

THE UNIVERSALITY OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

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In the abundance of literature concerning spiritual gifts, the predominant opinion is that every believer has at least one. The logical consequence of this opinion is that unless a believer is cognizant of, and is utilizing his gift, something is wrong.

In this study, the writer examines several Scripture passages which are commonly used as proof texts for the universality of spiritual gifts. First, however, it is necessary to define what is meant by the term, spiritual gift. To this end, the Greek words that have been so translated are discussed, including their etymology and usage in the New Testament. The most significant word, χάρισμα, has a much broader usage than spiritual gift, as that term is used commonly today. πνευματικός may be a more restrictive term, relating to certain spiritual enablements, but it is difficult to determine how restrictive it was meant to be.

Attention is also paid to whether these phenomena should be considered as totally supernatural, or if natural aptitudes and talents are also included. The definition of spiritual gift finally given is of necessity somewhat general: "any benefit, effect, or enablement bestowed freely upon men by God, with which He carries out His own purposes."

In the second chapter the statements of 1 Corinthians 12:7 and 1 Peter 4:10 are examined. In these passages the word ἕκαστος, variously translated "each" or "every" is discussed. It has been determined that this term does not denote absolute universality. The contexts of these passages also reveal that Paul's main emphases did not center on the all-inclusive distribution of spiritual gifts. A section is also included which deals with the time at which gifts are received. It is evident that certain spiritual endowments were received at a time subsequent to the salvation experience. This, too, has implications concerning the issue of universality.

In the final chapter, the writer seeks to make a sensible and balanced approach to the subject of Christian service. First, though, a brief discussion concerning the purposes for spiritual gifts is included. The conclusion recognizes the necessity of God's power and enablement for effectual service, but seeks to avoid the contemporary emphasis on identifying personal gifts before service for God can occur.

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INTRODUCTION

Christians today are often faced with a question that was probably seldom raised in past centuries, "What is your spiritual gift?" The charismatic movement has brought to the forefront much teaching on spiritual gifts, not only in their own circles but in non-charismatic bodies as well. Unfortunately, there is little unanimity among teachers concerning this subject. Each seems to have his own definition of a spiritual gift, along with his own emphasis concerning their use.

Consequently, the response of Christians to this diversified teaching has been likewise diversified. Some have plunged into the charismatic movement with both feet, regarding any or all of the extraordinary manifestations of the first-century Church as viable for the Church today. Others, more hesitantly, seek to discover their gifts but make this decision based on much more restrictive lists, many of which exclude any extraordinary or supernatural phenomena. Still others, for various reasons, have really done nothing to identify and utilize their "gifts."

Common Assumption

Although the contemporary doctrine of spiritual gifts is quite subjective and imprecise concerning scriptural data

on the topic, a common assumption is evident in almost all teaching. That is, every Christian has a spiritual gift. In other words, whatever a spiritual gift is, if you are a believer, you have one! As Charles Mylander states, "Without exception, every newborn child in Christ's redeemed family is gifted."¹

A natural consequence of this assumption is the conclusion that each Christian has a responsibility to discover his gift. "Unused gifts waste the grace of God!"² But is this assumption correct? Does the Bible really teach that every single Christian has a spiritual gift?

Purpose of this thesis

This writer purposes to examine the biblical data that is most often used to prove the assumption of the universality of spiritual gifts. Attention will be first given to definitions, followed by exegetical examination of several key passages and significant questions concerning gifts. Finally, an emphasis on the necessity of God's power in one's spiritual service will be made.

It is hoped that the reader will find the discussion of this popular subject both thought-provoking and helpful.

¹Charles Mylander, "How to Discover Your Spiritual Gifts," Eternity, 24:5 (May, 1973), p. 26.

²Ibid., p. 26.

However, there is no ambition or intention on the part of the writer, that this work be considered as authoritative, or as the "last word" on this vital topic.

CHAPTER I

WHAT ARE SPIRITUAL GIFTS?

There can be little argument concerning the importance of defining the term "spiritual gift" before entering into a study about the universality of this phenomenon. Since there is much diversity among commentators and Bible scholars even in identifying what a spiritual gift is, this writer feels it is necessary at the outset to arrive at an acceptable understanding of this concept. Once this has been accomplished, whether the reader agrees or disagrees with the definition, it will be used throughout the paper, except where indicated otherwise.

Greek Words

An examination of the Greek words used to convey the concept of spiritual gift will first be undertaken. The writer has confined his study to New Testament occurrences.

χάρισμα

This is the most significant term relating to spiritual gifts in the New Testament. It is, in fact, the word from which the charismatic movement derives its name. Thus, in the minds of many contemporary Christians, this term would

suggest tongues-speaking, healings and other extraordinary manifestations.

However, it has a much broader range of meaning in the New Testament, where it occurs seventeen times. *χάρισμα* is used only by Paul in his writings, with the one exception being 1 Peter 4:10. In many of these occurrences there is no connotation of a supernatural manifestation by individuals whatsoever. For example, the *χάρισμα* of God in Romans 6:23 is eternal life, and it is used in a similar way in Romans 5:15 and 16.

Paul also uses the plural form *χαρίσματα* in Romans 11:29 to refer to God's special election of Israel as a nation. Here, as in the previous references, the emphasis is on the free and gracious favor of God toward men. This favor of God is also present in 2 Corinthians 1:11 where *χάρισμα* refers to the event of Paul's deliverance from deadly danger.

Thus, Thayer's general definition, "a gift of grace; a favor which one receives without any merit of his own,"¹ covers well the meaning of *χάρισμα* in the New Testament. This concurs with the definition one would expect for a word derived from *χαρίζομαι*, which has the primary meaning, "give

¹Joseph Henry Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (New York: American Book Company, 1889), p. 667.

freely or graciously as a favor."¹ The $\mu\alpha$ ending specifies the result of the action.²

Many Bible scholars recognize a more technical sense of the term, especially in the context of 1 Corinthians 12-14 and Romans 12:6-8.³ It is in this sense that Thayer gives a second definition to $\chi\alpha\rho\iota\sigma\mu\alpha\tau\alpha$: "extraordinary powers, distinguishing certain Christians and enabling them to serve the church of Christ, the reception of which is due to the power of divine grace operating in their souls by the Holy Spirit."⁴

Clearly, the gifts of healing, prophetic utterances, the ability to speak with tongues, working of miracles, and others found in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 can be considered extraordinary powers, but it is also true that Paul includes under the category of $\chi\alpha\rho\iota\sigma\mu\alpha\tau\alpha$ such seemingly ordinary

¹William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 876.

²F. Blass and A. Debrunner, A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 59.

³Paul W. Schmiedel, "Spiritual Gifts," Encyclopedia Biblica (4 vols: New York: The MacMillan Company, 1903), IV, p. 4755. Hans-Helmut Esser, "Grace, Spiritual Gifts," The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), p. 121.

⁴Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, p. 667.

abilities as helps, administration, exhortation, giving, and showing mercy (1 Cor. 12:28 and Rom. 12:6-8).

The technical sense of *χάρισμα*, from which the term spiritual gift is derived, is probably dependent upon the presence in the lists of the extraordinary powers. One writer correctly observes, "It appears that a 'theology' of the gifts has been developed from an inspection of the miraculous gifts and made to apply to all the gifts."¹

It is questionable whether the technical sense applied to *χάρισμα* is a legitimate distinction. The apostle Paul used the term somewhat indiscriminately (from our perspective) to speak of prophecy, tongues, deliverance from danger, celibacy, or salvation. Sometimes the *χάρισμα*, or result of God's free, undeserved favor took the form of an enablement and other times a benefit or effect, but that is about as restrictive as one should be in line with the New Testament usage.

πνευματικός

This term has been translated as spiritual gift in 1 Corinthians 12:1 and 14:1 (KJV, NIV, NASB), and is taken by many to be synonymous to *χάρισμα*.²

¹Rick Yohn, Discover Your Spiritual Gift and Use It (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1974), p. 38.

²David F. Miller, "Concerning Spiritual Gifts," (unpublished Th.D. thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, Winona Lake: 1977), p. 20. Also Arnold Bittlinger, Gifts

The term πνευματικός is derived from πνεύμα (spirit) and the suffix ικος ("pertaining to" or "having the characteristic of").¹ In the majority of cases πνεύμα refers to the Holy Spirit and can be so taken in these two passages.

When used adjectivally πνευματικός often defines impersonal things. For example it is used of the law given by God (Rom. 7:14), of songs (Eph. 5:19), of understanding (Col. 1:19), of a house (1 Pet. 2:5a), and of food (1 Cor. 10:3). It can also be used substantivally in the neuter for spiritual things, or in the masculine, for spiritual men.²

Commentators are divided as to whether the masculine or neuter is preferable in 1 Corinthians 12:1.³ Both views have some support, since elsewhere in Corinthians πνευματικός refers definitely to persons (2:13,15, 3:1 and 14:37) but also to spiritual things (2:13, 9:11, 10:3 f. and 14:1).

By those who favor the neuter sense of πνευματικά in 12:1, an impressive argument has been maintained that the term is not strictly parallel to χάρισμα (in the technical

and Graces (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), p. 119 note.

¹Bruce M. Metzger, Lexical Aids for Students of New Testament Greek (enlarged ed: Princeton: Published by the Author, 1962), p. 56.

²Arndt and Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, p. 685.

³For a good discussion of this see Robert L. Thomas, Understanding Spiritual Gifts (Chicago: Moody Press, 1978), pp. 169-170.

sense of "spiritual gift"). This view takes πνευμάτικα to refer to the spectacular gifts, especially tongues and prophecy.

That χάρισμα and πνευμάτικος are not necessarily parallel terms is evident from Romans 1:11, where Paul uses the latter to modify the former. This argument further surmises that there was a class of men in Corinth who considered themselves as the spiritual elite, having been entrusted with prophecy and other ecstatic revelations, particularly the gift of tongues. Pearson argues:

The claim on the part of the Corinthian opponents to the designation πνευματικοί on the basis of their facility in ecstatic speech is documented at 1 Corinthians 14:37. Paul says, εἴ τις δοκεῖ προφήτης εἶναι ἢ πνευματικός κτλ. One can conclude from this that there were people in the Corinthian congregation who regarded themselves as "prophets" and "spiritual," and that they defined their status as "spiritual" in terms of "prophecy." From the context in 1 Corinthians 14, it can be inferred that for them "prophecy" consisted in ecstatic utterances and "speaking in tongues." This ability was characterized by them as a major "spiritual gift," a πνευμάτικον, and this¹ endowment was the ground for an enthusiastic boasting.

Ellis, who also sees the distinction between the wide and general scope of χάρισματα and the more restrictive sense of πνευμάτικα in this passage, defines the πνευμάτικα as gifts of inspired perception, verbal proclamation and/or its

¹Birger Albert Pearson, The Pneumatikos - Psychikos Terminology (Missoula, Montana: Printing Dept. of University of Montana, 1973), p. 44.

interpretation.¹ Certainly, chapter 14 bears out this distinction, introducing πνευμάτικα in the first verse, and then proceeding to discuss the relative merits of prophecy and tongues in the remainder of the chapter.

Baker argues that in chapter 12, where some have derived the parallel sense of the two terms, Paul uses their concept of πνευμάτικα to introduce the subject, but then refutes their circumscribed understanding of these gifts by referring to the many "gifts of grace" (χαρίσματα) which God gives to Christians.²

However, it should be acknowledged that many commentators have taken the two terms χαρίσματα and πνευμάτικα to be synonymous when referring to spiritual gifts. Meyer states, "The πνευμάτικα are in their nature the same as the χαρίσματα."³ Of course, whether these two terms are similar in definition, or whether the former is merely a subgroup within the latter, it has no crucial bearing on the universality of spiritual gifts.

¹E. Earle Ellis, "Spiritual Gifts in the Pauline Community," New Testament Studies, 20:2 (January, 1974), p. 129.

²David L. Baker, "The Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 12-14," Evangelical Quarterly 46:6 (Oct-Dec 1974), p. 229.

³Christian Friedrich Kling, "The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians," Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, ed. by John P. Lange (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1915), p. 275.

δῶμα and δωρεά

These two terms are found in Ephesians 4:7-8 where the Authorized Version reads, "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift (δωρεᾶς) of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts (δῶματα) to men."

The lexical designations for δωρεά emphasize the gratuity and the freeness of the gift,¹ which is also quite evident in Greek literature outside of the New Testament.² The idea of a spiritual gift in Ephesians 4:7 may be evident since δωρεά is often used in the New Testament for a supernatural or spiritual phenomena (Jn. 4:10, Acts 8:20, 11:17, Rom. 5:15, 2 Cor. 9:15, Eph. 3:7, and Heb. 6:4), but as is the case with χάρισμα these can refer to salvation, enablements, or as in the case of Acts 2:28, the Holy Spirit Himself.

The term δῶμα also seems to be a rather generic term, referring to earthly gifts given by fathers to their children in Matthew 7:11 and Luke 11:13, and to a financial gift in Philippians 4:17. It is derived from the verb δίδωμι and thus means simply "gift."

¹Arndt and Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, p. 210. Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, p. 161.

²James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963), p. 174.

Parallel Terms in 1 Corinthians 12:4-6

After Paul discusses the πνευματικῶν (vv 1-3), paying particular attention to the proper evidences of those who speak by the Spirit (ἐν πνεύματι θεοῦ λαλῶν), the apostle seems to launch out in an effort to broaden the concepts of spiritual enablements that some of the Corinthians seem to have acquired. Thus he introduces a new thought with the particle δέ in verse four.¹

The thought does not seem to be completed, however, until the end of verse six:

Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administration, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all (KJV).

Now there are some who seek to differentiate between the gifts (χαρίσματα), the administrations (διακονιῶν), and the operations (ἐνεργημάτων). For example, Godet sees χαρίσματα as the creative powers which God communicates to believers when their new activity expands under the influence of Christ. In discussing διακονία, however, he states that this word denotes, not like the preceding χαρίσματα, inward aptitudes, but external offices, with which certain individuals are put in charge.²

¹I have understood this δέ to be a transitional particle as allowed by H. E. Dana and J. R. Mantey, A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1927), p. 244.

²F. L. Godet, Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing

Another commentator sees *διακονίαι* and *ἔργα* to be consequential to, or the result of *χαρίσματα*. He states that the *διακονίαι* are the "manifold offices or functions in the church (understood in their widest sense), in which these 'gifts' were employed, and which indicate a division in the spheres of labor corresponding with these gifts."¹ The *ἔργα* then are said to be the "various effects resulting from the exercise of the 'gifts' in these particular 'ministries.'"²

However, though such distinctions certainly are reasonable, they seem not to be present in the mind of Paul as he enumerates the manifestations of the Spirit in verses 8 through 10. In those verses Paul places *χαρίσματα ἰσχυμάτων* right before *ἔργα δυνάμεων*, seemingly on a parallel basis, as part of a representative list of these manifestations.

It is certainly possible, on the other hand, to view these three terms as alternative designations for the same phenomena. As Lenski states:

Paul considers all of the gifts together and designates them by three different names: first as "charismata" or

House, 1957), pp. 189-190. See also M. R. Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament (4 vols: New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), III, p. 256.

¹Kling, "The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians," p. 249.

²Ibid., p. 249.

gracious gifts; then as "ministrations," services freely rendered by us for the benefit of others; lastly, as "energies," active forces, operations, resulting from the imparted spiritual energy. Viewed from one angle they appear as charismata, from another as ministrations, and from a third as energies.¹

Chrysostom also sees these three terms being used without significant distinction. He lays great stress on the Trinitarian formula used in this passage:

"And what," saith one, "is a working?" and what "a gift?" and what a "ministration?" They are mere differences of names, since the things are the same, . . . Seest thou that he implies that there is no difference in the gifts of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost? Not confounding the Persons, God forbid! but declaring the equal honor of Essence. For that which the Spirit bestows, this he saith that God also works: this, that the Son likewise ordains and grants.²

If these three designations be seen as different forms of expression but all relating to the same phenomena, one's concept of what constitutes a spiritual gift is necessarily broadened, just as Paul sought to broaden the concept of God's work in the minds of the Corinthian church members. The apparent elevation of certain manifestations, particularly the *πνευματικά*, had to be corrected. The Corinthians had to realize that no matter how God chose to work in their individual lives, it was still God giving, empowering for service,

¹R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1937), p. 495.

²Chrysostom, "Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians," The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, ed. by Philip Schaff (14 vols: Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), III, p. 171.

and energizing for His own purposes. As Paul states in a different epistle, "For it is God which worketh (θεὸς γὰρ ἐστὶν ὁ ἐνεργῶν) in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure (Phil. 2:13, KJV).

Supernatural or Natural Abilities

In discussing spiritual gifts there is little agreement among scholars as to whether these phenomena should be considered as supernatural manifestations totally unbased upon natural talents and abilities that may have existed before salvation, or whether spiritual gifts should include what may be considered the mundane and natural aptitudes of Christians. Walvoord concludes that the first view is preferable. He reasons that the spiritual gifts pertain to a believer's new nature rather than his old. From the realm of experience he further adds that it may be frequently observed that individuals with little natural talent are often used mightily of God when those with great natural talent, though saved, are never similarly used.¹

On the other side of the issue are those that feel natural talents or aptitudes do provide a basis for some spiritual gifts. Beare thus defines χαρίσματα as "the

¹John F. Walvoord, The Holy Spirit (Wheaton: Van Kampen Press, 1954), p. 167. This is also the view of Robert P. Lightner, Speaking in Tongues and Divine Healing (Des Plains: Regular Baptist Press, 1955), p. 9.

various endowments which God imparts to all members of the community, not to the leaders alone; natural aptitudes are heightened, and new powers are awakened by His presence with us."¹

There is no concrete solution evident from the Scriptural data but some valid inferences may be drawn. First of all, in the sense that one speaks of a gift as an enablement for service in the context of the church, it must be conceded that there is a dependence upon the power which God supplies. Christ said "without me you can do nothing" (see the entire context of John 15:1-8). Kuyper correctly asserts, "whatever the form of the task, the Church always needs spiritual power to perform it; a power not in itself, but which the King must supply."²

With this in mind, though, it was stated in the earlier section on *χάρισμα* that many of the phenomena that carried this designation were far from extraordinary or supernatural. So, allowing for the rather generic perception that Paul seemed to have of *χαρίσματα*, it would seem somewhat arbitrary to limit the concept of gifts to the supernatural. This being true, of course, if one understands supernatural

¹F. W. Beare, The First Epistle of Peter (Oxford: Blackwell and Mott, Ltd., 1958), pp. 185-186.

²Abraham Kuyper, The Work of the Holy Spirit (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1941), p. 184.

in the sense that Webster defines it as "existing or occurring outside the normal experience or knowledge of man."¹

Surely, one must not consider a generous and cheerful giver as one who is exhibiting supernatural manifestations, even though God is working through that one for His own purposes. Neither would an effective, Spirit-empowered administrator be so considered.

This is not to say that some of the operations and gifts of God are not supernatural, or outside the normal experience of man. This was particularly true with the sign and revelatory gifts of the first century. But, as was stated earlier, it is wrong to develop a theology of the gifts from an inspection of the miraculous, making it apply to all the gifts.

But what about the observation made by Walvoord that God has often mightily used those with little natural talent, when talented men often do not seem to be similarly used?² Surely, he points out a clear Scriptural principle that God wants and deserves the glory for all things. Paul's speech was not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that the faith of those

¹Webster's New World Dictionary, 2nd edition, ed. by David B. Guralnik (New York and Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1970), p. 1429.

²See also William McRae, The Dynamics of Spiritual Gifts (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), pp. 20-22.

who believed might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power (1 Cor. 2:4 and 5).

This does not preclude the possibility, however, of God taking the existing talents of some and using them for His glory. Zuck points out a good example of this in the Old Testament:

Aholiab, for instance, was by natural ability "an engraver, and a cunning workman, and an embroiderer" (Exodus 38:23). But for working on the tabernacle, God filled him (and Bezaleel and other wise-hearted men) with the Spirit of God in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship" (31:3; cf. 35:30-35)" for service of the sanctuary" (36:1).¹

When seeing a gift in the sense of an enablement, then, it can be safely concluded that God may use natural talents or aptitudes but He doesn't always use them for His purposes. Sometimes He will use a person in a certain way which is not consonant with that person's previous abilities. Either way believers must realize that it is God at work in them and that He deserves the glory for any effectual service.

Finally, *χαρίσματα*, in the sense of benefits or effects, might possibly be bestowed upon unbelievers. This conclusion is drawn from Romans 11:28-32, a passage dealing with unbelieving Jews who are nevertheless loved on account of the patriarchs, as far as election is concerned. In

¹Roy B. Zuck, The Holy Spirit in Your Teaching (Wheaton: Scripture Press, Inc., 1963), p. 67.

reference to these people, Paul writes, "For the gifts (χαρίσματα) and calling of God are without repentance" (Rom. 11:29). Murray asserts that the gifts and calling of God have reference to those mentioned in 9:4,5 as the privileges and prerogatives of Israel. He further states that these "are not repented of" is expressly to the effect that the adoption, the covenants, and the promises in their application to Israel have not been abrogated.¹ One would hesitate, however, to call modern-day Jews charismatic.

A Workable Definition

In light of the foregoing discussion it should be evident that the concept of gifts should be broad enough to apply to any benefit, effect, or enablement that God may freely bestow upon man. Only in the sense that Paul uses the term χάρισμα for an enablement of individual believers to perform certain tasks is there any technical sense. But these gifts should not be elevated to a definition that does not take into account the aspects of energizings or workings (ἐνεργήματα) and services or ministries (διακονίῳ) found in 1 Corinthians 12:4-6.

Also the term spiritual gift should not be restricted to supernatural phenomena but must take into account God's

¹John Murray, The Epistle to the Romans, 2 vols. in one (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965), p. 101.

prerogative to energize natural aptitudes of men for His own purposes. The πνευμάτικα may or may not have been used in a strictly synonymous sense with χαρίσματα, though they were certainly considered as part of the wide diversity of gifts, as Paul viewed them.

The definition of a spiritual gift is thus: "any benefit, effect, or enablement bestowed freely upon men by God, with which He carries out His own purposes."

CHAPTER II

DOES EVERYONE HAVE A SPIRITUAL GIFT?

The generally accepted position of most writers today is that everyone does have a spiritual gift, whether these writers happen to be charismatic or non-charismatic. For example, one writer emphatically states "Every single Christian, whoever he is and no matter when he lives, possesses a spiritual endowment."¹ Likewise Cranfield writes "Each member of the Church has received from God some particular endowment, some aptness or the wherewithal for some particular service."²

However, even in the many assertions that the gifts are universal among Christians, the commentators have different reasons for arriving at this conclusion. Some of these will now be examined.

The Statement of 1 Corinthians 12:7

Paul writes, in the midst of a discussion concerning the gifts, ministries, or workings of God in the lives of believers; "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to

¹Robert Thomas, Understanding Spiritual Gifts, p. 33

²C. E. B. Cranfield, The First Epistle of Peter (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1950), p. 96.

every man to profit withal" (KJV). From this statement many commentators conclude that every believer is gifted in some way. Lenski asserts that the dative ἐκάστῳ is emphatic at the beginning of the sentence, and that it cannot apply only to each individual in the class of those who are favored with gifts as distinct from another class which has no gifts.¹

Use of ἐκάστος

However, some questions must be answered as this proof text for the universality of gifts is examined. First of all, what does ἐκάστος (translated "every" in the KJV) mean? Is it that the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every single Christian without exception, or can ἐκάστος here be seen to speak of each one who had been so endowed?²

The basic lexical meaning of the substantive use is vague, given both as each one and every one. However, ἐκάστος can be strengthened by εἰς to give the meaning "every single one" in certain contexts.³ This is not the case in 1 Corinthians 12:7. Further, the anarthrous substantive ἐκάστος does not carry the same force as a similar

¹R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of First and Second Corinthians, p. 497.

²As opposed to Lenski see F. W. Grosheide, Commentary on The First Epistle to the Corinthians (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1953), p. 284.

³Arndt and Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, p. 236.

construction of $\pi\alpha\varsigma$, the first only conveying "each one" and the latter "anyone you please."¹ Of course, even $\pi\alpha\varsigma$ does not have unrestricted applicability in every occurrence.

Two passages in Corinthians seem to bear out the fact that $\epsilon\kappa\alpha\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$ does not necessarily mean "all," or "every-one." 1 Corinthians 4:15, in the context of the judgment seat of Christ, states: "Therefore, judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each ($\epsilon\kappa\alpha\sigma\tau\omega$) will receive his praise from God" (NIV). Here it should be understood that each one will receive praise who is praiseworthy.

1 Corinthians 11:21 seems to indicate the validity of this distinction also. Paul is here discussing the abuses of the Lord's Supper at Corinth and writes, "for as you eat, each of you ($\epsilon\kappa\alpha\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$) goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk" (NIV). Without elaborating on all of the events that took place, it is evident that the one who remained hungry was not one who went ahead of the others. Thus, $\epsilon\kappa\alpha\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$ should not be translated "every single one of you."

Neither need the force of $\epsilon\kappa\alpha\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$ be all-inclusive

¹Blass and Debrunner, A Greek Grammar of the New Testament, p. 143. See also Nigel Turner, "Syntax," A Grammar of New Testament Greek, ed. by James Hope Moulton (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963), III, p. 199.

in 1 Corinthians 12:7. It could very well be translated, "But to each one who is endowed."¹

Tense of Verb δίδωται

The verb in this verse translated "is given" (δίδωται) is the present passive indicative, third person singular form of δίδωμι. Dana and Mantey state that the progressive present is the use manifestly nearest the root idea of the present tense.² Thus, this verse could be translated, "Now the manifestation of the Spirit is being given to each man for the common good." This is the reading given by Robertson and Plummer,³ and though it is not the only sense possible it certainly is viable, and does make a difference concerning universality of gifts in this passage. It makes more sense to see the manifestations, especially those phenomena for signs and authentication recorded in the following three verses, as occurring in their midst in a diversified, yet on-going manner. For example, one person is being given a gift at this time, while another one is being given a different one. Next time, it may be entirely different.

There are several emphases Paul seems to be making in

¹Kling, "The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians," p. 250.

²Dana and Mantey, A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament, p. 182.

³Robertson and Plummer, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, p. 264.

the context of this passage, but the universality of gifts is probably not one of them.

The emphases seem to be more upon the diverse ways in which God works through believers, the common source of these gifts in God Himself, and the importance of using these abilities or effects for the profit of the church as a whole.

Context of Verse

There are two questions concerning the wider context of 1 Corinthians 12:7 that also come to mind, and which also have a bearing on the question of the universality of gifts. The first one is "Does not the body motif used by Paul, developed in 1 Corinthians 12:8-9,¹ indicate that everyone has a gift, just as every member of the body has a function?"

If Paul's analogy is taken in a strict and literal sense, then the answer must be "yes," everyone must at all times have a spiritual gift or the body of Christ cannot function correctly. But this is not necessarily the point Paul is trying to make.

That this figure of speech is appropriate is aptly demonstrated by Boyer who points out that this body motif

¹For a beautiful treatment on this motif see Handley L. G. Moule, "The Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans," The Expositor's Bible, ed. by W. Robertson Nicoll (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1900), pp. 283-284.

is more than an illustration, it is a figure representing a spiritual reality, a relationship actually existing between Christ and the believer through the functioning of the Holy Spirit.¹

But Paul's emphasis is two-fold, as seen in verse 12. First, there is unity in the diversity of the church. "The body is a unit, though made up of many parts" (12:12a, NIV). Secondly, there is diversity in the church even though it is one unit, and though all its parts are many, they form one body (12:12b, NIV).

In other words, Paul was warning the Corinthians, especially those who had exalted certain personal manifestations of the Spirit, that they must not be conceited because they are still dependent upon the other members of the body. They may have different contributions to make, as God empowered them, but the contributions are useless outside of the body.

Another question of context involves a well-known and widely approved hermeneutical principle. Mickelsen states "The first responsibility of every interpreter is to note carefully what precedes and what follows any verse or passage which he is interpreting."² In other words, the

¹James Boyer, For a World Like Ours (Winona Lake: BMH Books, 1971), p. 115.

²A. Berkeley Mickelsen, Interpreting the Bible (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1963), p. 102.

immediate context should receive prime consideration.

The question is this, put especially to those non-charismatic interpreters who nevertheless hold the principle of the universality of spiritual gifts: Can verse 7 be lifted from its context and held to be applicable to all Christians today, while verses 8-10 (or at least most of the phenomena listed here) be considered only as first century material? The point is this, if many of the miraculous works and supernatural revelations were merely first century occurrences, it may not be valid to remove Paul's statement in verse 7 from a first century context either. This, of course, being directed only to those that are persuaded that ἐκαστῷ means "every single Christian."

It would seem, concerning this point, that the charismatics who believe in the "almost wholesale re-entry of the gifts in the church"¹ are more hermeneutically accurate than those who deny their validity for today. Of course, those who hold that all spiritual gifts in the primary sense have ceased would also be consistent in their interpretation here.²

¹Peter E. Gillquist, Let's Quit Fighting About the Holy Spirit (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1974), p. 62.

²See Gene A. Getz, "Spiritual Gifts," in an unpublished "Faculty Review" (Dallas, Texas: Dallas Theological Seminary, March 21, 1974), p. 2.

Statement of 1 Peter 4:10

Another verse used as a proof-text that every single Christian possesses at least one spiritual gift (in the sense of a divine enablement) is found in Peter's first epistle. It states, "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another" (KJV).

Meaning of χάρισμα

First of all, the denotation one gives to the word "gift" here is important. For example, one commentator sees Peter speaking of money.

St. Peter does not speak of miraculous *χάρισματα*, of healings, or miracles, or prophecy, or discerning of spirits, or tongues, or interpretations. Throughout the Epistle he lets fall no word to show that these extraordinary gifts of the Spirit existed among the Diaspora, or that he himself attached any importance to them. Here, where the injunction to hospitality so closely precedes, it would seem that money, the means of hospitality, is regarded as a *χάρισμα*.¹

Certainly this view could provide a convenient argument if one is seeking to refute the universality of spiritual gifts. Money could be the sense here, except that nowhere else in Scripture is the term so used, and the lexical entries include no such designations.² There is a reference to financial means in 2 Corinthians 9:6-15, where the related

¹Charles Bigg, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1920), pp. 273-274.

²Arndt and Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, pp. 878-879.

word $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma$ may be used to refer to money. Paul writes, "And God is able to make all grace ($\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma$) abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work" (2 Cor. 9:8, NIV). But Lenski sees $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma$ in its broadest sense and states "We fail to see how anyone can restrict 'every grace' to earthly possessions and say that God gives these so that we can give to others. What we need most of all is 'every grace' for our hearts in order to do any proper giving."¹

In any event, the context following 1 Peter 4:10 certainly allows for an interpretation of $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\sigma\mu\alpha$ here as a divine enablement. Verse 11 concerns those speaking the Word of God and ministering. Both of these activities can be found in the so-called gift lists.

The Real Emphasis

Even allowing that $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\sigma\mu\alpha$ in 1 Peter 4:10 can be seen as an enabling gift, however, does not prove the universality of these gifts. As discussed earlier, $\acute{\epsilon}\kappa\alpha\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$ does not necessarily carry the force of "every single one" and as was true in 1 Corinthians 12:7 this is not the primary emphasis anyway. The main emphasis, like the Corinthians passage, is to encourage individual contribution,

¹R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistle to the Corinthians, pp. 1173-1174.

enabled by God, for the good of others, especially the body of believers.

Wuest, in discussing this verse, states that "As (καθὼς) is in the Greek text 'in whatever quality or quantity.'" ¹ Thus the force of καθὼς should not be seen as "since" or "in so far as," which would indicate the fact of a bestowal. The verse is well translated, "Whatever gift any of you have received employ it for your mutual benefit." ² Or to put the thought in contemporary vernacular, Clark states "We must do the best with what we have." ³

Thus understood, the verse is not suggesting that everyone has a gift but only that to the extent that one is gifted, he should be using it for the sake of others. This stands true even if one understands χάρισμα here in the sense of a special ability given by God.

The Time of Reception

Whether spiritual gifts (again, taken in a narrow sense for the sake of argument) are received at salvation or sometime subsequent to salvation also has a bearing on

¹Kenneth S. Wuest, First Peter in the Greek New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1945), p. 116.

²John T. Demarest, A Translation and Exposition of the First Epistle of the Apostle Peter (New York: John Moffett, 1851), p. 229.

³Gordon Clark, Peter Speaks Today (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1967), p. 3.

the universality of gifts. If a man can be saved and not receive a spiritual enablement until some time later, then naturally it cannot be said that every single person possesses a spiritual gift.

At New Birth

Walvoord reasons that from the nature of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which occurs at the moment of new birth, and the resultant placing into the body of Christ, it would be reasonable to infer that spiritual gifts are bestowed at that time in keeping with the place of the believer in the body of Christ, even if these gifts are not immediately observed or exercised.¹

It certainly is reasonable to conclude that if gifts are seen as divine enablements for Christian service, then only Christians are so gifted, but to say they are endowed at the time of the new birth goes beyond the Scriptural data. McRae even states that since they are given to every individual this seems to demand that it be at conversion.² There is nothing wrong with his logic on this point, but his presupposition of the universality of gifts is exactly the point in question!

¹Walvoord, The Holy Spirit, p. 166.

²McRae, The Dynamics of Spiritual Gifts, p. 35.

There are indications, however, that these gifts can be possessed by an individual without the practice or use of them. Such seems to be the case with Timothy, whom Paul exhorted, "Do not neglect ($\mu\eta\ \alpha\mu\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\iota$) your gift" (1 Tim. 4:14a, NIV). Here the negative $\mu\eta$, combined with the present imperative $\alpha\mu\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\iota$, indicates the sense of "stop neglecting your gift."¹

On the other hand, this passage can also be seen to indicate that Timothy received this gift sometime after his salvation. This gift was "given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you" (1 Tim. 4:14b, NIV). Hort sees this occurring at Lystra on Paul's second missionary journey, with which Hendriksen concurs.² Lock observes the possibility that this bestowal took place at Ephesus, although he considers it doubtful.³ In either case it seems to have been something that was not present with Timothy at the moment of salvation.

In fact, Judisch makes a strong argument that many of the gifts, especially those that served to reveal God's

¹Dana and Mantey, A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament, p. 301, states that a prohibition in the present imperative means to forbid the continuance of an act.

²Fenton J. A. Hort, The Christian Ecclesia (London: MacMillan and Co., 1898), pp. 184-187. William Hendriksen, New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1965), p. 159.

³Walter Lock, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1924), p. 54.

truths, as well as those that served to authenticate these messages, were not present except as the apostles themselves distributed them. According to Judisch the most apparent expression of this fact occurs in Acts 8: "When Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money" (v. 18). As the author further notes, "The Spirit mentioned here is the Holy Spirit in His role as the giver of prophetic gifts, not in His role as the worker of repentance and faith."¹ Thus, it can be seen that not only did Timothy receive gifts at a time subsequent to his salvation, but so did these believers at Samaria.

Desiring Spiritual Gifts

1 Corinthians 12:31, 14:1 and 14:13 seem to indicate that the gifts may be sought and prayed for, which also would indicate a time of reception after salvation. But not everyone agrees on the interpretation of these verses.

Much discussion has centered on the verb $\xi\nu\lambda\omicron\upsilon\tau\epsilon$, translated as "eagerly desire" in the NIV, and found in both 12:31 and 14:1. The problem for interpreters is that it can either be seen as an indicative or an imperative. The indicative mood denotes a simple assertion, "Ye are desiring

¹Douglas Judisch, An Evaluation of Claims to the Charismatic Gifts (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), p. 29. Whole monograph must be read to appreciate the force of the author's arguments.

the greater gifts," and the imperative mood denotes a command or entreaty, "Desire the greater gifts."

If Paul is entreating them to desire the greater gifts, this must also mean that gifts can be acquired at a time subsequent to one's new birth.

Some who hold that the mood in 12:31 is indicative do so with the understanding that Paul is deriding the Corinthians because of their flare for the more spectacular gifts.¹ One interpreter believes that Paul may have been sarcastically using a catch phrase initiated by the Corinthians themselves.²

Although the possibility of the indicative mood does exist in 12:31, it is not likely that it should be so understood in 14:1. There it is found in a parallel position to "Follow after love" (Διώκετε τὴν ἀγάπην) where the imperative is certainly applicable. As Thomas states, "the necessity of taking 14:1 as imperative greatly enhances the likelihood of an imperative sense in 12:31 also."³

Assuming the imperative mood, Paul is instructing the Corinthians to eagerly desire the greater gifts. It is likely that "greater" (μεῖζονα) gifts refer to the list

¹Arnold Bittlinger, Gifts and Graces, p. 73.

²David L. Baker, "The Interpretation of 1 Cor. 12-14," p. 227.

³Robert Thomas, Understanding Spiritual Gifts, p. 196n.

Paul has just enumerated in verse 28.¹ Or it could be that they refer to those gifts which were more useful, which meaning appears in 14:5. As Hodge points out, "The Corinthians had a very different standard of excellence; and coveted most the gifts which were most attractive, although the least useful."²

But there is yet another problem of interpretation concerning these imperatives. Do they refer to individuals or to the church as a whole? Thomas argues for the latter view but his objections to the individual sense are weak. He states that it is highly unlikely that Corinthian Christians would be instructed as individuals to seek the position of an apostle.³

Of course, Paul is not necessarily referring to the list in verse 28, as explained above, when he speaks of greater gifts. But even if he is, the Corinthians must be given enough credit to be able to recognize the unique nature of apostleship as a *χάρισμα*.

Next, Thomas conceding this point, and assuming that greater gifts refer to gifts other than apostleship, asserts that 14:1 would mean that every single Christian was expected

¹Boyer, For A World Like Ours, p. 116.

²Charles Hodge, An Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950), p. 264.

³Thomas, Understanding Spiritual Gifts, p. 196.

to ask for and receive the gift of prophecy.¹ But Lenski correctly observes that to regard this plural object as implying that each and every member is to strive for any and for all of the greater gifts is to misunderstand Paul's thought. Paul's injunction to strive zealously for the greater gifts has its evident and natural limitations.²

1 Corinthians 14:13 tends to support the validity of desiring gifts, where Paul writes "For this reason the man who speaks in an unknown tongue should pray that he may interpret" (NIV). The sense here is that he who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret, i.e. have the gift of interpretation also.³

As to the point made by some that desiring and praying for the gifts goes contrary to the sovereignty of the Spirit in their disposal, Boyer replies:

This admonition is not a contradiction of the truth presented earlier in the chapter, that the sovereign Spirit decides and bestows such gifts as He chooses. His sovereignty is not arbitrary. He may not give us the gift we ask for. But then again, He may. It is evidently His will to take into consideration our zealous desires; hence, this admonition.⁴

Thus, to pray for and to strive after certain gifts seems to have been a permissible and desirable thing in the

¹Ibid., p. 197.

²Lenski, The Interpretation of I & II Corinthians, p. 541.

³Robertson and Plummer, I Corinthians, p. 311.

⁴Boyer, For a World Like Ours, p. 117.

Corinthian Church, if the motivation was for the edification of the body. Admittedly, this does not necessarily preclude the possibility that every single one of the addressees of this letter already had at least one spiritual gift. However, in light of the foregoing discussion, and the fact that the Spirit distributes separately or individually (*ἰδίᾳ*) to each one just as he purposes (1 Cor. 12:11), it would seem inordinately restrictive to confine the time of reception of such enablements to the moment of salvation.

Conclusion

Although the question of the universality of spiritual gifts has not been fully answered, an attempt has been made to show that 1 Corinthians 12:7 and 1 Peter 4:10 do not demand the view that every Christian has one or more gifts, when gifts are defined in the common restrictive sense. These passages have been considered exegetically, with close attention being given to significant words and context.

A related question concerning the time at which gifts are received also has an important bearing on the issue of universality. If, as has been demonstrated, gifts were and can be received at a time subsequent to salvation, then it is possible that a Christian can be "giftless" at a certain point in time. However, the next chapter is crucial in bringing balance and further understanding concerning this issue.

CHAPTER III

CAN WE MINISTER WITHOUT SPIRITUAL GIFTS?

Before answering the question of whether we need spiritual gifts for the present-day ministry, it will be necessary to examine briefly the purposes they met or the needs they filled in the Apostolic age, that is, for the immediate recipients of Paul's epistles. Then some Scripture passages will be examined which reveal the necessity of the work of the Spirit through men for the work of the ministry in all ages.

Purpose for Spiritual Gifts

David Miller categorizes six different purposes that spiritual gifts served in the New Testament churches. These are given as glorifying God, profiting the Body, perfecting the saints, edifying saints, authenticating truth, and authenticating judgment.¹ While each of these is significant and has a somewhat different emphasis, it seems justifiable to break these down into two broad categories, revelation/authentication and edification.

Revelation/Authentication

Demarest is entirely correct when he states, that

¹D. Miller, "Concerning Spiritual Gifts," pp. 87-116.

the Apostolic Churches were differently constituted from any Christian Church or visible society of believers now in existence.¹ The apostles, as commissioned messengers with the message of the Gospel, were accompanied by various supernatural manifestations as they ministered the Word. The writer of Hebrews states, "This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will" (Heb. 2:3b and 4, NIV).

This is a significant passage for two reasons. First, it states that the extraordinary and supernatural occurrences were meant to testify to the validity of the message proclaimed. The word *συνεπιμαρτυρέω* is a double compound verb which has the literal meaning "to join in giving additional testimony."² The word translated "signs" (*σημεῖον*) often carries the sense of a "mighty act that confirms" in the New Testament. Thayer observes that it is used "of miracles and wonders by which God authenticates the men sent by him, or by which men prove that the cause they are pleading is God's."³

¹Demarest, Translation and Exposition of 1 Peter, p. 229.

²A. T. Robinson, Word Pictures in the New Testament, V., p. 343.

³Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon, p. 573.

Secondly, Hebrews 2:3,4 is significant because of the close association of the supernatural phenomena with the apostles, "those who heard him" (cf. Acts 1:21-22). Paul designates these occurrences as "signs of an apostle" (σημεῖα τοῦ ἀποστόλου) in the context of giving an apology for his own apostolic authority (2 Cor. 12:12).

Thus, it is evident that many of the spectacular phenomena designated as manifestations of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:7) and distributions or gifts of the Spirit (Heb. 2:4) were meant solely for the purpose of confirming and attesting to the Apostolic message.

That these sign gifts may have been exercised by other believers than the Apostles presents no real problem. These manifestations seem to have occurred in Scripture only where Apostles were or had been personally present.¹ If this connection of certain of the spectacular gifts with the apostolic age holds true, it becomes obvious that with the passing of that age the signs also become inoperative. The purpose they had no longer exists. This fact is beautifully expressed in Moule's commentary:

¹For a full discussion of the relationship of apostles to the spiritual gifts see Ardel B. Caneday, "The Significance and Relationship of the Laying on of the Hands and the Bestowal of Spiritual Gifts" (unpublished M. Div. thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, Winona Lake: 1976). See also Walter Chantry, Signs of An Apostle (Edinburg: Banner of Truth Trust, 1973), pp. 24-25.

Miracles which were once needed are now no longer required, because they served the purpose for which they were given. As when you make a plot in a garden you stick twigs round it, that no careless person may tread down and destroy the young and yet unseen plant, but when the plants have themselves become as tall and visible as the twigs, then these are useless, so if the miracles actually served to help the young Church's growth, she by their means has now become sufficiently visible and sufficiently understood to need them no more.¹

Edification

Another purpose of the enablements and endowments given by the Spirit to certain believers is edification. It is expressly stated in 1 Corinthians 14:12 that the believers were to seek to excel in gifts that edified, and it is implicitly stated in 1 Corinthians 12:7, where the idea of profiting is expressed.

The verbal form of the word "edification" literally means to "build up," being derived from the Greek words οἶκος (a home) and δομέω (to build).² In the New Testament, it is used both in a physical sense and a figurative sense, but in the context of 1 Corinthians 12-14 it takes the latter sense to speak of "the process of growth and development of the community" of believers.³

¹H. Moule, "Epistle of Paul to the Romans," p. 278.

²Vine, Expository Dictionary of the New Testament, p. 158.

³Otto Michel, "οἶκος, κ.τ.λ." Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. V, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), pp. 136-138.

Thus, a common theme with Paul, the strengthening and confirming of believers by each other, is an important function of spiritual gifts. This need is certainly still evident today, but one need not have a prophetic gift (14:4) or the gift of tongues with an accompanying interpretation (14:5) to be able to "build up" other Christians. Perhaps the greatest means of edification is pointed out by Paul in 1 Corinthians 8:1 where he states: ἀγάπην οἰκοδομεῖ, love edifies.

Power for Service

Scripture is replete with assertions that the Spirit's involvement is necessary for spiritual accomplishment. The Apostle Paul often recognizes this truth in his letters.

Mention of miraculous manifestations of the Spirit accompanying the Apostles' ministry has already been made, but Paul states that the power of God is necessary in an even broader sense in his ministry: "Whereunto I also labor, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily" (Col. 1:29). There is Paul's labor (κοπιῶ) which Wuest defines "to grow weary, exhausted, to labor with wearisome effort, to labor to the point of exhaustion."¹ But behind this labor is the energizing force of God (ἐνέργειαν). Paul is God's instrument, he toils and strains and agonizes

¹Wuest, Ephesians and Colossians, p. 195.

(ἀγνοήσμενος), but not with his own power, the power comes from God.

"If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 4:11b, NIV). The emphasis here is clear. It allows no room for pride or boasting. As one writer aptly states,

All Christians are "ministers," as was the Son of Man. They are to render their services not by way of patronage, with any show or feeling of superiority, but "as of strength which God supplies," with humble acknowledgment that all their power of doing good is given by God.¹

Conclusion

There are many opportunities for Christians to serve the Lord and one another in the Church today. And it is imperative that this service, whatever form it takes, be performed with the strength which God supplies, so that all glory goes to Him.

However, one seems to be going beyond the Scriptural emphasis if he declares that one needs a spiritual gift, in the sense of a special enablement given by the Spirit of God at the moment of salvation, in order to effectively perform a particular ministry. One should not seek a "gift of mercy" or a "gift of helps" before he follows the example of the Good Samaritan.

¹Bigg, St. Peter and St. Jude, p. 175.

Does everyone have a spiritual gift? Yes and no! Everyone who has eternal life is certainly gifted. Many benefits and effects of God's goodness come to us every day, many of which go unnoticed and unappreciated. But if one insists that every single believer is gifted at all times with a special enablement by the Spirit, the answer is probably no.

However, it is certainly safe to assume that every Christian has the potential for being specially empowered if the Spirit so desires. This should be seen though, with the understanding that many of the manifestations of the Spirit in the apostolic age were unique in the history of the church.

Also, the Christian must recognize that spiritual gifts, as they existed in the first century church, were not an indication of true spirituality, love was. And it still is!

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