

SERIES: DARE TO BELIEVE
PART 15B: DARE TO TRUST THE HOLY SPIRIT
TO LEAD YOUR LIFE

We looked at what Paul had to say about speaking in tongues in the book of 1st Corinthians. If you were not here last week I highly recommend that you go to our website and watch the video, or you can listen to the audio of that very important teaching. In Christian circles there has been an unwarranted bias and negative tone about the practice of speaking in tongues, which, I believe, the N.T. teaches very clearly. Because of prejudiced interpretation by the majority of Christian commentators and also misappropriation and misconduct in the use of the gift of speaking in tongues by those who call themselves Pentecostal and/or Charismatic, many Christians have been shamed into staying away from this vital subject of receiving their private prayer language in which the Holy Spirit intercedes for the person, praying according to God's will. As you will see by the time I am done--praying in tongues, praying in the private love language that God desires every believer to experience is being misunderstood and misrepresented by well meaning preachers, teachers and biblical scholars, and I believe that satan is using this misunderstanding in the church of God to create suspicion, fear and a great sense of insecurity, because he knows that if the church of Jesus Christ will humble themselves and trust God's Word and begin to discipline themselves in this praying in the Spirit that Paul identifies in 1 Corinthians 14:2-5, 14-15--the church will gain ground in their conflict against him. What I want to do with you this morning (afternoon) is to see how in Romans 8:26-27 and Ephesians 6:18 Paul refers to this practice of praying in tongues because it is a vital aspect of allowing God to pray His will and purpose through you. Please follow along as I read Romans 8:18-28.

The Biblical Purpose Of Praying In Tongues:

8:18-28 "Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory He will reveal to us later. 19 For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who His children really are. 20 Against its will, all creation was subjected to God's curse. But with eager hope, 21 the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay. 22 For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. 23 And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as His adopted children, including the new bodies He has promised us. 24 We were given this hope when we were saved. (If we already have something, we don't need to hope for it. 25 But if we look forward to something we don't yet have, we

must wait patiently and confidently.) 26 And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. 27 And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will. 28 And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose for them."

I. Praying in tongues achieves God's purposes through us in prayer.

A. The Holy Spirit assists us in our weakness through praying in tongues. Romans 8:26a

The word for assists or helps means to come to the aid of someone. It is the same word used in Luke 10:40 in Martha's complaint to Jesus about Mary that she should assist her in the making of the meal. The Holy Spirit wants to help and assist you in this life by partnering with you as you allow Him to pray God's perfect will through your own mouth. Weakness has to do with the sufferings, illnesses and our own sinfulness. 8:26 **"And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for."** It is in the light of our present realities of suffering and endurance, our lack of knowledge has to do with the larger pictures as it were, not knowing what to pray for. Fee writes, **"In the midst of the 'already/not yet' of our salvation, with its present suffering and endurance yet full of hope, we are left with an overwhelming sense of the enormity of our own weaknesses. Our 'not knowing' is related to our present weaknesses in light of our future redemption, our final revelation as God's children, clothed in resurrection bodies which have replaced the current ones which are subject to the same decay as the groaning creation. Since the Spirit is the first fruits of this glorious future, but is so as God's empowering presence in the context of our present weaknesses, Paul therefore assures us that the Spirit Himself pleads, intercedes, supplicates for us and on our behalf. The Spirit's appeal is before God for us."**

B. The Holy Spirit prays with us with groanings.

Romans 8:26c.

NLT says, **"But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words."** ESV says, **"The Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words."** NIV says, **"But the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express."**

Paul in using the word groanings demonstrates what we have in common with creation during this time of present “bondage to decay.” Fee argues that groanings make very little sense as something silent which the majority of the scholarly community insists is true based on vs.23 that says we groan inwardly. The difference is in vs. 23 we groan inwardly but vs. 26 says it is the Holy Spirit who prays for us with groanings. The majority of scholarship argues that it is a groaning of a kind that cannot be put into words at all so they interpret the phrase “too deep for words.” with final results being is that such praying is not really “groaning” at all, but is simply silent praying. Fee argues that such a view supported further by the explanation that God “searches the heart,” implying that what He sees in the heart need never be spoken by us and since such silent praying is what the majority of contemporary Western Christians do when praying privately, it seems perfectly natural that such prayer is what the apostle had in mind. But these words indicate the manner in which, when **“we do not know what to pray for as we ought, the Spirit intercedes for us according to God’s will.”** This understanding goes back as far as Origin then Zahn, Hamilton, Delling, Stendahl and especially Kaesmann that these sentences as a whole and this phrase in particular refer to a kind of private (“to oneself”) praying in tongues that Paul speaks about as part of his resolution of the practice of uninterpreted tongues in the worshipping community in Corinth. In Paul’s day praying was very much like reading, where even in private one read “aloud”--to oneself, to be sure, but by “mouthing words” nonetheless, just as children still do until they are “taught” otherwise. The causal evidence for this in the NT, of course, is Philip’s “hearing” the Ethiopian eunuch as he is “reading” from Isaiah (Acts 8:30). So also with praying. Not only does the narrative in Daniel 6 assume that Daniel prayed “aloud” when praying alone, but so does the parable of Jesus in Luke 18:9-14, as does Luke’s narrative about Jesus praying in 11:1 as the synoptic narrative about His prayer in the garden. In all of these cases the narrator assumes a culture where people prayed “aloud,” that is, articulated for themselves as they prayed. So the Holy Spirit’s praying through us is something that can be heard.

Romans 8:26-27 correspond remarkably with what Paul elsewhere calls “Praying with/in the Spirit. 1 Corinthians 14:14-15 **“For if I pray in tongues, my spirit is praying, but I don’t understand what I am saying. 15 Well then, what shall I do? I will pray in the spirit, and I will also pray in words I understand. I will sing in the spirit, and I will also sing in words I understand.”**

Ephesians 6:18 **“Pray in the Spirit at all times on every occasion.”** Gordon Fee argues that Paul, when he writes “Pray in the Spirit at all times on every occasion,” Paul intends this phrase precisely as he has used it elsewhere, especially in 1 Corinthians 14:14 & 15 and Romans 8:26-27 to refer specifically to that form of prayer in which the Spirit assumes a special role in the praying, especially, though not exclusively, praying in tongues. In that passage which we have looked at both this week and last week Paul distinguishes between two forms of prayer; one he will do “with the mind” and in the public assembly; the other he

will do “in/by the Spirit” and in the privacy of his own life of devotion before God which is speaking in tongues. If that catches some of us off guard because it is so little a part of the prayer life of most people in the church, we probably ought not to read our experience of church back into the life of Paul. What Paul says about this kind of praying in 1 Corinthians 14:1-5 and 14-19 demonstrates that he engaged in it regularly and that he urged the believers in Corinth to do so as well. The same is most likely true of Romans 8:26-27. If it is more specific “praying in the Spirit” in view, then one must also be prepared to enlarge one’s understanding of the nature of such praying: it is not only speaking mysteries to God, or praise and blessing God, or “inarticulate groaning” in times of present weakness, but a way of engaging the enemy in the ongoing conflict. What we see is that, for Paul, he considered prayer to be above all an activity empowered by the Spirit. It also indicates the crucial role the Spirit plays in our continuing “warfare” against satan. For Paul, the concern was not only that they be clothed with the armor that Christ provides in the gospel, but that they take the enemy on by Spirit-empowered proclamation and by Spirit-inspired praying. The context is that of conflict, warfare against “the prince of darkness grim”; Only “Praying in the Spirit” will suffice in such conflict. Fee writes further, “Perhaps we should note further that the feeble prayers of God’s people, spoken in their own strength and often in desperation, while heard on high, are surely not the stuff of ‘routing the foe.’ Because we do not know how to pray as we ought, we need to lean on more heavily on “praying in/by the Spirit.” Prayer is not simply our cry of desperation or our “grocery list” of requests that we bring before our heavenly Abba: prayer is an activity inspired by God Himself, through His Holy Spirit. It is God siding with His people and, by His own empowering presence, the Spirit of God Himself bringing forth prayer that is in keeping with God’s will and His ways.”

These two passages, Romans and 1 Cor 14:14-15, agree at two crucial points: a) The Spirit is the subject of the verb “interceding,” that is, the Spirit Himself is seen as praying from within us, and, b) The person’s involved do not understand what the Spirit is saying--or not saying, as the case may be.

When Paul speaks of private prayer he gives us the description of his own prayer life in 1 Cor 14:14-15, and he describes two kinds of prayer: Praying with his mind or understanding, and praying with his spirit. Praying with his mind alludes to the fact that he would understand what he is saying because they are generated by his own mind and, most likely, audible. Praying in the Spirit in this context can refer only to the praying in tongues which he discusses in vv. 2, 19, and 28 which is private, articulated but “inarticulate” with regard to his mind, that is, the Spirit prays and the mind itself is unfruitful in this case, and to himself and to God. Paul affirms that he does this more than all of them vs. 18, and desires that they would all pray in tongues but not in the assembly.

II. Acknowledge Paul’s understanding of speaking in tongues in 1 Corinthians 14.

Paul distinguishes between the uninterpreted tongue in private prayer and that which is public and needs interpretation. v.19. On the other hand, Paul indicates in 14:14-15 that private “praying in tongues” requires no interpretation, rather, one’s prayer is “by him/herself” and “to God” vs. 1:29. So in praying in tongues the mind does not enter into the prayer as such vs. 13. Such prayer is specifically said to be “by the Spirit” vs. 2 and in vv. 14-15 he says, “My spirit prays.” The Spirit prays in tongues through me. When I pray in tongues by the Spirit I speak “Mysteries” to God. Fee argues that praying in tongues is vocalized. How does one speak in a tongue and not do so aloud? Even though such prayer does not proceed by the way of the mind, Paul is nonetheless adamant that he will engage in it (vv.14-15) and that those so praying are edified (built up). Finally, since this is the only form of prayer in Paul’s letters that is specifically said to be by the spirit, and since Paul wishes that all would so pray, it is arguable that this is also what he meant when he urged the Ephesians to pray in the Spirit in Ephesians 6:18.

Concluding remarks on our Theological reflection on speaking in tongues:

The context for “Praying in the Spirit” for Paul concerning glossolalia, is his thoroughgoing eschatological (last days) framework, in which he understands the Spirit as the certain evidence that the future has already made its appearance in the present and the sure guarantee of its final consummation. Within this framework, glossolalia for Paul serves the believer not as evidence that the future is already present (*vis-à-vis* Corinth), but that the future is “not yet” consummated.

It is because of our “between the times” existence that we desperately need the Spirit’s help in our present frailty. This is quite the point of Romans 8:26-27. The Spirit comes alongside, prays through us with “inarticulate groaning,” as our help in this present time of weakness. At the same time glossolalia serves as a constant reminder that we, along with the whole of creation, continue, to anticipate our final redemption. This is why tongues, as well as prophecy and all other Spirit charismata, are for the present time only (1 Cor 13:8-13) Tongues, and prophecy and knowledge belong to this time of present weakness, when we “know in part” and need the Spirit’s help. The believers praying in tongues echoes the “groaning” of the whole creation, while together we await the final consummation of the future that God has already ushered in by the Resurrection and the gift of the Spirit.

The theological implications of such an understanding are huge. In contrast to what is often implied in Pentecostal and charismatic circles, for Paul one does not “Pray in tongues” from a position of “strength,” as though being filled with the Spirit put one in a position of power before God. Rather, one prays in tongues from a position of weakness, because we “do not know how to pray as we ought.” At such times we desperately need the Spirit to help us, for the Spirit to pray through us what is in keeping with God’s purposes. And we need especially to learn the kind of trust that such praying inherently demands, namely that God

does indeed know the mind of the Spirit, that His intercession for us is right on in terms of God's own purposes in our lives and in the world. Such an understanding of glossolalia implies weakness in yet another way. Although the one speaking in tongues is not "out of control" in the ecstatic sense of such phenomena, one is not "in control" in the more biblical sense: of giving up control of one's life and agendas, so as to put one's whole self--especially that most unruly part of oneself, the mind and the tongue--at God's disposal believing that His love for us is absolutely pure, totally "without disguise," and that He purposes only good for "His children." This is why Paul insists that he will do both: that he will pray and sing with his mind (for the sake of others), and that he will pray and sing in the Spirit. And at the same time, by praying out of a stance of weakness, Paul also affirms our utter dependence upon God for all things; and here is where the "power in weakness" comes in. By praying through us in tongues, the Spirit is the way whereby God's strength is made perfect in the midst of our weakness--which is where the ultimate strength lies for the believer. So our praying in tongues, while evidence for us that we have entered the new, eschatological age ushered in by the Spirit, serves especially as evidence that we are still "not yet" regarding the consummation of that age. Because we have not yet arrived, and await with the whole of creation our final redemption, we pray in the Spirit out of weakness, implicitly trusting the Spirit to pray in keeping with God's purposes. This kind of praying is freedom and power of God's power being perfected in the midst of our weakness.

(Read from Pg 118 FN 23 from Listening To The Spirit In The Text.)

III. See what you can expect to experience when you pray to be released in your prayer language (Speaking in tongues):

A. See that God gave His Holy Spirit to the church (us) on the day of Pentecost. Acts 2:4; 10:44-48; 19:1-7

B. Know that once you have confessed Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you're ready to be released in your prayer language. Acts 2:38 "Peter replied, 'Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'"

C. You can expect that the Father will give you what you're asking for when you pray or you're prayed for. Acts 19:6

D. Expect the Holy Spirit to move on your vocal chords and put supernatural words on your lips. Explain that the Holy Spirit will give you the power and the words to speak but you must speak them. Acts 2:4; Acts 10:46; 1 Corinthians 14:18

E. Reject the false thoughts that you have received something false or the lies that you're just making this up. Luke 11:11-13

F. Start speaking the words that the Holy Spirit has given you. Thank the Holy Spirit for giving you your prayer language.

Pray for everyone.