

Praying in the Spirit

READ JUDE 20-21 • 1 CORINTHIANS 14:2-16

²⁰But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.
JUDE 20-21

In Jude 20, we are commanded to pray in the Spirit. *Praying in the Spirit* means to pray under the inspiration and leadership of the Holy Spirit. One of the primary ways this was done in the New Testament was through the gift of tongues.

²For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to people but to God. Indeed, no one understands them; they utter mysteries by the Spirit . . . ⁴Anyone who speaks in a tongue edifies themselves, but the one who prophesies edifies the church.
1 CORINTHIANS 14:2,4

¹⁴For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. ¹⁵So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my understanding; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my understanding. ¹⁶Otherwise when you are praising God in the Spirit, how can someone else, who is now put in the position of an inquirer, say "Amen" to your thanksgiving, since they do not know what you are saying?

1 CORINTHIANS 14:14-16

Speaking in tongues is the supernatural ability to speak in human or angelic language. (See 1 Corinthians 13:1.) This gift was so important to Paul that when he was correcting the church in Corinth for their use of tongues in public worship, he said to them,

I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you (1 Corinthians 14:18). Earlier in his letter to the Corinthians, Paul had even told them, *I would like every one of you to speak in tongues* (1 Corinthians 14:5). Why is the gift of tongues so important?

Although there are a number of reasons for the importance of tongues, I will comment on just a few of them. First, in 1 Corinthians 14:14, Paul said, *For if I pray in a tongue my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful*. In verse two of that same chapter, Paul said when people pray in tongues, *they utter mysteries by the Spirit*. In other words, when we pray in tongues, the Holy Spirit prays through our spirit in words that are unintelligible to our minds. Jude 20 says that when we pray like this our faith is built up.

How does praying in tongues build up our faith? First, you exercise your faith when you pray in a language you do not understand. Second (and most importantly), praying in tongues enables you to effectively communicate with God, even when you have no idea how to pray or even what to say. In Romans 8:26–27, we discover the power of the Holy Spirit to pray perfectly through us no matter what we are facing.

²⁶In 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 through wordless groans. ²⁷And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

ROMANS 8:26-27

A number of scholars believe that the phrase *the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans* is the same type of praying described in 1 Corinthians 14:2: *For anyone who speaks in*

a tongue . . . utters mysteries by the Spirit. Furthermore, verse 14 continues: *For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful.* The Greek word translated *wordless* in the NIV can be interpreted as either *silence* or *inexpressible* (no words). In my opinion, if the second definition *inexpressible* is accepted, this passage may be describing a person who cannot find words for what they are feeling or facing. If that is correct, this passage could be referring to tongues.

Even if the *inexpressible groanings* referred to in this verse don't specifically refer to tongues, the passage itself does explain why the Holy Spirit's prayers through us build our faith. As God, the Holy Spirit perfectly understands both our desires and the Godhead's divine desires for us. This enables Him to perfectly express our needs, even when we cannot understand them ourselves.

This is why praying in tongues can create such a deep sense of divine connection, peace, and faith. Like the Apostle Paul has found, praying in tongues can be incredibly helpful. When we have no words to express the agony and burdens of our heart and soul, we can find relief through speaking in tongues. As the Holy Spirit bypasses our confusion and pain, we are filled afresh with peace, joy, and faith.

APPLY

Have you ever spoken in tongues? We know from Acts 10:45-46 that speaking in tongues is the primary sign of being baptized in the Holy Spirit. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is an immersion in the Holy Spirit's power that is normally both *separate from* and *subsequent to* our conversion to Christ.

Perhaps you have never been baptized in the Holy Spirit. Although it is normally received through other believers laying their hands on us and praying, there are times when God simply pours out the power of the

Holy Spirit on people while they are praying. If you have never spoken in tongues, ask the Lord to baptize you in the Holy Spirit. If you do not receive it, inform one of the leaders in your church that you want to be baptized in the Holy Spirit.

PRAY

- Raise your hands and begin to pray in tongues for at least two minutes. (Even two minutes can seem an eternity if you haven't prayed in tongues for awhile.)
- Focus on three things as you pray in tongues. First, express aloud (in your native language) the area of resistance you are targeting. After you have done that, pray in tongues over it for ninety seconds. Second, select a painful area or situation that has been difficult to pray about. Pray in tongues over this area for ninety seconds also. You may find helpful to imagine the person or situation as you are praying. Third, pray over your pastor and his or her family for ninety seconds in tongues.
- Pray for two minutes for your local church and the Every Nation region that you've chosen for today (page 27). After praying, take one more minute and quietly worship in tongues as you thank God for meeting with you. Try raising your hands again as you allow His peace and joy to seep into your soul.

Tomorrow, we will examine one of our most important weapon

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