised to us by the prophets and they are just a couple of our benefits in this messianic age. Shaul (Paul) quotes Isaiah when he says, “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;” 1 Corinthians 14:21 CJB. This scripture is clearly in the context of the gifts or evidences of the Holy Spirit that Shaul devotes a considerable portion of his letter in 1 Corinthians 12-14 to.

Shaul talks about speaking in tongues being a sign. He possibly means that it is a sign that accompanies believers in the Messiah (1 Cor. 14:22). Yeshua said, “And these signs will accompany those who do trust: in my name they will drive out demons, speak with new tongues;” Mark 16:17 CJB.

It is somewhat shocking to me that some people who believe in God think that something that a good God does is strange. Often these people are more concerned with how they will be seen instead of wanting something amazing and supernatural from God. Perhaps this has to do with not understanding the many ways that God can use speaking in tongues in the life of believers.

Shaul (Paul) talks about the work of the Holy Spirit in many of his letters. The Holy Spirit is talked about in the New Testament letters because the Holy Spirit is something that believers in the Messiah received and still receive. After Yeshua’s first messengers spoke in tongues, Kefa (Peter) said, “For the promise is for you, for your children, and for those far away - as many as ADONAI our God may call!” That includes you and me!

The early Jewish believers in the Messiah Yeshua were excited about the possibility of receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit from God. Yet some believers in the Messiah today are ignorant or refuse to put God in His proper place. They want to do things their way or they believe wrong teaching instead of following God’s commandments and receiving the Holy Spirit into their lives.

Isaiah prophesied that some will still not hear (Isaiah 28:11-12). They will not go unpunished. Yeshua said that those who believe in Him will receive the Holy Spirit (John 14:15-17). Those who blaspheme (speak against) the Holy Spirit will be held accountable (Mark 3:28-30). Yet God is merciful. I doubted that speaking in tongues was genuine at first, but God still allowed me to receive the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues. I was willing to give God a chance. How about you? God wants you to have the Holy Spirit, the various evidences of the Holy Spirit, and to receive speaking in tongues.

Spiritual Gifts and Evidences

First of all, speaking in tongues is an evidence of the Holy Spirit (one of the ways we see the Holy Spirit at work). God gives different gifts, ways of service, workings, and evidences (manifestations). God is the One that empowers these gifts or evidences of the Holy Spirit so they involve God’s supernatural work. Shaul calls the work of the Holy Spirit both gifts or evidences. In 1 Corinthians 12:7 he calls them “manifestations;” in Romans 12:6 he calls them "gifts." These shouldn’t be thought of what we can do, but it is what God does through us. The Bible says that it is the “Spirit,” God, “at work.”

Lists are used by Jewish teachers as a way of communicating at least part of what needs to be taught. That is why we see different lists for spiritual gifts in other places. Shaul is not confused, but he uses examples of various gifts at different places. We should by no means think of God being limited in what He can do. Even in the Old Testament portion God gave spiritual gifts that included those we read about in the New

¹ Kefa (Peter) quotes Joel 3:1-4 (2:28-32) and says what they are experiencing is the gift of the Holy Spirit which all those who believe in the Messiah are to receive (Acts 2:38-39).

Testament portion. God even gave spiritual gifting for the work of the Jewish Mishkan (the Tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting in the desert). Again, these are not our works, but God at work in us.

Romans 12:6-8

Prophecy	Giving
Serving	Leadership
Teaching	Mercy
Counseling	

1 Corinthians 12:8-10

Wisdom	Prophecy
Knowledge	Discerning Spirits
Faith	Speaking in Tongues
Gifts of Healing	Interpreting Speaking in Tongues
Miracles	

Ephesians 4:11-12

Messengers-Apostles – messengers sent by God for a specific purpose; for example, Jonah was a messenger. For more information see our belief, God's Messengers – Apostles.

Prophets – see our belief on Prophets.

Evangelists – those who have the mission to help people know about God.

Pastors – Those who lead a local group of people and help them to follow God.

Teachers – Those who teach truths from the Bible and their application.

In the Old Testament portion

Artistry; Ex. 36:1	Knowledge	Prophecy
Counseling	Leadership	Prophets
Discerning Spirits	Mercy	Serving
Evangelists	Messengers – Apostles	Teachers (Rabbis)
Faith	Miracles	Teaching
Gifts of Healing	Pastors (Rabbis)	Wisdom
Giving	Prophecy	Work; Ex. 36:1

The Benefits of Speaking in Tongues

The Bible tells us that the gift of the Holy Spirit is a good gift (Luke 11:11-13) and so we should also understand that speaking in tongues is something good. The scriptures say about speaking in tongues:

Be filled with the Holy Spirit; Eph. 5:18	Is a sign; 1 Cor. 14:22
Builds us up; Jude 1:20	Messianic benefit; 1 Cor. 14:21; Isa. 28:11-12
Can sing in tongues; 1 Cor. 14:15	Prayer for others; Eph. 6:18
Command of God; 1 Cor. 14:37	Prayer; 1 Cor. 14:14-15; Eph. 6:18
Do not forbid speaking in tongues; 1 Cor. 14:39	Speak in tongues when we don't know what to pray for; Rom. 8:26-27
Edifies; 1 Cor. 14:4	Speaking mysteries; 1 Cor. 14:2
Empowers us; Acts 1:8	Thanks, praise; 1 Cor. 14:2
Gives us peace; Isa. 28:11-12	Used with interpretation of tongues; 1 Cor. 14:26-27
God wants us to do it; 1 Cor. 14:5, 18	Worship; John 4:24
Helps our faith; Jude 1:20	
Helps us; Rom. 8:26	

What People Believe

Among circles where speaking in tongues is taught, most of the believers speak in tongues. Where it is ignored, few people speak in tongues.

- Some believe it is wrong. Clearly the Bible says **it isn't wrong**; 1 Corinthians 14:40 CJB, “Do not forbid speaking in tongues.”
- Some say that only some receive speaking in tongues (There is evidence that all the evidences or gifts are available to each believer at times; the scriptures seems to support all the gifts are available. 1 Corinthians 12:7 KJV, “But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man.” Namely, the gifts or evidences of the Holy Spirit are for every believer).
- Some say that everyone can speak in tongues if they are a believer in Yeshua. It also seems to say that not all speak in tongues. 1 Corinthians 14:5 CJB, “I wish you would all speak in tongues.” God appears to liberally give this gift to nearly all those who seek it. It depends on what is taught.

We can speak in tongues anytime and know that God is there; it is a witness to us. God's Spirit is in us and calling out to God. Shaul said, “Now because you are sons, God has sent forth into our hearts the Spirit of his Son, the Spirit who cries out, ‘Abba!’ (that is, ‘Dear Father!’);” Romans 8:15 CJB.

The Bible says that it is supernatural prayer. All the riches in the world are worth nothing compared to what God can do. God wants to give us good gifts and He wants us to use them.

Some Understand What is Being Spoken

The Bible says that the language we are speaking is either a tongue of men or of angels. Sometimes a person will understand the speaking in tongues because the Bible says that it can be language of men; 1 Corinthians 13:1 CJB, “I may speak in the tongues of men, even angels.” On Shavuot the people understood Yeshua's appointed messengers (apostles) when they spoke in tongues.

Yeshua's appointed messengers spoke in a language and someone from the area where that language was spoken understood them. It was a miracle. Most of the time we don't understand what is being spoken in a tongue and that's what the Bible says (1 Cor. 14:2). They weren't the only ones to ever speak in tongues; the Bible says speaking in tongues is an evidence or manifestation of the Holy Spirit and is therefore a common spiritual gift for those who receive the Holy Spirit.

Some people have understood someone speaking in tongues and it wasn't during missionary work – so speaking in tongues is not necessarily associated with missionary work. Some make the mistake of thinking God will miraculously give them the language of the local people without learning it; God can do that, but the Bible actually tells us what speaking in tongues is for.

God Gives us the Words – We Speak to God

The Bible says we don't understand what we are speaking; God gives the words as we speak. “For someone speaking in a tongue is not speaking to people but to God, because **no one can understand, since he is uttering mysteries in the power of the Spirit.**” 1 Corinthians 14:2 CJB. God gives us the words and the Bible says we are speaking to God. One of things we are speaking are mysteries. Since we don't understand what we are speaking, perhaps that is the mystery. What we are speaking is from God and it is up to God how He uses the tongue. We could be speaking something amazing. Doesn't the Bible say that God spoke the creation into existence? Genesis 1:3-5 CJB

Just like God was with His people in the desert every day as the shekinah glory and He fed His people, God is still at work on behalf of His people. This is your chance to experience and accept what God wants for you.

Shaul assures us that God intends to work powerfully. 1 Cor. 4:20

God is not far from us. Acts 17:27

God has not changed; and He will not change. Mal. 3:6; Hebrews 13:8

The Messengers (apostles) Did the Speaking.

(We have to open our mouths and make the sounds/words. Also, it is not by possession).

“They were all filled with the Ruach HaKodesh and began to talk in different languages, as the Spirit enabled them to speak;” Acts 2:4 CJB.

After we receive the Holy Spirit, the Ruach HaKodesh, then we can speak in tongues. We need to be a believer first. Then it says that they began to speak. Just like we speak in the natural, we have to decide to open our mouths and say something. We can stop and start when we want to; we decide to speak in the tongue that God gives us. It is not by possession.

It says the tongue is a specific language. It is not just a bunch of gibberish. We might repeat ourselves a lot giving praise to God, but doesn't He deserve thanks? It is not “goo goo gaga, boo boo.” There are many different languages and sounds. I heard a story once about someone hearing a very strange sounding tongue and they began crying because they understood it; it is God that is giving us the words. Some think that God has to take them over to speak in tongues. **That is not speaking in tongues.** As we speak God will give you the words. The Bible says they “began to talk.”

Interpret for Edification

(When together, we should interpret the tongue or others should so the people present are edified).

Shaul makes a good point about speaking in tongues. When we get together it should be for the purpose of building up others. Since speaking in tongues is not understood and we are speaking to God, Shaul says that when we get together it is okay to speak in tongue if we interpret. The interpretation is done supernaturally by God giving the interpretation; we are to pray to interpret. Either the person speaking in tongues or someone else should give the interpretation from God. If we speak in tongues in a meeting, we should be ready to believe God to interpret it ourselves if no one else does it. “Therefore someone who speaks in a tongue should pray for the power to interpret;” 1 Corinthians 14:13 CJB.

This is what the believers did when they came together. They had teachings, songs (psalms), spiritual revelations (information given by God for encouragement and help which includes prophecy), and speaking in tongues and an interpretation. We would expect many different evidences of God at work when we get together. Shaul said, “What is our conclusion, brothers? Whenever you come together, let everyone be ready with a psalm or a teaching or a revelation, or ready to use his gift of tongues or give an interpretation; but let everything be for edification.” 1 Corinthians 14:26 CJB. When we get together we are to do things to help us do better spiritually, to be edified.

Are we willing to humble ourselves like the woman that wiped Yeshua's feet with her tears (Luke 7:37-38)? God gave us speaking in tongues to give Him thanks. If we only knew how much we have to be thankful for. Wouldn't it be nice to honor God with our thanks by speaking in tongues?

There are people who don't believe in speaking in tongues. One person told me he couldn't speak in tongues; perhaps he didn't understand that it is up to us to speak. We won't speak in tongues if we don't open our mouths and start speaking. You need to actually try to say something.

Shaul said that we should imitate him, “Imitate me, even as I myself try to imitate the Messiah;” 1 Corinthians 11:1 CJB. Shaul said he spoke in tongues a lot (1 Cor. 14:18). There doesn't have to be a

reason to thank God. We should be willing to give Him praise and thanks, and speaking in tongues is one of ways to do that. Speaking in tongues a lot is a good thing to do.

Some interpret one scripture to mean that we are to pick up poisonous snakes and speak in tongues. That is definitely weird; why would anyone do that? The Bible says that we are not to tempt God, so don't do foolish things when you speak in tongues. "You shall not tempt the Lord your God;" Deuteronomy 6:17 CJB. That is a commandment of God.

We shouldn't use speaking in tongues in a disrespectful way. Don't be obnoxious and annoying when speaking in tongues. We shouldn't be annoying and pray in tongues out loud in front of someone. Instead, we could speak in tongues quietly to ourselves. Remember, they don't know what is being prayed for. The Bible says God will judge us for what we do whether good or bad (2 Cor. 5:10). God will judge those who dishonor God by using speaking in tongues inappropriately. Theatrics can be annoying and wrong. The speaking in tongues is always good and from God even if we are using it inappropriately.

God gives the speaking in tongues, but He doesn't approve of being disrespectful, weird, or putting on theatrics. 1 Corinthians 14:40 says, "Do not forbid to speak with tongues. **Let all things be done decently and in order.**" If you have used the Holy Spirit in a wrong way, decide today that you will not do that again.

People can do crazy things at times; pastors scream and hop around, people roll around on the floor and fall down. If I'm feeling the peaceful presence of God, I sit down. Don't scream and fall down. God doesn't need our help. Being respectful and orderly applies to all the spiritual gifts. I once had someone give me a prophecy in squeaky voice, "This is God speaking." I don't doubt his prophetic gifting, but he didn't need to add the ridiculous theatrics.

Don't be pushy with speaking in tongues. One time I heard of a group of people speaking in tongues while surrounding a new believer to get them to speak in tongues. Let people accept it on their own and want to speak in tongues. Shaul laid out the commandments for spiritual gifts and evidences of the Holy Spirit and said, "Let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord. But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant." If someone doesn't want to be blessed you can't force them. I offer to pray for people at times, but if they say no, I let it go.

The Spiritual Gifts are to Help Us (regardless of misuse)

God doesn't demand perfection or no one would be worthy to receive His gifts or salvation. We are on a lifelong pilgrimage to do what is right and good. The spiritual gifts and evidences are there to help us to do that. "Their task is to equip God's people for the work of service that builds the body of the Messiah, until we all arrive at the unity implied by trusting and knowing the Son of God, at full manhood, at the standard of maturity set by the Messiah's perfection;" Ephesians 4:12-13 CJB.

Then there are those who see people doing weird things or sinning. Perhaps they are thinking that speaking in tongues is wrong because the person speaking is sinning. Yochanan (John) said, "If we claim not to have sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us;" 1 John 1:8 CJB. We all sin and we are not perfect, but don't think for a minute that God is fooled by people who habitually sin. The Bible says, "Don't delude yourselves: no one makes a fool of God!" Galatians 6:7 CJB.

If someone needs correction, try to help them (knowing that we are not perfect) having their best interests in mind (Gal. 6:1). Do not let the poor behaviors of others about spiritual gifts influence us. Go ahead and receive what God wants to give you.

Seek the Things of the Spirit

In the context of the spiritual gifts or evidences of the Holy Spirit Shaul said, “Pursue love! However, keep on eagerly seeking the things of the Spirit;” 1 Corinthians 14:1 CJB. Doing things with love is very important, but **Shaul says that the Holy Spirit is important too.**

Walk out in faith and speak in tongues. You have to speak and let God give you the words. It was promised to us by the prophets, the Holy Spirit is a good gift, we may speak spiritual mysteries, we are edified, we can edify the believers when it is interpreted, it is prayer, and it can be thanks or praise. God can use it as He wishes. Why not receive God's gift?

Some say that you have to be perfect before you speak in tongues, but that is not what the Bible says. The evidences of the Holy Spirit and gifts are to help us grow as a believer. If God's gifts are to help us grow, then they must be available to us and we don't have to wait to receive all of them. Some of them like teachers are for the more mature believers.

We believe in the whole Bible from Genesis to Revelation. The gifts and evidences of the Holy Spirit are to be used with love (1 Corinthians 13:1-2). So, live an honorable life of love and holiness, and receive and use the gifts of the Holy Spirit.