

Any chapter in the Bible that speaks this much of the Holy Spirit should really pique our interest, because the Christian life, from beginning to end, is connected to the Holy Spirit.

We are called to walk in the Spirit,
To live in the Spirit,
To be filled with the Spirit,
To pray in the Spirit,
To manifest the fruit of the Spirit, and
To utilize the gifts of the Spirit
And on the negative side we are exhorted
not to grieve the Spirit,
not to resist the Spirit,
and not to quench the Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the Manager, Organizer, Author and Power Source of every part of the Christian life.

The very first thing He does when you become a Christian is wash you so thoroughly that you are actually a new person – reborn. Then He immerses (baptizes) you into a community of people called the Church.

As you read through this Bible you get the distinct impression that the Holy Spirit is concerned with very little outside of this community of people He is building called the Body of Christ.

His leadership approach in this organization is fascinating. Instead of handing down policies and memos and operating procedures, He simply distributes gifts, enables and motivates the individual people, and then moves inside their hearts to influence them to do what He desires for them.

The variety and combination of giftedness is varied and complex, but there are some categories of giftedness. The longest list of those categories appears in 1 Co.12:8-10.

1. message of wisdom

Skillful rhetorical ability in articulating the Gospel. (Preaching)

2. word of knowledge

Special ability to teach and explain Scripture in the area of Christian living. (Teaching)

3. faith

Special ability to trust God

4. gifts of healings

A gift of healing is a single event in which a person is enabled to heal another person.

We can't pin down with exact precision what this gift is, but I think we would be safe to assume that it must be something different from the world's counterfeit.

Surely the miraculous healing of God's hand would be something that would be distinguishable from the things the guys on the infomercials are doing with their positive thinking or miracle drugs.

5. miraculous powers

A miraculous power is a single event in which a person is enabled to do another kind of miracle (exorcism, resurrection, or perhaps miracles of judgment).

6. prophecy

Infallible, revelatory, inspired speech (word-for-word announcements of what God is saying).

Prophecy in a broader sense can involve knowing things that couldn't naturally be known

7. distinguishing between spirits,

Special ability in evaluating a prophet from Scripture to see if he is from God or not.

Tongues

to a different person speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues.

different kinds

One thing we know for sure is not all tongues are the same. This may be part of the reason why what happened in Acts 2 sounds so different from what was going on in Corinth.

Tongues

This is clearly the most controversial of the gifts, both then and now. Although in the time in between it really wasn't all that controversial. The Charismatic movement began emphasizing the gift of tongues in the 1950s, and it was from then until now that all the discussion has taken place. Prior to 1960 there had only been two articles in scholarly journals devoted solely to tongues. Since 1960 every journal has published articles, and the volume of literature on the subject is immense (Fee 597). It would have been impossible for me to have fully studied all the many statements about tongues in 1 Co.14 in a single week, so we are going to have to learn about tongues together as we go verse by verse through ch.14. For now, let me just introduce you to the concept of tongues by giving you some observations I have made this week.

16 Observations about Tongues

1. Tongues are languages.

That's what the word means. Some say they are human languages (*xenoglossia*), others say they are non-human languages (*glossilalia*), but either way they are languages. The gift of tongues is a verbal communication of syllables and sounds that have meaning and can be interpreted or translated into the language of the listeners. So right away we can rule out the idea some have suggested that Ro.8:26 is talking about the gift of languages.

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.

That cannot be languages, because languages, by definition, are thoughts expressed in words. And the gift of languages can be translated, whereas the groaning of Ro.8:26 cannot.

Besides that, I take great exception to anyone who tries to make this verse refer to the gift of languages, because in 1 Co.12:30 Paul is clear that not all believers speak in languages. So if Ro.8:26 is referring to languages, it doesn't apply to people like me. But the context of Ro.8 gives every indication that the principles apply to all believers.

In 1 Co.14:7-12 Paul makes the point that the whole point of audible communication is to convey meaning.

7 Even in the case of lifeless things that make sounds, such as the flute or harp, how will anyone know what tune is being played unless there is a distinction in the notes? 8 Again, if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle?

In the case of musical instruments, they don't even speak a language, and yet there is meaning that is conveyed. If an army is arrayed for battle, and the bugler plays Mary Had a Little Lamb, the soldiers will not rush into battle, because the correct message has not been conveyed.

9 So it is with you. Unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue, how will anyone know what you are saying? You will just be speaking into the air. 10 Undoubtedly there are all sorts of languages in the world, yet none of them is without meaning. 11 If then I do not grasp the meaning of what someone is saying, I am a foreigner to the speaker, and he is a foreigner to me.

Even with regular, non-miraculous speaking that does convey meaning, if that meaning is not conveyed in a way the listener can understand, its purpose is defeated.

2. Even uninterpreted tongues are verbal communications (Not just internal thoughts)

14:2 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.

3. In Acts speaking in tongues seems to serve as the primary evidence of the initial filling of the Holy Spirit (something that is obviously miraculous).

Acts 2:4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Acts 10:45-46

The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. 46 For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God.

Acts 19:6-7

When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.

4. There is more than one kind

1 Co.12:10 ...to another speaking in different kinds of tongues,

The word translated **different kinds** is the same word used in 14:10.

5. It is distinguished from prophecy at times, yet closely associated with prophecy.

1 Co.14:22 Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers; prophecy, however, is for believers, not for unbelievers.

Acts 19:6-7 **When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.**

(If this verse demonstrates a distinction, however, then we must also say there is a distinction between tongues and praise Acts 10:46 **they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God.**)

2:16,17 **this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 17 "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.**

The announcement that they would prophesy, see visions and dream dreams was evidently fulfilled by the speaking of tongues.

1 Co.14:5,6 **He who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may be edified. 6 Now, brothers, if I come to you and speak in tongues, what good will I be to you, unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or word of instruction?**

V.5 says tongues is only useful if interpreted. V.6 seems to be making the same point, but in place of interpretation we find **some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or word of instruction**. Perhaps those things are what you get when you interpret tongues.

6. In Acts 2, Jewish believers from at least 14 different countries heard the wonders of God being proclaimed in their own language. They were amazed because the speakers were from Galilee (uneducated).

Acts 2:4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. 5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. 6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. 7 Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? 8 Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? 9 Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome 11(both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs-we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" 12 Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"

On the other hand, the unbelievers mocked and accused them of being drunk.

13 Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."

It seems that tongues are designed to be understood by believers but not by unbelievers.

7. Tongues were never a gift for all believers

1 Cor 12:30 Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?

8. Tongues used in an unloving way is worthless

13:1 **If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.**

9. Tongues will cease

13:8 **Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears.**

Perhaps tongues does not appear in v.9 because knowledge and prophecy are partial elements of some future, fuller reality, whereas tongues is not.

This seems to rule out the possibility that tongues are the language of angels (are angels going to become mute at the Second Coming?)

10. Prophecy is superior to uninterpreted tongues in the church, because prophecy edifies the body and uninterpreted tongues is experienced only by God (v.2), self v.4) and the air (v.9)

3 But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort. 4 He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. Perhaps “edifies” should be in quotes here, because the rest of the chapter seems to indicate that edification can only come when the message is understood.

5 I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. He who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may be edified.

6 Now, brothers, if I come to you and speak in tongues, what good will I be to you, unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or word of instruction? 7 Even in the case of lifeless things that make sounds, such as the flute or harp, how will anyone know what tune is being played unless there is a distinction in the notes? 8 Again, if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle? 9 So it is with you. Unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue, how will anyone know what you are saying? You will just be speaking into the air. 10 Undoubtedly there are all sorts of languages in the world, yet none of them is without meaning. 11 If then I do not grasp the meaning of what someone is saying, I am a foreigner to the speaker, and he is a foreigner to me. 12 So it is with you. Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church.

11. At the time of speaking, the person speaking in tongues does not know the meaning of what he is saying. However it is possible, but not always the case that the same person could both speak in tongues and interpret.

13 For this reason anyone who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret what he says.

12. Uninterpreted tongues render the mind unfruitful.

1 Co.14:14 For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. 15 So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind. 16 If you are praising God with your spirit, how can one who finds himself among those who do not understand say "Amen" to your thanksgiving, since he does not know what you are saying? Side note: One important goal of your personal worship is for others to say, “amen.” This argues against non-participation in singing.

13. Tongues involve the will

17 You may be giving thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified.

So while you may not know what the words mean, evidently you know the general sense of what you are saying (that it is an intentional expression of gratitude, etc.)

18 I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. 19 But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue.

14. Tongues are a sign of judgment to the unbeliever

20 Brothers, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults. 21 In the Law it is written:

"Through men of strange tongues and through the lips of foreigners I will speak to this people, but even then they will not listen to me,"
says the Lord.

That quote is from Isa.28:11. The point Isaiah is making is, “Because you have rejected prophecy and have refused to repent, I’m going to send judgment. You will know it has arrived when you hear people speaking a foreign language in your country. That will be the Assyrians, who will be there to destroy you.” It is no mark of divine favor to have God speak to you in a language you don’t understand. Don’t pursue that as if that were the measure of high spirituality – it’s a mark of God judging you because you have rejected prophecy.

The question, then, is “Why the gift of tongues in the NT?” Perhaps it is symbolic. God is sending a message to the Jewish unbelievers that since they have rejected His Word, they are going to receive judgment.

22 Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers; prophecy, however, is for believers, not for unbelievers. 23 So if the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and some who do not understand or some unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your mind? 24 But if an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying, he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all, 25 and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, "God is really among you!"

Tongues serves to condemn the unbeliever. Prophecy converts him. It’s better to convert him than to simply condemn

him.

15. Tongues should not be chaotic

26 What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church. 27 If anyone speaks in a tongue, two-or at the most three-should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret.

16. When there is no interpreter, it is OK to speak in tongues silently

28 If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and God.

Is the modern phenomenon taking place in charismatic churches the biblical gift of tongues? We will address that in more detail when we talk about whether miraculous gifts are still in operation today. But for now, we can say a couple things:

I think one safe assumption is that the real gift of languages is not something that would be indistinguishable from the pagan counterfeit.

The question really comes down to whether or not the modern expression is a language. We know for sure that the gift of languages must be a language, otherwise it would be misnamed.

Whether or not it is a known, human language (*xenoglossia*) or some heavenly language not known on earth (*glossilalia*), in either case it must be a language that conveys meaning.

Do modern tongues fit that description?

Numerous studies have been done of recordings of modern tongues, and linguists have determined that they do not bear the marks of language.

All languages share certain characteristics. There is a universal grammar that is present in any language. Those marks are absent in modern tongues.

D.A. Carson (a charismatic scholar) writes, "To my knowledge there is universal agreement among linguists who have taped and analyzed thousands of examples of modern tongues-speaking that the contemporary phenomenon is not any human language." (Showing the Spirit p.86)

Probably the most often cited such study is that of W.J. Samarin *Tongues Of Men And Angels: The Religious Language Of Pentecostalism* (New York Macmillan; 1972) and *Variation and Variables in Religious Glossolalia: Language in Society* (London, Cambridge University Press; 1972)

That is coming from a man who is extremely sympathetic toward the charismatic movement, and is trying desperately to bring unity. Just to show you how sympathetic he is, he ends up concluding that perhaps the modern phenomenon is a genuine language that actually does convey cognitive meaning.

His theory is that perhaps it is information that is encoded.

To illustrate, he takes the sentence, "Praise the Lord for His mercy endures forever." Then he says if you remove all the vowels and spaces, then you rewrite the sequence using every third letter until all the letters are used up, then you add an "a" after every letter, you end up with:

Patara Rama Na Savaraha Dahara Dafarasala Fasa Carara

That has a sound that is very similar to modern tongues, and yet it actually contains cognitive meaning. And a person who knew the code would be able to decipher it.

So you can see that Carson is bending over backward to give the benefit of the doubt. But even he admits that there is no trace of the marks of language in the modern tongues, and that they do resemble what we would expect from meaningless gibberish.

For example, the individual "words" don't mean the same thing each time. In a language, the reason it can be learned is because a given word in the same context has the same basic semantic range (the word "semantic" always means "semantic," never "doughnut" or "perpendicular").

But in modern tongues, you might hear the phrase "Fasa Carara" in various places in the message, but interpretation doesn't reflect any similarity at those points.

It's also a little suspicious that tongues speakers can't reproduce something they just said on demand.

Another curiosity is that tongues speakers tend to speak in tongues that resemble their native language. French tongues never utilize the "th" sound, and English tongues never use the "u" sound as in the French "cru."

In fact, people who speak in tongues tend to speak a language that bears remarkable resemblance to the language spoken by the person who introduced him to tongues. It's not the same language, because there are differences. But if it is a different language, why would there always be so much resemblance to that language of the teacher?

One of the greatest evidences that the modern phenomenon is not really a language that conveys meaning is the modern gift of interpretation. There have been many studies along those lines as well, and they have found no evidence from the interpretations that what was spoken actually conveyed any meaning.

A tape of tongues will be played to someone with the gift of interpretation, and that person gives an interpretation. Then the same tape will be played for others with that gift, and the interpretation is never the same.

In fact, D.A. Carson, who is a charismatic, tells of one meeting his friend attended in which people were speaking in tongues and others were giving interpretation. So this man, who happened to have Jn.1:1-18 memorized in Greek, quoted it.

Interestingly while there have been thorough examinations of *glossilalia* (non-human languages), there have not been thorough examinations of modern instances of *xenoglossia* (people speaking in regular human languages that they have never learned).

Reports of *xenoglossia* abound, but for some reason they never seem to get recorded. Researchers have never had any difficulty getting recordings of *glossilalia* (which cannot be verified), but never *xenoglossia* (which can be verified).

Immediately someone with the gift of interpretation stood up and gave an interpretation that wasn't even remotely related to the message of Jn.1.

"But we shouldn't base our beliefs on experience." That's true about doctrine, but not about miracles. The whole point of a miracle is experience. The way you know if a miracle is happening is if you witness something miraculous.

So if you don't experience something miraculous, there is no reason to assume a miracle.