

QUESTIONS WE WANT ANSWERED

25.2 What Are the Gifts of the Holy Spirit?

Part II

Scripture: I Corinthians 12:1-31:

In our previous study we listed 17 gifts of the Holy Spirit under the title, **The Use Of Spiritual Gifts**. To this list we may add the following although not all of them are included in the lists given in Romans 12:6-8; I Corinthians 12:4-11, 28-31; Ephesians 4:7-12, or I Peter 4:8-11.

18. The Hospitality Gift:

Certain gifts overlap. Certainly this is true of the gift of evangelism which involves a measure of teaching, and the gift of ministering which may involve both mercy and helps. Somewhere the gift of hospitality will be included. The gift is mentioned in I Peter 4:9. Paul required an elder to be *“a lover of hospitality.”* (Titus 1:8; I Timothy 3:2) A qualifying factor in the widow's receiving of aid from the church treasury was that she *“have lodged strangers.”* (I Timothy 5:10) Believers are encouraged with the words, *“Be not forgetful to entertain strangers.”* (Hebrews 13:2) The gift enables one to provide a ready welcome and open house, so to speak, toward those in need with a readiness and ease that is unnatural. The person who exercises this gift does so with little concern for remuneration. This is in keeping with what Jesus said in Luke 14:12. Those unable to repay are to be invited, reward will come in its time.

19. The Celibacy Gift:

Paul gives some attention to single people in I Corinthians 7:26 where he speaks of persecution. They are to be spared temporal concerns because the form of this world is passing away. (7:28, 31) In 7:7 he explains that *“each has his own special gift from God.”* This is not to be an institutionalized celibacy, but a call from God coupled with the provision to live in the single state. We have a reference from Jesus recorded in Matthew 19:12.

20.The Martyrdom Gift

Martyrdom, although not mentioned as part of the charismata, has always been a means of strengthening the church and purifying it. I believe that this is the ability to accept and endure victoriously the prospects of one's home going at the hands of those who know not the Lord. We may be confident that God will give grace in that hour of trial. We have the marvelous example of Stephen as a case in point. (Acts 7:60, 56) Evidently there were those in the Corinthian Church who gave their bodies to be burned but needed love to ennoble their deed. (I Corinthians 13:3)

We have the understanding from Scripture that it is important we have an awareness of these spiritual gifts and their use. In the three instances where Paul lists the gifts, he does so within the context of instruction concerning the nature of the church. In both Romans 12, I Corinthians 12-14, and in Ephesians 4 the reasoning he follows is that believers are like individual parts of a body. The ability to function in place is most important. (I Corinthians 12:25-30)

IV. THE SOURCE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS:

About 1800 years ago a man by the name of Tertullian introduced the word "trinity" in describing the nature of God. The Trinity functions in a threefold way. God the Father is the source of all things. God the Son reveals the unseen Father and is the doer of the Father's will. God the Holy Spirit is the agent through whom the plan of the Father and the work of the Son is made meaningful for our lives. These three work simultaneously in the Old Testament period, the period of Christ and the apostles, and they work in the same way today. We are not to think of the Holy Spirit's working apart from the Father and Son. This arrangement the church has been at great pains to describe in its confessional statements for centuries. The Son is eternally begotten of the Father, and the Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father and Son. It is in this fashion that the Scripture describes the relationship which abides or obtains between them. The three persons are of one essence. This is a mystery beyond comprehension and comes to us by revelation. It has no basis of comparison within the scope of finite experience.

1. The Whole of the Triune God Provides the Gifts:

I Corinthians 12:4-6 mentions the source of the gifts. The same Spirit (v:4), the same Lord (v:5), and the same God (v:6) are mentioned. God the Father is spoken of in I Peter 4:10 *"As every man hath received the gift, even so minister*

the same one to another, as good stewards of the grace of God.” In Ephesians 4:7 we read about God the Son, *“But unto everyone of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.”* And in I Corinthians 12:11 we read about God the Holy Spirit, *“But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.”* (**Bouletai:** As He chooses). The Choice of the gift is that of the Spirit.) So it is the Holy Spirit who does not work alone, but is the executor of what the Trinity purposes to do now in the world.

2. Believers May Desire Certain Gifts Provided Their Motivation Is Pure:

I Corinthians 12:31 reads, *“But covet earnestly the best gifts.”* (See also 14:39) In 14:1 we are instructed to, *“Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts.”* It appears that some gifts bring the greater edification to the church and these are to be desired. It is a matter of practicality. Prophecy is mentioned in 14:1 which is the ability to meaningfully communicate the Word of God. Paul recognized a graduation in importance if the order has meaning in 12:28. He writes, *“First, secondarily, thirdly, after that, then.”* If I find myself desiring a spiritual gift I should ask the reason why I desire such a gift. It is not wrong to ask for a gift providing the reason is proper. Paul goes on to speak of a *“more excellent way.”* (12:31) There is a way to pursue which excels the exercise of gifts. In I Corinthians 13:1-3 we are told plainly that the gifts only have value as they are displayed in love.

I Corinthians 14:1 admonishes us to *“Follow after charity.”* The word is to hunt. As a hunter stalks and goes after his prey we are to go after love. Love is better than all the gifts together and better than all the gifts individually.

3. There May Be Differences Among Individuals and Churches:

It is a comfort to know the gifts are dispensed according to the wisdom of God. It is God Who knows what gifts are needed at a particular time and place. There is no wisdom in envying or being apprehensive about what others are equipped to do. We may be comforted that gifts are given as it pleases Him. (I Corinthians 12:8) If we were to have the power of choice, who knows, we would blunder in the selection.

Allow me to conclude this section with this summary. It is the purpose of God the Father to share His life with humanity. God the Son came and lived in first century Palestine to deal with the deadening effects of sin and to make Divine life possible for mankind. What the Son did at a point in time, the Holy Spirit extends

to men of all ages. The important thing about Pentecost, apart from the sensational happenings, was the initiation of the abiding presence of God, the fact that He no longer would be an impersonal force. Some theologians speak of the “setting free” of the Spirit in contrast to the irregular breakthroughs of the Old Testament. The Holy Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father and Son. The Father, Son and Spirit all participate in the ministry performed through the gifts given to the church.

V. THE POSSESSION OF GIFTS:

Three beliefs divide evangelicalism concerning the permanency of gifts. Commentators, scholars, and lay people have their individual approach and understanding of the charismatic happening.

1. Some Christians Believe All of the Gifts Are Extinct:

Richard W. DeHaan, teacher of the Radio Bible Class, Grand Rapids, Michigan, writes, “The gifts listed in I Corinthians 12 were of a temporary nature. They were not intended to be exercised throughout the entire church age.

I maintain that they long ago fulfilled their need and purpose, and that they were withdrawn. And because the spiritual gifts of I Corinthians 12 are no longer in operation, we who are living today have no right to them.” (The **Charismatic Controversy**; Spiritual Gifts, pp.10-11)

2. Some Christians Believe that All of the Gifts Are Operative:

Donald Bridge and David Phypers write, “ The gift with theory poses a problem to those who wish to use the New Testament as their handbook for the church. The only narrative they have to guide them is that supplied in the Acts of the Apostles. What that shows is a church living in the realm of the supernatural. The same applies when attention is turned to the Epistles. When they do touch on the subject of the exercise of gifts, they tell their readers how to regulate them, never how to phase them out. The only actual biblical instruction available on the subject assumes the presence of the gifts.” (**Spiritual Gifts & The Church**; Inter-Varsity Press, pp.28-30) The second sentence in this paragraph should read, “The **gift-withdrawal** theory...”

3. Some Christians Believe the Gifts Are Both Permanent and Transitory:

J. Dwight Pentecost writes, “The Word of God recognized two kinds of gifts: permanent and temporary. Some gifts were designed to operate as long as

the church has its existence upon the earth; other gifts were designed to be temporary in duration. If one puts an emphasis upon that which was divinely designed to be temporary, and seeks to make those temporary gifts the norm for spirituality in a day when they do not operate, he will be led into disillusionment or to some fleshly excess which manifests a pseudo-spirituality." Those gifts most often thought to be of a temporary nature were of a miraculous nature and corroborated the message being given. Among those gifts are miracles, healings, tongues, and interpretation of tongues. Some scholars include discerning of spirits, prophecy and apostles. (**The Divine Comforter**; J. Dwight Pentecost; Moody Press, pp.166) This gift withdrawal position does not have strong exegetical support. Its strength lies in the theological position that before the dissemination of doctrinal knowledge through Scripture, God gave men sign gifts. This position was that of John Calvin and finds its classic expression today in Benjamin Warfield who writes, "These gifts were not the possession of the primitive Christian as such...they were distinctively the authentication of the Apostles." (**Miracles: Yesterday And Today**)

It is the apostleship of the New Testament which gives validity to the classification of gifts as temporary and permanent. At least one of the 20 gifts I have cited was a temporary gift to the church, it was the gift of the apostle. Apostles were those who had been contemporaries of Christ, who were witnesses to His resurrection, who had a personal call from Him, who laid the doctrinal foundation of the church, and who had the power to work miracles. (Acts 1:21-22; 2:43; John 14:26, 16:13, 20:21; Mark 3:14) If this gift was a temporary one, it is possible others may be the same. If that is true, what about the signs of an apostle Paul speaks of in II Corinthians 12:12. He writes, "*Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.*" That which set, an apostle apart was the fact that he could perform signs and wonders. If the office of an apostle was temporary, then the signs which certified him and which were bestowed only upon an apostle would also be temporary. (Hebrews 2:2-4)

4. Divine Sovereignty Could Restore the Apostolic Office:

I have satisfied the issue in my own mind that it is valid to classify the charismata as temporary and permanent. I recognize that the Bible nowhere states that any of the gifts have passed away. Nor does the Bible say that it was only in apostolic times that the gospel required divine authentication. If

God chose to give miraculous gifts, withdraw them, and reinstate them in latter days, it is His right to do so. It is interesting that only two of the miracle gifts receive the weight or emphasis, the gift of healing and tongues. There is little attention given to raising the dead, the capacity to drink poisonous substances, or to handle deadly serpents. (Mark 16:9-20)

5. Spiritual Gifts Are Not a Test of Spirituality:

When leaders were chosen in the early church, Paul did not instruct young Timothy to look for gifts. His concern was for spiritual qualifications. (I Timothy 3:1-7) It appears that the Corinthian Church was very attractive from a gift standpoint. (I Corinthians 1:6-7) Yet, it was a carnal church. (I Corinthians 3:1)

6. Caution Should Be Exercised in Appraising the Miraculous:

If there is some question about the permanency of the miraculous or sign gifts, it would be wise to seek more those gifts which were given for the edification of the local church. We should look in the direction of helps, exhortation, showing mercy, faith, evangelism, administration and wisdom. The miraculous can be so misleading even to the point of being demonically and psychologically produced. Let me say that if God does sovereignly bestow such gifts upon some, they should be received with thanks and bound by the restrictions of Scripture. They do not reach gift status unless they edify and therefore should not become a matter of dissention in the local church.

7. It Is Unscriptural to Insist that Everyone Possess the Same Gift:

The beauty of the church is that it is a unity in a multitudinous diversity. Some things of the Spirit we share in common. Yet, it pleases God to cause us to differ. All Christians do not possess the same gifts. (I Corinthians 12:4, 8-10, 29-30) The presence of God is noted by a unity in diversity, not sameness.

8. Our Main Concern Should Be the Fruit of the Spirit:

The gifts can be nothing. I Corinthians 13 is placed right in the middle of Paul's long dissertation on spiritual gifts. It is an integral part of the teaching. (13 - use; 14 - perversion; 12 - purpose) Love is a fruit of the Spirit. How important are the gifts when compared to the fruit of the Spirit? If you were

to select a roommate would you prefer the gifts for service and ministry or the graces of Christian character to be most manifest?

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