

The Gift of Tongues

by Smith Wigglesworth

Smith Wigglesworth emphasizes the importance of the gift of tongues for personal edification and its role in the church and the lives of believers.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 14:1

Topics: "Spiritual Gifts", "Edification through Tongues"

Description

Smith Wigglesworth emphasizes the significance of desiring spiritual gifts, particularly the gift of tongues, as a means of divine communication with God. He illustrates how speaking in tongues allows believers to edify themselves and intercede according to God's will, sharing a testimony of Willie Burton's miraculous recovery through prayer in tongues. Wigglesworth encourages believers to pursue the gifts of the Spirit with fervor, highlighting that while tongues are for personal edification, prophecy serves to build up the church. He stresses the importance of understanding and interpreting tongues for the benefit of the congregation, urging believers to remain steadfast in their pursuit of spiritual gifts.

Transcript

"Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy. For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue, speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries" (1 Cor. 14:1, 2).

It is necessary that we have a great desire for spiritual gifts. We must thirst after them and covet them earnestly because the gifts are necessary and important, that we, by the grace of God having received the gifts, may be used for God's glory.

God has ordained this speaking in an unknown tongue unto Himself as a wonderful, supernatural means of communication in the Spirit. As we speak to Him in the unknown tongue we speak wonderful mysteries in the Spirit. In Rom. 8:27 we read, "He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." Many times as we speak unto God in an unknown tongue we are in intercession and as we pray thus in the Spirit we pray according to the will of God. And there is such a thing as the Spirit making intercession with groanings which cannot be uttered.

On this line I want to tell you about Willie Burton, who is laboring for God in the Belgium Congo. Brother Burton is a mighty man of God and is giving his life for the heathen in Africa. He took fever and went down

to death. They said; "He has preached his last; what shall we do?" All their hopes seemed to be blighted, and there they stood, with broken hearts, wondering what was going to take place. They left him for dead; but, in a moment, without any signal, he stood right in the midst of them; and they could not understand it. The explanation he gave was this, that, when he came to himself, he realized a warmth going right through his body; and there wasn't one thing wrong with him. How did it come about? It was a mystery until he went to London and was telling the people how he was left for dead, and then was raised up. A lady came up and asked for a private conversation with him, and arranged a time. She asked, "Do you keep a diary?" He answered, "Yes." She told him, "It happened on a certain day that I went to pray; and as soon as I knelt, I had you on my mind. -The Spirit of the Lord took hold of me and prayed through me in an unknown tongue. A vision came before me in which I saw you laid out helpless; and I cried out in the unknown tongue till I saw you rise up and go out of that room." She had kept a note of the time and when he turned to his diary he found that it was exactly the time when he was raised up. There are great possibilities as we yield to the Spirit and speak unto God in quiet hours in our bedrooms. God wants you to be filled with the Holy Ghost so that everything about you shall be charged with the dynamic of heaven.

"He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church" (Verse 4). I want you to see that he that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself or builds himself up. We must be edified before we can edify the church. I cannot estimate what I, personally, owe to the Holy Ghost method of spiritual edification. I am here before you as one of the biggest conundrums in the world. There never was a weaker man on the platform. Language? None. Inability-full of it. All natural things in my life point exactly opposite to my being able to stand on the platform and preach the gospel. The secret is that the Holy Ghost came and brought this wonderful edification of the Spirit. I had been reading this Word continually as well as I could, but the Holy Ghost came and took hold of it, for the Holy Ghost is the breath of it, and He illuminated it to me. And He gives me language that I cannot speak fast enough; it comes too fast; and it is there because God has given it. When the Comforter is come He shall teach you ALL things; and He has given me this supernatural means of speaking in an unknown tongue to edify myself, so that, after being edified, I can edify the church.

In 1 John 2:20 we read, "But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." In verse 27 we read, "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man should teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him." Even, when you are baptized in the Spirit you may say, "I seem so dry, I don't know where I am." The Word says you have an unction. Thank God you have received an anointing. The Holy Ghost here says that He is abiding and that He teaches you of all things. These are great and definite positions for you. The Holy Ghost would have you stir up your faith to believe that this word is true that you have the unction and that the anointing abideth. As you rise up in the morning believe this wonderful truth, and as you yield to the Spirit's presence and power you will find yourself speaking unto God in the Spirit and you will find that you are personally being edified by doing this. Let everything about you be a lie, but let this word of God be true. The devil will say you are the driest person and that you will never do anything, but you believe God's word, that the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you.

"I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edification." You must understand that God would always have you to be in the place of prophecy, for everyone who has received the Holy Ghost has a right to prophesy. In verse 31 we read, "Ye may all prophesy one by one."

Now prophecy is far in advance of speaking in tongues, except that you have the interpretation of the speaking in tongues, and then God gets an equivalent to prophecy. In verse 13 we read, "Let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue, pray that he may interpret." This is an important word.

After receiving the Baptism in the Holy Ghost and speaking in tongues as the Spirit gave utterance, I did not speak with tongues again for nine months. I was troubled about it because I went up and down laying hands upon people that they might receive the Holy Ghost, and they were speaking in tongues, but I did not have the joy of speaking myself. God wanted to show me that the speaking in tongues as the Spirit gave utterance, which I received when I received the Baptism, was distinct from the gift of tongues which I subsequently received. When I laid hands on other people and they received the Holy Ghost, I used to think, "Oh, Lord Jesus, it would be nice if You would let me speak." He withheld the gift from me, for He knew that I would meet many who would say that the Baptism of the Holy Ghost can be received without the speaking in tongues, and that people simply received the gift of tongues when they received the Baptism. I did not receive the gift of tongues at that time, but nine months later I was going out of the door one morning, speaking to the Lord in my own heart, when there came a volume of tongues. When the tongues stopped I said to the Lord, "Now, Lord, I did not do it, and I wasn't seeking it; so You have done it, and I am not going to move from this place until you give me interpretation." And then came an interpretation which has been fulfilled all the world over. Is it the Holy Ghost who speaks? Then the Holy Ghost can interpret. Let him that speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret, and God will give it. We must not rush through without getting a clear understanding of what God has to say to us.

"What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also" (Verse 15) . If you pray in an unknown tongue in the Spirit you do not know what you are praying; you have no understanding of it. It is unfruitful to those round about you; but you have the same power to pray with the understanding under the unction of the Spirit as you have to pray in an unknown tongue. Some say, "Oh, I could do that, but it would be myself doing it." If YOU pray, it is yourself, and everything you do in the beginning is yourself. I kneel down to pray and the first and second sentences may be in the natural; but as soon as I have finished, the Spirit begins to pray through me. The first may be yourself. Granted. The next will be the Holy Ghost, and the Holy Ghost will take you through, praise the Lord. Everything but faith will say, "That isn't right." Faith says, "It is right." The natural man says, "It isn't right." Faith says, "It is right." Paul says, "I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also;" and he does it in faith. The devil is against it and your own self-life is against it. May God the Holy Ghost bring us into the blessed place where we may live, walk, pray and sing in the Spirit, and pray and sing with the understanding also. Faith will do it. Faith has a deaf ear to the devil and to the working of the natural mind, and a big ear to God. Faith has a deaf ear to yourself and an open ear to God. Faith won't take any notice of feelings. Faith says, "You are complete in Him."

It is a wonderful thing to pray in the Spirit and to sing in the Spirit, praying in tongues and singing in tongues as the Spirit of God gives you utterance. I never get out of bed in the morning without having communion with God in the Spirit. It is the most wonderful thing on earth. It is most lovely to be in the Spirit when you are dressing and you come out to the world and the world has no effect on you. You begin the day like that and you will be conscious of the guidance of the Spirit right through the day.

"I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all: yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue" (Ver. 18, 19) . Many people will come round and say that Paul said he would rather speak five words with the known tongue than ten thousand words without understanding. Then will always

leave out that part of the sentence, "I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all." Paul was here correcting the excessive speaking in tongues without interpretation, which was not for the edification of the assembly. If there was no interpreter present, they were simply to speak to themselves and to God. Suppose we had someone preaching and we had twenty or thirty people all up and down in tongues, it would be very serious. There would be confusion. The people who attend the meeting would rather have five words of edification, consolation and comfort than ten thousand words without understanding.

Because you feel a touch of the Spirit you are not obliged to speak in tongues. The Lord will give you a sound mind so that you will hold your body in perfect order for the edification of the church. But Paul here says that he spake in tongues more than they all; and, as it is evident that the Corinthian church was given to this thing very considerably, he certainly must have been speaking tremendously in tongues both day and night. He was so edified by this wonderful, supernatural means of being built up, that he could go to the church, and preaching in a manner so that they could all understand him, he would marvelously edify the saints.

"In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord. Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not" (Verses 21, 22). There are many who call themselves believers who are extremely unbelieving. One of the unbelieving "believers" was a Methodist minister who lived in Sheffield, England. A man gave him a check and told him to go and take a rest. This man also gave him my name and address; so, when he got to Bradford, he began to inquire about me. He was warned against me as one of the "tongues people," and was told to be very careful and not to be taken in, for the whole thing was of the devil. He said, "They will not take ME in; I know too much for them to take me in."

He was quite run down and needed rest; and when he came he said, "A friend of yours sent me, is it all right?" I replied, "Yes, you are welcome." But we could do nothing with that man. It was impossible. Talk? You never heard anyone talk like him. It was talk, talk, talk, talk. I said, "Let him alone, he will surely finish some day." We had dinner, and he talked through dinner time; we had the next meal and he talked through that.

It was our Friday night meeting for those seeking the Baptism and the room began to fill with people and still he talked. No one could get an edge in. He lodged himself in a place where he could not be disturbed by those coming in. I said, "Brother, you will have to stop now, we are going to pray." As a general thing we had some singing before going to prayer; but this time it was different. It was God's order. We got straight to prayer and as soon as we began to pray two young women, one on this side and the other on the other side began speaking in tongues. And this minister-it was all so strange to him-moved from one to the other to hear what they were saying. In a little while he said, "May I go to my room?" I said, "Yes, brother, if you wish." So he went to his room and we had a wonderful time.

We went to bed about eleven o'clock or so and at half-past three in the morning this man came to the bedroom door. Knock, knock, "May I come in?" "Yes, come in." He opened the door and said, "He is come, He is come"-holding his mouth, for he could hardly speak in English. I said, "Go back to bed, tell us tomorrow." Tongues are for the unbeliever, and this man was an unbeliever, an unbelieving "believer." Again and again I have seen conviction come upon people through the speaking in tongues.

The next morning he came down to breakfast and said, "Oh, was not that a wonderful night?" He said, "I know Greek and Hebrew, and those two young women were speaking these languages, one was saying

in Greek, 'Get right with God,' and the other was saying the same thing in Hebrew. I knew it was God speaking, and I knew it was not they. I first had to repent. I came in an unbeliever, but I found that God was here. - In the night God laid me on the floor for about two hours. I was helpless. Then God broke through." Here he began again to speak in tongues, right over the breakfast table.

God will have witnesses of His mighty power that no man can gainsay. You will have to see that the Holy Ghost will speak through you in tongues and interpretation which will bring conviction to the unbeliever in the open air; and you will find that God will convict by this means.

I will explain to you the most perfect way to receive the gift. Come with me to the second chapter of 2 Kings and I will show you a man receiving a gift. Elijah had been mightily used of God in calling down fire and in other miracles; and Elisha is moved with a great spirit of covetousness to have this man's gifts. You can be very covetous for the gifts of the Spirit and God will allow it. When Elijah said to him, "I want you to stop at Gilgal," Elisha said, "As the Lord liveth and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee." There was no stopping him. When Elijah wanted Elisha to stop at Jericho he said in substance, "I am not stopping." The man that stops gets nothing. O, don't stop at Jericho; don't stop at Jordan; don't stop anywhere when God would have you move on into all of His fullness that He has for you.

They came to Jordan and Elijah took his mantle and smote the waters. They divided; and Elijah and Elisha went over on dry ground. Elijah turned to Elisha and said in substance, "Look here, what do you want?" Elisha was wanting what he was going to have, and you may covet all that God says that you shall have. Elisha said, "I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me." This was the plow-boy, who had washed the hands of his master; but his spirit got so big that he purposed in his heart that, when Elijah stepped off the scene, he would be put into his place.

Elijah said, "Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee." May God help you never to stop persevering till you get what you want. Let your aspiration be large and your faith rise until you are wholly on fire for God's best.

Onward they go, and as one steps, the other steps with him. He purposed to keep his eye on his master until the last. It took a chariot of fire and horses of fire to part them asunder, and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. I can fancy I hear Elisha crying out, "Father Elijah, drop that mantle!" And it came down. Oh, I can see it lowering, lowering and lowering. Elisha took all of his own clothes and rent them in two pieces, and then he took up the mantle of Elijah. I do not believe that, when he put on that other mantle, he felt any difference in himself; but when he came to Jordan, he took the mantle of Elijah and smote the waters and said, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" And the waters parted and he went over on dry ground. And the sons of the prophets said, "The spirit of Elijah doth rest upon Elisha."

It is like receiving a gift; you don't know that you have it till you act in faith. Brothers and sisters, as you ask, BELIEVE.

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