
Chapter 12.9

Is There a Super Prayer Gift?

Understanding 1 Corinthians 14:2, 28

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Primary Points

- The only reason the Apostle says those who utter something in an incoherent tongue do so to God is, as he says, "**because no one [else] understands**" and only God knows what it is (14:2).
- This is supported by the Apostle's statement a few verses later that those who pray in an incoherent tongue "**will just be speaking to the air**" (v. 9).
- No one *could* know if such an utterance was to God because those listening do "**not know what you are saying**" (v. 17), or to whom you are saying it.
- We would ask why does God need to hear "**mysteries**" from a human?
- It is revealing that the Apostle says that the speaker of an incoherent utterance does it merely "**in his spirit**," (v.2) instead of the Holy Spirit.
- In fact, while *glossaists* wish to continually insert a mention of the *Holy Spirit* in 1 Corinthians 14, the Apostle *never* does, always intentionally speaking of the human seat of emotion in regards to speaking in an unknown tongue.
- Whatever "praying in a tongue" is, its uninterpreted version is very inferior in spiritual value to speaking edifying words to people. Would the Apostle really be so down on an intimate form of prayer to God? Not likely.
- Perhaps the real reason the Apostle says that a meaningless utterance in a tongue is "**to God**," is to remind them that God will hold them accountable for such utterances, even the empty praise of a tongue. Which is unfortunate because no one can know what is even in such prayers. The Apostle is warning them that God will know if they are faking some kind of spiritual gift they really don't possess.
- *Glossaists* make the demeaning and divisive claim from their interpretation of 1 Corinthians 14 that they alone have a gift from God that enables them to pursue fellowship with the Father, and spiritual edification and power in a way that other Christians cannot.

1 Corinthians 14 is one of the most difficult passages in the NT to interpret. Hopefully, the points made in the previous chapters will help us in correctly understanding it. At this point it is necessary to revisit some of the verses in this passage that are not only difficult to understand, but that are commonly used in *glossaism* for biblical justification of a “private prayer language” version of the gift of speaking in tongues.

Such a view was practically unheard of for at least 1900 years of Christianity. Nonetheless, the Evangelical Free pastor and ardent glossaist Doug Bannister has written, “I am personally indebted to the charismatic movement for dusting off I Corinthians 12-14.”¹ On the contrary, we believe a great deal of proof texting has occurred in order to justify the tongues phenomenon that has arisen relatively very recently in Church history, and in the process, the passage has been horribly obscured. We hope the following will bring clarity to this passage of Scripture.

A) Biblical Problems with Praying in a Tongue

In 1 Corinthians 14:1-2 the Apostle writes:

Pursue love, yet desire earnestly [pneumatika: “spiritual things], **but especially that you may prophesy.** **For** [gar “because”] **one who** [lalōn: “utters something”²] **in** [an unknown] **tongue** [glosse] **does not speak to men but to God; for** [gar “because”] **no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries.**

Obviously, many have supported their practice of a “private prayer language” with this statement. However, it is important to remember what we have learned in the previous chapters from the contexts and the Greek text of 1 Corinthians 14.

First of all, we notice that for the first time in this letter the Apostle has switched from the use of glossais, which invariably describes the gift of tongues, to glosse, which, as demonstrated elsewhere, refers to the “unknown” tongue being spoken in the Corinthian congregation.³ It is the “unknown” utterance that sounds no different from the pagan variety of praying in a “tongue” common in the Corinthian mystery religions, but which may be revealed as an utterance produced by the gift of tongues if it is miraculously interpreted. In fact, the Apostle clearly describes this utterance of a “**tongue**” as “unknown” when he says, “**no one understands**” it and the person is uttering “**mysteries.**” It is indeed “unknown.”

Secondly, why does the Apostle say it is spoken **"to God?"**⁴ He clearly tells us in this very verse. The only reason the Apostle gives for saying that such an utterance is to God is because only the omnipotent God knows what the obscure utterance is. It is that simple. The Apostle's use of *gar* ("because") here is significant in that it is "a conjunction used to express cause, explanation."⁵ Therefore, it becomes obvious that the Apostle himself is explaining that an incoherent utterance spoken in an "unknown" **"tongue"** is **"to God because [and only because] no one [else] understands"** what the person is saying. He never intended to say more than that.⁶

This view is clearly supported when a few verses later the Apostle makes an almost identical statement and says: **"Unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue, how will anyone know what you are saying? You will just be speaking to the air"** (v. 9). Here, the Apostle does not add the idea that an obscure utterance is **"to God"** as he did in verse 2. In verse 9, he simply says that such a thing is like **"speaking to the air."**

Accordingly, John Calvin (1509-1564) commented on the **"one who [utters something] in [an unknown] tongue"** as one who, "preaches to himself and to the walls."⁷ This parallel statement in verse 9 concerning the effect of an incoherent utterance should cast some doubt on the *glossaists'* insistence that the Apostle is talking about a meaningful private prayer language to God in verse 2, for he certainly is not in verse 9.

We recognize that *glossaists* will understandably insist we are not making enough of the statement in verse 2 that the utterance in a tongue is **"to God,"** but neither do they give proper value to the Apostle's description of the very same thing in verse 9 as merely **"speaking to the air."** At least we are attempting to reconcile these two statements, whereas we have never read an explanation, or even a recognition within *glossaism* of the Apostle's description of praying in a tongue in verse 9.

Thirdly, it is far too much to assume that an obscure utterance is necessarily a prayer to God. Throughout Scripture, the authentic Christian gift of tongues is described as speaking in tongues, not praying in a tongue. And again, it is **"to God"** only because He is the only one who would know what it is. We repeat, there is no way the Apostle, or any human, could know with absolute certainty, that the obscure utterance they were hearing was a prayer directed to God. The Apostle admits this a few verses later when he says:

If you are praising ["God" is not in the Greek and only an assumption!⁸] [only] **with your spirit** [not the Holy Spirit, and in an unknown tongue], **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 [or to whom you're saying it]? You may be giving thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified. (14:16-17)

The NIV's insertion of "**God**" is erroneous and misleading, again because no one could know this because the utterance is not understood. The NIV's insertion of "**may**" is important and should not go unnoticed (cf. RSV, NRSV, ESV, NCV). While it is not in the Greek text, it would seem demanded by the context. If someone "**does not know what you are saying**" then there is no possible way that any human could know that the utterance was a prayer to God. Here is where glossaist teachers consistently contradict themselves. For example, we had earlier quoted Gordon Fee stating in reference to 1 Corinthians 12:1-3:

Most likely, therefore, he [the Apostle] is reminding them of what they well know, that in some of the [pagan mystery] cults, "inspired utterances" were part of the worship. . . . If so, then [the Apostle's] concern is to establish early on, as v. 3 seems to corroborate, that it is not "inspired speech" as such that is evidence of the Spirit. They had already known that phenomenon as pagans. Rather, what counts is the intelligible and Christian content of such utterances.⁹

Here, the Pentecostal expositor is rightly expressing the fact that the source of any incoherent utterance can only be known by the "content of such utterances." Yet, when this gifted scholar comments on 1 Corinthians 14:2, he would seem to completely forget this truth and merely assumes what he wants, but cannot honestly do so. He writes:

The content of such utterances [that "**no one understands**"] is "mysteries" spoken "by the [Holy] Spirit." . . . [I]t carries here the sense of that which lies outside the understanding, both for the speaker and the hearer.¹⁰

Likewise, Dr. Fee's translation of 1 Corinthians 14:16 is, "You, to be sure, are giving thanks well enough" is too presumptuous. While he rightly admits with the Apostle in 12:1-3 that no human can know if something is of the Holy Spirit apart from its "intelligible and Christian content," he denies the need for such a thing here, erroneously assuming that the obscure utterance is from the Holy Spirit.

Fourth, we notice that the Apostle says this person that utters something in an unknown tongue "**speaks mysteries** [mysteria]."

We have demonstrated elsewhere that this is a bad thing, not a good thing.¹¹ Not only because this would seem to be a direct reference to practices in the pagan mystery religions, but because a "secret" and unspoken mystery as described here is not Christian. "**Mysteries**" in a Christian context were to be proclaimed to others for their benefit, such as through the gift of prophecy. To withhold a mystery, as was done in the pagan cults, and similarly by one who speaks in an unknown tongue was a pagan practice, not a Christian one.

Someone might object that the Apostle says these "**mysteries**" are spoken to the Christian God and therefore does not have a pagan or negative connotation. We would ask why does God need to hear "**mysteries**" from a human? Is the human revealing something to God? Mysteries were from God to a person, and the Corinthians knew that. It would seem to be yet another way that the Apostle is communicating the uselessness and absurdity of such a practice, and relating it to the worship found in the Greek mystery religions.

Fifth, the fact that the Apostle says in 14:2 that the speaker of the incoherent utterance does it merely "**in his spirit**," instead of the Holy Spirit, is intentional on his part and revealing. In fact, while *glossaists* wish to continually insert a mention of the Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians 14, the Apostle never does, always intentionally speaking of the human seat of emotion in regards to speaking in an unknown tongue (cf. 14:2, 14, 15, 32).¹²

The Greek word here in 14:2 for "**spirit**" is the common *pneuma* which can either be translated with a small "s" or a capital "S" depending, again, on the context. The NASB, NIV, KJV, NKJV, PME, and JB translate it "spirit," whereas what could be termed the "looser" translations (TLB, NLT, CEV, NCV, TEV) have it "Spirit." It would seem certain that in verse 2 "**spirit**" is the most likely translation based on the Apostle's parallel statement in verse 14 that "**if I pray in [an "unknown"] tongue [glosse] my [mou] spirit [pneuma] prays.**" The Greek text there leaves no doubt that an utterance in *glosse* is merely by the person's spirit, not the Holy Spirit.

It should be recognized that the human spirit is often distinguished from the Holy Spirit in Scripture (cf. Rom 8:16; 12:11; 1 Cor 2:11; 5:3-5; 7:34; 14:14-16, 32; 16:18; 2 Cor 2:13; 7:1, 13; Gal 6:18; Eph 4:23; Phil 4:23; 1 Thess 5:23; 2 Tim 4:23; Plmn 1:25).¹³ Therefore, there is no reason to interpret the Apostle's references to "**his spirit**" (1 Cor 14:2) and "**my spirit**" (14:14-16) as referring to the Holy Spirit.¹⁴ These are references to the human spirit.

Thus, the respected Bible scholar Albert Barnes (1798–1870) wrote concerning 1 Corinthians 14:2:

The word spirit here (pneuma) has been variously understood. Some have understood it of the Holy Spirit—the Spirit by which Paul says he was actuated. Others of the “spiritual gift,” or that spiritual influence by which he was endowed. Others of the mind itself.

But it is probable that the word “spirit” refers to the “will;” or to the mind, as the seat of the affections and emotions; that is, to the heart, desires, or intentions. The word “spirit” is often used in the Scriptures as the seat of the affections, and emotions, and passions of various kinds; see Matt. 5:3, “Blessed are the poor in spirit;” Luke 10:21, “Jesus rejoiced in spirit.” So it is the seat of ardor or fervor Luke 1:17; Acts 18:25; Rom. 12:11; of grief or indignation; Mark 3:12; John 11:33; 13:21; Acts 17:16. It refers also to feelings, disposition, or temper of mind, in Luke 9:55; Rom. 8:15. Here it refers, it seems to me, to the heart, the will, the disposition, the feelings, as contradistinguished from the understanding.¹⁵

What then is meant in Scripture by the human “spirit”? While references to it can refer to various aspects of our “heart,”¹⁶ Vine’s Expository Dictionary lists a primary one as “the sentient element in man, that by which he perceives, reflects, feels, desires,”¹⁷ with some uses particularly including our emotions (cf. Matt 5:3; Luke 1:47; Acts 17:16). And this is especially the meaning of the human spirit when it is being contrasted with the mind, as it is here. Accordingly, Charles Hodge (1797–1878) reflected the common view of NT scholars when he wrote: “When spirit is to be distinguished from the understanding, it designates the affections [i.e. emotional desires].”¹⁸

The fact that the Apostle intentionally says those who utter something in a “**tongue**” do so merely with their human spirit (i.e. emotions) instead of the Holy Spirit should be another clear indication that the Apostle is not speaking of the same supernatural gift of tongues he had earlier described as a “**manifestation of the [Holy] Spirit**” (12:7), and also as a “**work of one and the same [Holy] Spirit**” (12:11). Again, the Apostle will not, and cannot, assume that such an “unknown” utterance is a “**manifestation**” or “**work**” of the Holy Spirit and neither should we.

Sixth, one question needing to be asked by those who claim the Apostle Paul is encouraging a “private prayer language” to God, is why wouldn’t such a marvelous practice be at least as great as prophecy? Whatever “praying in a tongue” is, its uninterpreted

version is very inferior in spiritual value to speaking edifying words to people. Would the Apostle really be so down on an intimate form of prayer to God? Not likely.

Some may object that the Apostle is saying that prophecy is superior only in the assembly, which is the context of 1 Corinthians 14. On the contrary, Paul allows the practice of silently "praying in a tongue" in the assembly (cf. v. 28), and from the glossaist's perspective, the Apostle is saying such a thing is to be practiced in the public assembly, not just privately. Yet, throughout the passage he says time and energy would be better spent in the assembly practicing prophecy rather than "praying in a tongue." This, again, is quite odd, if in fact it is a spiritually edifying and intimate discourse with God, as glossaist claim.

The idea of a very private, exclusive, superior prayer language certainly reflects the values of American individualism, but not biblical, others-oriented, communal Christianity. This, in spite of the fact, that in the clearest biblical definition of what the gift was, the Apostle tells the individualistic minded Corinthians, "**tongues are a [public] sign, not to [individual] believers, but for unbelievers**" (14:22). And this is precisely how it operated in the clearest biblical description we have of the gift (cf. Acts 2:4-11).

Contrary to the "private prayer language" promoted in *glossaism*, Jesus told us to pray communally, addressing God as "**Our Father,**" and asking Him together to "**give us,**" "**forgive us,**" and "**lead us.**" The value of such communal prayer is reflected throughout the NT (cf. Matt 18:19-20; Acts 1:12-14; 2:42; 4:23-31; 12:5; Col 1:9; 4:12-12; 2 Thess 1:11; 1 Tim 2:8). For all the claims among *glossaists* that tongues is the highest form of prayer, it is significant that Christ never mentioned it.

Finally, we suggest there may be another reason that the Apostle reminds these Christians that an obscure, meaningless utterance is "**to God**" (1 Cor 14:2). It is to remind them that God will hold them accountable for every utterance from their mouth and that all utterances had better be authentic prayer and praise to God. The Apostle is warning them that God will know if they are faking some kind of spiritual gift they really don't possess. Accordingly, the following warning from Christ comes to mind:

[O]ut of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him [and the empty-minded man brings empty things out of the empty-mindedness in him]. But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every [argos: "useless, empty"] word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted,

and by your words you will be condemned. (Matt 12:35-36)

It is not “careless” words that Christ is condemning here, as many translations erroneously render *argos*, but rather, “worthless, unfruitful, barren”¹⁹ utterances that mean nothing. Therefore, when we read that God will hold us accountable for even meaningless and barren utterances to Him, those who pray in a meaningless tongue should take notice.

We are reminded here of the Lord’s rebuke to His people, “**Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense** [symbolic of prayer?] **is detestable to Me**” (Isa 1:13). How can *glossaists* know for sure that the obscure, unintelligible prayers they pray in a babble they have merely learned, are not meaningless?

God says, “**I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind to reward a man according to his conduct**” (Jer 17:10). What then does God find in the mind of those who pray in a mindless tongue? Nothing. And it is not good to come before God with empty prayers and praise, which is what empty-minded prayer and praise will automatically be.

The Apostle writes, “**we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad**” (2 Cor 5:10). Praying in a meaningless tongue is something we do “**in the body**” and it is “**bad**” because it mimics ancient and modern practices in pagan religions and offers God an empty mind, instead of a worshipful one. This is precisely why the Apostle says in this very passage that he will not pray or sing in a mindless, unfruitful tongue, but rather, will pray and praise with his spirit and mind so that it is not only meaningful to himself, but to God also (cf. v. 14-15).

While *glossaists* can assume there is something meaningful in their meaningless utterances, God knows it is empty and will one day expose it as such because “**There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known**” (Luke 10:2). “**This will take place on the day when God will judge men’s secrets through Jesus Christ**” (Rom 2:16). If those praying meaningless, empty things to God do not know it now, they will know it on that Day, and we will mourn their loss of reward and waste of time, mind, energy, and “prayer” with them.

Therefore, if we do not ignore the reason the Apostle gives in this very verse, and the identical description in verse 9, a more accurate translation of the Apostle’s statement in 1 Corinthians 14:2 would be “one who utters something in the congregation that

people can't understand is just speaking to the air and only God will know what it is."

Unfortunately, our glossaist brothers and sisters read far too much into verse 2 that is not there and translate it, "One who speaks in an incoherent utterance speaks to God because the Apostle is introducing a completely different gift of tongues than that described in Acts and which enables a tongue speaker to fellowship in a more intimate way with God in a way that other Christians cannot." Read that statement again, because it is precisely how *glossaism* is interpreting the Apostle's statement. The practical and divisive ramifications of such an arrogant claim will be discussed next.

Pastoral Practices

- We see again that the issue of the modern version of tongues is not merely a doctrinal one, but a moral one. If indeed our Father does not value empty-minded prayers, which is precisely what modern tongues is, then they are indeed at best wasting His and their time. But how dishonoring to our Lord. Therefore, there is some motivation to persuade those in *glossaism* of their error.

B) Historical Problems with Praying in a Tongue

Church history gives us further proof that our interpretation of the above Scriptures is accurate. We have no record of any respected Church leader ever suggesting that the gift of tongues was a private prayer language until the 1900's.

It would seem that the earliest mention of the gift of tongues outside of the NT in early Christian literature comes from Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, who writes (c. 180):

We do also hear many brethren in the church, who possess prophetic gifts, and who through the Spirit speak all kinds of languages, and bring to light for the general benefit the hidden things of men, and declare the mysteries of God.²⁰

Notice that while Irenaeus acknowledges the operation of the gift of tongues into the second century, he does not describe it as an unintelligible and private prayer language, but as a source of divine revelation like prophecy.

Around the same period, the very influential early Church leader Tertullian (c. 160-225) wrote:

[L]et him [the heretic Marcion] produce a psalm, a vision, a prayer -- only let it be by the Spirit, in an ecstasy, that is, in a rapture, whenever an interpretation of tongues has occurred to him.²¹

Again, Tertullian believed the gift of tongues was a source of public divine revelation, not a private prayer language.

Likewise, as discussed further elsewhere, even though the second century Montanists were excommunicated from the Church for falsely claiming "charismatic" gifts, they at least believed that the gift of tongues was a source of new divine revelation and never spoke of it as a private prayer language.²²

Finally, as discussed further elsewhere, it is significant that the recognized founder of the modern *glossaism* movement, Charles Parham, believed the gift was the miraculous ability to speak in a foreign human language and never taught that it was a private prayer language.²³

C) Practical Problems with Praying in a Tongue

Not only have many ignored the many biblical problems with interpreting the Apostle as encouraging the pagan practice of praying in an obscure, meaningless tongue, but they have also ignored the serious practical ramifications of such a teaching. Our glossaist friends claim that someone who prays in an incoherent, mindless tongue has a gift from God that enables them to pursue fellowship and intimacy with God in a way that other Christians cannot. Let us seriously consider the potentially dangerous and divisive ramifications of such a teaching, because those advocating it, mere practitioners and mighty scholars alike, do not seem to seriously consider the dangerous and divisive ramifications of it at all.

It would be one thing to claim that God would grant a spiritual gift especially to you, so that you might serve others in a way those without the gift cannot. And that may be true. However, it is quite another thing to claim, like Professor Storms at Wheaton College, that God would grant a spiritual gift especially to you in order that you can be "profoundly" helped in your "prayer life," deepened in your "intimacy with the Lord Jesus Christ," and enhanced in your "zeal and joy in worship" in a way others without your spiritual gift will not be able to.²⁴

Let us likewise remember that J. Rodman Williams states in the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* that, "glossolalia is . . . the vehicle of communication par excellence between man and God."²⁵

There is simply no other way of interpreting this than concluding that those who do not have the "gift" of "praying in a tongue" are left with second-rate vehicles of communing with God. And let's not forget that the Apostle clearly describes tongues as a gift (cf. 1 Cor 12:7) that cannot be earned, or learned, but is bestowed by the sovereign grace of the Holy Spirit (cf. 12:11).

This is precisely what John MacArthur meant when he said *glossaism* has succeeded in dividing "the Christian community into the spiritual 'haves' and 'have-nots.'" ²⁶ In giving gifts to his Church, God does not put some of his people at a disadvantage in relation to our interaction with Him. Remarkably, *glossaists* have twisted a portion of Scripture originally written by an Apostle to rebuke the arrogance, false superiority, fake spirituality, and divisiveness that pagan practices of worship cause, and they have used it to support this very thing. And they add insult to injury when they label their private prayer language as "praying in the Spirit," (cf. Jude 1:20) as Dr. Storms does, implying those who do not have the gift of praying in a tongue cannot really pray "in the Spirit," or at least not to the degree they do.

We could ask that if such a wonderful gift of "super prayer" exists, why is it nowhere else eluded to in the NT? ²⁷ Why is this "super prayer gift" confined to only certain churches? And, if praying with the gift of tongues really does bring such wonderful edification to the believer, giving them special powers of communication with the Father, why would God withhold it from any of His children? Why hasn't God granted us this wonderful gift of fellowship with our Father? What are non-*glossaists* to think? And may those who pray in an unknown tongue never reply that the rest of us do not have this gift because we lack faith or "openness" to the Spirit of God!

Finally, wouldn't we expect the practice of a Holy Spirit-empowered prayer gift to result in a noticeable superiority in a person's relationship with God and their spiritual maturity, compared with those who do not practice such prayer? And yet, this has never been the case. There were many practicing a tongue speech in the Corinthian church, but its lack of spiritual maturity and intimacy with God is infamous.

Likewise, (generally speaking), there is no superiority whatsoever in spiritual maturity, intimacy with God, answered prayer, or any other dimension of spiritual health in churches practicing "praying in a tongue" compared to those churches which do not. *Glossaists* insist on the spiritual value of praying in a tongue, yet ignore the fact that the godliest Christians throughout the Church's history never exhibited their practices.

Accordingly, Dr. Carson, who otherwise unfortunately supports the practice of "praying in a tongue," is at least willing to admit:

The great movements of piety and reformation that have in God's mercy occasionally refreshed and renewed the church were not demonstrably crippled because their leaders did not, say, speak in tongues. Those who have thoughtfully read the devotional and theological literature of the English Puritans will not be easily convinced that their spirituality was less deep, holy, powerful, Spirit-prompted than what obtains in the contemporary Charismatic movement. . . .

It would be a strange calculus which concluded that a modern Charismatic lives on a higher spiritual plane than did, say, Augustine, Jonathan Edwards, Count Zinzendorf, or Charles Spurgeon, since none of these spoke in tongues.²⁸

Likewise, Dr. Edgar writes:

The concept of a special gift for prayer and praise to God also seems to violate basic Christian teaching. The New Testament teaches that every Christian has full access to God through Jesus Christ. This access was obtained for every Christian by Christ's death on the cross (John 14:13-14; Eph. 2:18; 3:12). Every Christian is instructed to pray continually, but there is no implication anywhere in the New Testament that certain individuals have greater access to God or greater prayer ability.

To state that a special gift is necessary or better for prayer implies that ordinary prayer is deficient and that those without the gift do not have complete access to God the Father. This view of tongues amounts to the allegation that in some mystical sense the speaker can better communicate with or praise God by speaking apart from his understanding than by speaking words which have meaning to him. There needs to be some biblical explanation showing why this is better; however, none has been produced.

It is sometimes claimed that prayer in tongues allows greater freedom in prayer, but this can only be due to a psychological "letting go" since we are already free in prayer. There are no restrictions from God's side; therefore, the only restrictions would be in the individual's emotions. Yet such emotional release in prayer apart from rationality is not biblical prayer. Biblical prayer is prayer based on knowledge.

²⁹

We'll say again that all sincere interpreters of Scripture should seriously consider the potentially divisive ramifications of the

commonly accepted view of the tongue phenomenon, because those advocating it, mere practitioners and scholars alike, do not.

Pastoral Practices

- Has anyone in your congregation been intimidated by the arrogant and unbiblical claims of *glossaists* concerning their supposed gift of prayer? Seek them out and comfort and instruct them in the fact that their coherent, natural prayers are much more pleasing and intimate with God than the incoherent gibberish of *glossaism* that displeases Him and does not connect to Him at all.

Extras & Endnotes

A Devotion to Dad

*Our Father, we thank you that it truly is your desire to relate to us in prayer and strengthen us spiritually. And we thank you for the biblical means you have provided for these things as exemplified by our first century brothers and sisters: **"They devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to [coherent, corporate] prayer"** (Acts 2:42). Let us devote ourselves to the same and lead others to do so as well, and never allow cheap substitutes for real spiritual edification to distract us.*

Gauging Your Grasp

- 1) Why do we claim the Apostle says that glossaists speak to God (1 Corinthians 14:2)? What reasons do we give for this interpretation? Do you agree? Why or why not?
- 2) Why is the glossaist's interpretation of 1 Corinthians 14:2 both divisive and demeaning to the rest of the Body of Christ?

Publications & Particulars

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- ¹ Doug Bannister, *The Word and Power Church* (Zondervan, 1999), 83.
- ² It would not seem best to automatically interpret *lalōn* at 14:2 as "speaking" which would imply intelligible words. Obviously, that is not what is happening here, because "**no one understands**" the unintelligible sounds being made by the one uttering something in a tongue. Accordingly, William Mounce notes that the Greek word here can mean "to give forth sounds or tones." (*Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words* [Zondervan, 2006], 673).
- ³ For further discussion of the meaning of *glosse* in 1 Corinthians 14 see section 12.8.B
- ⁴ Although only verse 2 will be discussed here in detail, the discussion regarding the reference to God is intended to apply to verse 28 as well.
 Dr. MacArthur attempts to alleviate the difficulty of the reference in 14:2 by stating:
 I believe a better translation is "to a god." The Greek has no definite article, and such anarthrous constructions usually are translated with an indefinite article. (*1 Corinthians in MacArthur's New Testament Commentary*, Electronic Edition STEP Files CD-ROM [Parsons Technology, 1997])
 No doubt for some this is a tempting argument and would easily explain a lot. And the Greek word here *theo* is translated as "god" small "g" several times in the NT. However, there are several problems with the idea. First of all, the context of the use of *theo* is a far more reliable guide to its translation than the inconsistent rule of Greek grammar that Dr. MacArthur cites. And with the context here, it would not seem possible to confidently choose "god" over "God" or vice versa.
 But more importantly is the Apostle's almost identical statement in verse 28 that "if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God." Here the definite article *does* precede *theo* and according to Dr. MacArthur's suggestion, the Apostle *is* talking about "the God" here, and he would seem to agree (cf. *1 Corinthians* at 1 Cor 14:28).
 So although it may be tempting to suggest otherwise, it is most likely that in both cases the Apostle means the tongue speaker is speaking to "the God" not "a god".
- ⁵ *New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, Robert L. Thomas, ed., (Foundation Publications, 1998), #1063, 1516.
- ⁶ Accordingly, Dr. Edgar writes:
 I Corinthians 14:2 does not concern speaking to God in prayer or praise. The verse itself states the situation. The statement introduced by "for," *gar*, "for no man understands," gives the reason for the preceding statement, "he speaks . . . unto God." The reason he speaks to God is not because he is in prayer but because no one understands. The "speaking unto God" is equivalent to "only God

understands." (*Satisfied by the Promise of the Spirit* [Kregel, 1996], 174.

⁷ John Calvin, *Calvin's Bible Commentaries*, 1 Cor 14:2; online at www.ccel.org.

⁸ "God" is not in the Greek text of 14:16 but unfortunately the NIV, NLT, CEV, NCV, TEV, JB, PME, NEB all insert it causing the unnecessary impression that the Apostle is talking about something other than the incoherent utterance produced by the mindless prayer he is referring to.

Dr. Fee's translation is even worse ("If you are praising God by the Spirit") inserting both "God" and the Holy Spirit, neither of which are in the Greek text (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT [Eerdmans, 1987], 667). The more literal English translations (i. e., NASB, ESV, RSV, KJV, NKJV) correctly refrain from adding "God" to the text here in 14:16, and none of them follow Dr. Fee's insertion of the Holy Spirit.

⁹ Fee, 577-578 (italics in the original).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 656.

¹¹ For further discussion of the meaning of "mysteries" here see section 12.7.B.

¹² The Pentecostal Dr. Fee, of course, insists that *pneuma* here refers to the Holy Spirit. His argument, based on a rule of Greek grammar regarding the complex and often uncertain subject of definite articles is unconvincing, and even he admits the rule is not consistent in the NT (578, n. 43). Additionally, Dr. Fee ignores the contextual evidence provided by verses 14 and 15 as demonstrated above, which is surely a better guide.

Elsewhere, Dr. Fee claims:

All of this is to say that the small case "spiritual" probably should be eliminated from our vocabulary, when it comes to this word in the Pauline corpus. (*God's Empowering Presence* [Hendrickson, 1994], 32)

On the contrary, as noted here, the Apostle obviously and often distinguished between the human spirit [i.e. seat of emotions] and the Holy Spirit.

Likewise, Dr. Thiselton wrongly claims that the major reason we would interpret *pneuma* here as the person's spirit is because "Many commentators before the 1950's were unduly influenced by a view of human personhood dominated by idealist or Cartesian dualism." (1086). Nonsense. Even he admits that *pneuma* must be interpreted as the human spirit a few verses later because of the context, and this is precisely what we are basing our view on as well.

For further discussion of what the Apostle meant by the human "spirit" see chapter 4.8.

¹³ As the *NIDNTT* notes, references to the human spirit "occurs nearly 40 times," in the NT (*New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (*NIDNTT*), Colin Brown, ed., 4 vols., [Zondervan, 1986],

III:693). Although instead of seeing it as the emotional, affectional aspect of a human, it is defined here as "man in so far as he belongs to the spiritual realm and interacts with the spiritual realm." (Ibid.).

- ¹⁴ For a fuller discussion of 1 Cor 14:14-16 and a refutation of the idea that by "**his spirit**" (1 Cor 14:2) or "**my spirit**" (1 Cor 14:14-16) the Apostle means the Holy Spirit, or a spiritual gift, see section 12.11.A.
- ¹⁵ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the New Testament*, Electronic Edition STEP Files CD-ROM (Findex.Com, 1999), *in loc.*
- ¹⁶ See a rather complete listing of the variety of meanings for *pneuma* in *Vine's*, p. 593.
- ¹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁸ Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1 Cor 14:2; online at www.ccel.org. Although as discussed in section 12.11.A, Hodge believed these were references to the Holy Spirit.
- ¹⁹ For example, the NIV at Matthew 12:36 translates *argos* as "careless." To the contrary, Greek scholar John Nolland writes: "In the present context 'careless' or 'thoughtless' have also been suggested, but there seems to be no evidence of such a meaning for [*argos*]." (*The Gospel of Matthew* (NIGTC) (Eerdmans, 2005), 507. Likewise, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Thomas Nelson, 1996) translates *argos* as "inactive, idle, unfruitful, barren (*a*, negative, and *ergon*, "work"), 316. Accordingly, BAGD give the possible meanings as "idle" or "worthless." (*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Early Christian Literature*, F. W. Danker, ed., 3rd ed. (University Of Chicago Press, 2001). Therefore, "careless" is not a good translation.
- ²⁰ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, II.23, V.6.1. Online at ccel.org
- ²¹ Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, Book V, Chapter VIII. Online at ccel.org.
- ²² Regarding the use of tongues among the Montanists in the second century see section 12.13.B.
- ²³ Regarding the fact that the founder of modern *glossaism*, Charles Parham, believed the gift was the miraculous ability to speak in a foreign human language and never taught that it was a private prayer language, see section 12.2.B.
- ²⁴ C. Samuel Storms, "A Third Wave View," in *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?*, Wayne Grudem, ed., (Zondervan, 1996), 222.
- ²⁵ J. Rodman Williams, "Charismatic Movement," in the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (EDT), Walter Elwell, ed., (Baker, 1984), 206.
- ²⁶ John MacArthur, *Charismatic Chaos* (Zondervan, 1992), 21-22.
- ²⁷ For discussion of other Scriptures that are claimed to mention praying in a tongue see discussion in section 12.12.C-F.
- ²⁸ D. A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition of 1*

Corinthians 12-14 (Baker, 1987), 167.

²⁹ Edgar, 179.