

Ten good reasons for praying in the spirit

from Ingolf Ellßel.

1. In Acts 2:4 it is written: "All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them." Praying in the spirit is the initial evidence or witness of being baptized in the Holy Spirit. This is the supernatural sign which was promised in the Bible. Everybody who "prays in the spirit" makes himself and others aware that God still fulfills His word. In Acts 10 we read what convinced the Jewish Christians that the Gentiles in Cornelius' house had received the Holy Spirit. "For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God." (Ver. 46)

2. The Bible teaches us about the spiritual benefit of speaking in tongues: "He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself..." (1 Cor. 14:4). The original meaning of the word edify (to build up) in today's vernacular can be better understood as "to electrify" as in charging up a battery. Here we are talking about a charge of strength for the inner man or the born again spirit of a person. One is not constantly running out of energy and needing to have his spiritual "batteries" recharged, but one does use up strength in every day living and continually needs more to be "charged". Other Bible commentators refer to this point as being "tanked up" or "filled" with the Spirit.

3. "For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays," (1 Cor. 14:14). The Bible teaches us that man's fall in sin resulted in his spiritual death. Jesus proclaimed the new birth of the human spirit (John 3:6+7). Every gift that God has given humanity needs to be exercised and developed, whether the body, mind... or also the regenerated spirit. By speaking in tongues, it is the spirit that prays, a healthy exercise which bares good spiritual fruit.

4. The mind finds rest, " ... but my mind is unfruitful." (1 Cor. 14:14). From childhood on our minds are trained. Through the many years of school and study the development of the mind is measured by tests, grades and school reports. Whoever wants to succeed in life must learn to think and do it quick and exact. These are certainly important traits. Yet the Bible tells us: "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding." (Prov. 3:5). Indeed this speaks from a trusting relationship with the Lord who has power over heaven and earth. Speaking in tongues fosters trust in the spirit towards God. The mind is not switched off for good, but comes to a place of rest. Heaven forbid that we would dismiss one of His good gifts.

5. Speaking in tongues reminds us of the presence of God's Spirit. "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever - the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you." (John 14:16+17). In my home as a pastor I unintentionally became aware of an outburst of rage from my 17-year-old daughter. As she came screaming into the room where I was sitting and saw me there, she turned red with embarrassment and

apologized for her behavior. I drew her attention to the fact that not only was I present, but the Holy Spirit who dwells within her and suggested that she not need to be ashamed because of me, but because of Him. Whoever prays in tongues has an audible reminder of the presence of the Holy Spirit who dwells within.

6. When we pray in tongues, we pray in accordance to God's perfect will. "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. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will." This verse from Romans 8:26+27 gives us another valid reason to pray in tongues. We often do not know how we should pray, but the Spirit knows. Sometimes He directs our prayer as we pray in our normal language. Sometimes He does this "with groans that words cannot express."

7. Our faith is strengthened. "But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit." (Jude 20). One whose faith is struggling, who is enduring affliction or standing before an important decision, may edify and build himself up in faith by praying in the Holy Spirit.

8. "If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church..." at this point many Bible interpreters stop quoting the Bible. But the verse continues... "and speak to himself and God." (1 Cor 14:28). As people say: "Talk is silver, silence is golden." Where there is a lot of talking, sin will not be far off. "... but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison." (James 3:8). Would it not be great to have a language with which one has never sinned. In daily living we need to keep our "big mouth" under control, but for ourselves, inwardly, we can pray to God in tongues. This causes no outward damage, only inner gain.

9. "For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries with his spirit." (1 Cor 14:2) It is good that we do not need to know everything. Many things take care of themselves without our worrying about them. We often do not know how we should pray, but in the spirit we talk to God about the mysteries in the situations and challenges of our life. In our spirit we gain a sense of what tomorrow may hold, even to the point of prophetic perception. An inner assurance arises about things which we could not have ever known or have not yet seen. "The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children." (Romans 8:16)

10. Whoever prays in the spirit, gives praise and thanksgiving to God, without the limitation of words. In 1 Cor. 14:17 we read in Paul's teaching on the subject that we can give thanks to God in the spirit. How often do we find ourselves quickly at the end of our words when it comes time to offer God a worthy praise and thanksgiving. In verse 17, Paul uses the expression "you may be giving thanks well enough...." It is understood that thanksgiving in the spirit is in essence beautiful and meaningful.

