**“Earnestly desire the best gifts” 1 Cor:12:31**

1 Cor 12:4-6: it seems that Paul makes a distinction between the Gifts v 4, services v 5, and works/activities v6.

V 4 The Greek word for Gifts is Charisma form the root charis (grace) so these are pure free gifts given by the Holy Spirit.

V 5 The Greek word for services DIACONIA from which we get the word DEACON and these services are assigned by the Lord Jesus.

V 6 The Greek word for activities/effects is ENERGMA from which we get the word energy and these activities are assigned by the Father.

**Rules about the Gifts:**

* The Gifts are given to EVERY believer 1 Cor. 12:7
* The Gifts are meant for the edification of the church 1 Cor. 12:7
* The Gifts are to be practiced in love 1 Cor:12:31
* The Gifts of the Spirit to be sought after 1 Cor. 12:27-31, 14:1
* The Gifts are to be practiced in order 1 Cor 14:26-33

**Words of Wisdom:**

This is a supernatural wisdom given through the Holy Spirit to act in certain situations.

Examples:

Joseph’s advise to Pharaoh Genesis 41:33-38[[1]](#footnote-1)

Acts 27:31-32 “31 Then Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, “Unless these men stay with the ship, you cannot be saved.” 32 So the soldiers cut the ropes that held the lifeboat and let it drift away.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

**Word of Knowledge:**

That is when God reveals secret things

Examples:

2 kings 6: 8-12[[3]](#footnote-3)

Acts 5: 1-11[[4]](#footnote-4)

**Gift of Faith:**

Faith is the only thing that is both a gift of the Spirit and a fruit of the Spirit.

Faith as a supernatural gift is when you know that miracle is going to happen.

For example, Luke 17:6 He replied, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you.

**Healings:**

* Healing is provided for in the atonement and Jesus’ death on the cross Matt. 8:16-17
* Healing and miracles is Jesus’ promise to all those who believe in Him John 14:12.
* Gifts of Healings are gifts that the Holy Spirit give to some beliers as their primary way to edify the body of Christ.

**Miracles:**

This gift when the believer overturn the rules of nature. Like when Moses have the earth to swallow Korah and his company Numbers 16 or like when Joshua stopped the sun and the moon to obtain victory at Gibeon Joshua 10:12.

Other examples:

Acts 5:1-11 Ananias and Sapphira falling dead. Note that the gift of miracle acted upon a word of knowledge[[5]](#footnote-5).

Acts 13:4-12 Paul and Elymas[[6]](#footnote-6)

**Prophecy:**

Supernatural revelation of upcoming events like the Biblical prophecies about Christ, destruction of Jerusalem…etc.

Other examples:

Acts 13: 1-3

Acts 21:11[[7]](#footnote-7)

**Discerning of the spirits:**

That is to know the force/reason behind what is happening.

Examples:

Examining prophecy: 1 Cor. 14:29

Knowing the cause of a sickness; if it is natural or demonic. Compare

Luke 11:14 And He was casting out a demon, and it was mute. So it was, when the demon had gone out, that the mute spoke; and the multitudes marveled.

Matt. 15:30 Then great multitudes came to Him, having with them *the* lame, blind, mute, maimed, and many others; and they laid them down at Jesus’ feet, and He healed them.

**Tongues:**

**Outlines:**

1. **Tongues is primarily a prayer language.**
2. **Is tongues as a prayer language for all believers?**
3. **The Importance of praying in tongues.**
4. **Tongues is PRIMIRALY a prayer language:**

Let us look at 1 Cor. 14:1-33:

The purpose of this passage is: *Why, in the church, prophesy is more edifying to the church than speaking in tongues, unless there is interpretation.*

(Before we analyze this passage, remember that the purpose of all the gifts is to edify the church as whole 1 Cor. 12:7)

Now let us see what we learn from this passage about tongues:

v 2. who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. So speaking in tongues is actually praying.

V4 He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself.

Question: Isn’t the purpose of all the gifts is to edify the church? 1 Cor. 12:7.

Answer: Tongues can be either a prayer language or gift. When the individual believers pray between himself and God, that is the prayer language, he edifies himself. But when the believer PRAYS out loud in the church in tongues accompanied with interpretation, that is the GIFT of tongues, that edify the church. Paul explained that in V 5

V 12-20 IN A CHURCH GATHERING: Paul is not discouraging praying in tongues But rather using praying in tongues with interpretation for the edification of the church rather than the individual believer.

V14-17 Paul clarify that there are 2 different kinds of prayers:

1. Praying in Tongues: which is the same as Praying in the Spirit.
2. Praying in understanding: which is the normal prayer in our own language.

This is essential to understand what Paul was referring to when he spoke about “praying in the Spirit” in other scriptures.

V20-25: Paul seems to contradict himself in these verses. First in v20-22 he says that tongues is a sign for the unbelievers but then in v 23-25, particularly v 23, he says that tongues hinders the unbeliever.

Let us look closely at these verses:

v 21: Paul is quoting Isaiah 28:11-12, In the passage in Isaiah God is telling the children of Israel that He will use another nation that speaks another to punish the children of Israel and through that Israel will know that God doesn’t tolerate their sin. In the same way, God will use tongues to bring unbelievers back to Him. We see an example of that in Acts 2, the unbelieving Jews heard the disciples “speaking the wonderful works of God” Acts 2:11. Note How in v 2 Paul says that He who speak in tongues “speak to God and not to man” and in Acts 2 that is exactly what happened. Unbelievers heard the disciples praising “the wonderful works of God” i.e. the disciples was speaking to God praising Him. That was the sign to the unbelievers.

In v 23 Paul argues that if the whole church is speaking in different tongues and an unbeliever visit. The unbeliever, not understanding the language, will think that the church members are out of their minds. I guess we see an example of that as well in Acts 2 when some of the unbelievers thought the disciples are drunk.

**II. Is tongues as a prayer language for ALL Believers?**

YES.

1. In Acts 2 we see that there was a 120 disciple praying in the upper room when the Holy Spirit fell. In v 4 we read “And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” Every single one of the 120 was filled with the Holy Spirit and every single one of them spoke in tongues.
2. In Ephesians 6:18 Paul lists “praying in the Spirit” as one of the weapons of the full armor of God. If we are going to argue that tongues as a prayer language is not for all believers, then, by the virtue of being faithful to the text, we must argue that the full armor of God is not for all believers.

But how about 1 Cor. 12:10 “to another gifts of tongues” and how about 1 Cor. 12:30 “do all speak in tongues?” doesn’t these scriptures prove that tongues isn’t for everyone?

Answer:

It seems like Paul makes a distinction between a private use of tongues as a prayer language and the public use of tongues as a gift of the Holy Spirit.

In 1 Cor. 12:10 Paul is taking about the Gifts of the Holy Spirit which the Holy Spirit distribute according to His will. These gifts are used PUBLICLY and EDIFY THE CHURCH and MUST BE INTERPRETED.

But in 1 Cor. 14 he is asking that if there is no interpreter that the believer keep TALKING TO GOD privately and EDIFY HIMSELF.

1 Cor. 12:28-31 “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. *Are* all apostles? *Are* all prophets? *Are* all teachers? *Are* all workers of miracles? 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.”

Note how Paul switched from Gifts that the HOLY SPIRIT DISTRIBUTES to ministries that GOD THE FATHER APPOINTS v 28.

it seems that all these ministries/gifts are only for public service. In the context of public ministry tongues isn’t for all But that doesn’t mean that tongues as a prayer language isn’t for all.

III. **why praying in tongues?**

**There are many spiritual benefits for praying in tongues:**

**1- When you pray in tongues, you glorify God in unknown language:**

Look at these scriptures:

Acts 2:11 “we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.”

Acts 10:46 “For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God.”

1 Cor. 14:17 when you pray in tongues, “ For you indeed give thanks well”

Have you ever been worshiping God and felt overwhelmed by His goodness that you said “Lord, there is no words deep enough to tell you how much I love you.” That is what tongues for. When our human language fall short to ascribe majesty to God, tongues of fire from above come down to glorify His name.

When I was in Uganda in 2013, I was in a small church preaching. I heard the guy who was leading the service saying in pure Arabic, my mother tongue, “To you belong the majesty. To you belong the honor.” He kept on saying that many times. I thought to myself, “wow, I did’t know he spoke Arabic.” After the service, I told him, “You didn’t mention to me that you speak Arabic.” He replied, “I don’t. I don’t know a word in Arabic.” Then I knew that he was praising God in tongues.

**2- When you pray in tongues, you pray according to God’s will:**

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.”

The context of these 2 verses seems odd. In Romans 8:18-30, the whole passage talks about our suffering as christians in this life, and how we long for the day when Jesus comes and all this sufferings end.

In that context, Paul is saying in v 26-27 that we don’t know exactly what we should pray for but the Holy Spirit prays in us according to the will of God.

What Paul was saying that may be in our “understanding” we pray that the suffering would end soon. But when we pray in tongues, the Holy Spirit prays the suffering would last a bit longer for our own good.

**3- When you pray in tongues, you pray effectively against the powers of darkness:**

In Ephesians 6:12-13 Paul says “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places.* Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”

Then he command us to be “praying always in the Spirit” Eph. 6:18. Paul knew that praying in tongues is a mighty weapon against the powers of darkness.

**Interpretation of Tongues:**

* Tongues + interpretation = prophecy 1 Cor. 14:5
* It is okay for the person who gave the message in tongues to give the interpretation ! for:14:13
* It is interpretation of tongues not translation of tongues.[[8]](#footnote-8)
1. Kenneth Hagan Sr, The Gifts of the Holy Spirit, 137 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Hagan, 138 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Hagan, 122 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Hagan, 114 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Hagan, 162 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Hagan, 163 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Hagan, 178 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Hagan, 202 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)