

Gifts of the Spirit, Part 2

Prophecy, Tongues, Interpretation, and Manifestations

The first of the gifts we discuss in this session is prophecy. But before we can discuss it, we must know what it is. All of us can immediately think of great prophets such as Daniel and John, and speak of prophets telling the future, but that is only one of the tasks performed by prophets (Q1c). The first and foremost task of the prophet is to speak for God by way of instruction (Q1a). This is how the bulk of the Bible was created. Prophets recorded direct instruction or instructive history, and that became canon. The second task of the prophet is to bring a covenant lawsuit (Q1b), such as Nathan brought to David when David committed adultery with Bathsheba.

The task of the prophet in Paul's discussion (Q2) is the presentation of instruction from God. He makes this clear by stating that prophecy is for the purpose of edifying the church. This is reinforced (Q3) by his statement that tongues is of no profit to the church assembly, but prophecy is. Prophecy is directed (Q4) to the church as a sign. But if an unbeliever or ignorant person should enter the assembly (Q5), the prophecy will disclose the secrets of his heart, he will be convicted by the Holy Spirit and will worship God. So, while the primary purpose of prophecy is for the believers' instruction and edification, it also serves in the missionary task toward the unbelieving.

In the interests of orderly conduct of worship, Paul directs that two or three prophets should speak (Q6), and then judgment should be made on the prophecies. If it were absolutely certain that all were prophets, and that their prophecies were clearly from God, it might not be necessary pass judgment. But, since prophecy can be faked or a result of an excited person's mistaken belief in his own inspiration, it is absolutely necessary that no prophetic word be taken at face value without comparing it to the known standard of the revealed word of God. Even Paul was not given the status of unquestioned authority. Luke records approvingly that the Bereans were cross-checking Paul's teachings with the Hebrew Bible. The church will not be built up by blind faith in leaders. Blind faith leads to disaster. Only a careful, informed church can be most profited by the gift of prophecy.

We may only speculate as to the specific import of a seated prophet (Q7). Presumably such a person was not actively engaged in the service at the moment, since anyone speaking would rise in order to be seen. The revelation to that seated person would seem to have the seal of authenticity, since it is received at the moment needed. But this revelation is not exempt from the judgment of the audience. All are allowed to speak and to pass judgment. But all is to be done in good order (Q8), because God is an orderly God, and a God of peace. If order is not maintained, the meeting would degenerate, and the church would not be edified or equipped for the gospel task.

An argument is made by some Charismatics that the gifts of the Spirit are irrevocable abilities granted to individuals. Therefore, when Paul says the "spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets," this means that the individual controls the gift and in essence, the Spirit granting the gift. Since there is only one Holy Spirit, this could mean that the individual is controlling the Holy Spirit. Syntactically this also suffers from the fact that the word is plural leads us to suspect that another understanding is correct. As we consider other passages (Q9) where Paul uses the Greek word *pneuma*, it becomes clear that he does not always refer to the same thing with the word. Many times he speaks of the *pneuma* as the spiritual aspect of one's mind. Other times he is more direct, placing *pneuma* in direct parallelism with *nous*, the Greek word for mind. In some places, such as where Paul says he is absent in the body, but "present in spirit," the only realistic understanding is that *pneuma* means mind. So we find that in this statement (Q11), the more proper understanding is that the prophets are in control of their own minds, and are fully able to wait their turn to speak. The gift of prophecy does not require them to speak the moment they are inspired. They can remember what they have received, and present it in turn. At no time can a man be said to be in control of God. God inspires prophets, but they must respond to that inspiration. Jonah refused to follow God's instruction initially, but only relented after his marine odyssey. We are no different.

Tongues is truly the single most controversial area of the gifts of the Spirit. Pentecostals insist that two things are true. First, tongues is not generally human language, but is rather a divine language, useful for the Holy Spirit to convey true prayer (cf. Rom 8:26) to the Father. Second, every saved person will speak in tongues at the moment of conversion. This universality is perhaps the most disputed point. Some Charismatics will accept the idea that not all speak in tongues, but do not dispute the idea that tongues is

glossolalia, a polysyllabic speech which has no human language content. Our task is to examine both of these claims in the light of both scripture and history.

Jesus promised (Q12) that certain signs would follow the believers (Mark 16:17-18). These are:

1. casting out demons
2. speaking with new tongues
3. picking up serpents
4. not be harmed by drinking deadly poison
5. healing the sick by laying on of hands

Pentecostals use this passage to say that every new believer will speak in tongues (Q20). The first obvious fact is that not all of these signs follow every believer. If that were so, why should only speaking in tongues be a universal sign of the Holy Spirit? Should not the new believers also be immediately handling snakes and drinking poison? There is no substantial scriptural reason for insisting that one sign is universal and the others are not. In fact, Jesus' statement is that these signs would follow "those who have believed." That is, the signs will be seen within the church. There is no intent that any specific sign or signs would be part of any specific person's walk of faith. They are an attribute of the body as a whole, and serve as signs that the church, not any specific member, is the recipient of the Holy Spirit in action. It is further notable that the fulfillment of this statement is seen two verses later where (lit. trans.) we find that "the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the attesting miracles that followed."

I must digress here and point out a very important aspect of this argument. The attesting miracles served the purpose of confirming the word. If each believer were to speak in tongues, that would serve as confirmation of the believer, not the source of the belief. This would turn the message on its head. We must remember that in all cases the miraculous power of God is demonstrated for the purpose of glorifying God, not for any honor for the believer. That would allow the individual to boast that he had the Holy Spirit, and we are never to boast except in the Cross (Gal 6:14). An additional point for consideration is that this passage may not properly be part of scripture! It is well known that the ancient manuscripts are not identical. When Jesus was asked by John the Baptist's messenger (Luke 7:20-22) if he was the Messiah, Jesus quoted a version of Isaiah 35 which is not in our modern Bibles, but has been found in the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran. Mark 16:9-20 is not in the oldest manuscripts of the book. Properly understood, it adds no new doctrines to scripture and contradicts no doctrines, but it was a later addition that may not be of apostolic origin.

The first specific record of anyone speaking in tongues is at the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 (Q13). There we find that the crowd is drawn by the sound of rushing wind, then is kept in place (Q14) by the fact that each person (15 languages in all) heard the apostles speaking in his own language. This may have occurred by either of two mechanisms. The apostles may have spoken directly in the unlearned foreign language, or there may have been miraculous translation into the foreign language. There are numerous modern examples of the latter, but these cannot be proved to be the intent of scripture for lack of direct evidence. On the other hand, the bulk of scriptural references clearly point to direct speech in unlearned foreign languages. Of particular importance, however, is that the speaking in tongues did *not* cause conversion. It was a device which drew the attention of others, and it was Peter's sermon (Q14) which "pierced [them] to the heart" and led to 3,000 conversions, none of whom are recorded as speaking in tongues. The tongues were, as Paul states in 1 Cor 14:22, "a sign for unbelievers."

This brings us to the two other recorded instances where tongues are recorded as accompanying the gift of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 10 (Q15), Peter receives the vision of unclean meats where he is to "arise, kill and eat." The angelic visitor then tells him that "What God has cleansed, no *longer* consider unholy." Peter awakens, and while reflecting on the vision, which was not interpreted (Q15a), is met by messengers from Cornelius. He goes to Cornelius' home in Joppa, attended by Jewish converts to Christianity. It was clearly unlawful for Peter to make this visit (Q15b), but Peter reveals to Cornelius (Q15c) that God wants all people to hear the gospel. He did not understand this until he arrived, and his statement shows that he was revealed this truth directly. Peter's associates (Q15d) were unaware of this. They were, however, clearly believers in the gospel. So when the new believers began speaking in tongues (Q15e), Peter pointed out that this was the sign of God's approval on the gospel going to the Gentiles. The sign of tongues served as incontrovertible evidence to the Jewish Christians (Q15f), who did not believe in the fitness of Gentiles for the message, of the propriety of preaching to the Gentiles.

At this moment, we should consider just why God would use tongues as the attesting miracle (Q15g) rather than other miracles such as wonders and healings. When we examine the story of Simon

the sorcerer, we find that he had been performing many magical wonders. These were widely known, and if believers had done them as the immediate sign of the Spirit when needed, it could be argued that they were phony. So healings and miracles would not be useful.

But would prophecy serve (Q15h)? The first task of the prophet is instruction, and new believers are hardly fit for that task. Their instruction would be highly suspect, since they were generally uninformed, and would have to be cross-checked with scripture before being accepted. New believers are totally unsuited to bring a covenant lawsuit, the second task of the prophet. And predictions of the future are totally useless as an immediately confirmable sign. This leaves only tongues as a sign which had no counterfeit, and which could be instantly understood as divine in origin. As Peter said, the new believers had "received the Holy Spirit just as we *did*," implying that the speaking in tongues was both divine *and* of the same character as Pentecost: the speaking of unlearned foreign languages.

The third example of speaking in tongues upon receipt of the Holy Spirit is in Acts 19 (Q16). Paul met with believers who had been baptized into John's Baptism. They did not know of the existence of the Holy Spirit. Paul instructed them, then baptized them into Jesus Christ. They received the Holy Spirit and began "speaking with tongues and prophesying." (Q16a) It should immediately be noted (Q16b) that it is not stated that everyone spoke in tongues or that everyone began to prophesy. Rather, the inclusive term "they" is used, referring to the group at large. It is impossible to determine from the text whether all did both, some did one and the rest the other, or whether only some members of the group did one or the other. Whatever the specifics, it is clear that tongues were present. And it is also clear that unbelievers were present (Q16c). They were not unbelievers in the gospel, they were unbelievers in the Holy Spirit. Tongues served as a confirming sign for them as to His reality.

We must pause to catch our breath here. Pentecostal apologists emphatically state that all the persons in the Acts 19 story spoke in tongues. Since this cannot be confirmed from scripture, they declare it to be implied. They also neglect the fact that in all three stories where tongues demonstrate the receipt of the Holy Spirit, the presence of tongues serves as a sign for unbelievers, just as Paul tells us in 1 Cor 14:22. It is just that the term "unbelievers" is not restricted to those who do not believe the gospel. It can include those who do not believe in important aspects of the message, as we have just demonstrated.

Pentecostals insist that tongues are implied in other accounts where they are not stated. This is "because everyone who receives the Holy Spirit speaks in tongues." The circularity of this should be obvious. They believe that tongues are a universal sign, and therefore *must* be present, whether recorded or not. The actual evidence is unimportant to them. But the evidence is very important in determining the truth, so we must examine representative examples of the claim. The first of these is the story of Simon the Sorcerer (Q17).

Our first observation (Q17a) is that Simon was clearly a believer in the gospel. This fact is specifically recorded. Next, (Q17b) it is specifically recorded that Simon saw many "great signs and miracles" while accompanying Philip. From this it is quite obvious that he understood the power of the Holy Spirit. But Simon was unaware of the means by which this power was received (Q17c). When he eventually saw that the power of the Spirit was received by the laying on of hands, he then asked to buy the power. Scripture does not tell us what manifestations were present at the laying on of hands (Q17d). There may have been speaking in tongues, or miracles, or no outward sign at all. Scripture is totally silent. Simon did not need to see any sign, because he had seen many miracles by the power of the Spirit. What he had not seen was the bestowal ritual. As a final note (Q17e), the story does not include any unbelievers for whom tongues would serve as a sign. We may properly note that in this case silence does speak volumes.

The second case is that of Paul (Q18). Ananias was directed by the Lord to visit Paul to restore his sight and to fill him with the Holy Spirit. The text which follows notes the restoration of Paul's sight, but is silent on his receipt of the Spirit. It is quite obvious that Paul did receive the Spirit, since his ministry was clearly filled with the power of the Spirit. Pentecostals again insist that Paul spoke in tongues at the moment of his receipt of the Spirit. The filling is implied, and therefore, so is the tongues. Once again, we must note that this is circular reasoning. And, when the account itself is examined, it includes several mundane details. "And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he arose and was baptized; and he took food and was strengthened." If Paul had spoken in tongues, an event more important than a meal, it would have been recorded. Yet it is not. And again, there are no unbelievers present for whom the tongues would act as a sign. Again, silence speaks volumes.

Paul's own words ought to be the final statement on this subject (Q19). In his dissertation on tongues he rhetorically states that "All do not speak in tongues, do they?" The implication of this is so clear that Pentecostals have to dance around it and somehow separate the discussions in 1 Cor 12 and 14.

This first discussion becomes a discussion of the external use of tongues, while later sections are declared to refer to private tongues which are a prayer language in which the individual, without knowing what he is saying, is actually praying to God with the help of the Holy Spirit in some angelic language.

Before moving into the scriptural data on this issue, we must consider that "there is no linguistic or other evidence whatsoever for glossolalia or ecstatic utterances in the world outside the New Testament."* In other words, not one case of glossolalia can be identified in a religious context, either in Christianity or pagan religions prior to Azusa. Even the Pythian priestess of Delphi, alleged by Pentecostal scholars to have spoken in glossolalia, did no such thing. Her religious oracles were carefully crafted poetry and prose, but were obscure by their content. The early church fathers, some of whom were taught by bishops taught personally by apostles, uniformly teach of tongues as the miraculous speaking of foreign languages. In the later years of the church, there is not one verifiable example of glossolalia. This historic record is overwhelming. This must give us cause to be concerned regarding the quality of Pentecostal scholarship on this issue.

It is extremely clear that at Pentecost (Q20), the tongues were unlearned foreign languages. Fifteen specific languages are mentioned. Each person heard in his own language. It is possible that some of these cases included miraculous translation rather than miraculous speech, because of the statement that everyone heard in his own language. But this is unclear, and the visit of Peter to Cornelius speaks against this. There (Q21), the tongues was the same gift as at Pentecost, and all of the people in the story spoke the same language. Therefore the tongues had to be a language other than the Greek or Aramaic of the participants, but still recognized as foreign. Finally, in Corinth (Q22), there is no specific indication in the story to define the nature of the tongues speaking, but since Luke has already recorded two identical instances, it is reasonable to expect that the third is of the same character, while the supposition of glossolalia is completely without basis.

This brings us to the issue of tongues as a sign. At Pentecost (Q23) tongues caught the attention of the crowd. If the apostles had been babbling in glossolalia, the entire crowd would have considered them "drunk with new [unfermented] wine" just as the scoffers did. But instead their attention was riveted by the fact that they were speaking in the native languages of many foreign visitors. The obvious miraculous nature of this could not be missed, and was the sign which led to them staying for Peter's sermon. In each of the other cases, it was the clear language of the tongues which served as the sign for unbelievers, something impossible for glossolalia. Imagine if you will, a group of people babbling in a nonsense "tongue" when you, an unbeliever, happens upon them. Would it convince you of anything other than their insanity? But if you heard a group of foreigners suddenly begin speaking in your language, it would get your attention (Q24).

We would be remiss in our discussion if we did not dwell for a moment on the metaphor of the body of Christ (Q25). Paul points out the difference between members, while emphasizing the necessity of all. This unity in diversity shows how not all can have any one special talent or the body would be handicapped. Just as one may be a teacher, another is a healer and another a prophet. All are necessary. No one has all the talents, and no talent belongs to all. Therefore, all do not speak in tongues.

Pentecostals continue to maintain that tongues are a private prayer language because "one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men, but to God; for no one understands." (Q26) This, they insist, means that tongues are actually being spoken directly toward God. Here we must fall back on the fact that a text without its context is a pretext. Paul's discussion is predicated on the fact that the tongues are spoken in a body of believers. Only by ignoring this can they become private language. The reason that they are only understood by God is that the Greeks in Corinth could be expected to understand Greek, and any other language, such as Hebrew or Akkadian would be foreign to them and not understood. But we must not stop here. Paul says that the person speaking in the foreign language is speaking to God. Why would he say this?

The first part of the thought is that the person is speaking. This implies intelligible content. In other words, the speaker has coherent thought patterns with specific meanings which are miraculously transformed into a foreign language. Because the language actually spoken is not Greek (in this case) no one present understands it. Paul does not mean that no one anywhere can understand it. Context is crucial. The audience would not understand it. They might recognize the fact that the speaking was a foreign language, but would not understand it. On the other hand, God understands all speech, so the tongues-speaker would be "speaking to God."

Paul's discussion of musical instruments (Q27) serves to emphasize what we have already discovered. Only the distinct, organized sound of a true human language is of any benefit. When we note

that (Q28) the parts of this discussion are tied together by words such as "so," "therefore," and "for" it becomes clear that the issue of intelligibility is crucial in Paul's mind. We are not to speak in tongues in church without an interpreter specifically because they are meaningless to the audience. It almost seems redundant (Q29) by now to state that in no way has Paul referred to private devotions. The prayer, singing and psalms are specifically those which are part of a church assembly.

Yet in the face of all this evidence, Pentecostals take the common translations of 1 Cor 14:15 to mean that "praying with the spirit" really means "praying in unknown tongues through the Holy Spirit." The context we have developed clearly contradicts this interpretation, and translation possibilities allow a completely different, consistent (Q30) interpretation. If *pneuma* is taken as "mind" as we found earlier, we can translate *nous* legitimately as "meaning," and get "I will pray with my mind and with my meaning." This is consistent with Paul's statements and says that I will pray with clear intent, and I will use the language of my hearers in expressing my intent so that they will understand. We have violated no rules of translation, and have avoided a translation which is contrary to the thread of Paul's discussion. Paul (Q31) has not spoken of private devotions in angelic languages (Q32) at any time. Tongues are, as a consequence of their miraculous nature and content, a sign for unbelievers, particularly those who do not speak the same language as the speaker (Q33).

Our final stop on tongues is to re-examine their value to the church. We have already found that they serve as a sign for unbelievers. But if they are interpreted, Paul states that they are equivalent to prophecy (Q34) for "edification, exhortation, and consolation." This implies that the tongues are essentially preaching in foreign languages, which can be translated. But he does not let his thought stop there. The tongues-speaker "speaks mysteries." Pentecostals insist that this means that the tongues-speaker does not understand what is being said. But when we examine the use of "mystery" (Q35) in scripture, it becomes clear that the term is a technical description of spiritual realities of the kingdom of God and the "mystery of iniquity." In other words, tongues function in exactly the same capacity as prophecy, but with a different audience.

With this we have completed the discussion of the gifts of the Spirit as presented by Paul. But Third Wave Christians are quite vigorous in presenting several other manifestations as truly from God. These are "Holy Laughter," "Holy Dancing," and being "slain in the Spirit." Since these manifestations are so commonly presented in almost the same breath as the specific listed gifts, we must consider them briefly. It is easy to simply brush them off, since the Charismatics have been shown to be so far off base on the issue of tongues that this ought to be similar. But such an approach is contrary to scripture. We must give all of these a test against the Word.

The first item is holy laughter (Q36). Job tells us that God will fill the mouth of a holy man with laughter, and the Psalms confirm at least one occasion on which this promise was fulfilled. Holy dancing (Q37) is recorded by Moses. David engaged in it, and the Psalms explicitly tell us to praise the lord in dance. Being slain in the Spirit is an event where under the Holy Spirit's influence a person falls down. Sometimes the person will become completely insensible to his surroundings. Again (Q38), the scriptures present examples of exactly this happening. This leaves us with a problem. Are these manifestations truly from the Holy Spirit? Jesus tells us that we will know them by their fruits (Q39). As we have said before, the gifts of the Spirit lead to the fruit of the Spirit. And the Spirit will convict the world of sin, of judgment and of righteousness. A corollary to this is that revelations by the Spirit in any of these states will agree perfectly with scripture.

As a resident of central Florida, I watched with puzzled interest the ministry of Benny Hinn. His Orlando Christian Church became the World Outreach Church, then the Benny Hinn Media Ministries. On several occasions this charismatic preacher was accused of financial malfeasance, and he appeared on such shows as Larry King Live to give his *mea culpas*. He made scriptural errors which he later recanted. But most puzzling in this commercial appearing ministry was the dramatic manifestations of "the Spirit." There were mass healings, and there were hundreds of people "slain in the Spirit" when he breathed on them. He would pronounce that he felt "the anointing" coming on him, and would proceed to heal someone. All through this there seemed to run a commercial flair contrary to his protestations of being God's servant and that all glory should be given to God. I had to rely on Jesus' statement that the saints would not be deceived (Matt 24:24) by false prophets. So I reserved judgment.

Recently Benny Hinn has now showed his true colors. In direct contradiction to Matt 24, he has announced that Jesus is in the desert, preparing the ministry that is to come. It seems that his followers have become so removed from the pure truth of scripture that they no longer check the Bible for confirmation of his claims. Benny Hinn has become their God, but the saints are not deceived.

We must be exceedingly cautious in condemning miraculous manifestations as being from the Devil (Q40). Certainly we must prove all things, but we must remember that the fact that there will be false manifestations presupposes the presence of the true! And if we categorically deny all manifestations as Satanic, we will quench the Spirit, and will be unable to carry out the gospel commission. It is only with the power of God that the message will go forward, and that power includes the miraculous.

One final question revolves around the last days prophecy of the remnant church. It is said that it will have the "spirit of prophecy." The SDA church has classically maintained that the ministry of a single prophet, E. G. White proves that the SDA church is the church envisioned. This position is terribly shortsighted. Paul tells us that prophecy will continue right up until the second coming.

I wonder just how prepared Christians who reject the ministry of the miraculous will be for the time of trouble. Scripture is quite clear that not one saint will be lost in that time. The incredible horrors which precede the second coming would destroy all the saints if it were not for the miraculous hand of God preserving them. If they are unable to accept the miraculous in good times, how will they stand when bad times require miracles?

* Gerhard Hasel, "Speaking in Tongues", Adventist Theological Society Publications, Berrien Springs, MI