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**Reading Summaries**

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***Perspectives on Pentecost by Richard B. Gaffin, Jr.***

Gaffin begins his book by noting that controversy can be healthy if it brings about honest wrestling with Scripture for God's truth. The Spirit will guide us into all truth (John 16:13) and we must be bound by God's Word and not our own experiences. With a common commitment to the final authority of the Bible Christians can hope to resolve the conflict over spiritual gifts.

As guidelines for examining the issues involved in the discussion of spiritual gifts these comments seem fair enough. After finishing the book and looking back at this introduction his comments seem somewhat pejorative in that he knows what he is going to conclude from the study and he also knows that other people will disagree with his position. However, he believes that his view is the correct one and that everyone who disagrees with him will see it his way if they would only accept the authority of the Bible over their experiences! This, in retrospect, seems to indicate a shallow view of the other positions.

In Section II he gives an overview of the New Testament (NT) teaching on the work of the Holy Spirit. Pentecost is the fulfillment of the promise of Jesus baptizing with the Holy Spirit. It includes a destructive aspect as it involves the eschatological judgment. It is also his personal coming to the Church in order to give it life. Thus, the work of Jesus and of the Holy Spirit converge at this point. So far, it is the climax in redemptive history. Pentecost is also seen as the "establishment of the Church as the new covenant people of God, as the body of Christ." This a once and for all accomplishment. He says that the events recorded in chapters 8, 10, 11, and 19 are not repetitions of but extensions of Pentecost that accompanied the spreading of the Gospel. Thus, (based on I Corinthians 12:13) the whole Church has been baptized with the Spirit and is experienced by each individual at the time of his/her incorporation into the one body (i.e. at conversion). This undermines "second-blessing" theologies. The "filling" of the Spirit is distinguished from the baptism in that the filling is "Spirit-worked obedience to Christ as that comes to expression in the basic, everyday relationships and responsibilities of life." I Cor. 3:1-3 is not Paul's rationalization of a "non-spiritual" Christian life-style but that that kind of behavior is a *contradiction* of the Christian's identity. John 20:22 is a picture of the first-fruits of Pentecost.

This section seems complete in its coverage of pertinent issues. Although his arguments seem to make sense on the surface, I had a sense of a hidden agenda on his part. At times, he seemed to be forcing his theology on the text. For example, the work of the

post-ascension Jesus may be too closely equated to the work of the Holy Spirit. His comments on the baptism and the filling of the Spirit were helpful as well as his discussion of “carnal Christianity.” Also, his arguments concerning the passages in Acts 8, 10, 11, and 19 as well as John 20:22 were not completely convincing. Although I myself do not have the answers to the questions he poses, it seems to me that he is delving into speculation and making dogmatic statements based on the results. For example: in John 20 Jesus said, “Receive the Holy Spirit” not “Receive the first-fruits of the Holy Spirit.”

He begins Section III by making a distinction between the gifts of the Spirit (“particular operations pertaining to various ministries”) and the gift of the Spirit(the Spirit himself). About gifts he writes, “any capacity of the believer, including aptitudes present before conversion, brought under the controlling power of God’s grace and functioning in his service is a spiritual gift.” Thus, “charismatic” and “Christian” are synonymous. He notes that the list of gifts in the NT are not complete. Each gift can be categorized as either a word-gift of a deed-gift. We should not ask “What is my gift?” but “How can I serve in word and/or deed in my present situation?”

Most everything in this chapter seemed helpful. I did not find anything of significance in it that I disagree with.

His fourth section is about prophecy and tongues. He points out both the similarities and the differences between them. In the NT, the gift of prophecy was given only to some and was a revelatory gift used to communicate “words of God in the primary and original sense.” He sees a correspondence between OT and NT (Agabus) prophecy. They both originated with the Spirit and both are authoritative. About tongues he writes, “In exercising the gift of tongues the mind of the speaker is bypassed.” Thus, prophecy and tongues are related in that the source of both is the Holy Spirit; both are revelational. The gift of interpretation of tongues is the gift of being able to translate them. Tongues in both Acts and Corinthians were existing languages. The private use of tongues in the NT was secondary to their public use. None of the gifts (including tongues) is integral to true spirituality.

This section seem particularly confusing. He seemed to “dance around” what he really wanted to say. His descriptions of tongues and prophecy were helpful. I agree that there does seem to be some important differences and similarities between them. However, he digresses to what seems to me to be a very confusing discussion: the correlation between grace and faith. Also, I was not completely convinced of the one-for-one correspondence between prophecy in the OT and in the NT.

In Section V he deals with the question of the cessation of the gifts of tongues and prophecy. He writes that the gift of Apostle was to end at the end of the first generation of the church. They were only required as a foundational group of the first part of the history of the Church. Gaffin distinguishes between apostles and prophets but then notes that he thinks prophets had a foundational (therefore, temporary) role as well. He attempts to deal with some objections to his position by saying that prophecy was no longer needed after the completion of the NT canon. Tongues is also temporary in that it is a *mode* of prophecy that is also no longer needed. They were to be a sign against (mostly Jewish) unbelievers. Of I Cor. 13:8-13 he writes that the “perfect” is the return of Christ but that the passage is silent about when the “imperfect” will pass away. Other gifts like healing have also “passed out of the life of the church” in that they were among the “signs of the apostles.”

This chapter as a whole was not convincing in the least. His discussion of the Apostle seems correct but his discussions of the other gifts seems lacking. It is obvious that he is concerned (rightly, I believe) about the possible misuse of gifts that were revelational in nature but goes beyond what the Scripture says about them. The gift of prophecy need not compete with Scripture for authority. He did not look at all of the passages about the issue (which he admit toward the beginning of the section). His arguments about tongues is short circuited if the cessation of prophecy can be questioned. Also, his discussion of I Cor. 13 seems to be lacking. The passage obviously mentions “*when*.”

His last section warns both charismatics and non-charismatis about non-loving attitudes. He responds to the objection that a non-charismatic view of the gifts denies the freedom of the Spirit. He tries to show that he is in the mainstream of the history of the church by aligning himself and his cause with those of the Reformers. He tries to explain the present-day tongues phenomenon in light of his position.

This last section seems rather pedantic. He assumes that his arguments will have been more than persuasive for every reader.

## ***The Gift of Prophecy by Wayne Grudem***

Grudem's purpose in this chapter (chapter 12) is to examine the question of the cessation of the gift of prophecy. He focuses on two issues: 1) the relationship of I Corinthians 13:8-13 to the question, and 2) the relationship of the gift of prophecy to the New Testament (NT) canon. About 1) he notes that the main point of I Cor. 13:8-13 is that love is superior to spiritual gifts in that love is permanent while the gifts are temporary. He determines from an in-depth exegetical examination of the passage that the gifts will cease *when Christ returns* and not before. Next, he considers various objections to his conclusions and tries to show that these objections are not convincing. About 2) he argues that the continuation of prophecy does not challenge the sufficiency of Scripture or the closed canon. Prophecy in the NT and in the Church age are subject to Scripture. He includes quotes from many people associated with the charismatic movement who want people to be aware of the possibility of abuse when the gift of prophecy is allowed to operate.

This chapter is very well organized and logically argued. Grudem was very helpful in distilling out the most important issues and in arguing for a balanced perspective. I agree with his conclusions. I think that he did a very good job of refuting (in love) Gaffin's position while maintaining a tolerant attitude towards those who might disagree with him.

In Appendix C Grudem writes about the importance of the sufficiency of Scripture. He defines it to mean "that Scripture contains all the words of God which he intends his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it contains everything we need God to tell us for salvation, for trusting him perfectly and for obeying him perfectly." The rest of the Appendix is spent on elaborating this statement and on its implications.

This was very good for showing the importance of Scripture in the lives of Christians. This also further showed that prophecy today is not in a position to challenge the authority of Scripture in our lives.

## ***Showing the Spirit* by D.A. Carson**

In this chapter (chapter 2) Carson takes an in-depth look at the grammar and syntax of I Corinthians chapter 13. He argues that chapter 13 is more than a parentheses between chapters 12 and 14: it is an integral part of Paul's argument. He also argues for understanding "zšloue" as imperative rather than indicative. He points out that Paul does not deprecate spiritual gifts but says that spiritual gifts apart from love are meaningless and useless. Carson shows that Christian love is not defined by the particular word that is used to express it (*i.e. agapaw*) but by the concepts expressed by Paul in I Cor. 13. He points out that God loves (and the Christian should also love) because of who he is not because of who the object of the love is. He concludes that spiritual gifts will cease when Christ returns (and not before) but that love (and faith and hope) will continue forever.

Carson's exegetical analysis is very thorough. He dealt with all of the possible issues and alternatives. He makes a very compelling case for his conclusions and I agree with him. His conclusions seem to me to be supported by the context and flow of Paul's argument.