

## **Life With The Spirit Part 4**

### **What About Speaking In Tongues?**

This is part four of our series Life With The Spirit. Last Sunday we talked specifically about the baptism in the Holy Spirit. This week I ran across something that Father Dennis Bennett said. He was an Episcopal priest who was baptized in the Holy Spirit and was really at the forefront of the Charismatic renewal of the 1960's and 70's. Speaking at a conference on the Holy Spirit more than 30 years ago he said, "When the Holy Spirit comes in, all of Him comes. For He is a person, not a quantity of something. Some talk about Him as though he were like electricity, or gasoline. We hear talk about getting more or less of the Holy Spirit. But you can't have more or less of a person visiting your house! It doesn't make sense to say, 'We've got some of our friend John Smith over to our house today – more will be coming tomorrow. If we're real good, the rest of him will be here next week!' If the Holy Spirit is living in your life, all of Him is there. The question is not, How much of the Holy Spirit do you have? But rather, How much of you does the Holy Spirit have? He is in your house, but how much of your house have you given Him access to? The baptism in the Holy Spirit takes place when you decide to open the rest of your house to the Holy Spirit. The word baptize in classical Greek means to plunge, drench, overwhelm. To be baptized in the Holy Spirit means that our souls and bodies, as well as our spirits, are drenched and overwhelmed by God's Holy Spirit. When that takes place, we become vastly more aware of God. We are able to know that He is in us, to feel His presence, both in our souls and in our bodies and we become much more aware of the spiritual world, both good and bad." I thought that was a good assessment of the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

I hope the message last week helped you to understand the importance of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. This morning we want to focus specifically upon the subject of speaking in other tongues. In the events of Pentecost in Acts 2, the bible says they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

You will notice some things about the events of Acts 2 that are unique to that initial outpouring of the Holy Spirit. For instance the sound like the blowing of a violent wind and tongues of fire were unique to the Day of Pentecost. But this physical evidence of speaking in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them, we see and hear this repeated in the book of Acts. We believe this experience then is normative, that is it is to be expected when someone is baptized in

the Holy Spirit. We refer to speaking in tongues as the initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. This is not the only evidence, but it is the first, the initial physical evidence. This experience of Spirit Baptism with the initial physical evidence of speaking in other tongues is one of the doctrinal distinctives of the Assemblies of God. This is what makes us “Pentecostal/charismatic.”

Often it is the whole notion of speaking in tongues that seems to make people uncomfortable. Why would God choose this particular manifestation as evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit and why should we be open to this experience? I’m glad you asked.

**Why should we desire to speak in tongues?** Let me give you three quick reasons. **It is the normative experience associated with the Baptism in the Holy Spirit.** Last week we pointed out some of the reasons why we should desire to be baptized in the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues comes along as evidence of the experience. It is the natural, logical, physical consequence of this Pentecostal empowerment of the Holy Spirit. We see it happening in Acts 2 and 4, Acts 8 in Samaria, Acts 10 at Cornelius house, Acts 19 at Ephesus. We see it happening later in Corinth. It appears to be the normative experience associated with the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Secondly, **Scripture encourages speaking in tongues.** Jesus listed speaking in other tongues as one of the miraculous signs that would follow the life of the believer in **Mark 16:17**. Paul encourages believers in **1 Corinthians 14:5, 18, 39** to speak in tongues. Jude indicates that “praying in the Holy Spirit”, what we interpret to mean praying in tongues, would be a source of spiritual encouragement and a means of building up our faith in **Jude 20**.

Finally, **The experience of speaking in other tongues is part of our total surrender to the will and purpose of God.** James describes the tongue as the most unruly member of the body. When the believer is baptized in the Holy Spirit, the Lord is given control of this most unruly member of the body. It is a sign of His control, His Lordship, his authority in the life of the believer.

So, there are three good reasons why we should want to experience the Baptism in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking with tongues, but have you stopped to wonder why God chose tongues as this initial evidence of the Spirit’s empowerment? The truth is, we may never know because His ways are above our ways, His thoughts are above our thoughts. But, I

want us to consider some possible reasons as to why God chose tongues as the initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

**The tongue is given so we can communicate.** Even apart from its role as evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, the tongue plays a significant role in our life. We communicate by means of our tongue, don't we? If I asked you to turn to the person next to you and describe the happiest moment in your life - but to do it without talking, what would you do? Without a tongue, communication becomes pretty difficult doesn't it? You could write it down, but even then we lose the subtleties of intonation that explain and give meaning. Spoken communication is a powerful thing and that is why God gave us a tongue. We use that tongue to communicate with others and we use that tongue to communicate with God, offering praise and honor to God both in our known language and in a heavenly language.

**God gave us a tongue because it is the shortest distance between our inner life and the outer life.** Look at what Jesus said. **“No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thorn bushes or grapes from briars. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.” Luke 6:43-45**

Whatever is on the inside of us, in our heart and spirit, will come out. The life of our inner man will be expressed, and one of the quickest ways it is expressed is by our tongue, our language and conversation. “Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.” What is your heart filled with? The overflow will spill out through your tongue, your spoken language. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, our heart overflows and our mouth begins to speak praise as we declare the wonders of our God.

**God gave us a tongue because it is the shortest distance between our inner life and the inner life of another.** It is the primary way to let another person see into your heart and into your life. That's why you spend hours talking on the phone to your sweetheart. You are sharing your heart. And not only does that apply between any one of us and another person, but I believe that applies between us and God. The sharing of our heart with God. The Psalmist said, “Deep calls to deep.” George Wood in speaking of this passage of Scripture said, “The depths in nature call the swallows to migrate, the depths of the moon call the tide to rise and fall and the

depths of God call forth the depths of our being, the inner man.” As God calls to our spirit, the quickest response is with our voice as we express our thanks and praise and love and adoration to God from within our spirit. The quickest way of releasing my inner depths to God is in spoken fashion. We become more conscious and aware of God and what he is doing when we release our response to God in a spoken fashion and this becomes even deeper and more intimate when the Holy Spirit speaks through us in the language of the Spirit.

1 Samuel 1 tells of Hannah’s prayer for a son. She told Eli, “I was pouring out my soul to the Lord.” That is deep calling unto deep. That is her inner life being poured out to God. I believe that speaking in other tongues, that prayer language of the Holy Spirit, is one of the special ways the depths of our soul can be poured out to the Lord.

As we pray in the Holy Spirit, we communicate with God on a level of intimacy beyond what our mind and language can accomplish. Paul said, “In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.” Romans 8:26 Deep calling unto deep, communicating with God as the Spirit of God makes intercession through us in a heavenly language of prayer.

I believe **God chose the tongue as a sign because the tongue has been affected by the fall of man and God desires to show his redemptive purpose.** James 3 has a good bit to say about the tongue. James compares the tongue to a bit that is put into the horse’s mouth to turn the animal; a rudder that, although small, is used to turn a great ship; a spark that sets on fire an entire forest. The tongue is described as a restless evil, full of deadly poison that sets the whole course of our life on fire.

The bible describes a number of sins that are specifically associated with the tongue: anger (Eph. 4:31, Col. 3:8) profanity, lying (Col. 3:9), criticism, grumbling (Eph. 4:29), gossip, backbiting, slander.

All of these things are sins associated with the tongue. But God has chosen to redeem us and to redeem the tongue from its sinful purposes and to renew it so that from the overflow of our heart, that same tongue that used to lie and swear and gossip can now speak the truth in love. That same tongue that used to deceive can now speak faithfully, deliberately, carefully. And in addition, God has chosen the tongue to be the instrument by which we speak forth the highest

praises and declare the glory of God. He chooses the tongue, that James said was a restless evil that could not be tamed, and God tames it and renews and uses it to proclaim his glory and to tell of his redemptive plan for us all. It is part of God's plan to reverse the curse.

**God chose the tongue because words bring about change.** If this is true of our known language, when we speak, it must surely be true of unknown tongues because they are declarations of the wonders of God. Remember Acts 2 the disciples were speaking in tongues and the people that heard and understood the tongues said they were declaring the wonders of God! Paul said when we pray in an unknown tongue we are speaking not to men but to God and that we utter mysteries with our spirit. 1 Cor. 14:2. In Romans 8:27 Paul tells us that when the Holy Spirit prays through us, he not only expresses the deep things of our heart, but also that he intercedes for us in accordance with God's will. As we pray in tongues, the Spirit of God praying through us, I believe we are not only declaring the wonders of God but we are declaring what God intends to do in our circumstances. Prayer changes things and prayer in the Spirit changes things according to God's perfect plan and will. The Holy Spirit knows the mind of God and the plans of God for us so as we pray in the Spirit, praying in tongues, I believe we can be declaring by faith what God has ordained should be in our lives and in our circumstances. We are declaring in the Spirit, by faith, the reality that God has ordained for us.

Speaking in other tongues declares the reality of the Holy Spirit being poured out upon us. God has chosen the tongue, our most unruly member, to be submitted to him in a most unique step of faith that not only edifies and builds us up, but also allows us to declare God's glory and to pray in accordance with his will, giving honor to him in a way that is most precious and pleasing to him.

**The tongue is one part of the body that is most fitted to bring forth the praise God desired to be expressed from the depths of our soul.** God wanted to do a new thing on the day of Pentecost as he poured out his Holy Spirit. He wanted to help man to praise him more from the depths of our being. What could he have done? He could have told us to raise our hands, but he had already done that in the Old Testament. He could have told us to do something with our feet, our hands, fall on our knees, smile with our face. And all of those are somewhat normal ways to express honor and joy. But the tongue was the one part of the body that would require an expression of faith and would involve a unique expression of praise from our body that had

not been seen before. New at Pentecost, that from the depths of our being we give praise to God, expressed in a new heavenly language.

There are two means of communication available to us: verbal and non-verbal. How do we communicate with God? Verbally. We pray. But how do we reach out non-verbally to communicate with God? We can't physically touch him. We can't embrace him, we can't pour oil on his head or perfume on his feet, so our communication is verbal. With our tongue, our speech, we relate to God verbally. But I want to suggest to you this morning that when we pray in tongues, pouring out the depths of our being to the Lord, that in one sense it is almost a nonverbal experience. We are relating to God then in a fashion we don't quite understand, reaching out after God, communicating on a level that is different than when we pray with our understanding, in our known language. Paul said the Holy Spirit helps us when we don't know what to pray for, interceding for us "with groans that words cannot express." It is beyond verbal. Oral Roberts used to say that praying in tongues bypassed the intellect and communicated directly from our spirit to the Spirit of God. He taught this was God's original plan for communicating with him.

Praying in tongues, praying in the Spirit, is pouring out emotion to God from the depths of our soul and spirit – a release of the depth of our inner being – loving God in a way that is prompted by the Spirit of God within us, but in a way that is beyond us – deeper than what we can explain or understand.

Scientists tell us that we have two hemispheres of the brain. One side is responsible for emotive, creative types of things and the other is the more rational, analytical side. When we pray in the Holy Spirit, speaking in other tongues, it is as though God has chosen to involve both left and right hemispheres so that we praise God from the deepest part of our being. Paul said, **"I will pray with my spirit but I will also pray with my mind (or with my understanding)."**

### **1 Corinthians 14:14-15**

We praise God with the words we have, in the language we know, with the understanding we have, but we will also reach beyond that to the depths of our soul and allow God, by the Holy Spirit, to bring forth praise and adoration to God on the deepest level of our being.

When we are baptized in the Holy Spirit and we begin to speak in other tongues, our spirit is opened to praise God in a new fashion, in a new language. We don't understand the

words. I don't know if the words I speak in tongues are a known language or unknown to all but God, but I know it is language. I know it is communicating with God, speaking forth his glory, declaring the mysteries and the wonders of God.

After considering all we've said this morning, considering the power of the tongue and how God can take our tongue, unruly and evil, and redemptively use it to declare his glory and offer praise and adoration to God, I can say like Paul this morning, "I thank God I speak in tongues (more than you all)!"

Why did God choose tongues as the initial physical sign or evidence? Because our tongue is the means by which we communicate and God wants us to be able to communicate with him on the deepest level possible. Our spirit, touched and empowered by His Holy Spirit, speaking to God out of the fullness of our spirit and from the depths of our soul.

Speaking in tongues, praying in the Spirit, allows for an intimacy with God in prayer that perhaps we don't find anywhere else. Paul says we edify ourselves when we pray in the Spirit. Why are we edified? Because we are communicating with God in spiritual intimacy.

Now finally, understand this is not about a doctrine of tongues. This is a sign, a result of being baptized in the Holy Spirit. Speaking in tongues is not an end in itself. It is a sign of that spiritual empowerment and remember, the baptism of the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues was associated with **Power** ("You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you") with **Proclamation** ("You will be my witnesses") and with **Praise** ("We hear them declaring the wonders of God"). Power, proclamation and praise all flow out of continually spending time in intimate communion with God and praying in tongues is one of the ways we communicate with God on that most intimate level.

O God, pour your Spirit out upon us. Take our tongues and may we proclaim the highest praise. May we pray with our understanding, but Lord, let us also pray in the Spirit, let us declare the wonders of God from the depths of our soul, the deepest part of our being. My language fails me. Let me speak words of praise beyond my intellect, beyond my understanding. Let my heart be poured out to you, adoring you in spiritual language. Lord if there are love languages of marriage, let me speak to you in one of the love languages of heaven, declaring my deepest praise to you.