

SHOWING THE SPIRIT

D.A. Carson

(summarized by Paul Schlehle)

I. THE UNITY OF THE BODY AND THE DIVERSITY OF GIFTS (12:1-30)

A. Reflections on the Background of the Argument in 1 Corinthians 12-14

1. From chapter 7 on, Paul is answering questions from a Corinthians letter (head coverings, food offered to idols, the Lord's Supper, grace gifts etc.)
2. One common denominator for problems was overrealized eschatology (e.g. 4:8).
3. The church is divided. Paul uses "yes-but" arguments. That is, there are exceptions to much of what he says. "Yes, you may have truth on your side to a point, but..." (e.g. 7:1; ch. 8; 14:5a, 18-19). Paul seems to side with the tongue speakers. He says we should not forbid it (14:39). Nothing Paul says demands abolition of the gift.

B. The Bearing of Christianity's Central Confession on What It Means to Be (Five Principle Turning Points)

1. Paul's Use of *charisma*
 - a. Used 16x's in Paul and once in Peter (1 Peter 4:10). The cognate is *charis* (grace) and has the idea of a grace gift. Paul uses it in Romans to communicate a "spiritual gift" and in 1 Timothy 4:14 and 2 Timothy 1:6 as the gift of the ministry.
 - b. So, we can see that *charisma* is not a technical term that Paul uses only for supranormal gifts like healing and tongues. It can be used for encouraging, salvation (Rom. 6:23), celibacy, and marriage. Thus, in one sense, every Christian is a charismatic and all *unbelievers* as well, because they are all married or single. The term is broad.
 - c. In 12-14, the spiritual gifts are gifts of God's grace.
2. The meaning of *pneumatikon*
 - a. There is debate whether "spiritual gifts" in 12:1 should be spiritual *people*, but here Paul sets the agenda for the next three chapters. Key: Paul is answering a Corinthian question something like this: Is it true that spiritual manifestations is unfailing evidence of spiritual people? ("Is it true that..." vs. "It isn't true is it...").
3. Relationship between *charisma* and *pneumatikon*
 - a. In 12:1, Paul uses the term the Corinthians prefer (*pneumatikon*), then throughout chapter 12 uses what he prefers (*charisma*). Paul's point is that anything "spiritual" is a gracious gift of God.
 - b. Some say that *pneumatikon* is restricted to prophecy and/or tongues (Carson disagrees).
4. The flow of the argument
 - a. View 1: Pagan ecstasy in view. Paul doesn't want the Corinthians to be "uninformed" about verse 2-3, which are tightly connected (Because you were once led away by idols, I am telling you that no one can say by the Spirit that Jesus is anathema). Consequences: (1) In the past, the unbelieving Corinthians were involved in ecstatic frenzies where Jesus was cursed. (2) This was

compared with the work of the Spirit. That is, there was “pagan” inspiration and Christian inspiration and the only difference was the resulting confession.

- b. View 2: Verse 2 is connected to verse 1 to further explain the Corinthians ignorance. The “therefore” in vs. 3 connects the verse with 1-2, not just 2. Thus: “I don’t want you to be ignorant of spiritual gifts (v.1), which isn’t out of the question since you had a profound ignorance of such things when you were pagans (v.2). Now, I’ll make it clear to you (v.3). This allows us find out vs. ties in—not with 1-2—but with the rest of the passage. So there were two groups in the Corinthians church: charismatics who wanted to prove their spirituality by certain gifts and noncharismatics who were skeptical and wanted Paul to rebuke the other side.
- c. 12:3 is basically saying: “But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him” (Rom. 8:9). In sum, 12:1-3 is not to provide a confessional test to enable Christians to distinguish true from false spirits, but to provide a sufficient test to establish who has the Holy Spirit at all.

5. The Significance of the Blasphemy “Jesus Be [or is] Cursed”

- a. If view 1 is correct (2-3 provide criterion to distinguish true from false manifestations in the church), then we need to find a place where Jesus being cursed was done in the Corinthians assembly. Every attempt and example has been weak. Most of them say: “Paul is giving rough criterion to enable his hearers to distinguish between true and false “spiritual gifts”.
- b. Correct view: Paul is establishing who truly has the Holy Spirit. This is not a test to find false teachers in the church. It doesn’t mean people were actually saying this in the Corinthians church. Rather, those who have the Spirit (e.g. those who call him Lord) are Christians, and those who do not are no Christians.

C. The Bountiful Diversity of the Grace-Gifts (12:4-11)

- 1. Paul flattens the distinction between charismatic and noncharismatic gifts. First, each believer is given gifts. Second, these gifts are for the common good. Many use this reference to “common good” (v. 7) to rule out private use of tongues. But Paul was given revelations that were for his immediate benefit (2 Cor. 12:1-10), even though it helped the church indirectly later. If private tongues makes one a stronger Christian, the whole church benefits. Thus, it rules out private tongues for self-satisfaction.
- 2. Next we find a list of *charismata*. This list, as in all others (1 Cor. 12:28, Rom. 12:6-8, Eph. 4:11, 1 Peter 4:11), does not attempt to be exhaustive. Second, the order is not important, though there is some significance that tongue is the last gift listed each time. Third, the lists have a mixture of charismatic and NC gifts.
- 3. “The message of wisdom” and “the message of knowledge” probably refer to a special experience of the Spirit by which a message came to them and they transmitted it to the people. “Faith” is not saving faith but rather faith to perform some extraordinary work, one that can move mountains. This kind of faith enables a believer to trust God to bring about certain things for which he or she cannot claim some divine promise recorded in Scripture. For example, George Muller had this.

4. "Gifts of healing" in the plural suggests there were different gifts of healing. Some could only heal at certain times and certain diseases. [Note: Carson's comments in this brief section appear very weak, though he promises to deal with these things again later].
 5. "Miraculous powers" are again broad like the previous gifts and would include non-healing miracles. "The ability to distinguish between spirits" is the ability to distinguish demonic forces from the Holy Spirit [Note: again, this is odd and I wish he would elaborate; perhaps he will later]. "Gifts of support" and "Gifts of direction" is referring to help or assistance.
 6. These gifts are given to each man and sovereignly. But why does Paul tell us to pursue the best gifts (12:31 and 14:1) if the Spirit gives them sovereignly? Thus, noncharismatics say the latter verses should not be taken imperatively but as a statement. But this cannot be right. Paul calls salvation itself a *charisma*, and this is sovereignly given, though at the same time we are to seek it. So Christians can pursue what is best but not view those without it as less spiritual.
- D. The Baptism in the Holy Spirit and the Body Metaphor: The Mutual Dependence of Believers on One Another (12:12-26)
1. If you smash your finger with a hammer, you could say: "I hurt my finger" or "I hurt myself".
 2. Christians are not to think of themselves individually but in terms of the body.
- E. Conclusion (12:27-30)
1. A firm "No!" is expected for the questions in 29-30.
 2. Key is not to renounce tongues as a whole but tongues as a special sign of a second blessing.

II. THE MOST EXCELLENT WAY; OR, WHEN DOES PERFECTION COME (12:31-13:13)

A. The Setting of Chapter 13

1. How are we to interpret: "But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way" (12:31)?
 - a. View 1: *Zeloute* (earnestly desire) is an indicative – earlier, Paul said that gifts are sovereignly given, so how can Paul command us to desire certain gifts? So Paul notices that "you eagerly desire the greater gifts!" But the very same verb and form is used in 14:1. Not the best interp.
 - b. View 2: *Zeloute* is an imperative –
2. Love is not a spiritual gift (charismata) but an entire way of life. Without it, charismata are worthless. IN Paul's list of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23, love heads the list of the mature Christian's character.
3. The indispensability of love (13:1-3)
4. Some characteristics of love (13:4-7)
 - a. Love is not so much defined but described.

B. The Permanence of Love (13:8-13)

1. Significance of the verb "pasnta" (pass away) – the verb attached to prophecies is in the passive meaning "will be destroyed" (in connection with the coming of "perfection" in v. 10). The verb with "tongues" is in the middle. Some take this to mean tongues will cease of themselves. But middle has a

variety of meanings. It doesn't always mean it will stop under its own power (e.g. the verb in the middle voice in Luke 8:24, not under its own power).

2. Relation Between "perfection" and the "imperfect" – when the perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. The time of passing away of the charismatic gifts will come between the perfect and imperfect. Some say "perfection" is Christian maturity. Others say it is the completed canon. Others say it is the parousia. This is very important.

III. PROPHECY AND TONGUES: PURSUING WHAT IS BETTER (14:1-19)

A. Reflections on the Nature of Several of the *Charismata*

1. Kinds of Tongues and Interpretations of Tongues (12:10, 29, 30)
 - a. What does "speak in tongues" mean? Were they ecstatic? NC think of ecstatic as non-real languages but gibberish. The two issues are: (1) was there ecstasy involved? (2) whether it was a known human language. CM don't like the term "ecstatic" because it makes them sound looney.
 - b. Some distinguish between "hot" (tongues in mental dissociation) and "cool" (tongues with total alertness and control of mind, though does not understand what he is saying) tongues. Carson's experience is that the overwhelming majority of modern tongue-speakers use "cool" tongues.
 - c. Were the tongues in 1 Corinthians 14 xenoglossia (speaking in unlearned human languages) or glossolalia (verbal patterns, not human languages)? This is very difficult to answer.
 - d. Most CM would be content with this definition: "a supernatural manifestation of the HS, whereby the believer speaks forth in a language he has never learned, and which he does not understand." Of course, the debate then lies in "language".
 - e. Williams strongly criticizes the view that *glossa* is always human languages when not referring to the organ of the mouth. Acts 2 is glossolalia because they were confused with drunks. Carson's disagrees. Acts 2 is real, known, human languages.
 - f. Others say that 1 Corinthians is nonsense (14:2, 13, 14, 18, 26) if real languages are tongues. But Paul assumes that the tongues speaker doesn't know what he is saying (he needs an interpreter) and he can pray without the mind).
 - g. In sum: Paul thought the gift of tongues was a gift of real languages (i.e. cognitive; but real, human, known languages?). Paul didn't think of the tongues in Acts 2 and 1 Cor. 14 as totally different, though they had some different functions.
 - h. Most research has revealed that modern tongues are not known human languages. Most "tongues" have sounds similar to the speakers native language (e.g. Germans will not use the English "th" sounds). Very difficult to find xenoglossia. Many thus conclude that speaking in tongues can no longer be valid.
 - i. But Poythress disagrees. He says glossolalia occurs when (1) humans connect sequence of speech sounds (2) he can't identify the sequence to any known language (3) doesn't know the meaning of the words (4) native might suppose it was an unknown language. Carson sides with CM that "languages" should be used for tongues, though it may not be a known human language. Paul can

speak of different kinds of tongues (12:10, 28), as some were human languages (Acts 2) and some were not.

- j. What about interpretation? Carson gives example of a man who went to a CM church and quoted John 1:1-18 in Greek. The interpretation had nothing to do with the verses. This doesn't disprove tongues, but acknowledges its distortions and should bring about "reflective pauses".
- 2. Apostles (12:28) - The likely interpretation of this verse is the apostles are "first in chronological appointment".
- 3. Teachers (12:28)
- 4. Prophecy and Prophets (12:10, 28-29)
 - a. Some define prophecy as preaching the Scriptures, since OT prophecy called for renewal and reform.
 - b. Grudem: prophecy is the reception and subsequent transmission of spontaneous, divinely originating revelation. Prophecy is the process. He avers that the prophecy of the NT must be distinguished from the prophecy of the OT, especially in authority status. His reasons:
 - i. Though prophecy comes from God, it may not be in direct quotation from God. That is, prophecies are not prefaced with "thus says the Lord" in the NT.
 - ii. The legitimate heirs of the OT prophets were the apostles, not the prophets. In the OT, once a prophet was approved, people were bound to obey him. But in the NT, prophets are to have all of their content carefully weighed (14:29). There is no word of excommunication for the prophet who is occasionally wrong and Paul places the authority of the prophet under his own (14:37-38). And Paul uses the verb *diakrino* (weigh) not *krino* (judge).
 - iii. Why did the prophets not take over leadership of the church after the apostles died out? Either the prophets died with the apostles OR they never enjoyed the same authority as the apostles.
 - iv. The NT prophets have a very low profile. Two key passages: Ephesians 2:20; 3:5. If "foundation of the apostles and prophets" (against Grudem) means the prophets enjoyed a role with the apostles in giving revelatory foundation for the church, then prophets must be linked with the OT form.
 - v. There are certain prophecies in the NT that seem to have less authority than OT prophecy, like Acts 21:4-11.
 - vi. Prophecy is tamed in the NT, which is why Paul can encourage women to pray and prophesy in public (1 Cor. 11) but forbidding them to teach (1 Tim. 2) and evaluate content (1 Cor. 14:33-36).
 - c. Carson says this has a few small flaws, but in general agrees with Grudem.
- B. The Superiority of Prophecy Over Tongues (14:1-19)
 - 1. Paul focuses on two charismata, so there must have been confusion on these two. Tongues isn't necessary the least important, just less than prophecy and vice versa.
 - 2. Potential of charisma for Building the church (14:1-5)

- a. In vs. 5, he cannot mean he wants every single person to speak in tongues any more than his desire in 7:7 is for everyone to be celibate. He told us in chapter 12 that not all speak in tongues. His point is that he wants them to enjoy the gift.
- 3. Edification Depends on Intelligibility of Tongues (14:6-12)
 - a. Point: edification demands intelligible content, and tongues, by themselves, cannot provide it.
- 4. Stipulations for Tongues-Speakers (14:13-19)
 - a. Speaking in tongues is a form of prayer.
 - b. The outside is a non-tongues-speaker.
 - c. Paul thanks God that he speaks in tongues more than the rest, thus identifying with the CM in the letter.
 - d. 14:18 is the strongest defense of the private use of tongues; Paul doesn't want to speak in tongues in church (v. 19), so where does he speak them? In private. Paul will not permit unintelligibility in the church.
 - e. In church history, the church focuses on different things, either intellectualism or "feelings"; rarely is both present (Puritans is exception).

IV. ORDER AND AUTHORITY: RESTRAINING SPIRITUAL GIFTS (14:20-40)

- A. The Relation of Tongues and Prophecies to Unbelievers (14:20-25)
 - 1. Point in vs. 20: overconcentration on glossolalia is a sign of immaturity.
 - 2. Verse 21-25 are very difficult, primarily because tongues are said to be a sign for unbelievers in verse 22, while in verses 23-25 unbelievers respond negatively to tongues and positively to prophecy. This seems to contradict verse 22. Explanations:
 - a. Tongues are real, human languages and are a sign to unbelievers in that, like at Pentecost, they were an evangelistic tool. Weakness: how verse 23 fits as well as the quote in vs. 21.
 - b. Paul quotes vs. 21 to show that tongues was a sign for Jewish people. Weakness: race is not an issue in this passage.
 - c. Vs. 21 says tongues serve as a sign to indicate that God's redemptive plan has shifted from Jews to all the nations of the world. They call attention to the mighty works of God, whereas prophecy calls attention to repentance and faith. Weakness: the unbeliever in chapter 14 is a Gentile.
 - d. Carson view – vs. 21 quote of Isaiah 28:9-13 shows God's judgment on his people. They don't give content to the Jews, rather, they are a negative sign of judgment. Prophecy, however, is a positive sign. In Jewish day, unbelievers were punished with tongues, but the remnant benefited from Isaiah's prophecy. Sometimes signs are positive (Acts 2:22, 43) 0, sometimes negative (Luke 11:30; 21:11, 25; Acts 2:19). These tongues do not have the same function as those in Acts 2, since these are to non-Christian visitors in the congregation.
- B. Order in Public Worship (14:26-36)
 - 1. Who may prophesy? Those who are gifted.

2. What does “you can all prophesy one by one” mean? (1) not every person without exception but every person without distinction (2) “all” referring to prophets
3. Tongues
 - a. Limitations
 - i. Interpreter present
 - ii. Only one tongue-speaker at a time
 - iii. Only two or at the most three speak
 - b. Clear that the tongue speakers have control over themselves; seems to be some differences between this prophesying and that of Isaiah or Jeremiah in the OT.
4. Prophecy (14:29-33)
 - a. Per vs. 29, it seems the whole congregation is to weigh (e.g. 1 Thess. 5:21)
5. Restrictions on women (14:33-36)
 - a. Interpretation here is very difficult because in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, Paul is quite prepared for women to pray and prophecy. Options:
 - i. Silence is an absolute rule. 1 Corinthians 11 is not the public, church setting like chapter 14. Weakness: 11:16 seems to have the church in mind and the broader context is church polity and work. Plus, Pentecost said women would prophecy.
 - ii. This was a cultural command in 1 Cor. 14.
 - iii. Women may prophecy (per Grudem definition) but not weigh the prophecies. This would be usurping the man, prohibited in Genesis or more broadly against 1 Timothy 2. This view is not inconsistent if we used Grudem definition of prophecy.
- C. Warning (14:37-39)
 1. All prophecy is revelatory (v. 30), but not in the same way as OT. Paul recognizes revelation in his own day but not on par with him.
- D. Summary (14:39-40)
 1. Prophecy is encouraged and tongues are not to be forbidden.
- E. Concluding Reflections
 1. Great deal of spontaneity in early church, not just one man speaking in front of listeners.

V. UNLEASHED POWER AND THE CONSTRAINTS OF DISCIPLINE: TOWARD A

- A. Reflections on Tongues, Miracles, and the Baptism in the Spirit in Acts
 1. Acts 2
 - a. Here, we are dealing with xenoglossia, real human languages never learned by speakers. These were their own dialects (2:8). These tongues did not need interpretation.
 - b. The tongue in 1 cor. 14 are understood to be first and foremost address to God (14:2), a gift used in prayer (14:14). Plus, they are unlike the tongues in 1 Cor. 12-14 in that unbelievers understand them (with no interp),

2. Summary: tongues in Acts→only in groups, are public; in 1 Corinthians→ individuals, may be in private, translated in public,

B. Reflections on Second-Blessing Theology

C. Reflections on Revelation

1. There is a distinction between mode and result of inspiration. The *result* of inspiration is a text truly from God—the very words, but this doesn't mean the *mode* of inspiration requires God to dictate the text.

D. Reflections on the Evidence of History

E. Reflections on the Charismatic Movement

F. Reflections of a Pastoral Nature

1. Does Christ primarily work through official teachers or “gifted” people? The church recognizes two official offices but “giftedness” is not confined only to them. The more public the gift, the more it must be tested and confirm the person so gifted.
2. What does a pastor do when people call for tongues in the church? Two Carson conclusions: tongues cannot serve as a criterion for anything; no unequivocal criterion for ruling out *all* contemporary tongues-speaking, though most is contrary to Paul. These two points solve most of the problem. Tongues easily promotes pride for charismatics and resentment for noncharismatics. Since not *all* tongues were ruled out, those who practiced in private didn't feel threatened. One man said he had spoken in tongues in private, but does not anymore because it was “for baby Christians”.
3. Three areas leading to excommunication: flagrant immoral life, major doctrinal aberration, loveless, divisive spirit.