

GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

By
B.L. Cocherell

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PREFACE

The Bible is unique. It is the only book that has the answers to the basic questions of life and claims to be written by the true God. This book tells humanity who its Creator is, why it was created, and its ultimate destiny.

Although the Bible reveals the awesome purpose for human existence, it does so in a carefully coded message. The studies that we present reveal much of what is contained in these messages that has not been taught or understood since the demise and disappearance of the early church as a powerful spirit filled entity.

OUR GOALS

Our primary goal is to share our knowledge and understanding of the Sovereign God's plan and purpose for humanity with those who are interested in living their lives according to the law of God, not by the dictates and traditions of men. Our secondary goal is to proclaim the coming Kingdom of God as a warning and a witness to humanity before the Messiah returns to rule the earth.

We hope that you will find this study of God's word intellectually challenging and spiritually enlightening and beneficial.

If you want to know more about us, the work we are doing, or how you can participate in our biblically based educational and research projects, contact us at: www.BibleResearch.org or www.Bible-Prophecy.net

Sincerely,
B. L. Cocherell

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INTRODUCTION

The Father's elect are sent into the world by Christ to share the good news that, through him, a person can be reconciled with the Father and become a member in his family as an immortal god-being. As Christ's representatives, the elect also represent God the Father, his Family, and his Kingdom. Because the elect are authorized to speak on behalf of Christ for the Father, some are authorized to use whatever spirit-power necessary in order to carry out their mission to proclaim the Father's offer of reconciliation through his good news message and to warn the world of the consequences of not accepting this offer.

"You go therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy spirit: Teaching them to observe all things whatever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Be it so" (Matt. 28:19-20 KJV Para.).

"You go to all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. Those that believe and are baptized shall be saved; but those that do not believe shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name they shall cast out devils; they shall speak with new languages; They shall take up serpents; and if they shall drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Mk.16:15-18 KJV Para). See also Acts 1:4-5,8; 5:12-15; 6:8; 13:8-11; 15:12.

"And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen" (Mk.16:20 KJV).

Few realize the awesome power the Father placed at the disposal of the early church, and that this power is still available to those who will use it for its intended purpose. Before the end of this age of human rule on earth, the Father will authorize and empower the elect to perform the greater work Christ predicted, which was also recorded by Joel and Habakkuk:

"Truly, truly, I say to you, He that believes on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to my Father" (Jn.14:12 KJV Para.).

"And I will pour out my spirit on my slaves and on my slave-girls in those days. And I will give signs in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord" (Joel 2:29-31 KJV Para.).

"Behold you [i.e., the various tribes of Israel] among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvelously: for I will work a work in your days, you will not believe, though it were told" (Hab.1:5 KJV). See also verses 1-4; Acts 13:40-41.

The supernatural abilities the Creator God (Jesus Christ) gave to individuals before the gospel age were real and produced perceivable, tangible results in the physical and spirit realms, just as the abilities God the Father gives today.

If any of the elect think that the Father has not given them any supernatural abilities, they are mistaken. During this gospel age, everyone the Father calls to salvation and empowers with his holy spirit is also given abilities beyond that of a normal human.

Biblical prophecy clearly shows that many of the elect will have powerful supernatural abilities, attributes, and authorizations of power during the final days of human rule on earth. The scriptures also show that many supernatural abilities, attributes, and authorizations of power from the Father are still available to the elect in this age, so why are they not being exhibited or exercised? There are several reasons, including the inability to recognize these attributes and abilities due to not studying the scriptures where they are mentioned, the fact that specific abilities must be passed from one individual to another, or a person not being advised that they have these abilities and what they should be doing with them.

THE FATHER'S WORK ON EARTH

John chapter 5 contains the account of Jesus healing a lame man at the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath and telling him to take the bed he was lying on and walk away. When the Jews saw the man carrying his bed, they accused him of working on the Sabbath. After the man knew it was Jesus who had healed him, he told these Jews about the healing, and they then went to Jesus and accused him of breaking the Sabbath. To which Jesus answered: *"My Father continues to work, and I also work" (Jn.5:17 Para.)*.

Jesus said his heavenly Father is actively engaged in doing a work and that he is also doing a work. But what is the Father's work and how much effort is he putting into what he is doing? The few scriptures we will review reveal a work the Father is doing which is extremely important to each person who has received the indwelling of the Father's holy spirit after being called by him to salvation, because we are an integral part of this work.

We know from the scriptures that Jesus Christ created all things for the Sovereign God, and that he sustains this creation and governs the heavenly and physical realms for him. This might give the impression that the Father does not have much to do, but Jesus said our Father is doing a work. So, what is the work he is doing and how much effort is he putting into this work?

The Father's Work

Besides whatever else our heavenly Father is doing, it is clear from the scriptures that he has spent and is now spending a tremendous amount of thought, planing, and effort to make sure the greatest and grandest of all his projects is successfully completed. But, what is this extremely important project the Father is working on?

The answer is that he is putting a tremendous amount of thought, planing, and effort into helping each person he calls during this age to successfully enter his family as an immortal spirit-being and to correctly represent him, his son, and his message of salvation to the world before he sends Christ to establish his kingdom on earth.

The more we know and understand about our heavenly Father's work, the more we can appreciate him and the tremendous love, care, and concern he has for us and how grateful we should be that he has taken a very personal interest in each of us.

Twice Jesus said the following which shows that the Sovereign God's personal call to salvation during this gospel age is extremely special given the billions of people on earth:

"No one can come to me, except the Father which has sent me draws them: and I will raise him up at the last day" (Jn.6:44 KJV Para.). See also verse 65.

On the Festival of Pentecost the apostle Peter said the following to a crowd of people gathered to hear what he had to say about the gift of languages being manifested by those with him:

"For the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:39 KJV).

While he was with his disciples a short time before being crucified, Jesus said the following in a prayer to his heavenly Father:

"I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours" (Jn. 17:6-9 NIV).

Clearly God the Father is personally involved in determining who will and will not be called to salvation during this gospel age, which means he knows an enormous amount about a person before he opens their mind to understand his message to them.

Before the Foundation of the World

The biblical record shows that, before the foundation of the world, the Father determined that he would cause some individuals to be born and then call them to salvation during this phase of his plan for humanity. These individuals would be given the opportunity to become holy and blameless through the sacrifice of his first-born son, Jesus Christ, so that they could be adopted into his family as his spirit-sons:

"According as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestined us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will . . . In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his own will, for us to be the praise of his glory, the ones who first trusted in Christ" (Eph.1:4-5, 11-12 KJV Para.). See also 2.Tim.1:8-10.

Verses 11 and 12 tells us that the Father predetermined that certain individuals would come into existence. To do this, it took thoughtful planning and the execution of that plan throughout human history.

The predestination the apostle Paul speaks of in verses 11 and 12 has nothing to do with a person's decision to accept or reject the Father's call. But, it has everything to do with the Father's predetermined plan (i.e., his will and purpose) for the salvation of specific individuals at a specific point in human history and for the salvation of humanity as a whole. To predetermine something takes thought, planning, and the power to make it happen.

Although God the Father calls some individuals to salvation because they happen to be in the right place at the right time (e.g., a spouse or a child of someone who is already one of the Father's elect). There are specific people whom the Father calls to salvation individually or as members of a specific family.

In order to call a specific person to salvation, at a specific time in history, a great deal of thought, planning, and manipulation of events throughout history must be done. Knowing and understanding that our heavenly Father put this much effort into making sure we had an opportunity to become an immortal member of his family of spirit-beings at this point in history, should make us extremely grateful to him, but probably makes us also wonder, "why me?" and what does he want me to do for him during my life on earth, other than successfully becoming one of his immoral children?

Called According to a Purpose

"But we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, and for those who are called according to a purpose. For whom he foreknew, he predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover those he predestined, he also called: and those he called, he also made innocent: and those he made innocent, he also glorified."What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom.8:28-31Para.). See also Jms.1:18.

The English word *glorified* in verse 30 is translated from the Greek word *doxazo*, which has many meanings, some of which are: to render (or esteem) glorious, honor, magnify, describe or represent as admirable, especially unjustifiably or undeservedly or represented as or appearing more elevated or special than is the case.

Make no mistake, the Father's call to salvation during this age is very special and is an opportunity granted to only a very few individuals. Each person to whom the Father presents the opportunity for salvation during this age is called to perform a function and a responsibility within his earthly family. This is the reason the Father personally calls each individual and bestows additional supernatural abilities, attributes, and authorizations of power to some of his elect besides the ones initially bestowed at the time of one's adoption into his family.

Our heavenly Father has personally called each of us to be among the first humans to become a member of his family of immortal spirit-beings who are to inherit his kingdom and rule it with his firstborn son.

The biblical record tells us the following things about our heavenly Father's involvement in our lives and the work he is attempting to do with us, in us, for us, and through us:

- He knows why he has called us during this gospel age and he wants us to also know and understand these reasons.
- He knows and understands us better than we know and understand ourselves.
- He knows our thoughts, emotions, anxieties, desires, needs, and potential.
- He gives each of us supernatural abilities, attributes, and authorizations of power so we can perform good works for him and other people, and become one of his immortal sons.
- He is actively working to help us have a harmonious relationship with him and our Savior.

Created to do Good Works

When Paul wrote the following, he revealed a profound truth about the Father's work on earth:

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good works, which God [i.e., God the Father] has before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph.2:10 KJV).

The English phrase *has before ordained* is translated from the Greek word *proetomazo*, which means to fit up in advance (literally or figuratively): i.e., *to prepare in advance*.

If you are one of the Father's elect children, you are his work, which he created in Jesus Christ. And your purpose for being created is to do good works for him. But, what are these good works and how are you to accomplish them?

The Father Began a Work in Us

"Paul and Timothy, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; Being confident of this very thing, that he which has begun a good work in you will do it until the day of Jesus Christ: Even as it is fit for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of my grace" (Phil.1:1-7 KJV). See also Job 14:14-15; 1.Cor.15:52-58.

Paul states that our heavenly Father began a good work in us, but when did he begin this work? Obviously, he could not begin a work in us unless we accepted the opportunity he offered to us. Therefore, he would have to cause many events to happen in order for us to be in the right place at the right time so he could open our minds to his message for us. Which means he took a personal interest in some of us long before we were aware of him or his son.

The Father's work which impacts every aspect of our life began for some in the timelessness of eternity when he predestined our existence before the foundation of the world in order for us to be called to salvation during this age.

In verse 6, Paul explains to the Philippians that we are a work in progress, which is to be finished at Christ's return when we will be transformed into spirit-beings and enter our Father's heavenly kingdom and family as his immortal children.

The biblical record clearly shows that the Father's primary purpose for creating humans is to increase his family and kingdom through the transformation of humans into his spirit-sons (Rev.21:7) with whom he will share all he has or ever will create:

"But rather you seek the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added to you. Don't be afraid, little flock; because it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Lk.12:31-32 KJV Para.).

A major part of the Father's work on earth concerns calling, guiding, teaching, nurturing, and protecting us so we can successfully fulfill the purpose for which he called us:

"For it is God which works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil.2:13 KJV).

"Now the God of peace [God the Father], that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (Heb.13:20-22 KJV).

The work our heavenly Father has begun with us, in us, for us, and through us is extremely important to him and to us. This work is so important that he allows each of us to personally discuss our thoughts, desires, and needs with him, day or night, for him to consider and act on.

There are many good works we are to accomplish for our heavenly Father, many of which are mentioned throughout the biblical record. In order for us to accomplish these good works in addition to working out our salvation, the Father has carefully considered and continues to consider the needs and potential of each of his earthly children and he bestows the abilities, attributes, and authorizations of power each of his children need in order to perform the specific work he has called each to do during their life on earth.

Note to the Reader:

The gifts of the spirit presented in this study are not in any specific order of importance, because some, but not all, may be necessary for specific individuals to perform their personal functions and responsibilities as one of the Father's elect, but all are necessary to one degree or another for the elect to function as a dynamic and powerful entity in order to perform the collective work of the church.

This study has been designed in a progressive manner in that each section contains information that is necessary to fully understand the information in the next section; therefore, you will find the information to be better understood if you study each section in the sequence presented.

The sections that follow present an analyses of most of the more recognizable supernatural abilities, attributes, and authorizations of power in order to show why these are necessary to do the greater work Christ spoke of (Jn.14:12-14), to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom to all nations (Matt.24:14), and to perform the awesome work recorded by Joel and Habakkuk.

Because most English translations of the biblical record do not convey the intent of many scriptures which deal with the gifts of the spirit, it is necessary to paraphrase (Para.) some scriptures in order to convey their true intent. Because of the complexity of the subject, it will sometimes be necessary to repeat a scripture or parts of previous comments in order to explain a gift of the spirit, an event, or topic surrounding the gift being discussed.

Hopefully, you will find the information about the abilities, attributes, and authorizations of power the Sovereign Father gives to the elect interesting, enlightening, and spiritually beneficial.

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CHAPTER

ONE

FRAMEWORK OF THE EARLY CHURCH

What made the early church the dynamic and powerful organization that changed the course of history and why did it disappear into obscurity?

The answer to these questions reveal the reasons for the early church's demise, its continued obscurity for many centuries, and why it will rise out of obscurity and become more dynamic and powerful before Christ returns than in its beginning.

The apostle Paul reveals the framework and organizational structure of the early church in his letters to the elect at Corinth, Rome, and Ephesus. It is within this structure that we find the functions, responsibilities, and supernatural abilities, attributes, and authorizations of power that made the early church so dynamic and powerful.

When this organizational structure is again implemented by those truly dedicated to performing the functions and responsibilities their heavenly Father has called them to fulfill in this gospel age of salvation, the church will rise out of obscurity to perform a dynamic and powerful witness and warning to the world. This rise will begin and end the following prophecy recorded by Habakkuk, which was meant for the Father's elect and the modern day Israelites scattered among the nations:

"Behold you among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvelously: for I will work a work in your days, which you will not believe, though it be told you" (Hab.1:5 KJV).

When Paul spoke to both Jews and Gentiles at Antioch he indicated that Christ partially fulfilled this prophecy recorded by Habakkuk:

"Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses. Take care that what the prophets have said does not happen to you: "Look, you scoffers, wonder and perish, for I am going to do something in your days that you would never believe, even if someone told you" (Acts 13:38-41 NIV).

A Witness and Greater Works

Christ said that, before he returned, the Father's good news message would go to all nations as a witness. He also said that those who believe (i.e., truly believe) would do greater works that he did:

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matt. 24:14 KJV).

"Truly, truly, I tell you, he that believes on me, the works that I do he shall also do, and greater works, than these he shall do; because I go to the Father. And whatever you will ask in my name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the son. If you will ask any thing in my name, I will do it" (Jn.14:12-14 Para.).

The biblical record tells us that the Sovereign God gave his holy spirit (i.e., his spirit power) to Christ without limits (Jn.3:34) and Christ performed awesome supernatural works using this power. On one occasion, Christ said that nothing would be impossible for those who had the faith to use this power (Matt.17:20). It is through the Sovereign God's spirit-power that his elect are given abilities and powers above and beyond those of normal humans (i.e., gifts of the spirit) to perform these greater works before Christ returns to establish his heavenly Father's government on earth.

Although the Bible is the most published and read book in the world, the Father's true good new message has not been preached to the entire world for a witness. As powerful as the apostolic church age was in the performance of their responsibility to proclaim the Father's message, they did not do a greater work than Jesus. However, some of the Father's elect who will live just before Christ returns will do this greater work. They will do a greater work because they will have the kind of faith, power, and protection necessary to do a greater work. See Dan.11:31-32; Jn.14:12-14; Rev.11:1-6.

A DEPARTURE FROM THE FAITH

Paul said to the Galatians, *"I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ to another gospel: Which is not another; but there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ" (Gal.1:6-7 KJV).* See also 2.Cor.11:13-15.

Paul warned Timothy, *"Now the spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron" (1.Tim.4:1-2 KJV).*

"For the time will come when they [the elect] will not accept sound teaching. . . . And they shall not pay attention to the truth, and shall turn it away, and shall be turned instead to fables" (2.Tim.4:3-4 Para.).

Many who fellowshipped in the congregations of the early church would not accept sound teaching. They sought out teachers who would teach things that were pleasing to them and things that did not require their obedience to God's laws, precepts, and principles. To deceive the gullible and the spiritually lazy, these teachers replaced truth with error

and taught mysticism and other philosophies that appeal to human nature.

The Prophecy of Zechariah

The answers to the perplexing questions concerning the demise and disappearance of the early church are only partly answered by the warnings of Jesus and the apostles. Additional answers, are found in a prophecy recorded by Zechariah. Matthew, Mark, and John all record Jesus quoting the first part of this prophecy that foretold the scattering of Jesus' disciples after his death:

"All you shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered abroad" (Matt.26:31 KJV). See also Mk.14:27; Jn.16:32.

This is an extremely important prophecy because the rest of the prophecy, which Jesus did not quote, allows us to understand why the early church ceased to exist as a powerful entity:

"I will turn my hand upon [i.e., against] the little ones" (Zech.13:7 KJV).

The little ones mentioned here are the Father's elect who are mentioned in many scriptures (see Matt.8:12; 18:3-10; 19:13-14; Mk.9:42). But, why would the Lord of hosts turn against the *little ones*? And why did Jesus omit this prophecy?

The reason for the rejection of the *little ones* is that they would reject the "faith once delivered" and cease to be zealous for truth. The reason that Jesus did not quote the rest of this prophecy is that it was a different prophecy, which was to be fulfilled at a different time. The second part of this prophecy began its fulfillment during the apostolic church age and will continue to be fulfilled until shortly before Christ returns.

The Early Church Became Corrupted

The early church failed to hold onto the "faith once delivered" and became corrupted with false and misleading teachings about the Sovereign God, his ways, and his plan for humanity. Because of the persistent corruption of God's truth, the once dynamic and powerful entity that Jesus established for his heavenly Father on the Feast of Pentecost began to collapse from within.

As the early church became more and more corrupted by evil individuals the gifts of the spirit which made the elect a dynamic and powerfully entity were no longer sought after, understood, or manifested to any great degree.

After the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and following the death of the apostle John, the organized preaching of the gospel on a powerful basis ceased. The elect were persecuted and their numbers were greatly reduced by the Romans. They became scattered and eventually disappeared into obscurity. Centuries of intense persecution forced the church

to go underground. Until the 19th century, the only remaining records of the early church were written by their enemies. A careful study of prophecies about the Sovereign Father's true body of believers clearly shows that the church Jesus built will remain small and obscure until just before his return at the end of this age of human rule.

THE AWAKENING

The prophecies about the end of the age show that just before his return, Christ will again establish a dynamic and powerful people to proclaim his Father's good news message and his coming Kingdom to rule the earth.

During this time many of the Father's elect will become unified in belief and filled with dynamic supernatural spirit-power. Many will manifest the authorizations of the early church and more, which is noted by the prophecies about the Two Witnesses, the Third Elijah, and in Daniel 11:31-32.

It is likely that some of the people whom Jesus will use in a dynamic way in the end of this age will come out of six of the seven church groupings noted in the Book Revelation, chapters two and three. These will be awakened out of their spiritual lethargy and begin performing the functions and responsibilities they were originally called to do. During this time, many of the elect will have the ability to defy the laws of the physical universe with their miracle working power. Moreover, no physical or spiritual power will be able to stop them from doing their God-given tasks.

A Short Time Before Christ Returns

Daniel chapter 12, verses 1-4 speak about the troublesome times a few years before Christ returns, the resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous, the wise, and the increase in knowledge:

"And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which stands for the children of your people (i.e., all Israelites): and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time your people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever. But you, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased" (Dan.12:1-4 KJV).

It is apparent that the wise who turn many to righteousness during the time of trouble, which is a few years before Christ returns, are the elect who truly understand the reason they were offered salvation and know the functions and responsibilities that they are expected to perform within their heavenly Father's earthly family. These are the ones that will

participate in the greater work Christ spoke of just before he returns. But, how will these individuals know what to do and how to do it?

They will know because they will have searched the scriptures in order to understand the structure of the early church and the functions, responsibilities, and gifts of the spirit that made the early church so dynamic and powerful.

The Elect at Corinth

The congregation at Corinth was a dynamic, evangelizing group of the elect, but they were having problems maturing spiritually. Therefore, Paul's letters to them contained many reprimands about sinful attitudes and behaviors and instructions regarding how to live righteously. It is within this context that Paul lists many supernatural abilities the Father gives to his earthly children in order for them to mature spiritually and perform their various functions and responsibilities in an organized manner:

"Now concerning the spiritual [not "spiritual gifts"], brethren, I would not have you ignorant. You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, even as you were led. Therefore I give you to understand, that no one speaking by the spirit of God calls Jesus accursed: and that no one can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the holy spirit. Now there are various gifts, but the same spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are differences of operations, but it is the same God which works all in all. But the manifestation of the spirit is given to everyone to profit" (1.Cor.12:1-7 KJV Para.).

The word *gifts* in verse 1 is not in the Textus Receptus and was added by the King James translators, therefore it has been omitted. The addition of the word *gifts* obscures Paul's intent to urge the elect to desire things pertaining to godly spirituality (i.e., godly characteristics).

It is apparent from verses 1 through 12 that the supernatural abilities the Father gives are to be used in a unified organizational structure to perform the collective work in which he has called each of the elect to participate.

"For to one is given by the spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same spirit; To another faith by the same spirit; to another the gift of healing by the same spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another different kinds of languages; to another the interpretation of languages: All these are the work of one and the same spirit, and he gives them to each person, as he wills. For as the body is one, and has many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ" (1.Cor. 12:8-12 KJV Para.).

In verses 8 through 12, Paul mentions the following supernatural abilities which are given to individuals within the Father's earthly family: wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, different kinds of languages, and the interpretation of languages.

In verses 28-31, Paul again mentions some of the same abilities he mention previously along with these additional ones: apostles, prophets, teachers, helps, and governments:

"And God has set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, different kinds of languages. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gift of healing? do all speak with various languages? do all interpret? But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet I show to you a more excellent way" (1.Cor.12:28-31 KJV Para.).

The English words *first*, *secondarily*, and *thirdly* are translated from the Greek words *proton*, *deuteros*, and *tritos*, which respectively mean *first*, *second*, and *third* in time, place, order, or importance.

By stating that *"God has set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers,"* Paul reveals the hierarchical structure of the church.

The Hierarchical Structure

Although it is beyond the scope of this study to go into great detail regarding the hierarchical organizational structure of the early church, it is important to give an overview of this structure in order to understand that this same structure may well be implemented by Christ as the church emerges out of obscurity to perform a powerful witness to the world.

An analysis of the organizational structure of the early church shows apostles, prophets, and teachers (1.Cor.12:28) being the three offices which governed and directed the church and its collective work. Within this organizational structure were other men performing various functions, such as bishops, pastors, elders, evangelists, prophets (both predictors of future events and inspired speakers), and men given the task to care for widows. It is within this structure that all of the gifts of the spirit that the Father gives to individuals must be exercised for the benefit of the elect and their collective work. It is also clear that, in order for the church to function as a dynamic and powerful entity, each of the elect must understand and use the supernatural abilities they have been given.

The Elect at Rome

Paul explains to the elect at Rome that all of the various supernatural abilities, functions, and responsibilities that the Father gives individuals are to work together in a unified manner for the benefit of all the elect:

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your logical service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Rom.12:1-2 KJV Para.).

In order to become a living sacrifice, we must truly dedicate ourselves to a holy lifestyle. When we totally give ourselves to practicing a sinless life and to the work we have been called to do, then we are doing what the Father expects of us as a living sacrifice.

"For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than they ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness" (Rom.12:3-8 KJV Para.).

Here, Paul mentions several supernatural abilities he did not mention to the elect at Corinth, among which are prophecy (predictions), ministry, exhortation, giving, leadership, and mercy.

The Elect at Ephesus

In his letter to the elect at Ephesus, Paul list apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers which all require supernatural abilities, attributes, and authorizations of power in order to perform their responsibilities adequately:

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we are no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the deceitful scheming and trickery of people, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up to him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, makes increase of the body to the edifying of itself in godly love" (Eph.4:11-16 KJV Para.).

THE PROBLEM

The problem we face when studying the gifts of the spirit is that these gifts and the explanation of what they are and the purpose for which they are given is scattered throughout the biblical record. So, we must view the study of these supernatural abilities in the light of what the Creator inspired the prophet Isaiah to record about the acquisition of knowledge and understanding:

"Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little" (Isa.28:9-10 KJV).

In Isaiah 28:9, the English phrase *shall he make to understand* is translated from the Hebrew word *biyn*, which means to separate mentally (or distinguish), i.e., (generally) to understand. The English word *doctrine* is translated from the Hebrew word *shemuw`ah*, which means something heard, i.e., an announcement.

Clearly, if we are to comprehend what the Father has recorded in the biblical record for the elect, we must move beyond an academic understanding of the Hebrew and Greek languages. Being "*weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts*" means to have the foundational truths of salvation firmly fixed in our mind and be in the process of moving toward spiritual maturity.

Although gifts of the spirit were abundant during the beginnings of the early church, some of the elect were spiritually immature and were not using these abilities correctly or to their full potential.

The Elect at Corinth

From what Paul writes to the elect at Corinth, there is no doubt that the Father had given many of these individuals supernatural abilities to proclaim his message of salvation and to grow in godly character, but they were having difficulty maturing spiritually:

"And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual, but as to carnal, even as to babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto you were not able to bear it, neither yet now are you able. For you are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are you not carnal, and walk as humans?" (1.Cor.3:1-3 KJV Para.).

The Hebrews

After explaining Christ's experience as a human and who he is now, the writer to the Hebrews reprimands these elect for their lack of diligence to their calling and their spiritual immaturity:

"We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil" (Heb.5:11-14 NIV).

In order to mature spiritually and exercise the supernatural power we receive at the moment of our adoption into the Father's family, we must move past spiritual infancy and grow toward spiritually maturity and perfection:

"Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on to perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment" (Heb.6:1-2 KJV).

In Hebrews 6:1, the English word *perfection* is translated from the Hebrew word *teleiotes*, which basically means to finish what is begun. This tells us that, after baptism and receiving the Father's holy spirit, we are to begin the process of maturing spiritually while performing the functions and responsibilities we are called to perform in this age.

Summary

The organizational framework of the early church and how it functioned is clearly described in the biblical record. Also described are many of the supernatural abilities, attributes, and authorizations of power the Father gives to his elect, along with how these gifts are to be applied.

It is evident from the biblical record that, before and after the advent of Christ, in order for an individual to effectively use their supernatural abilities, attributes, and authorizations of power, one must have and maintain a certain level of spiritual maturity and an understanding of why these spiritual gifts have been given to them.

The question for us today is not whether or not the Father gives gifts of the spirit to his elect, because he does. The question is when will the elect reach the level of spiritual understanding and maturity that our heavenly Father requires in order to bestow on us the powerful supernatural abilities, attributes, and authorizations that his elect must have in order to bring this current age of salvation to a close and begin the next phase of his plan for the salvation of humanity.

By B.L. Cocherell

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NOTES AND COMMENTS

CHAPTER
TWO
GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

The Sovereign God and the Creator God had thousands of years of observational evidence to prove humans are naturally inclined to behave in ways that are in opposition to godliness. When the Creator was sent to earth to live a righteous life as a human and sacrifice his life to pay the penalty for our violation of God's law, his human experiences reinforced what was already known about human nature—humans needed help to overcome their nature and become godly in character. Because of this fact, the Sovereign God made a promise to give humans a portion of his spirit-power to help them accomplish this.

Before his death and resurrection, Christ told his disciples, *"I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high"* (Lk.24:49 NIV). This power from the Father is the holy spirit which is his unlimited power and the essence of his being and existence.

On the Day of Pentecost after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Peter explained what had just happened to the crowd of people who had witnessed the miracle of languages being manifested by those who were gathered with him and the other apostles:

"Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said to Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said to them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ [i.e., through his authority] for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the holy spirit. For the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:37-39 KJV).

The English word *gift* is translated from the Greek word *dorea*, which means a gratuity i.e., a present. The *gift of the holy spirit* should not be confused with the individual gifts of the spirit the Father gives to individuals in order for them to have abilities beyond that of normal people. The holy spirit is something entirely different; it is the medium through which the Father bestows various abilities, attributes, and authorizations of power to his earthly children.

"And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the holy spirit, whom God has given to them that obey him" (Acts 5:32 KJV).

AFTER BAPTISM

After baptism and during the ritual of laying on of hands, God the Father personally places his holy spirit within a person. Through this process the following things simultaneously happen:

- The Father merges his holy spirit with the person's human spirit.
- The person is transformed into a new and different creation having the spirit of man and the spirit of God.
- The person is adopted into the Father's family as one of his earthly children with the potential to become immortal.
- The presence of the Father's holy spirit (his spirit-power), his personal spirit, and Christ's personal spirit become an integral part of the new member of the Father's earthly physical and spiritual family.
- The person's physical body is transformed into one of the Father's earthly temples in which his holy spirit resides.
- The Father bestows three supernatural abilities to his newly adopted child: power, love, and self-control.

After these things happen, the holy spirit remains within the child of God throughout their physical life and will continue to be an integral part of their being as a member of God the Father's heavenly family.

But, what use is the holy spirit to a person during this physical life after initially receiving it as a gift? The answer throughout the biblical record is that the holy spirit is given to be used for the benefit of the person receiving it, for the benefit of others, and to perform a work for their heavenly Father. Therefore, it is vitally important for each of us to understand what the holy spirit is, how to use it effectively, and how to maintain and increase its power within us in order to be spiritually successful while alive on this earth.

If the power of the holy spirit remains at the same level as when it was first given, the chances of one's spiritual growth is greatly diminished. However, if a person faithfully increases the power of the holy spirit within them and uses this power correctly, spiritual growth and success is guaranteed.

God Is a Spirit

Many people wonder who and what God is. The apostle John answers this question for us: *"God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth"* (Jn.4:24 KJV).

God the Father is an immortal spirit-being who has no beginning or end. He is composed of energy, force, and unlimited power, and has as an integral part of his existence all knowledge, wisdom, love, self-control, and the power and ability to create, sustain, and destroy. The spirit of God the Father is in fact what he is in that he is composed of spirit.

Why is this information important to those the Father has adopted as his earthly children? It is important because we are his children and have as an integral part of our existence the same basic qualities of existence he has. These basic qualities are power, love, and self-control.

In order to understand the various functions of the holy spirit, we must first understand the reasons the Father gives the qualities of power, love, and self-control to each individual at the moment he adopts them as one of his children and why later other abilities, attributes, and authorizations of power are given to individuals within his family.

Power, Love, and Self Control

In his second letter to Timothy, the apostle Paul documents the three most important spiritual attributes the Sovereign Father bestows on each individual after baptism as they receive his holy spirit and are adopted as one of his earthly children:

"Therefore I put you in remembrance that you stir up the gift of God, which is in you by the putting on of my hands. For God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2.Tim.1:6-7 KJV).

Through the laying on of his hands, Paul passed a gift of the spirit to Timothy. We are not told what this gift of the spirit was or its purpose; however, this gift was something Timothy either needed in his personal life or in his ministry, otherwise it would not have been given to him.

Notice Paul told Timothy that God has not given us (i.e., each of the elect) the negative emotion of *fear* but he has given us *power*, *love*, and a *sound mind*. Without understanding these four words which were translated from the Greek language into English, it is impossible to understand the enormity of what has been given to each of the Father's earthly children.

The English word *fear* in verse 7 is translated from the Greek word *deilia*, which means *timidity* (i.e., the characteristic of being fearful).

It is important to know that the negative characteristic or emotion of timidity and fearfulness is absent in those whom the Father places his holy spirit into at their adoption into his family; otherwise, one's chance of success would be constantly hampered by this negative emotion.

Christ warns that a person who becomes spiritually fearful and timid will not be in his Father's kingdom. See Rev.21:7-8.

Verse 7 also tells us that each person who receives the indwelling of the holy spirit is given: power, love, and self control.

Power

The English word *power* in verse 7 is translated from the Greek word *dunamis*, which means miraculous power (usually by implication, a miracle itself).

Dunamis is the same power the Father exercises to create, sustain, and destroy. This is the same power Christ exercised while on earth and that each of the Father's children is given at the time of their adoption into his family. This power becomes an intrinsic part of their godly nature. The only limitations each of the elect has in their exercise of this power is the degree to which each one is authorized by the Father.

Although there are many reasons the Father gives spirit-power to those he calls to salvation, the following are two primary reasons:

- To help a person grow in spiritual maturity.
- To perform the task, function, and/or responsibility for which he has called a person during this age of salvation.

Love

The English word *love* in verse 7 is translated from the Greek word *agape*, which means affection or benevolence; specially (plural) a love-feast. This is the kind of love expressed by God the Father and Christ that goes beyond social affection or moral concern for another person. *Agape* is a godly characteristic which becomes an intrinsic part of one's character at the time of one's adoption into the Father's family.

This is the same love Christ exercised while on earth. The Father does not limit his children's expression of godly love, but expects his children to express godly love to him, his firstborn son, their brothers and sisters in his family, as well as to other people in the same way given their knowledge and understanding of this godly characteristic.

Sound Mind

The English phrase *sound mind* is translated from the Greek word *sophronismos*, which is derived from a word meaning *discipline*. *Sophronismos* basically means self-control.

Sophronismos is not to be confused with our natural ability to control our attitude, behavior, and emotions. This type of self-control is a spiritual attribute; it is the exercise of a godly characteristic.

Sophronismos draws its ability and power to help us control our attitude, behavior, and emotions from the indwelling of the holy spirit, which is a part of our spiritual nature; it tells us what is a correct expression of godly character and what is not.

These three basic qualities of the holy spirit also describe the Sovereign Father's existence as a spirit-being. But, why are the spiritual gifts of power, godly love, and self-control the most important?

- Spiritual power gives a person the ability to supernaturally produce an effect in the physical and spirit realms.
- Without godly love, we can neither understand the mind of the Father and Christ nor the attitude and behavior we should have toward other people. Both of these are necessary to be holy as our heavenly Father and Christ are holy.
- Without self-control we cannot overcome our old nature and behave righteously.

The three most important spiritual attributes the Father gives to each member of his earthly family are power, godly love, and self-control. Without these three spiritual attributes, none of the other spiritual gifts from the Father can be used effectively for their intended purpose. These three foundational gifts of the spirit must be maintained and increased through use during our physical life in order to be spiritually successful and not become spiritually powerless and fearful.

Functions of the Holy Spirit

In order to understand the functions of the holy spirit, we must first understand that our heavenly Father's goal is to increase the number of children in his heavenly family. This is the primary reason he gives supernatural gifts to his earthly children during this gospel age of salvation.

After listing several attitudes and behaviors that are righteous, Jesus said the following which is intended for those who are striving to enter the Kingdom of God, "*Be you therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect*" (Matt.5:48 KJV).

In Matthew 5:48, the English word *be* is translated from the Greek word *esomai*, which has a future tense i.e., *will be* or *become*. The English word *perfect* is translated from the Greek word *teleios*, which is derived from a word meaning *complete* in various applications of labor, growth, mental and moral character, and etc.. *Teleios* basically means being complete or perfect in every aspect.

It is the Father's goal for us that, through the process of living a righteous life and overcoming our character flaws, we will grow toward becoming perfect in godly character, attitude, and behavior. Therefore, to become perfect in godly character as the Father is perfect, we must continually exercise the gifts of spiritual power, godly love, and self-control given to us the moment we were adopted into his earthly family.

Innocent Ones Made Perfect

The writer to the Hebrews wrote the following about being made perfect:

"To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of innocent ones made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than that of Abel" (Heb.12:23-24 KJV Para.).

Here, the English phrase *innocent ones* is translated from the Greek word *dikaiois*, which in the context of verse 23 means innocent ones or holy ones. The English phrase *made perfect* is translated from the Greek word *teleioo*, which means (literally) to accomplish, or (figuratively) to consummate (i.e., perfect in character).

Although a person may fail in their attempt to continually exercise godly attitude and behavior, Christ's sacrifice brings forgiveness from the Father. Therefore, the Father views his earthly children in a future tense, as being totally innocent and perfect in character and having already obtained perfection in every sense of the meaning of the word perfect:

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good thing to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Be it so" (Heb. 13:20-21 KJV Para.).

Here, the English word *perfect* is translated from the Greek word *katartizo*, which in the context of verse 21 means to be thoroughly complete in every detail.

According to Hebrews 13:20-21, we need to be perfect in order to "do his will." But what is the Father's will for his children? The Father's will for us above all else is that we enter his heavenly family as his immortal sons. See Rev.21:5-7.

The apostle Peter wrote the following which gives us more insight into what it means to have the indwelling of the holy spirit and what this spirit-power does for us:

"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the spirit, to obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you, and peace, be multiplied" (1.Pet. 1:1-2 KJV).

Here, the English word *sanctification* is translated from the Greek word *hagiasmos*, which is derived from a word meaning purification. In the context of verse 2, *hagiasmos* means the state of purity, i.e., holiness.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy has begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith to salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1.Pet.1:3-5 KJV).

Here, the English word *kept* is translated from the Greek word *phroureo*, which means to be a watcher in advance, i.e., to mount a guard as a sentinel (post spies at gates); figuratively, to hem in or to protect.

The English word *power* is translated from the Greek word *dunamis*, which means miraculous power (usually by implication, a miracle itself).

It is the power of our Father's holy spirit that guards and protects us. But how does this protection work? It is its presence within us that protects us in the following ways:

- The holy spirit gives us access to our heavenly Father, which allows us to ask him for help in times of stress and sickness.
- The holy spirit alerts us to spiritually dangerous situations, attitudes, and behaviors.
- It allows us to be recognized by the Father's heavenly host, as well as evil spirits.
- It is the power we can exercise through the authority of Christ to counter an evil influence or an evil spirit's attack.
- It is the power we can exercise to produce an effect in the physical and spirit realms for our brothers and sisters in our Father's family and to benefit other people.

SUPERNATURAL ABILITIES

In his letters to the elect at Corinth, Rome, and Ephesus, the apostle Paul lists most of the supernatural abilities the Father gives to his earthly children. Other gifts of the spirit are mentioned throughout the biblical record.

In order to understand the reasons supernatural abilities are given, what they are, and how to use them, we need to review sections of the three letters in which Paul mentions these abilities.

The Elect at Corinth

In his opening statement to the elect at Corinth, Paul says he wants them to understand spiritual concepts, *"Now concerning spiritual ~~gifts~~, brethren, I would not have you ignorant"* (1.Cor.12:1 KJV Para.).

The word *gifts* in 1.Cor.12:1 is not in the Textus Receptus and was added by the King James translators. The addition of the word *gifts* obscures Paul's intent to urge the elect to desire things pertaining to godly spirituality (i.e., godly characteristics).

"You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, even as you were led. Therefore I give you to understand, that no one speaking by the spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and that no one can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the holy spirit" (1.Cor.12:2-3 KJV Para.).

In verse 3, Paul refers to the Father's holy spirit, which only those who have been adopted into his earthly family truly know and understand. Other people may say and even believe they know Christ, but in reality they do not, and they cannot utter the words Jesus is lord through the inspiration of the holy spirit.

Paul uses both the words God and Lord to describe a god-being in verse 3.

The English word *God* is translated from the Greek word *Theos*, which is generic for a supreme divinity; figuratively, a magistrate, or a god, which in the context of verse 3 means God the Father.

The English word *Lord* is translated from the Greek word *kurios*, which means supreme in authority, i.e., (as noun) controller; by implication, Mr. (as a respectful title). Therefore, referring to Christ whom the Father has placed in authority over his earthly family.

"Now there are a variety of gifts, but the same spirit" (1.Cor.12:4 KJV Para.).

Here, the English word *gifts* is translated from the Greek word *charisma*, which in the context of verse 4 means a (spiritual) endowment, i.e., (objectively) a miraculous faculty.

"And there are a variety of administrations, but the same Lord [God the Father]" (1.Cor.12:5 KJV Para.).

Here, the English word *administrations* is translated from the Greek word *diakonia*, which means one who serves or a service depending on the context in which it is used.

"And there are a variety of effects, but the same God [God the Father] which work all in all" (1.Cor.12:6 KJV Para.).

Depending on which function of the holy spirit is exercised, it will result in a specific effect becoming a reality in the physical or spirit realm. Regardless of the specific supernatural ability, attribute, or authorization a person is given, the resulting effect of its use is caused by the inherent power of the Father's holy spirit.

"But the manifestation of the spirit is given to everyone [i.e., men and women] to profit" (1.Cor.12:7 KJV Para.).

Here, the English word *profit* is translated from the Greek word *sumphero*, which in the context of verse 7 means to contribute. Later in this chapter, Paul explains what the exercise of the power of the holy spirit is to contribute.

"For to one is given by the spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same spirit; To another faith by the same spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another different kinds of languages; to another the interpretation of languages" (1.Cor.12:8-10 KJV Para.).

Not all members of the Father's family have the same supernatural abilities, attributes, and authorizations of power to exercise. Each person is given what they need to perform their particular function and responsibility as a family member.

"All these are the work of the one and the same spirit, and he gives them to each person, as he wills, For as the body is one, and has many members, and all the members of one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we are Jews or Gentiles, whether we are bond or free; and have all been made to drink of one spirit" (1.Cor.12:11-13 KJV Para.).

Each person with the indwelling of the holy spirit is an integral part of the body of Christ which is God the Father's earthly family of believers.

"For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot says, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear says, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where is the hearing? If the whole is hearing, where is the smelling? But God has arranged each part of the body, just where he wants them to be" (1.Cor.12:14-18 KJV Para.).

Paul explains that every member of the Father's earthly family is necessary in order to carry out the collective work of the church and that it is the Father who has placed each member exactly where he wants them to be in his family.

"And if they were all one member, where is the body? But now they are many members, but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you, nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. No, much more those members of the body, which seem to be weak, are necessary. And those of the body, which we think to be less honorable, on these we place greater value; and our less elegant parts are treated with special modesty. For our elegant parts have no need, but God has tempered the body together, having given greater value to the ones thought to be inferior. That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another" (1.Cor.12:19-25 KJV Para.).

Each member of the Father's family is important and each gift of the spirit given to the elect is necessary for the Father's earthly family to function efficiently and effectively. However, what we see today (2017) is that the body is dysfunctional, because many of these abilities, attributes, and authorizations of power either do not yet exist among the elect, are not recognized, are not being used, or are being misused.

"And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member is honored, all members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and members in particular." (1.Cor.12:26-27 KJV Para.).

Paul speaks of the mutual love, respect, and concern that each member of the Father's earthly family should have for each other and again reminds them that, although they are individuals, they are of the body of Christ.

Some seem to think that one supernatural ability is more important than others; however, each gift of the spirit has an important place in the Father's family and each is meant to complement all the others and work in concert to fulfill the Father's purpose for the existence of his earthly family.

"And God has set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gift of healing, helps, governments, different kinds of languages. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gift of healing? do all speak with various languages? do all interpret? But desire in a greater degree miraculous faculties, and yet I show to you a more excellent way" (1.Cor.12:28-31 KJV Para.).

Among the gifts of the spirit there is one that is more important than any other to a person in the development of godly character and in the performance of one's functions and responsibilities in the collective work of the church. This one attribute is to be desired, cultivated, and increased above all other gifts of the spirit.

Paul explains this more excellent way (i.e., the better road to travel) in chapters 13 and 14, which will be addressed in the next section of this study.

The Elect at Rome

In Romans, chapter 12, Paul begins to address an improper attitude some had regarding gifts of the spirit by urging all the elect to dedicate themselves to the life they had been called to practice and to think seriously about the opportunity they were being offered by their heavenly Father:

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your logical service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Rom.12:1-2 KJV Para.).

In order to become a living sacrifice, we must truly dedicate ourselves to a holy lifestyle. When we totally give ourselves to practicing a sinless life and to the work we have been called to do, we are doing what the Father expects of us as a living sacrifice.

In verse 2, Paul urges the elect to repair their mind, which indicates that some of the elect were not thinking correctly in a spiritual sense and needed to return to correct thinking in a godly sense.

"For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of themselves more highly than they ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith" (Rom.12:3 KJV Para.).

Some of the elect at Rome seemed to have suffered from the same problem as some of the elect at Corinth, in thinking that they were more important than other members of the Father's family because of the abilities, attributes, and authorizations of power given to them.

"For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another" (Rom.12:4-5 KJV Para.).

Each member of the Father's family is important, none should think more highly of themselves than they should; because, each individual has been called to perform certain functions and responsibilities within the Father's family in order to accomplish the work of the church and to assist their brothers and sisters to succeed in their calling.

"Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness" (Rom.12:6-8 KJV Para.).

The Elect at Ephesus

In his letter to the elect at Ephesus, Paul mentions apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. Four of these individuals directly impact the spiritual growth of the elect. It is important to understand that each of these five individuals mentioned must have specific supernatural abilities, attributes and authorizations of power given to them in order for them to perform their function and responsibility adequately:

"But to every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ" (Eph. 4:7 KJV Para.).

The English word *grace* is translated from the Greek word *charis*, which in the context of verse 7 means the divine influence upon the heart and its reflection in one's life.

"Therefore he said, When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave a gift to humans, [i.e., both men and women]. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended into the lower parts of the earth [i.e., the grave]? He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all heavens, that he might fulfill all things.)" (Eph.4:8-10 KJV Para.).

In verse 8, Paul speaks of Christ presenting humanity with the gift of his sacrifice, which makes it possible for our sins to be forgiven. Although God the Father is the one who bestows abilities, attributes, and authorizations of power to individuals in his earthly family, it is through Christ's sacrifice that these individuals are made worthy to receive them.

In verses 11 and 12 Paul mentions specific functions and responsibilities within the Father's family and the reasons for them:

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph.4:11-12 KJV Para.).

In verses 13-16, Paul sums up the reasons that the gifts of the spirit are important to each person the Father calls to salvation during the gospel age and to the performance of the collective work of the church:

"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we are no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the deceitful scheming and trickery of people, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up to him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, makes increase of the body to the edifying of itself in godly love" (Eph.4:13-16 KJV Para.).

Foundational and Specialized Gifts

It is clear from the scriptures that the Father gives each of the elect three foundational gifts when they receive his holy spirit: spiritual power, godly love, and self-control. Some of the elect are given specialized gifts and authorizations for the purpose of performing certain functions, responsibilities, and tasks for the benefit of their brothers and sisters in the faith, or to perform the work of the church in proclaiming the Father's good news message. Moreover, if a person has a specialized authorization, such as that of a prophet, evangelist, or elder, or the discernment of spirits, the ability to heal the sick, cast out evil spirits, or perform other supernatural acts, that person is expected to use these authorizations for their intended purpose. Therefore, if a person has an authorization, they must know that they have it in order to use it. But, how does a person know if they have a specialized gift or authorization from the Father and Jesus Christ?

Although the scriptures do not give detailed instructions about how a person knows if they have been given supernatural authority and power in specific situations (e.g., the authority to end an evil spirit's influence or control of an individual or the ability to perform supernatural works in the physical and spirit realms), it is very clear that those who are given this authority and power know they have it.

Authorizations to enable individuals to perform certain functions, responsibilities, and tasks are communicated to individuals through many different means. For example:

- Moses was told by the Creator God himself (Ex.3:15-22, 4:1-9)
- Elisha the prophet was told by Elijah the prophet (2 Kgs. 2:9-10)
- Christ told his disciples (Mk.3:14-15; Matt.28:19-20; Acts 1:6-8)
- Christ told Ananias in a vision to tell Paul (Acts 9:10-18)
- Paul told the evangelist Timothy (1.Tim.4:14; 2.Tim.1:6-7)

Regardless of the method through which a person becomes aware that they have been given an authorization to use spiritual power or a supernaturally enhanced ability. (e.g., the gift of prophecy, the ability to perform miracles, or the ability to cast out evil spirits), that person will know what authorization and/or power that has been given, what it is to be used for, and how to use it; otherwise, the authorization would not be given.

Detailed Instructions

Other than the examples of the use of the holy spirit with prayer and study, there are only a few detailed instructions given about how to use spiritual gifts, authorizations, and powers. But spiritual power is useless without knowing how to use it. Because there are few detailed instructions regarding how to use specialized gifts and authorizations recorded in the Bible, it seems logical that Jesus Christ will make sure that any person who needs knowledge about these specialized gifts or authorizations will receive it in order for them to perform their specific function or task.

Much information about spiritual gifts, authorizations and powers, and how to use them can be gleaned from the many examples of their use in the biblical record. Therefore, it behooves each person with the indwelling of the holy spirit to diligently study the scriptures in order to gain the knowledge and understanding regarding how to more effectively use the abilities, attributes, and authorizations the Father has given them to perform the work he has called them to do during their life on earth and to successfully become one of his immortal children.

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CHAPTER
THREE

**THE DESIRE FOR SUPERNATURAL ABILITIES
AND GODLY LOVE**

Many people wish they had supernatural abilities so that they can work miracles, heal the sick, foretell the future, and perform other awesome works; however, not all people want these powers solely for a righteous purpose.

A person who desires more abilities than the ones they were given when they received the indwelling of the holy spirit and the ones that help them grow toward spiritual maturity and to perform the functions and responsibilities of their calling should take time to do a serious self-evaluation. They should ask themselves why they want these additional abilities. If someone wants additional supernatural abilities for personal aggrandizement, entertainment, or other purely selfish reasons, they have the wrong motivation.

Remember, the apostle Paul said that all authorizations of supernatural ability and power are given for the purpose of performing the collective work of the church and the benefit, edification, and enrichment of the Sovereign Father's elect. See Eph.4:7-16.

For the Father's elect there are two primary reasons to desire supernatural abilities:

1. To render service to other members of our heavenly Father's earthly family.
2. To help perform the collective work of the church to proclaim the Father's good news message of salvation as a witness and warning.

SUPERNATURAL ABILITIES

In his letters to the elect at Corinth, Rome, and Ephesus, the apostle Paul mentions over twenty individual supernatural abilities. He says that our heavenly Father personally determines which of these to give each of his earthly children in order for them to successfully become one of his immortal children and perform the function and responsibility for which they were called during this gospel age of salvation.

After explaining many things about supernatural abilities and their use in his letter to the elect at Corinth, Paul writes of the one spiritual attribute that each of them has been given, without which none of these other abilities have meaning in the context of the life they have been called to practice. If this one spiritual attribute is not expressed and increased in our lives, any other supernatural ability the Father gives us

cannot be exercised to its fullest or becomes useless to the purpose for which it was given. Therefore, before we begin our study into the supernatural abilities our heavenly Father gives to individuals, it is important to review what the apostle Paul wrote to the elect at Corinth and to the evangelist Timothy regarding this extremely important gift from the Father.

The Elect at Corinth

Much of what Paul writes to the elect at Corinth has to do with attitudes and behaviors which show a lack of respect, concern, and godly love for their spiritual brothers and sisters. Paul brings these problems into focus while discussing how the church is to function as a team and that the gifts of the spirit are to benefit all of the elect and to help them carry out their collective work to proclaim the Father's good news message of salvation.

In 1. Corinthians, chapter 12, after Paul explains that the Father has given each person he calls to salvation the supernatural abilities he wants them to have and that he has placed each one in his earthly family where he wants them to be, Paul writes the following:

"Now you are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God has set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, different kinds languages. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gift of healing? do all speak with languages? do all interpret? But desire the best gifts: and yet I show you a more excellent way" (1. Cor. 12:27-31 KJV Para.).

Paul urges the elect (both men and women) at Corinth to desire the best gifts. Are some gifts of the spirit better than others and to be desired above others? The answer is yes. However, these gifts of the spirit are not obvious, but can be found and understood through a diligent, prayerful study of the biblical record, meditation on what one finds there, and insight given through the holy spirit.

To Timothy

In Paul's letter to Timothy, he reminds him of three important spiritual attributes that are an integral part of his spiritual makeup and that must remain with him throughout his life and into eternity as a member of the God family. One of these three attributes is godly love. Without it no one can please the Father and Christ, practice a righteous life, or be given immortal life:

"Therefore I put you in remembrance that you stir up the gift of God, which is in you by the putting on of my hands. For God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, love [Greek Agape], and self-control" (2. Tim. 1:6-7 KJV Para.).

There are many different Greek words used in the New Testament to describe different types of love and the degree to which each is expressed toward people or things. Of these, two are mentioned most often in relation to God the Father, Christ, and the elect. These are defined by the Greek words *agape* and *agapao*:

- **Agape:** To express godly love. Agape basically means affection or benevolence; specially (plural) a love-feast. Agape is an intrinsic quality of God the Father and is an expression of his character (1.Jn.4:16). This is the kind of love expressed by the Father and Christ that goes beyond social and moral concern for another person. Godly love is a deep and abiding affection for another person which looks past the other person's character flaws and continually seeks to benefit the person loved. Godly love is a spiritual attribute the Father gives to each of his adopted children.
- **Agapao:** To express love in a social and moral sense. This is the kind of love that expresses the principles of good behavior conforming to accepted principles and standards, which is different from fraternal affection or affection for one's spouse or children.

These two types of love are inseparable. We cannot express godly love and treat other people disrespectfully by not expressing a godly attitude and behavior toward them.

From what is written in the gospel accounts and the apostles letters about godly love, it becomes clear that, of all the supernatural abilities the Father gives to his children, the most important is the gift of godly love, without which all other gifts of the spirit are of no value to a person in a spiritual sense.

Note: As we continue Paul's explanation of this "more excellent way" he wrote of at the end of chapter 12, I will insert the word *agape* or *agapao* in brackets next to the word *love* and replace the word *charity*, where applicable, with the words *godly love*, in order to more accurately express the insight Paul was giving the elect at Corinth about the importance of expressing godly love with the exercise of supernatural abilities.

Charity

"Though I speak with the languages of men and of angels, and have not charity [agape], I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal" (1.Cor.13:1 KJV Para.).

In order to introduce the subject of godly love and the importance of expressing it in every aspect of one's life, but especially when exercising one's supernatural abilities, Paul mentions the supernatural ability to speak in various languages that are not native to the person speaking. This ability was being misused and was causing a problem within the Corinthian congregation.

Paul clearly understood that if he did not have godly love, any supernatural ability he had or could have would be meaningless to him in his work and in his pursuit of his own salvation. His use of these abilities would be as if he were just making a lot of loud meaningless noise.

"And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and do not have godly love, I am nothing" (1.Cor.13:2 KJV Para.).

Paul mentions these four extremely important supernatural abilities to emphasize the point that, even if he had all of these abilities and the confidence to exercise them, he would be nothing without godly love.

"And though I give all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and do not have godly love, it is useless" (1.Cor.13:3 KJV Para.).

Here, the English word *burned* is translated from the Greek word *kauchaomai*, which basically means to brag, to praise oneself. It does not mean burned. By the use of this Greek word, perhaps Paul was alluding to personal sacrifice of wealth, time, and effort.

What is clear from the biblical record is that, if a person does not have godly love as the basis for what they do for another person or their exercise of supernatural abilities, it is of no value in a spiritual sense to the person doing them.

Many scriptures show that the righteous will be judged and rewarded according to what they have done in the flesh and the attitude in which their works are performed. See Matt.16:27; Lk.6:36-38; 2.Cor.9:6-7.

"Godly love is patient and is kind; godly love does not envy; godly love does not brag and is not haughty. It does not behave itself unseemly, does not seek its own, is not easily provoked, thinks no evil; Does not rejoice in injustice, but rejoices in the truth; it endures all things, it has all faith, trusts much, and perseveres. Godly love never fails: but whether there be predictions, they may fail; whether there be languages, they may cease; whether there be knowledge, it may vanish away" (1.Cor.13:4-8 KJV Para.).

What Paul writes is in the context of explaining the purpose for the Father giving supernatural abilities to his earthly children and the attitude in which these abilities are to be exercised.

"For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away" (1.Cor.13:9-10 KJV).

Paul says that as yet we do not know everything. He clarifies this statement later in verse 12. He also mentions prophecy, which is a reference to the giving of divinely inspired messages, not the ability to predict future events. He then explains that, when we are god-beings in the Father's kingdom, our knowledge and understanding will be perfect.

"When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things" (1.Cor.13:11 KJV).

Remember, Paul is still addressing the problem of the misuse of supernatural abilities within the congregation at Corinth. Here, he uses his own example of maturing to adulthood to explain to them that what they are doing is childish and they need to mature spiritually.

In verse 12, Paul speaks to our present condition and the future after we become an immortal spirit-being in the Father's heavenly family:

"For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now these three remain, faith, hope, and godly love; but the greatest of these is godly love" (1.Cor.13:12-13 KJV Para.).

Paul mentions the belief and confidence we have in the Father's promises to us and his love for us, but that the greatest of these is his love for us, because it is through his love for each of us continually being expressed through his care, concern, and mercy that we can have the belief and confidence that he will fulfill his promises. See Rom.5:1-8.

In 1.Corinthians, chapter 14, Paul continues speaking about the importance of godly love and urges the elect to engage in a course of action that will lead to an increase of this godly characteristic.

"Pursue godly love, and desire the spiritual gifts, but much more that you may prophesy" (1.Cor.14:1 KJV Para.).

The English word *spiritual* in verse 1 is translated from the Greek word *pneumatikos*, which refers to the supernatural (i.e., things pertaining to the spirit realm). The use of the word *pneumatikos* shows that Paul is urging the elect at Corinth to desire to be spiritual (i.e., righteous) in their thought, attitude, and behavior.

The word *gifts* in verse 1 is not in the Textus Receptus and was added by the King James translators. The addition of the word *gifts* obscures Paul's intent to urge the elect to desire things pertaining to godly spirituality (i.e., godly characteristics).

The English phrase *you may prophesy* in verse 1 is translated from the Greek word *propheteuo*, which means to foretell events, divine, speak under inspiration, or exercise the prophetic office. In the context of verse 1, *propheteuo* means to speak things which are divinely inspired.

Again, the attribute to be most sought after and increased is godly love in our lives. We are also to desire to have other gifts of the spirit, but even more so the ability to say things that are divinely inspired.

In the rest of chapter 14, Paul explains in great detail that the correct use of the gift of languages is to convey understanding. But, some at Corinth were showing a lack of godly love, respect, and concern for those in the congregation who could not understand what they were saying. See the section Languages and the Interpretation of Languages for complete details about this issue.

Love Each Other

What Jesus said in his many conversations with his disciples about the expression of social, moral, and godly love, and his command for them to love each other with this same love explains why the Father's earthly children must exhibit and practice this type of love not only toward each other, but also other people.

John records Jesus telling his disciples about two types of love they should practice:

"Little children, yet a little while I am with you, and I go to him that sent me. You shall seek me: and as I said, Where I go, you cannot come; so now I say to you. A new commandment I give to you, That you love [agapao] one another; as I have loved [agapao] you, that you also love [agapao] one another. By this shall everyone know that you are my disciples, if you have love [agape] one to another" (Jn.13:33-35 KJV).

There are three important things we can learn about the two types of love mentioned in verses 34-35:

1. This love is to be social, moral, and godly.
2. We are to follow Christ's expression of love.
3. The practice of social, moral, and godly love identifies a person as Christ's disciple.

Telling his disciples to have social and moral love for each other as he had for them was nothing new to the disciples, because this was required in the law given to ancient Israel (Matt:22:37-40). What was new, was that they were not only to have this type of love for each other, but they were to also love each other with a godly love, which was a completely new concept to them.

The social, moral, and godly love these men were told to express to each other would indeed identify them as his disciples. However, this type of love was impossible for them to express while Jesus was alive, but would be possible after his death and resurrection, because God the Father would make godly love a part of their spiritual nature.

The kind of love that identifies a true follower of Christ includes social, moral, and godly love. This kind of love goes beyond what is considered love by human standards. This type of love for another individual is indeed a sign of those who follow Christ, because it is the manifestation of the Father's holy spirit within an individual.

Godly love is the love that God the Father and Jesus Christ have exhibited in providing a way of salvation for humanity. This kind of love is truly selfless and puts the welfare of others before our own. See 1.Cor.13:1-13.

Almost all people express some degree of love for other people in a social or moral sense, but only the elect can express agape love as an identifying mark. Agape love is a godly quality. True love and concern for another individual is a rare thing and is indeed a sign of those who follow Christ. This kind of love is a manifestation of God's holy spirit working within an individual.

Greater Love

After explaining the relationship between his heavenly Father, himself, and those who would become members of his Father's family, Jesus said the following:

"This is my commandment, That you love [agapao] one another, as I have loved [agapao] you. Greater [agape] has no one than this, that one lay down their life for their friends. You are my friends, if you do whatever I command you" (Jn.15:12-14 KJV Para.).

Jesus mentions social and moral love in the context of an attitude and behavior that should be an integral part of a disciples nature. But beyond this type of love, is godly love, which means a person is willing to give up everything including their life for their friends. This is exactly what Christ did for his disciple and all humans. See Rom.5:1-8.

Before being human, Jesus was an immortal, spirit-being who possessed the highest form of existence—life that springs forth from itself, never dying nor decaying. This immortal being who was not subject to death, voluntarily emptied himself of his glory, power, and immortality to become a mortal man in order to live a sinless life as an example for us to follow. His sacrifice is the ultimate expression of godly love. This kind of love holds nothing back and is willing to give all for those who are loved.

Although we cannot sacrifice our life in the same way Christ did, we can and must exhibit and exercise godly love toward those of the elect and toward other people. There are many other ways we can lay down our life for our friends and other people. A person's life is their time, energy, effort, and material goods which can either be spent in worldly pursuits or doing good works, which is the Father's will for those of his earthly family. See Eph.2:10; Tit.3:8, 14; Heb.10:23-24; 13:20-21.

The apostle John wrote many things about the enormity of our heavenly Father's and Christ's love for humanity and that we should emulate this type of love as we practice a righteous life:

"He that says, I know him, and does not keep his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps his word, in him truly is the love [agape] of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him" (1.Jn.2:4-5 KJV Para.). See also 1.Jn.5:3.

One of the indications that a person is exhibiting and exercising godly love is that they will be practicing God's laws, precepts, and principles which instruct one to have respect and concern for all people.

"Beloved, let us love [agapao] one another: for love [agape] is of God; and every one that loves [agapao] is born of God, and knows God. He that does not love [agapao] does not know God; for God is love [agape]" (1.Jn.4:7-8 KJV Para.).

Those who are the Father's earthly children have the attributes of social, moral, and godly love as an integral part of their spiritual nature. Why is this? It is because the Father's earthly children are not human as others are human. Although still in the flesh, they are a new spiritual creation with completely different potentials and goals than a person who is purely human. See 2.Cor.5:17.

"In this was manifested the love [agape] of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love [agape], not that we loved [agapao] God, but that he loved [agape] us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved [agapao] us, we ought also to love [agapao] one another" (1.Jn.4:9-11KJV Para.).

We are to express and exercise the same kind of love our heavenly Father has for us toward our brothers and sisters in his earthly family and by extension toward all other people, because the Father also loves them, which is evidenced by his sending Christ to sacrifice himself for all people.

"No one has seen God at any time. If we love [agapao] one another, God dwells in us, and his love [agape] is perfected in us. By this we know that we remain in him, and he in us, because he has given us of his spirit" (1.Jn.4:12-13 Para.). See Acts 5:32.

John explains that, if we are practicing the kind of love that shows an outgoing concern for our spiritual brothers and sisters, the Father's love (i.e., his character) is being perfected in us.

"And we have known and believed the love [agape] that God has to us. God is love [agape]; and he that remains in love [agape] remains in God, and God in him. Herein is our love [agape] made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love [agape]; but

perfect love [agape] casts out fear: because fear has torment. He that fears is not made perfect in love [agape]. We love him, because he first loved [agapao] us" (1.Jn.4:16-19 KJV Para.).

The Sovereign God expressed godly love when he sent the Creator to become human and sacrifice his life in order for our sins to be forgiven. This also showed his tremendous concern for our happiness and well-being.

Remaining in godly love is a state of mind that views all humans in the same light as the Sovereign God and Christ view them. Remember that the Father wants everyone to be saved, and that Jesus loved us so much he sacrificed his life for us.

Godly love removes all fear from a person, because anyone who truly believes that their heavenly Father loves them and expresses this same love themselves has faith that he will keep his promises to them, and will eventually transform them into one of his immortal children. So, there is nothing to be afraid of. See Rom.8:31-39.

"If anyone says, I love [agapao] God, and hates his brother, they are a liar: for one that does not love [agapao] their brother whom they have seen, how can they love [agapao] God whom they have not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That the one who loves [agapao] God loves [agapao] their brother also" (1.Jn. 4:20-21 KJV Para.).

If Godly Love Grows Cold

One day, Jesus told his disciples about the future destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, after which they came to him privately to ask about what he had said. Instead of answering their questions about the temple, his future coming, and the end of the age of human rule on earth, he began to tell them about what would happen after his death. Later in this same conversation with his disciples, he said:

"Many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many. And because lawlessness shall have been multiplied, the godly love [agape] of many will grow cold. But the one that endures to the end, that one will be saved" (Matt.24:11-13 KJV Para.).

The many whose godly love will grow cold refers to some of the Father's elect who will either neglect their promise to diligently practice a righteous life or for various reasons decide living righteously is not worth the effort. See 1.Tim.4:1; Rev.3:14-16.

After praising the elect at Ephesus for much of their effort to live righteously, Jesus said the following:

"Nevertheless I have somewhat against you, because you have left your first love [agape]. Remember therefore from where you are fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come to you

quickly, and will remove your lamp-stand out of its place, except you repent" (Rev.2:4-5 KJV Para.).

The English word *first* in verse 4 is translated from the Greek word *protos*, which means foremost (in time, place, order or importance). It is logical to assume that this first love (agape) is the godly love that each of the elect is bestowed when they become one of the Father's earthly children. It is also logical that the expression of this godly love for the Father, Christ, the elect, and other people is what has grown cold.

If we allow the gift of godly love to diminish in us, our spiritual lamp which lights our path of righteousness will be extinguished, leaving us in spiritual darkness. If you are truly interested in receiving additional gifts of the spirit to use for the purpose for which they are intended, this is yet another reason to seek to increase, truly understand, and express godly love in your life.

SUMMARY

Remember, the apostle Paul said that all authorizations of spiritual power and ability are given for the purpose of performing the collective work of the church and the benefit, edification, and enrichment of the Sovereign Father's elect who are being prepared to serve all of humanity through his family and government. See Eph.4:7-16.

Godly love [agape] is mentioned over 100 times in the New Testament and is mostly mentioned as an identifying characteristic of God the Father, Christ, and the elect. The apostle Paul alone mentions godly love more than 70 times. For godly love to be mentioned this many times points to the importance of this godly characteristic.

In the apostle Paul's letter to the elect at Corinth, he stressed the importance of godly love as something which must be in evidence if we are to use the gifts of the spirit to benefit our spiritual brothers and sisters and to do the work of the church. Therefore, it is logical that if you are seeking additional gifts of the spirit, you must have and be exercising godly love in your life.

According to Christ, Paul, and other apostles, the spiritual attribute which is to be most evidenced and increased in our lives is godly love. We should also desire other gifts of the spirit, but more so the ability to say things which are divinely inspired.

If you want additional gifts of the spirit, it would be wise to take time to do a serious self-evaluation and ask yourself why. Because it is evident that the exercise of godly love is necessary in order to properly manifest supernatural abilities for their intended purpose, it would also be wise to prayerfully search the scriptures in order to understand godly love and its application before asking the Father for additional gifts of the spirit.

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____ CHAPTER ____
FOUR
THE GIFT OF FAITH

To the elect at Corinth, Paul wrote the following about the supernatural abilities the Father gives to all members of his earthly family and the unique abilities and authorizations he gives only to some during this gospel age of salvation:

"Now there are a variety of gifts, but the same spirit. And also a distinction made in those who serve, but the same Lord. And there are a variety of effects, but it is the same Sovereign God which work all in all. But the manifestation of the spirit is given to everyone to profit" (1.Cor.12:4-7 KJV Para.).

The English word *gifts* is translated from the Greek word *charisma*, which in the context of verse 4 means a (spiritual) endowment, i.e., (objectively) miraculous faculty. The English word *profit* is translated from the Greek word *sumphero*, which in the context of verse 7 means *to contribute*.

"For to one is given by the spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same spirit; To another faith by the same spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same spirit" (1.Cor. 2:8-9 KJV).

The English phrase *To another* is translated from the Greek word *heteros*, which in the context of verse 9 means another, the other, or different. The use of the word *heteros* tells us that this type of faith is not given to all the elect, but is given only to specific individuals.

The English word *faith* in verse 9 is translated from the Greek word *pistis*, which in this context means persuasion, i.e., credence, conviction, or confidence that something is true.

The question that needs to be answered is why is there a need for the Father to give a gift of faith to specific individuals when all of the elect must have and exercise faith in order to please him with their life and receive the benefits he promises for being righteous?:

"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb.11:6 KJV).

In order to understand why the gift of faith is important to specific individuals in the Father's earthly family, this section discusses the following two types of faith that can be exercised to accomplish an effect in the physical and spirit realms:

1. Faith that gives one the confidence that the Father and Christ will keep all the promises they have made to those who live righteously during one's physical life and into eternity.
2. Faith that gives one the absolute confidence in their authority to use a supernatural ability or authorization the Father has given them and the absolute confidence that whatever is asked of him that is within his will, he will do it. This type of faith is the gift of faith referred to by the apostle Paul in 1.Cor.12:8-9.

THE BEGINNING OF FAITH

The parable of the sown seed gives insight into how faith in things pertaining to God's truth begins for some people, is rejected by some, and exercised and increased by others.

"A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and were trampled, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell on a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold. And when he had said these things, he declared, He that has ears to hear, let him hear" (Lk.8:5-8 KJV Para.).

There are four types of people the Father calls to salvation; each is given enough knowledge and understanding to believe the information they have received about God the Father, Christ, and their opportunity for salvation.

"And his disciples asked him, What might this parable mean? And he said, To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand" (Lk.8:9-10 KJV Para.).

Although many hear the Father's good news message about the Kingdom of God and salvation from death, only those the Father personally calls to understand his message will truly understand what he is offering them.

"Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the way side are they that hear; then the devil comes, and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. And that which fell among thorns are they, which when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. But that on the good ground are they which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience" (Lk.8:11-15 KJV Para.).

If a person believes what they have heard about their opportunity for salvation and desires to move forward in a relationship with God the Father, he then gives them a spark of spiritual faith, which is a confidence beyond normal human belief. Because this spark of faith is spiritual, it give a person the ability to interact with God the Father to make a formal agreement with him for salvation.

After receiving the spark of spiritual faith, some individuals are persuaded to disregard the opportunity they have been offered, some fail to follow through with their commitment to pursue a righteous life, while others put forth the effort required to successfully become one of the Father's immortal children.

Faith that is Confidence

Although Paul mentions the gift of faith to the Corinthians in the context of a supernatural ability (1.Cor.12:8-9), he also tells them that both he and they have the same faith (i.e., confidence) and that they will be raised from the dead as Christ was. He then quotes a portion of Psalm 116 as proof that Christ had this same type of confidence:

"And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed and therefore I spoke," we also believe and therefore speak, knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you" (2.Cor. 4:13-14 NKJV).

The faith Paul writes of in 2.Cor.4:13-14 is the same type of faith (i.e., confidence) he writes about to the elect at Rome. This is the measure of faith the Father gives to each of his earthly children that is necessary for them to exercise in order to please him with their life and have confidence that they will receive the benefits promised for being righteous:

"For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of themselves more highly than they ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith" (Rom.12:3 KJV Para.). See also verses 4-6.

It seems logical that this measure of faith is given to each person at the time they receive the indwelling holy spirit. This measure of faith also gives us the confidence to exercise the abilities and authorizations the Father has given us, such as speaking directly to him, requesting things from him, resisting and overcoming evil spirits, and performing our functions and responsibilities as a member of his earthly family.

Increase Faith

It is apparent from what Paul wrote to the elect at Corinth about his own and his companions' work among them that the faith we are initially given is not to remain static, but is to increase as we practice a righteous life and perform our functions and responsibilities as members of the Father's earthly family:

"But we will not boast of authority we do not have. Our goal is to measure up to God's plan for us, and this plan includes our working there with you. We are not going too far when we claim authority over you, for we were the first to come to you with the Good News concerning Christ. It is not as though we were trying to claim credit for the work someone else has done among you. Instead, we hope that your faith will grow and that, still within the limits set for us, our work among you will be greatly enlarged" (2.Cor.10:13-15 TLB).

The English phrase *will grow* in verse 5 is translated from the Greek word *auzano*, which means to grow, i.e., enlarge.

"Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, to the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fit, because that your faith grows more and more, and the godly love of every one of you all toward each other increases . . . " (2 Thes.1:1-3 KJV Para.).

The English phrase *grows more and more* in verse 3 is translated from the Greek word *hyperauxano*, which means to increase above an ordinary degree.

Faith is the foundation upon which all other gifts of the spirit must be built and exercised. Without exercising our faith in the Father, Christ, and their promises, little if anything positive in a spiritual sense can be accomplished in one's life. The question is how do we grow (i.e., increase) our faith?

Faith and Works

The apostles James and Peter both explain how to increase our faith through doing good works:

"Dear brothers, what's the use of saying that you have faith and are Christians if you aren't proving it by helping others? Will that kind of faith save anyone? If you have a friend who is in need of food and clothing, and you say to him, "Well, good-bye and God bless you; stay warm and eat hearty," and then don't give him clothes or food, what good does that do? So you see, it isn't enough just to have faith. You must also do good to prove that you have it. Faith that doesn't show itself by good works is no faith at all—it is dead and useless" (Jms.2:14-17 TLB).

James says it takes physical effort as well as the correct attitude to fulfill God's laws, precepts, and principles in our lives, as well as to demonstrate that a person has faith. But, how does doing good works demonstrate a person's faith?

"But someone may well argue, You say the way to God is by faith alone, plus nothing; well, I say that good works are important too, for without good works you can't prove whether you have faith or not; but anyone can see that I have faith by the way I act. Are there still some among you who hold that only believing is enough? Believing in one God? Well, remember that the devils believe this too so strongly that they tremble in terror! Dear foolish man! When will you ever learn that believing is useless without doing what God wants you to? Faith that does not result in good deeds is not real faith" (Jms.2:18-20 TLB).

It is not enough just to say you have faith. The evidence that you truly have faith (i.e., confidence) in the Father, Christ, their promises, and the biblical record can only be validated through conformity to God's laws, precepts, and principles, which means they are not only internalized but also practiced as an expression of your life.

Faith and good works are synonymous in that one can not exist without the other. True faith and good works are the natural result of yielding to the influence of the holy spirit.

Abraham

"Don't you remember that even our father Abraham was declared righteous because of what he did, when he was willing to obey God, even if it meant offering his son Isaac to die on the altar? You see, he was trusting God so much that he was willing to do whatever God told him to; his faith was made complete by what he did, by his actions, his good deeds" (Jms.2:21-22 TLB).

Abraham was willing to trust (have faith/confidence) in the Creator God no matter what he asked him to do—because of his works, his faith was complete. This account also shows that trust is a component of faith. Trust, faith, and confidence all describe the spiritual attribute the Father gives to each of his elect in order to help each one fulfill their calling and enter into his family as one of his immortal children.

"And so it happened just as the Scriptures say, that Abraham trusted God, and the Lord declared him righteous in God's sight, and he was even called 'the friend of God'. So you see, a man is declared righteous by what he does, as well as by what he believes" (Jms. 2:23-24 TLB).

True worship of God requires faith and physical effort. If we have faith and works, we are truly obeying God's way of life. Through faith combined with good works, we show God the Father and Jesus Christ that we truly love them and their way of life.

Peter

The apostle Peter writes the following about faith and adding other attributes to our character:

"And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience goodness; and to goodness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness godly love" (2.Pet.1:5-7 KJV Para.).

The attributes and qualities that need to be added to faith can only be added if we first exercise faith, and then do the things that we have been instructed to do. When we exercise faith the Father will seriously consider our petition to help us increase our faith and add other gifts of the spirit:

"For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacks these things is blind [nearsighted], and cannot see afar off, and has forgotten that he has been purged from his sins. Wherefore rather brethren, give diligence to make your calling sure: for if you do these things, you shall never fail" (2.Pet.1:8-10 KJV).

Although the Father does not initially give each of his children the same amount of faith, each of us is expected to exercise faith and works and to grow in the confidence we have in the Father, Christ, and the biblical record (2.Cor.10:15; 2.Thess.1:3), because faith is required to please and serve the Father, grow in godly character, and receive the blessings promised.

ACTS OF FAITH

The writer to the Hebrews wrote that faith is the assurance of things expected and the evidence of things not seen (Heb.11:1). This definition of faith describes what faith is and what is expected to be accomplished by its exercise.

In order to understand why the Father bestows a special type of faith (i.e., the gift of faith; 1.Cor.12:8-9 KJV) to specific individuals in his earthly family during this age, it is necessary to review several accounts of supernatural abilities and authorizations which were exercised before, during, and after Christ's time on earth.

Elijah and Elisha

Elijah and Elisha were two men the Creator gave tremendous supernatural ability to that they could use at their discretion in order to carry out their function as prophets. And they had faith that what they determined to do would happen. The following are some of what they did through the power given to them.

Elijah

- He stopped the rain for three and one half years and then caused it to rain again (1.Kgs.17:1; 18:41-45; Jms.5:17-18).
- He caused the continuous production of flour and cooking oil for a woman who had fed him with the last food she had for her family and later resurrected another woman's dead son (1.Kgs. 17:8-24).
- He brought fire from the sky and vaporized two groups of soldiers and their officers who had been sent to arrest him and bring him to King Ahaziah (2.Kgs.1:1-12).

Elisha

- He caused the continuous production of cooking oil for a prophet's widow, so she could pay her creditors in order to prevent her sons from becoming indentured servants and to provide enough money to sustain her family for some time to come (2.Kgs.4:1-7).
- He gave a woman and her husband the ability to have a son even though her husband was very old. Then, many years later, he raised this same woman's son from the dead (2.Kgs.4:8-36).
- He used his power to purify stew contaminated with poison gourds, increased twenty loaves of bread and grain to feed a hundred hungry men. 2.Kgs.4:38-44), and caused Naaman, captain of the army of Syria, to be healed of leprosy (2.Kgs. 5:1-14).

Both of these men were given discretionary power to manipulate physical laws, resurrect the dead, and create physical things to help people out of difficult situations.

Christ

The apostle John recorded the following about the unlimited power Jesus was given by his heavenly Father:

"Those who believe him discover that God is a fountain of truth. For this one—sent by God—speaks God's words, for God's spirit is upon him without measure or limit" (Jn.3:33-34 TLB).

Christ knew who he was, what he was sent from his Father to do, and that he had absolute power and authority from his Father to do whatever was necessary to complete his mission. Therefore, his faith was absolute, which gave him the confidence to use the tremendous power at his disposal. The following are some of his authorizations of power:

- Power to heal the sick and raise the dead (Lk.7:20-23; Jn.11:39-44)
- Power to control evil spirits (Matt.17:14-18; Mk.1:34)
- Power to manipulate natural law (Matt.8:23-27; 14:21-26)
- Power to create physical things (Matt.14:15-21; 15:32-38; Jn.2:1-11)
- Power to destroy the physical existence (Matt.21:18-20)
- Power to bring curses (Matt.21:18-19; Mk.11:12-14)
- Power to enlist angelic help (Matt.26:53)

Through the discretionary use of spirit- power, he turned water into wine, created food for thousands, healed the sick, cast out demons, resurrected the dead, walked on water, calmed the sea, and had total discernment of spirits and people's thoughts, and much more.

Jesus not only used spirit-power at his discretion but also authorized others to use this same power. Early in his ministry, he taught the message of the Kingdom of God to twelve men he chose to be with him throughout his ministry and he sent them out to teach the same message he taught them:

"Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick" (Lk.9:1-2 KJV). See also Mk.6:7.

Jesus gave these twelve men authority and power over evil spirits and physical illness. Other scriptures show that these twelve were given other authorizations and powers, some of which they were told not to use at that point in time (Lk.9:51-56).

Jesus also taught seventy other men the same message he had taught the twelve and sent them to heal people and perform other miracles in his name (i.e., his authority) as they preached the good news of the Kingdom of God:

"After these things Jesus appointed seventy others also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, where he would go. And he said to them . . . heal the sick that are there, and say to them, The kingdom of God is come near to you" (Lk.10:1-2, 9 KJV Para.).

"And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject to us through your name . . . Behold, I give to you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you" (Lk.10:17, 19 KJV).

All eighty-two men whom Christ sent to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom performed supernatural acts that they were authorized to perform. But, why did these men believe that Christ had the authority to authorize them to proclaim the Kingdom of God and use supernatural power to do the things he told them to do? They believed his message because the Father gave them insight into who Jesus was, they saw him work miracles, and they were actually able to use the power he authorized them to use.

All eighty-two men had the authority to exercise spirit-power at their discretion; they did not have to ask Jesus each time they wanted to exercise this power. This same discretion was given to some in the early church, it is given to some today, and will continue to be given to some of the Father's elect who live during the end of the age just before Christ returns.

Casting out a Demon

Mark, Matthew, and Luke record the account of Jesus removing an evil spirit from a young man that his disciples could not remove. But, what is the reason that these men who were authorized to remove evil spirits from individuals were not able to remove this particular demon?

"A man in the crowd said, "Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a mute spirit that has robbed him of speech. Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not" (Mk.9:17-18 NIV Para.).

Jesus reply to this statement in verse 18, gives us the first clue as to why the disciples could not remove this evil spirit:

"O faithless generation, Jesus replied, how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me. So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into convulsions. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth. Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this? From childhood, he answered. It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do something, take pity on us and help us. Jesus said, If able everything is possible for the one who believes. Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, I do believe; help me overcome my disbelief!" (Mk.9:19-24 NIV Para.).

The English word *believes* in verse 23 is translated from the Greek word *pisteuo*, which can mean to have faith (in, upon, or with respect to, a person or thing), i.e., credit; by implication, to entrust.

The boy's father said he believed, but then qualified his statement by asking Jesus to help him have a belief that was absolute. This man had belief based on what he had come to know. He knew that Jesus had cast out many demons, but he did not have a belief beyond doubt that Jesus could cast this demon out of his son.

After Christ removed the demon from the boy the disciples wanted to know why they could not remove it:

"After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, Why couldn't we drive it out? He replied, This kind can come out only by prayer" (Mk.9:28-29 NIV Para.).

In verse 29, the King James translators of the Bible added the words *and fasting* after the word *prayer*. These added words, which are not in the Textus Receptus, give a false impression of what Jesus said.

Did Jesus pray before he cast out the demon? Nothing in this account indicates he did. So why did he mention prayer? His mention of prayer is the second clue as to why the disciples could not remove this evil spirit.

The disciples were all authorized with the power necessary to heal people and cast out demons, so why would a person who is authorized to remove demons need to pray in order to perform this task?

The English word *prayer* in verse 29 is translated from the Greek word *proseuche*, derived from the Greek word *proseuchomai*, which can mean to pray to God (i.e., supplicate or worship). *Proseuche* means prayer in the context of worship; by implication, an oratory (chapel, i.e., a place of private worship): Jesus was not simply speaking of petitioning God for something, he was referring to participation in a temple worship system.

The disciples did not have absolute confidence in their authority and ability to remove this exceptionally powerful demon. This is why Jesus spoke of them as being faithless.

Faith that is absolute is the kind of faith Jesus had. Jesus had the holy spirit, which made him his Father's temple on earth (see 1.Cor.3:16-17). These men were not yet the Father's temples; therefore, they could not receive the gift of faith from God the Father referred to by the apostle Paul in 1.Cor.12:8-9. The Father's gift of faith gives one absolute confidence in their supernatural abilities.

Matthew's account of this event adds the rest of what Jesus told his disciples about their lack of faith.

"Then the disciples came to Jesus privately, and said, Why could not we cast it out? And Jesus said to them, Because of your unbelief: for truly I say to you, If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, Remove from here to that place over there; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible to you" (Matt.17:19-20 KJV Para.). See also Matt.21:19-21, Lk.17:6.

A person does not have to ask their heavenly Father for help if their faith is unwavering. Unwavering faith is a gift from the Father which gives one absolute confidence that they are authorized to use a supernatural ability at their discretion, and that whatever they determine to happen through their use of this ability will happen. This kind of faith is unwavering in its exercise of spirit-power.

Crossing the Sea of Galilee

While Jesus and his disciples were crossing the sea of Galilee with some other people, a storm came up and the disciples began to worry that the boat would sink and they would die:

"And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And he [Jesus] was in the stern of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they woke him, and said to him, Master, don't you care that we perish? And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And he said to them, Why are you so fearful? how is it that you have no faith? And they were very afraid, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (Mk.4:37-41 KJV).

Jesus' faith in his authority over the physical realm was absolute. Nothing in the physical realm was beyond his ability to control and manipulate. This is the kind of faith the apostle Paul says is a gift from the Father. This is the kind of faith the disciples did not yet have, but would be given when they received the indwelling of the holy spirit.

Peter's Gift of Faith

Acts 3:1-16 contains the account of Peter and John going to the temple at the hour of prayer. While they were entering the temple area, Peter healed a crippled beggar who had asked them for a gift.

Although Peter and John along with other men, had been authorized by Christ to heal people and had done so for about three and a half years, this healing was different. Peter and John were now of the Father's elect with the indwelling of his holy spirit and had been given the gift of faith by the Father. This type of faith gives one the absolute confidence that whatever ability the Father has given a person can be used without reservation at one's discretion to accomplish its intended purpose.

Greater works

The disciples and other people were always amazed at the supernatural power Jesus was able to wield as he went about proclaiming his Father's good news message of salvation and his coming kingdom.

During a conversation with his disciples about his return to his heavenly Father's spirit realm, he made the following promise to them and those who would believe in him in the future:

"Truly, truly, I say to you, He that believes in me, the works that I do he shall also do; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to my Father" (Jn.14:12 KJV Para.).

Believing in Christ entails more than just an acknowledgment that he lived. Many people acknowledge this, even evil spirits believe he and his Father exist (Jms.2:19). However, few people believe to the point that they are willing to truly follow Christ's teachings. In order to be able to do greater works than Christ, a person must be authorized to use the same spirit-power from the Father that Christ used.

SUMMARY

Few people realize the awesome power the Father gave to the early church as a unified body and the discretion with which they were authorized to use this power. Each authorization of supernatural power and ability was to be used to build the early church into a powerful and dynamic force in order to perfect the elect, for the work of the ministry, and to carry out other functions of the church. See Eph.4:7-12; 1.Cor.12:8-10, 28-30; Rom.12:3-8.

Although there are obviously a number of authorizations and powers that were only given to elders, there were many authorizations given to others (men and women) in order to benefit the Father's entire family and perform the work of the church.

Whether or not you are given specialized authorizations and powers from the Father, all supernatural gifts from the Father are useless without the faith to exercise them, because a person must truly believe they can exercise them before they can be used for their intended purpose.

The scriptures show that some of the elect are given unique abilities, attributes, and authorizations of power for the purpose of performing certain functions, responsibilities, and tasks for the benefit of their brothers and sisters in the faith, and that other supernatural gifts from the Father are given to perform the work of the church to proclaim his good news message.

There is a tremendous difference between asking the Father for something and using your delegated authority and power in order to influence, control, or cause an event to happen in the physical or spirit realms. This is why a person with unique authorizations, such as a prophet, evangelist, or one with the ability to heal the sick, cast out evil spirits, or perform other supernatural acts must have absolute confidence that, when they exercise their authority, what they expect to happen will happen.

Faith

The writer to the Hebrews wrote, "*But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*" (Heb.11:6). Clearly, everyone who is called to salvation and receives the holy spirit must have the kind of faith noted in Hebrews 11:6 as a prerequisite to please the Father. This is yet another proof that the gift of faith referred to by Paul in 1.Cor.12:8-9 is above and beyond that required to please the Father through belief in him and his promises.

Although having faith in the Father, Christ, and in their promises to us is a major part of our relationship with them, the scriptures show that this kind of faith alone is not enough to have the confidence required to use authorizations from the Father and Christ beyond that which is normally given each member of the Father's earthly family.

Not all individuals require the gift of faith which is above and beyond the faith required to exercise our authority as one of the elect, such as our authority to communicate with the Father, request things from him, resist evil spirits and their influence, and perform our functions and responsibilities as members of his earthly family.

Not all individuals require the gift of faith from the Father to exercise their authority or ability. But for some individuals, the gift of faith is necessary for them to have absolute confidence in their authority and ability to perform supernatural acts, such as the ability to heal people, remove evil spirits from people, or raise the dead. Without the gift of faith from the Father, none of these can be exercised to their full potential.

The Commission

"And he said to them, You go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. The one that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but the one that does not believe shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name [i.e., his authority] they shall remove evil spirits; they shall speak with languages new to them; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Mk.16:15-18 KJV Para.).

The type of belief to which Jesus refers is based on a knowing and a confidence that is beyond normal human belief. This type of belief (i.e., faith) is a gift from the Father and is only given to those who need it in order to have absolute confidence in their authority and ability to use the powers they are given from him to perform their functions and responsibilities as members of his earthly family.

By B.L. Cocherell

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NOTES AND COMMENTS

CHAPTER

FIVE

WISDOM, KNOWLEDGE, AND UNDERSTANDING

There are some gifts of the spirit that cannot function well without other essential gifts being used in harmony with them. This is the case with wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. When all three are exercised together, the best result possible is produced.

When the gifts of wisdom and knowledge are reviewed in the biblical record they are seldom found mentioned together in one text, but almost always are discussed individually. Nevertheless, they are interdependent. Although the attribute of understanding is not one of the spiritual gifts Paul mentions, it is one of the intellectual attributes that the Creator gave to individuals and that the Father also gives to his elect. Therefore, an analysis of wisdom, knowledge, and understanding cannot be made individually, but must be made predicated on their interrelationship.

As with many other gifts of the spirit, the attributes of wisdom, knowledge, and understanding are not gender specific, these are attributes that each of the elect need and can have to one degree or another, depending on a person's functions and responsibilities within the Father's family.

A depth of knowledge and understanding about what is in the biblical record gives a person the information necessary to practice a righteous life, and give intelligent understandable answers to people about the Father, our Savior, and the plan of salvation. But, knowledge and understanding do not impart wisdom, wisdom is the ability to make correct decisions and give correct answers predicated on the knowledge and understanding a person has.

Wisdom, knowledge, and understanding are all necessary to produce something of value for our heavenly Father and our Savior and to help us practice a righteous life, benefit our brothers and sisters in the faith and other people, and to perform the collective work of the church.

Wisdom is mentioned over 225 times in the biblical record. Sometimes wisdom is interconnected with knowledge and sometimes with understanding. But, each time wisdom is mentioned, the thought is that wisdom is exceptionally valuable and should be desired by those seeking to practice a righteous life.

Spirit of Wisdom

Throughout the biblical record, we see many individuals given abilities beyond that which is mentally or physically possible for humans to acquire through their own effort. And so it is with the wisdom, knowledge, and understanding the Father gives to his elect to help them perform their functions and responsibilities as members of his earthly family.

In the Book of Exodus is the following account of individuals being given the spirit of wisdom in order for them to make holy garments for the priesthood:

"And you take Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister to me in the priest's office, even Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons. And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother for glory and for beauty. And you shall speak to all that are wise hearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron's garments to consecrate him, that he may minister to me in the priest's office" (Ex.28:1-3 KJV Para.).

The English words *wise* and *wisdom* in verse 3 are translated from the Hebrew words *chakam* and *chokmah*, which respectively mean intelligent, skillful or artful and wisdom (in a good sense).

Individuals who were already skilled or talented in a craft had their natural abilities supernaturally enhanced in order for them to produce the clothing and other articles to be worn by the high priest and others of the priesthood (Ex.28:4-43). Exodus, chapters 31 through 36 mentions many individuals who had their abilities enhanced so they could make items for the tabernacle.

According to the writer to the Hebrews, the priesthood and the tabernacle were symbolic representations of things in heaven (Heb. 8:1-5). Because everything associated with the priesthood and the tabernacle must be made as accurately as possible, there was a need for exceptionally skilled artisans and craftsmen.

It is evident from the many accounts of individuals being given various abilities that, when God wants something performed in a specific way, he will choose individuals who already have some ability, talent, or potential to do what he wants done and either enhance what they already have or give them the ability, then communicate to these individuals what he wants them to do.

Wisdom and Intelligence

When the Creator God asked Solomon what he wanted from him, Solomon replied that he wanted wisdom and intelligence to rule Israel. Recorded for our benefit are many of the things Solomon wrote which show the interrelationship between wisdom, knowledge, and intelligence and that God is more than willing to give these attributes and abilities to those who request them and diligently seek them:

"And Solomon went to the brass altar before the Lord, which was at the tabernacle of the congregation, and offered a thousand burnt offerings on it. That night God appeared to Solomon, and said to him, Ask what I shall give you. And Solomon said to God, You have shown great mercy to David my father, and have made me to reign in his stead. Now, O Lord God, let your promise to David my father be established: for you have made me king over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude. Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this your people, that are so great?" (2.Chron.1:6-10 KJV Para.).

The English word *knowledge* in verse 10 is translated from the Hebrew word *madda*, which means intelligence and awareness. In the context of verses 10 through 12, both of these gifts work together, which allowed Solomon to not only know something but also perceive how to use what he knows.

Solomon was well aware of what was required to govern the nation of Israel and he understood that he needed tremendous wisdom and intellect in order to rule as his father did.

"And God said to Solomon, Because this was in your heart, and you have not asked riches, wealth, or honor, nor the life of your enemies, neither yet have asked long life; but have asked wisdom and intelligence for yourself, that you may judge my people, over whom I have made you king: Wisdom and intelligence is granted to you; and I will give you riches, and wealth, and honor, such as none of the kings have had that have been before you, neither shall there any after you have the like" (2.Chron.1:11-12 KJV Para.).

The Creator was extremely pleased with Solomon because he did not ask for material things; but he asked for wisdom and the intelligence with which to make correct decisions. No human, except Christ, has had or will ever have the same amount of wisdom and intelligence Solomon was given.

This account also tells us that a person must have both wisdom and intellect in order to have the ability to make correct decisions.

"God gave Solomon great wisdom and understanding, and a mind with broad interests. In fact, his wisdom excelled that of any of the wise men of the East, including those in Egypt. He was wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite and Heman, Calcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol, and he was famous among all the surrounding nations. He was the author of 3,000 proverbs and wrote 1,005 songs. He was a great naturalist, with interest in animals, birds, snakes, fish, and trees—from the great cedars of Lebanon down to the tiny hyssop which grows in cracks in the wall. And kings from many lands sent their ambassadors to him for his advice" (1.Kgs.4:29-34 TLB).

In verse 29, the English word *understanding* is translated from the Hebrew word *tabuwn*, which means intelligence.

Although Solomon's wisdom and intellect were supernaturally enhanced, he still had to choose to make correct decisions, which he failed to do in his old age. Being extremely wise, knowledgeable, and intelligent is no guarantee a person will make wise decisions. Many such individuals choose to make foolish decisions and do foolish things.

The following are some of what Solomon wrote about wisdom, the need to have a keen understanding about what is known, and the acquiring of wisdom, knowledge, and understanding:

"My son, if you will receive my words, and hide my commandments with you; So that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding. Yes, if you cry after knowledge, and lift up your voice for understanding" (Prov.2:1-3 KJV Para.).

Verse 3 tells us that we should seek knowledge and the ability to understand what we come to know. Knowledge and understanding are very different things; many people have an academic knowledge of the Bible, but do not understand its many physical and spiritual concepts, laws, precepts, and principles.

"If you seek her [i.e., wisdom and knowledge] as silver, and search for her as for hid treasures; Then shall you understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God" (Prov.2:4-5 KJV Para.).

The English word *understand* in verse 4 is translated from the Hebrew word *biyn*, which means to separate mentally (or distinguish), i.e., (generally) to understand.

"For the Lord gives wisdom: out of his mouth comes knowledge and understanding" (Prov.2:6 KJV Para.).

The English word *knowledge* in verse 6 is translated from the Hebrew word *da' ath*, which means to know.

"He [i.e., God] lays up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a protector to them that walk uprightly. He keeps the paths of judgment, and preserves the way of his saints. Then shall you understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yes, every good path" (Prov.2:7-9 KJV Para.).

Solomon understood that God is all wise, has all knowledge and understanding, and will give it to his holy ones in order for them to live a righteous life and receive its benefits.

"When wisdom enters into your heart, and knowledge is pleasant to your soul. Discretion [i.e., prudent planing] will protect you, and understanding will guard. To deliver you from the way of evil, from the man that speaks perversity" (Prov.2:10-12 KJV Para.).

The essence of verses 10, 11, and 12 is that a righteous person finds pleasure in making wise decisions predicated on knowledge and understanding derived from God's truth. But, why is this? The reason is that a righteous person knows that they are pleasing God with their life. A person who plans their life around the knowledge and understanding of God's laws, precepts, and principles builds a protective barrier against the evil influence of wicked individuals and evil spirits.

"Happy is the one that finds wisdom, and the one that gets understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. It is more precious than rubies: and all the things you can desire are not to be compared to it. Length of days is in its right hand; and in its left hand riches and honor. Its ways are ways of pleasantness, and all its paths are peace, it is a tree of life to them that lay hold on it: and happy is every one that retains it" (Prov.3:13-18 KJV Para.).

Truly, the person that has godly wisdom and understanding is happy, because that person knows the result of having both of these attributes.

"The Lord by wisdom has founded the earth; by understanding has he established the heavens. By his knowledge the depths divided, and the clouds dropped dew" (Prov.3:19-20 KJV Para.).

How wise was God when he formed this physical existence? What kind of wisdom, knowledge, and understanding did it take to ensure that everything in it was in dynamic balance in order to produce a continuous self-regulating environment with billions of symbiotic relationships?

"Get wisdom, get understanding: do not forget it; neither turn away from the words of my mouth. Do not forsake it, and it will preserve you: love it, and it will keep you. Wisdom is first; therefore get wisdom: and with all your getting get understanding. Exalt it, and it will promote you: it shall bring to you honor, when you do embrace it" (Prov.4:5-8 KJV Para.) See also Prov.8:11-12; Job 28:12-18.

The decisions we make in this life will determine whether or not we will become an immortal spirit- being. Additionally, these decisions will determine our rewards and positions of rulership in our heavenly Father's kingdom. Because this is true, we must do our best to make wise decisions predicated on our knowledge and understanding of our Father's laws, precepts, and principles, and his purpose for calling us to salvation during this age.

The prophet Daniel recorded the following promise to the elect for being wise:

"And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Dan.12:3 KJV).

The Gospel Age

The following are several things Christ said that tell us each one of us should be seeking the gifts of wisdom, knowledge, and understanding in order to fulfill our heavenly Father's purpose for granting us the opportunity for salvation during this gospel age:

"And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. You go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy spirit: Teaching them to observe all things whatever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world. Be it so" (Matt.28:18-20 KJV Para.).

Much of the task given to the elect is a function and responsibility of the ministry, but much is to be shared by all of the elect in a team effort. Especially, the task of teaching the Father's newly adopted children how to live a righteous life. Those who have diligently been living righteously for many years should have reached a level of spiritual maturity to teach the practice of a righteous life by word and example, which requires exercising wisdom, knowledge, and understanding.

While speaking of the events that will happen before his return, Christ made the following promise to the elect who are persecuted for living righteously, being a witness of his authority over human affairs, and performing their personal and collective functions and responsibilities:

"But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. And it shall turn to you for a testimony. Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what you shall answer: For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist" (Lk.21:12-15 KJV).

Any of the elect who find themselves in these situations are promised that they will not have to devise clever answers to give to their persecutors, because they will be given the wisdom to say the things that are impossible to refute. Logically, these individuals must already know and understand foundational aspects of God's truth to draw upon when they are given this wisdom.

Paul and Wisdom

The apostle Paul wrote the following to the elect at Corinth about human wisdom and the Father's gift of wisdom which is above and beyond the ability of those without the holy spirit to acquire:

"And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God" (1.Cor.2:1-5 NKJV).

The English word *power* in verse 5 is translated from the Greek word *dunamis*, which means force (literally or figuratively); specially, miraculous power (usually by implication, a miracle itself). It is through the Father's spirit-power that we are given wisdom above and beyond that of normal humans.

Paul's message was salvation through Christ's sacrifice. Additionally, he demonstrated his authority to proclaim this message through supernatural abilities given to him by the Father.

"However we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden, which God ordained before the world to our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1.Cor.2:6-8 KJV Para.).

The wisdom Paul wrote of is wisdom hidden from the world along with the knowledge and understanding which can only be obtained from God the Father as a gift. This is the wisdom that Paul, other apostles, prophets, teachers, evangelists, elders, and many other individuals of the early church possessed in order to carry out their functions and responsibilities.

"But as it is written, Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man, the things that God has prepared for them that love him. But God has revealed them to us by his spirit: for the spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man, but the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knows no man, but the spirit of God. Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us by God" (1.Cor.2:9-12 KJV Para.).

Paul emphasizes that knowledge pertaining to the spirit realm and to God the Father is freely given by him to his earthly children.

"Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the spirit teaches; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural person does not receive the things of the spirit of God: for they are foolishness to them neither can they know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1.Cor.2:13-14 KJV Para.).

A person without the indwelling of the holy spirit only has access to human wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. But, each of the elect have access to spiritual wisdom, knowledge, and understanding, which is a normal function of the indwelling of the holy spirit. However, the Father determines who has a need for a higher order of these attributes above and beyond that which is a normal function of the holy spirit.

"Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. But to each one is given the manifestation of the spirit for the common good. For to one is given the word of wisdom through the spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same spirit" (1.Cor.12:4-8 NASU).

The type of wisdom and knowledge mentioned in verse 8 is not human; it is a supernatural ability to be intrinsically wise and to have certain physical and spiritual knowledge, which is given to specific individuals for a specific purpose on a case by case basis.

The Elect at Ephesus

To the elect at Ephesus, Paul mentions the following three supernatural abilities he has asked the Father to give them:

"Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love to all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints" (Eph.1:15-18 KJV).

In verse 17, the English word *revelation* is translated from the Greek word *apokalupsis*, which means disclosure. *Knowledge* is translated from the Greek word *epignosis*, which in the context of verse 17 means total discernment.

Paul wants the elect at Ephesus to have revealed to them the things about their heavenly Father that are kept secret from the unrighteous, so they can have confidence in the Father's promises to them. This tells us that the elect at Ephesus did not have a teacher within their congregation with the gifts of wisdom, knowledge, and insight above and beyond that which is available to each of the elect through a diligent and prayerful study of the biblical record and meditation on what one finds there.

To the Colossians

After his introductory comments to the elect at Colossi, we again see the need for the gifts of knowledge, wisdom, and understanding above and beyond what is normally available to each of the elect. Perhaps this was necessary in order for them to progress beyond their current level of spiritual growth and to have the tools to help them fulfill the purpose for their calling in a greater way:

"For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that you might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That you might walk worthy of the Lord to all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Col.1:9-10 KJV). See also 2.Tim.2:1-7.

The English word *understanding* in verse 9 is translated from the Greek word *sunesis*, which means intelligence or (concretely) the intellect.

Paul and others with him are beseeching the Father to bestow on these elect a spiritual attribute. The use of the word *sunesis* shows that this type of intelligence is above and beyond a normal humans ability to acquire. Verse 9 shows another gift from the Father, which gives a person the supernatural ability to acquire and apply knowledge and skills.

Grace, Peace, and Knowledge

At the beginning and at the end of the apostle Peter's second letter, he gives instructions regarding knowledge. Both of these instructions have to do with the gift of knowledge, its increase, and its importance to our relationship with our Father and our Savior. There are several fundamental principles in what Peter wrote in the beginning and ending of his letter that are extremely important to becoming more spiritually mature and godly in character.

In order to understand what Peter wrote about grace, peace, and the knowledge of the Father and Christ, it is necessary to examine the meanings of several Greek words used in both texts:

"Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God [God the Father] and our Savior Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied to you through the knowledge of God [God the Father], and of Jesus our Lord, in the manner his divine power has bestowed to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us to glory and virtue" (2.Pet. 1:1-3 KJV Para.). See also verses 4-10.

Grace

The English word *grace* in verse 2 is translated from the Greek word *charis*, which can mean that which affords joy, pleasure, delight, sweetness, charm, loveliness, grace of speech, good-will, loving-kindness, favor, and what is due to grace. *Charis* can also mean the spiritual condition of one governed by the power of divine influence, divine influence upon the heart, and its reflection in one's life, and a token or a proof of grace.

Regardless of the nuance, *charis* (i.e., grace) bestowed on us has its origin with our heavenly Father and results in a divine influence on our heart, and its reflection in our life. See 2.Jn.3; Rom.1:7-9; 1.Cor.1:3.

Peace

The English word *peace* in verse 2 is translated from the Greek word *eirene*. One of the nuances of the word *eirene* is that it can mean a state or time of peace in a relationship between several individuals. This seems to be the peace to which Peter refers. It is this peace (i.e., a peaceful relationship) each of us must have with our heavenly Father and our Savior in order to fulfill the purpose for our existence.

Multiplied

The English word *multiplied* in verse 2 is translated from the Greek word *plethuno*, which means to multiply.

Knowledge

The English word *knowledge* is translated from the Greek word *epignosis*, which in the context of verses 2 and 3 means total discernment.

A key to understanding how the spiritual attributes of grace (i.e., the Father's divine influence on our heart, and its reflection in our life) and peace (i.e., a peaceful relationship with the Father and Christ) are multiplied to us (i.e., intensified in us) is to understand that this can only be accomplished through truly knowing our heavenly Father and our Savior, which is vital to our spiritual growth in order to become more like them.

Peter advises us to grow in the godly characteristics he mentions, but how do we gain this type of knowledge other than studying the biblical record? Peter answers this question in verse 3:

"In the manner his divine power has bestowed to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us to glory and virtue" (2.Pet.1:3 KJV Para.).

It is through the power of the Father's holy spirit that he bestows all of his spiritual gifts. Each of us has access to our heavenly Father through our high priest Jesus Christ in order to ask our Father to increase the gifts he has already given us and to ask him to give us more spiritual abilities, attributes, or authorizations.

At the end of his letter, Peter encourages the elect to grow in grace (i.e., the Father's divine influence on our heart, and its reflection in our life) and to truly know our Savior:

"You therefore, beloved, seeing you knew these things before, beware lest you also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in the grace [charis], and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen. (2.Pet.3:17-18 KJV).

In verse 18 the English word *grow* is translated from the Greek word *auzano*, which means to increase. The English word *knowledge* is translated from the Greek word *gnosis*, which means to know or knowledge.

In order to truly increase the attributes of grace (i.e., the Father's divine influence on our heart, and its reflection in our life) and to know more about our Savior, we must ask the Father to increase the degree of the gift of knowledge he has already given us (1.Jn.5:19-20) and follow through with diligent and prayerful study of the biblical record and meditation on what we find there.

Know the Father

In a conversation with the Pharisees, Jesus said, "*You neither know me, nor my Father: if you had known me, you should have also known my Father*" (Jn.8:19). And in a conversation with his disciples about his going back to his heavenly Father and his death and resurrection, Jesus explained to them that, if they had had an intimate knowledge of him, they would have known what the Father was like, because he was a reflection of his Father. See Jn.14:9-11.

It is through having an intimate knowledge and understanding of Christ's character and teachings that we are able to know what the Father is like. Therefore, it seems logical that the apostle Peter used the word *charis* (i.e., grace) to indicate the increase of divine influence that should be reflected in our life in order for us to better know the Father and Christ. But, why is this important to growing in the attributes of grace, peace, and knowledge?

The increase of a godly attitude, behavior, and character in one's life is the result of allowing the Father and Christ through the holy spirit to influence one's life. It is also evident that in order to become more like our Father and our Savior, we must know and cultivate the Father's influence and presence in our life (i.e., his grace in our life); hence, Peter's instruction and warning.

An important point to note is that Peter says grace is to be increased through the knowledge of the Father and of Jesus our Lord (2.Pet.1:2). This is important because it reinforces the necessity for each of us to be a willing, dedicated, responsible, and teachable student of the Father's truth in order to learn and practice the attitude, behavior, and character of the Father and Christ.

The Prophet Hosea

The prophet Hosea recorded the following statement and prophecy by the Creator to ancient Israel about knowledge, which also applies to those called to salvation in this age:

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because you have rejected knowledge, I will also reject you, that you shall be no priest to me: seeing you have forgotten the law of your God, I will also forget your children" (Hos.4:6 KJV).

Many called to salvation in this age are destroyed because of a lack of knowledge about the Father, Christ, foundational biblical laws, precepts, and principles, evil spirits, the spirit realm, and what is expected as one of the elect. Clearly, the gifts of wisdom, knowledge, and understanding from the Father are just as important today as they were for members of the early church.

If Any Lack Wisdom

If we are to grow in or acquire any spiritual attribute or quality, we must know what it is, what it does, why it is needed, how it works, and how to use it. Growing in any spiritual attribute requires a sincere desire and effort. In order to grow toward spiritual maturity, a person must exercise faith that is belief by following the instructions given in the Bible concerning spiritual growth.

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that gives to all liberally, and does not scold; and it shall be given them" (Jms.1:5 KJV Para.).

Just because a person has knowledge and understanding does not mean that person will make wise decisions. Making wise decisions is sometimes difficult; therefore, if we feel we need help in this area, we should ask our heavenly Father and claim his promise to give us help in time of need. See Matt.7:7-11; Heb.4:16; 1.Jn.5:14-15.

"But ask in faith, without hesitating. For he that hesitates is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. That person should not think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A man who vacillates is unstable in all his ways" (Jms.1:6-8 KJV Para.).

Our heavenly Father is more than willing to give us wisdom, knowledge, and understanding and to increase these when necessary; however, we must put forth the effort to study his word and meditate on what we find there. Additionally, we must ask him to increase our knowledge, understanding, and wisdom in order for us to serve him and fulfill the reason he has called us. Might, maybe, and perhaps are not words to use when asking the Father for something. Either we need or desire something from the Father or we do not.

Ask for These Abilities

Wisdom, Knowledge, and understanding, are extremely important to being equipped to fulfill our functions and responsibilities as one of the elect; therefore, we should ask our heavenly Father to give us these spiritual attributes and abilities for the following reasons:

- We truly desire to correctly worship and serve our heavenly Father whole heartedly.
- We want to serve our brothers and sisters in a greater capacity.
- We want insight into how to overcome our old nature and make wise decisions.
- We want to answer people intelligently who question us about our Father's good news message and the way of life we practice.

Solomon asked for wisdom and the intellectual ability to govern Israel. How much more do we in this age need wisdom, knowledge, and understanding as we make every-day decisions in our practice of a righteous life and decisions about how to fulfill our personal and collective functions and responsibilities before Christ returns?

Although the holy spirit already imparts a degree of wisdom, knowledge, and understanding to us, if we want these to be increased, we must ask the Father and follow through with diligent and prayerful study of the biblical record and meditation on what we find there.

The apostles urging and instructing the elect of the early church about the gifts of wisdom, knowledge, and understanding tells us that we who have been called to salvation in this gospel age also need these spiritual attributes which are available from the Father to those who ask him for the right reasons.

No person is given perfect wisdom, knowledge, and understanding the instant they receive the holy spirit. A review of the apostle's letters to the churches shows that the acquisition of spiritual wisdom, knowledge, and understanding is through communicating with the Father, asking for what is needed, and studying and meditating on what is written for us in the biblical record.

By B.L. Cocherell

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CHAPTER

SIX

MIRACLES, SIGNS, AND WONDERS

In 1. Corinthians, chapter 12, Paul mentions several supernatural abilities the Father gives to specific individuals. One of these is the gift of miracles which Paul mentions three times:

"To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; . . . And God has set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, different languages. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles?" (1. Cor. 12:10, 28-31 KJV Para.).

In these verses, the English word *miracles* is translated from the Greek word *dunamis*, which means miraculous power (usually by implication, a miracle itself).

Although there are many supernatural abilities the Father gives to individuals, the gift of miracles cannot be identified as one specific ability, such as the ability to heal people or to speak different languages.

In order to begin to understand why the Father gives this extremely powerful ability to some of his elect, it is important to review some of the biblical accounts that show individuals performing miracles, signs, and wonders before the advent of Christ.

Ancient Israel

This review of the ability to perform miracles, signs, and wonders begins with several accounts of individuals in ancient Israel who were authorized to use this power in the physical realm.

During Moses' encounter with the Creator at the burning bush, the Creator told him what he wanted him to do, but Moses protested and said that no one would believe him or pay attention to him. In answer to Moses, the Creator provided him with three visual demonstrations of miraculous power to prove to others that the Creator had indeed sent him: 1) Moses' staff turning into a snake and then to a staff, 2) his hand turning white and then to its normal color, and 3) his taking water from the river and turning it to blood after he poured it on the ground. See Ex.4:1-9.

In Exodus 4:8-9, the Creator identifies these supernatural demonstrations as *owth* which can mean (in the sense of appearing); a signal (literally or figuratively), as a flag, beacon, monument, omen, prodigy, and evidence. In the context of verses 8 and 9 the word *owth* means evidence.

"And the Lord said to Moses, When you return to Egypt, see that you do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in your hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go" (Ex.4:21 KJV Para.).

In verse 21, the English word *wonders* is translated from the Hebrew word *mowpheth*, which has the sense of conspicuousness; a miracle; by implication, a token or omen.

The demonstration of these supernatural works before Pharaoh were meant to show him the power Moses possessed and that he was a messenger sent from the Creator God.

In verses 27-31, Aaron and Moses gather the Israelite elders, demonstrate these supernatural works to them, and the people believed what they told them:

"And the Lord said to Aaron, Go into the wilderness to meet Moses. And he went, and met him in the mount of God, and kissed him. And Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord who had sent him, and all the signs which he had commanded him. And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel: And Aaron spoke all the words which the Lord had spoken to Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people. And the people believed: and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked on their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshiped" (Ex.4:27-31 KJV).

Although it was the Creator who brought all ten plagues on Egypt, it was through Moses that these plagues were initiated. Moses also opened the sea to allow Israel to cross over to the other side and then closed it to destroy the Egyptian army. He also held in his hands the rod, which symbolized the authority God had given him, to give Israel victory over Amalek. From what is recorded about Moses, it seems that he performed even more supernatural works than are recorded in the biblical record. See Deut.34:12.

Although there are several Hebrew words used to describe miracles, signs, and wonders, each of these Hebrew words are used at various times to emphasize that a specific supernatural event is evidence of the Creator's power being exercised by him or by one of his servants to benefit people, warn people to repent of sin and obey God, or punish the unrepentant.

The following are several of the miracles, signs, and wonders recorded in the biblical record that the prophets Elijah and Elisha performed at their discretion:

Elijah

- Controlled weather (1.Kgs.17:1; 18:41-45; Jms.5:17-18)
- Created food (1.Kgs.17:8-16)
- Resurrected the dead (1.Kgs.17:17-24)
- Took men's life by fire (2.Kgs.1:1-12)

Elisha

- Created food (2.Kgs.4:1-7; 2.Kgs.4:42-44)
- Caused child birth (2.Kgs.4:11-17)
- Healed leprosy through ritual (2.Kgs.5:1-14)
- Cursed 42 very young men with death (2.Kgs.2:23-24)
- Removed poison from food (2.Kgs.4:38-41)
- Resurrected the dead (1.Kgs.4:18-36)
- Turned a poison water spring into pure water (2.Kgs.2:19-22)

Christ's Ministry

During Christ ministry, he performed many miracles, signs, and wonders as he went about proclaiming the Kingdom of God and his Father's message of salvation. Although many of the things Christ did through the awesome power he could use at his discretion were recorded, according to the apostle John, much of what he did was not recorded:

"And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book" (Jn.20:30 KJV).

"And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen" (Jn.21:25 KJV). See also Acts 2:21-24.

The following are several of the miracles, signs, and wonders that Christ performed during his ministry:

- Changed water into wine (Jn.2:1-11)
- Created money (Matt.17:25-27)
- Created food for thousands (Matt.14:15-21; 15:32-38)
- Healed the sick, the blind, and removed evil spirits (Lk.7:20-23)
- Manipulated physical laws (Matt.8:23-27; 14:21-26)
- Pronounced curses (Matt.21:18-20; Mk.11:12-14)
- Resurrected the dead (Jn.11:39-44)

The Early Church

The New Testament record tells us little about what individuals did with the tremendous supernatural power they had been given in order to proclaim the gospel message, but it does record some of the things they did which were above and beyond healing people and removing evil spirits from them.

During the ministerial conference held in Jerusalem to discuss whether or not non-Israelite men should be circumcised, Barnabas and Paul were allowed to tell of their experiences with non-Israelites:

"Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them" (Acts 15:12 KJV).

We are not told what these miracles and wonders were that Barnabas and Paul related to the apostles and elders gathered at this conference; we are just told that this is what they did as they preached the gospel among the Gentiles.

Stephen

Stephen was one of the seven men chosen to serve the widows. He was given the ability to perform supernatural works which were above and beyond the other gifts of the spirit which are mentioned by the apostle Paul:

"And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders, and miracles among the people" (Acts 6:8 KJV).

Perhaps Stephen also resurrected the dead just like Elijah, Elisha, Christ, Peter, and Paul, but we are not told exactly what he did with his supernatural ability. However, what he did brought much attention to him and the message of salvation he preached. This account of Stephen also shows that a man does not have to be an elder to receive the gift of miracles.

The Two Philips

There are two Philips mentioned in the Book of Acts—Philip the apostle and Philip the evangelist who was one of the seven chosen to serve the widows. Because only Philip the evangelist is clearly identified in the Book of Acts, it is not possible to know which one is being spoken of in all of the references to Philip. However, it is certain that both Philips were given supernatural abilities because of their functions and responsibilities to proclaim the gospel message and the Philip mentioned in Acts, chapter 8, had the ability to work miracles:

"Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ to them. And the people with one accord gave heed to those things which Philip spoke, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did" (Acts 8:5-6 KJV).

The English word *miracles* in verse 6 is translated from the Greek word *semeion*, which seems to mean something seen i.e., an indication of something:

"For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city" (Acts 8:7-8 KJV).

Verses 7 and 8 identify several of the supernatural works Philip performed as he went through the city preaching the gospel of the kingdom. Verses 9 through 13 show that many believed his message and even a famous sorcerer believed and followed Philip, watching him perform other supernatural works:

"Now for some time a man named Simon had practiced sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria. He boasted that he was someone great, and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, "This man is the divine power known as the Great Power." They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his magic. But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Simon himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw" (Acts 8:9-13 NIV).

The English word *signs* in verse 13 is translated from the Greek word *semaino*, which seems to mean a mark to indicate something. The English word *miracles* is translated from the Greek word *dunamis*, which means miraculous power (usually by implication, a miracle itself).

Although these scriptures do not say exactly what these miracles and signs were that Philip did, these supernatural works may not have been the ones mentioned in Acts 8:7-8, but something different which gave credibility to what he was saying about Christ and salvation.

Peter

Shortly after the beginning of the early church, Ananias and Sapphira, a married couple, dedicated all the money that they had received from a land sale to God. Because this money was dedicated to God, it was considered holy and it belonged to God. But, Ananias and Sapphira violated the law of holiness by first stealing a part of what they had dedicated to God, and then lying about the price of the land. Because of their violation of the law of holiness, they died through the apostle Peter's power to punish evil people.

After Ananias died and was carried away to be buried, about three hours later, his wife Sapphira came and Peter questioned her about the price of the land. She lied to Peter and also died.

"And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things. And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch" (Acts 5:11-12 KJV).

Although it is not recorded what these signs and wonders were, the context of verse 12 seems to indicate that they were performed in Solomon's porch on the temple grounds where people were allowed to gather.

Some might assume that the reference to the hands of the apostles is metaphorical and does not mean that the apostles used their hands in performing supernatural works. However, there are many accounts in the biblical record which show a hand or both hands used as instruments to exercise supernatural power in order to initiate and accomplish tangible results in the physical realm.

One or both hands are often used in the biblical record to visually symbolize an action or an event that is to occur; however, reference to the use of one or both hands is often more than just symbolism. There are many biblical accounts showing that supernatural power is exercised and projected into the physical realm through the hands.

Cursed With Blindness

Acts, chapter 13 contains the account of Paul and Barnabas on the island of Paphos being called by a public official to speak to him about God's truth. But, a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Elymas who was benefitting from his association with the official was trying to discourage him from listening to Paul and Barnabas, so Paul cursed him with blindness:

"O full of all subtlety and all mischief, you child of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is on you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. When the deputy saw what was done, believed, and was amazed at the doctrine of the Lord" (Acts 13:10-12 KJV Para.).

There seem to be two reasons for Paul blinding Elymas:

1. To warn Elymas to stop interfering with God's servants who were teaching his truth.
2. To convince the official that he and Barnabas were telling him the truth about Christ and salvation.

Paul and Barnabas in Iconium

After spending many days preaching the gospel at Perga in Pamphylia, Paul and Barnabas went to Iconium where they preached the gospel to both Jews and Greeks and performed supernatural works to prove they were sent from God and that their message was true:

"And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spoke, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed. But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren. Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony to the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands" (Acts 14:1-3 KJV). See also 2.Cor.12:10-13.

Paul's Special Miracles

"And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: So that from his body were brought to the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them" (Acts 19:11-12 KJV).

The English word *special* in verse 11 is translated from the Greek word *tugchano*, which in the context of verse 11, means to bring to pass.

The English word *handkerchiefs* in verse 12 is translated from the Greek word *soudarion*; a *sudarium* (of Latin origin), which means a sweat-cloth, i.e., a towel for wiping the perspiration from the face or binding the face of a corpse. The English word *aprons* is translated from the Greek word *simikinthion* (of Latin origin), which basically means a narrow covering.

The account of Paul healing the sick and casting out evil spirits through the use of a cloth or apron sent from him does not tell us if this method of healing was to be applied within or outside the congregations. However, if cloths were used within congregations, it seems logical that, whenever the aprons and cloths were sent, there was no elder available to cast out demons or perform the healing ritual as set forth by the apostle James. Otherwise, there would have been no need for these special miracles. Moreover, there is no mention of Paul anointing a cloth or apron with oil as some believe. What is clear is that this was a special authorization given to the apostle Paul.

Although not recorded in the biblical record, it is obvious that Paul would have also sent along instructions detailing what to do and say surrounding the use and disposal of the cloth. In the case of the removal of an evil spirit, it seems logical that Paul delegated authority to cast out evil spirits to the one who was to perform this task on his behalf through the use of the cloth or apron.

This account does not reveal whether or not the people who received healing or the removal of evil spirits were of the elect or not. However, we know that the holy spirit and evil spirits are not compatible; therefore, it would seem that the evil spirits were removed from individuals without the indwelling of the holy spirit. For a more detailed study of this subject get a copy of *Survive and Thrive as a Follower of Christ*, ISBN 978-0-9844608-6-1 or visit www.bibleresearch.org.

SUMMARY

We are given very little insight into the discretionary authority and power the Creator gave to individuals before he came to the earth as the Messiah. But, we are told that Jesus had unlimited authority and power to use at his discretion and that he authorized his twelve disciples and seventy other men with tremendous supernatural power in order for them to perform the responsibility he gave them to proclaim the Kingdom of God.

These men had the power to cast out evil spirits and heal the sick, and on one occasion when Jesus was not received into a Samaritan village, James and John asked for permission to command fire to come down from heaven to destroy the villagers. Jesus did not say that the brothers did not have the power to do this; he just kept them from doing it. See Lk.9:51-56.

Jesus' authority over the physical and spiritual existence was absolute. Nothing in the physical and spirit realms was beyond his ability to do if he wanted to do it. This is the same kind of authority and power that a person who has the ability to do miracles has.

Because Christ said that the elect would do greater works than he did (Jn. 14:11-12) it is logical to assume that some, if not all, of the miracles, signs, and wonders that were authorized to be performed in the past will also be authorized for those to whom the Father gives the gift of miracles. The Sovereign God's power is absolute. When he gives the gift of miracles to an individual, that person has absolute authority to use that power at their discretion within the boundaries the Father has set.

Few people realize the awesome power the Father gave to the early church as a unified body and the discretion with which they were authorized to use this power. The gift of miracles helped to build the early church into a powerful and dynamic entity.

The Two Witnesses

The two men called the Two Witnesses in the Book of Revelation, chapter 11 play a pivotal role in fulfilling prophecies about the calling of humanity to repentance and the proclaiming of God the Father's good news message to the world. The scriptures show that these two men will be given tremendous authority and power from God the Father in order to accomplish their mission just before the first resurrection and the return of Jesus Christ to conquer the earth and establish the Kingdom of God. See Matt.24:14.

"And I will give to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two lamp-stands [candlesticks] before the Lord of the earth" (Rev.11:3-4 Para.).

Their proclamation of the gospel as a witness and warning to the world will be accomplished over a period of 3½ years with unimaginable power, signs, and wonders:

"If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want" (Rev.11:5-6 NIV).

The English word *devours* in verse 5 is translated from the Greek word *katethio*, which means to eat down, i.e., devour (literally or figuratively).

These men have the same ability as Elijah did to vaporize anyone who attempts to stop them from completing their ministry. They are also given the discretion to cause tremendous destruction on the earth in order to prove that what they say is from the Sovereign God.

It seems that these two men will have the kind of faith, authority, and power that Christ spoke of to his disciples:

"For truly I say to you, That whoever shall say to this mountain, You be removed, and cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he says shall come to pass; he shall have whatever he says" (Mk.11:23 KJV Para.). See also Matt.17:20-21; 21:21.

"And the Lord said, If you had faith as a grain of mustard seed, you might say to this sycamine tree, You be pulled up by the root, and you be planted in the sea; and it will obey you" (Lk.17:6 KJV Para.).

These and other scriptures pertaining to the gift of miracles shows that this gift allows the recipient to resurrect the dead, create and destroy, control and manipulate the physical realm, all of which are done to do good works, proclaim the gospel message, and warn people of Christ's return to conquer the earth and establish the Kingdom of God.

By B.L. Cocherell

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NOTES AND COMMENTS

— CHAPTER —
SEVEN

PROPHECY AND PROPHETS

When we analyze the gift of prophecy as it pertains to making predictions about future events, it is not difficult to determine its application. But, this is not the case with determining the function and responsibility of prophets in the early church, because it is not always clear from the Greek language if the text is speaking of a prophet who has the ability to predict future events or a person fulfilling a completely different function. Additionally, the gift of prophecy is not always given to a person fulfilling the office of a prophet within the church as noted in Acts 19:1-7; 21:8-9.

Without doing an in-depth analysis of several texts in which prophecy and prophets are discussed, it is difficult to determine if the usage of the word *prophet* is referring to a person exercising the gift of prophecy, the office of a prophet as a spiritual leader, or the gift of being an inspired teacher.

Ancient Israel

In ancient Israel there were both men and women who functioned as prophets; however, it is important to understand that there were distinct differences between a prophet and a prophetess in authority, responsibility, and how each was to perform their individual function as a prophet, just as there is during this gospel age of salvation.

When the subject of prophets and prophetesses is reviewed, it is important to understand that they are always directly chosen by God for a specific task, such as delivering a message of repentance to God's people, foretelling or delivering punishment for disobedience to God, blessing or cursing people or nations on behalf of God, foretelling future events, and in some cases, teaching spiritual lessons.

Male prophets were the Creator's personal representatives to Israel, other nations, and people. These men not only predicted future events and issued warnings, but the Creator also gave some of them tremendous supernatural power to work all kinds of miracles, signs, and wonders. Some of these prophets controlled weather, created food, caused child birth, healed people, resurrected the dead, took men's life by fire, cursed individuals with death, and altered physical elements.

Although male prophets in ancient Israel were at times leaders of God's people, prophetesses were never shown as being authorized to hold positions of leadership by the Creator God. For a detailed explanation of the function and responsibility of a prophetesses in ancient Israel get a copy of the Book *Survive and Thrive as a Follower of Christ*, ISBN 978-0-9844608-6-1 or visit www.bibleresearch.org.

Women prophets were the Creator's personal representatives, just as men were. The biblical record shows that the prophetess Deborah advised the Israelites concerning God's will for them, gave them warnings from God, and conveyed knowledge of prophetic events. Huldah the prophetess warned King Josiah and the people of Judah of punishment because of their rebellion against God, and Anna the prophetess spoke of the advent of Christ. But, none of these women were given positions of leadership.

The Early Church

Much of what is written about prophets and prophetesses in the early church is difficult to understand in many translations of the Textus Receptus, because many translators used the same word in their language to translate different Greek words referring to the functions of prophets which obscures the meaning of the text.

Therefore, it is important to understand the meaning and nuances of the Greek words relating to prophets in the context of each scripture in order to determine if the person being written about is functioning in the office of a prophet, a prophet delivering a prophetic message or warning, or an inspired teacher.

It is apparent from 1. Corinthians 12:1-12 that the supernatural abilities the Father bestows on specific individuals were meant to be used in a unified organizational structure to perform the collective work in which he has called each of the elect to participate. In verses 8-11, Paul mentions several abilities the Father gives, one which is the gift of prophecy:

"For to one is given by the spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same spirit; To another faith by the same spirit; to another the gift of healing by the same spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another different kinds of languages; to another the interpretation of languages: All these are the work of one and the same spirit, and he gives them to each person, as he wills" (1. Cor. 12:8-11 KJV Para.).

The English word *prophecy* in verse 10 is translated from the Greek word *propheteia*, which means prediction.

All references in the New Testament (KJV) where the word prophecy is used it is translated from the Greek word *propheteia*, the only exception is in 2. Pet. 1:19, where it is translated from the Greek word *prophetikos*, which relates to the prediction of events (i.e., prophetic).

Even if the Father gives a person the ability to predict future events it does not mean that person is fulfilling the function and office of a prophet in the same sense as the powerful prophets of ancient Israel or in the sense of a prophet as a spiritual leader within the church:

"And God has set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, different languages. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles?" (1.Cor. 12:28-29 KJV Para.).

The English word *prophets* in verse 28 is translated from the Greek word *prophetes*, which can mean one who foretells an event (i.e., a prophet); by analogy, an inspired speaker.

The English words *first*, *secondarily*, and *thirdly* are translated from the Greek words *proton*, *deuteros*, and *tritros*, which respectively mean first, second, and third in time, place, order, or importance.

By stating that *"God has set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers,"* Paul not only reveals the hierarchical structure of the church but also that prophets are of great importance to the elect in order for the church to function as the Father intended.

What Paul writes in 1. Corinthians, chapters 12 and 13 is in the context of explaining the purpose for the Father giving supernatural abilities to his earthly children and the attitude in which these abilities are to be exercised.

"For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away" (1. Cor. 13:9-10 KJV).

The English word *prophesy* in verse 9 is translated from the Greek word *propheteuo*, which can mean to foretell events, divine, speak under inspiration, or exercise the prophetic office.

Paul says that, as yet, we do not know everything and he clarifies this statement in verses 11-12:

"When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (1. Cor. 13:11-12 KJV).

When Paul says *"we prophesy in part,"* he is making a reference to the giving of divinely inspired messages, not the ability to predict future events. He then explains that, when we are god-beings in the Father's kingdom our knowledge and understanding will be perfect.

Because chapter 13 is a continuation of Paul's thoughts and instruction about the gifts of the spirit, the connection between the ability to give divinely inspired messages (1. Cor. 13:9-12) and a prophet in a leadership function of the church noted in 1. Cor. 12:28 can easily be made. The prophet of 1. Cor. 12:28 is both a man fulfilling the office of a prophet and an inspired speaker.

"Pursue godly love, and desire the spiritual gifts, but much more that you may prophesy" (1.Cor.14:1KJV Para.).

The English word *spiritual* in verse 1 is translated from the Greek word *pneumatikos*, which refers to the supernatural (i.e., things pertaining to the spirit realm). The use of the word *pneumatikos* tells us that Paul is urging the elect at Corinth to desire to be spiritual (i.e., righteous) in their thought, attitude, and behavior.

The word *gifts* is not in the Textus Receptus and was added by the King James translators. The addition of the word *gifts* obscures Paul's intent to urge the elect to desire things pertaining to godly spirituality (i.e., godly characteristics).

The English phrase *you may prophesy* in verse 1 is translated from the Greek word *propheteuo* which can mean to foretell events, divine, speak under inspiration, or exercise the prophetic office. In the context of verse 1, *propheteuo* means to speak things which are divinely inspired.

"I would that you all speak with languages but rather that you prophesied: for greater is he that prophesies than he that speaks with languages, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying" (1.Cor.14:5 KJV Para.).

The English words *prophesied* and *prophecies* in verse 5 are translated from the Greek verb *propheteuo*. Because Paul is writing about edifying the elect, it seems logical that, in verse 5, *propheteuo* means to speak under inspiration of the holy spirit in the context of teaching God's truth.

Paul says he wished that all those who spoke to the congregation in Corinth had the supernatural ability to speak in other languages. However, he wished even more that these men would be inspired speakers who were able to explain God's truth, because the one who can explain God's truth has a far better gift than the one who is multilingual, unless the multilingual preacher or teacher can also explain and expound God's truth in the foreign language with clarity.

The Elect at Rome

In Romans, chapter 12, Paul states that, because each member of the Father's family is important and is called to perform certain functions and responsibilities within the Father's family, none should think too highly of themselves, then in verse 6 he mentions prophesy:

"Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given us, if prophecy, according to the proportion of faith" (Rom.12:6 Para.).

The English word *prophecy* in verse 6 is translated from the Greek word *propheteia*, which means prediction.

A person who is inspired to predict something should have faith that what they have received to convey to others is true; otherwise, they should not voice this prediction.

Obviously none of the abilities the Father bestows on his elect are unnecessary, but there are important questions that need to be answered: 1) Why is it necessary for some individuals to be gifted with the ability to predict future events; 2) In what venue are these predictions to be made known? These two questions will be answered as we continue to make an analysis of the gift of prophecy.

The Elect at Ephesus

In his letter to the elect at Ephesus Paul lists several functions within the church which directly impact the spiritual growth of the elect. All of these functions require some degree of supernatural ability in order for them to be performed adequately. One of these is the function of a prophet:

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we are no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the deceitful scheming and trickery of people, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, makes increase of the body to the edifying of itself in godly love" (Eph.4:11-16 KJV Para.).

Fulfillment of Prophecy

In order to explain to a crowd of people gathered outside the temple in Jerusalem why the apostles and the others with them had the ability to speak in languages foreign to them, Peter quotes the prophet Joel and says that this was being done in order to fulfill this prophecy about events which would happen in the end of the age of human rule:

"But this is what was spoken of by the prophet Joel; And it will come to pass in the last days, says God, I will pour out my spirit on all flesh: and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out my spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy" (Acts 2:16-18 Para.). See Joel 2:28; Isa.44:3.

The English phrase *they shall prophesy* in verse 18 is translated from the Greek verb *propheteuo*, which can mean to foretell events, divine, speak under inspiration, or exercise the prophetic office. Depending on the context in which *propheteuo* is used, it can express more than one of its meanings. Perhaps, both the foretelling of future events and the speaking of divine counsel will be manifested by those speaking.

It is evident from verses 16-18 that the Father chooses both men and women to fulfill the function of a prophet and to speak under divine inspiration within his earthly family. The only difference is the degree to which each fulfills this responsibility.

Prophets in the Early Church

Because of the importance of prophets to the functioning of the early church, it seems the Father chose many men to fulfill the function of a prophet with the ability to predict future events and fulfill other functions of this office. It seems he also chose many men to fulfill the function of teaching his truth to the elect. Some of these men fulfilled the functions of both a prophet and a teacher. The following are several men, mentioned by name, who fulfilled the responsibility of prophet and teacher in the early church:

"Now in the church in Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen . . ." (Acts 13:1 Para.).

Barnabas who was also an apostle and a companion of Paul (Acts 14:14) is mentioned as also being a prophet. Because the men with Barnabas are called prophets and teachers, it logical to assume that some of these men fulfilled the office of a prophet as well as being an inspired teacher of God's truth to the elect.

"And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them" (Acts 15:32 KJV).

Because these men are only mentioned as prophets, it cannot be determined if they fulfilled the office of a prophet or were inspired teachers of God's truth. However, in Acts 15:22, the prophets Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas are called "*chief among the brethren.*"

The English word *chief* in verse 22 is translated from the Greek word *hegeomai*, which can mean to lead, i.e., command (with official authority). This seems to indicate that they were fulfilling the office of a prophet and teacher within the church.

Philip's Daughters

After Paul and his companions left Ptolemais on their way to Jerusalem, they lodged with Philip the evangelist who was one of the original seven men chosen to serve the widows noted in Acts 6:5:

"And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him. And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy" (Acts 21:8-9 KJV).

The English word *prophesy* in verse 9 is translated from the Greek verb *propheteuo*, which is a derivative of the Greek word *prophetes* and means to foretell events, divine, speak under inspiration, and exercise the prophetic office.

Women receive prophetic revelations and can reveal these revelations to others as many scriptures indicate. The daughters of the evangelist Philip were among those of the early church whom God chose to receive and convey information to the elect. See also Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:14-18; 21:9-10.

Although righteous women can and do prophesy, it is not proper for a woman to prophesy in the congregational assemblies of the elect. Paul speaks to this in 1. Corinthians, chapter 14:

"Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted to them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also says the law" (1. Cor. 14:34 KJV).

Additionally, Paul says that it is a shame for a woman to speak in church. The English word *speak* in verse 34 is translated from the Greek word *laleo*, which means to talk.

"And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church" (1. Cor. 14:35 KJV).

Paul's instruction to the elect at Corinth in chapter 14 concerns the issue of authority and order in the congregation. Men who receive a revelation should speak in an orderly fashion and women should not speak out in the congregation, but must keep silent.

Although righteous women are sometimes chosen and authorized to convey prophetic and other types of messages, like the prophetesses Deborah, Huldah, and Anna, women cannot, formally proclaim these messages within formal congregational assemblies, according to the authority structure of the church. Therefore, in order for a prophetess to fulfill her responsibility, she must do so within the authorized structure of the church; otherwise, she acts without divine authority and usurps the divinely appointed order of authority.

This silence of women within the congregational worship assemblies when a minister or other men are speaking not only shows respect for God and his law but also for the authority of the spiritual leader and the other men in the congregation. Moreover, it is evident that, if women are to be silent in a formal congregational assembly, they are also prohibited from prophesying or teaching within a formal assembly.

Agabus the Prophet

Agabus is first mentioned in Acts, chapter 11 as a prophet among other prophets within the church:

"During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) The disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea. This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul" (Acts 11:27-30 NIV).

The English word *prophets* in verse 27 is translated from the Greek word *prophetes*, which can mean to foretell events, by analogy to speak under inspiration.

Whether or not all of these men had the gift of prophecy in the sense of being able to predict future events, it is evident that Agabus was a prophet of the highest order because his prediction came to pass.

The second time Agabus is mentioned is when he gave a prophetic warning to Paul and his companions while they were lodging with Philip who had four daughters on whom the Father had bestowed the gift of prophecy:

"After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. Coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, "The Holy spirit says, 'In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles'" (Acts 21:10-11 NIV).

This account shows Agabus as a prophet with the gift of prophecy, which allowed him to be given insight into future events. Agabus then conveyed the information revealed to him to Paul and others with him who needed it in order to decide what to do:

"When we heard this, we and the people there pleaded with Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, "Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." When he would not be dissuaded, we gave up and said, "The Lord's will be done" (Acts 21:12-14 NIV).

Apollos and Prophesying

In Acts 18:24-28 and 19:1-7 is the account of a gifted individual named Apollos who understood the gospel message and was preaching it with great success, but he and others were only baptized as John the Baptist had instructed and had not received the holy spirit. Paul laid hands on Apollos and 11 other individuals and they received the holy spirit and the gift of languages and prophesied.

The word *prophesied* in the account of Apollos is translated from the Greek word *propheteuo*, which means to foretell events, divine, speak under inspiration, and exercise the prophetic office.

It can be assumed that, because these men had just received the holy spirit, they were not all made a part of church leadership (i.e., the office and function of a prophet) at that time, although the scriptures do show that Appolos continued in the function of an evangelist. There is not enough information in this account to determine if any of these men prophesied in the sense of foretelling future events or were inspired to say other things of importance. What we can know for sure is that all these men were given two gifts from the Father to prove that they were of the elect.

SUMMARY

Nowhere in the biblical record is it found that prophets were ordained to their function by either the priesthood or the eldership. What is found, are prophets who were personally selected to this position of service, authority, and responsibility by the Creator God (Jesus Christ) and God the Father, after which they were acknowledged by God's people as they fulfilled these positions.

Within a Congregation

In his first letter to the Corinthian church, Paul address serious problems regarding disorderly conduct, among which was the inability of some men to keep from interrupting a man speaking to the congregation during a formal assembly of the church:

"Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the others judge. If any thing is revealed to another that sits by, let the first hold his peace. For you may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. And the spirit of the prophets is subject to the prophets. For God is not of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints" (1.Cor.14:29-33 KJV Para.).

The English word *prophets* in verse 29 and throughout this text is translated from the Greek word *prophetes*, which means a *foreteller* (a prophet); by analogy, an inspired speaker:

The English word *prophesy* in verse 31 is translated from the Greek word *propheteuo*, which can mean to foretell events, divine, speak under inspiration, and exercise the prophetic office:

From the Greek words *prophetes* and *propheteuo* in verses 29-33, it is logical to assume that within the congregation at Corinth there were both men occupying the office of a prophet and men with the gifts of prophecy and the ability to speak under inspiration of the holy spirit.

Clearly, not everyone should be speaking at the same time, each man should wait their turn if they have been given a revelation or have special understanding of the subject being presented. Paul stresses order among the elect in a formal setting when they come together to worship the Father, to learn, and to share in learning.

Acceptance of Prophets

Although Christ was speaking of himself when he said the following about God's prophets, it can also apply during this gospel age of salvation:

"And he said, Truly I say to you, No prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; But to none of them was Elias sent, save to Sarepta, a city of Sidon, to a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian" (Lk.4:24-27 KJV Para.).

The English word *prophet* in verse 24 is translated from the Greek word *prophetes*, which means a *foreteller* (a prophet); by analogy, an inspired speaker.

Have there been and will there continue to be men occupying the office of a prophet within the Father's earthly family? The answer is obviously yes according to both the apostle Paul and Christ:

"And God has set some in the Church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of languages" (1.Cor.12:28 KJV Para).

"And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophecy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth." These are the two olive trees and the two lamp-stands standing before the God of the earth. And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner. These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire" (Rev.11:3-6 NKJV).

A Warning

"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn-bushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them" (Matt.7:15-20 NIV).

"But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping" (2.Pet.2:1-3 NIV).

Many people today claim to be the Sovereign God's prophets and because of their persuasiveness, it is sometimes difficult to know whether or not a person is a prophet of God or a false prophet, but there are many false prophets and teachers of damnable heresies and shameful things which are in opposition to God's truth. One way to tell if a person is a prophet sent from God is to see if their teaching or message reflects God's truth. If a prophet's teaching, message, or behavior is in opposition to God's law, they are not sent from him. See Deut.13:1-3; 18:19-27.

The biblical record contains many warnings about avoiding false prophets. The Book of Revelation speaks of a great False Prophet that will come on the world scene at the end of this age and deceive most of the world into worshiping a false god who is identified in the Book of Revelation as the Beast.

Will the False Prophet and the Beast openly reveal who and what they are and their true intentions? Of course not! The only way that a person will be able to recognize these individuals for what they truly are is to understand the prophecies concerning them.

This is why the elect need to clearly understand the foundational plan of God, the foundational teachings of the Bible, and what God expects of those he calls to salvation during this age; otherwise, they will be among those deceived by false prophets and other evil individuals.

Does it Matter?

Does it matter what you believe about prophets and prophecy and will these beliefs affect your salvation? The answers to both questions depend on your attitude and behavior toward God and the current state of world events.

For ancient Israel, it was very important for them to heed a prophet's warning to repent of their individual and national sins in order to receive the blessing that God had promised and not suffer punishment for continued rebellion. Today, it is just as important to pay attention to the Father's prophets as it was for ancient Israel, because the Father's prophets during this gospel age are not only to witness of his truth to the world, but also are charged with the care of the church.

The gift of prophecy is extremely important, whether one is chosen to fulfill the office of a prophet or prophetesses, or as a prophet who is inspired through the holy spirit to instruct and give spiritual insight to the elect.

We do not know the extent of the authority, supernatural power, or abilities that male prophets in ancient Israel or in the early church had. But, it is evident from the biblical record that being a prophet or a prophetess with the gift of prophecy is an extremely important function and responsibility within the Father's earthly family.

By B.L. Cocherell

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— CHAPTER —
EIGHT
DISCERNMENT

Although all of the supernatural abilities given to the elect are important and necessary for the work of the church, some are essential in the performance of the ministry and on a personal level for many of the elect in this age. One of these is the ability to discern the difference between good and evil, including the ability to recognize good or evil spirits, an evil influence, or an evil presence in a person, place, or thing.

The biblical record shows that through the use of lots the Creator God revealed knowledge and insight about people, things, events, and his will in specific situations. And this method was in common use by those whom God had authorized as the civil and spiritual leaders of his people. The apostles also used this method to determine who was to replace Judas. But, this is not the gift of discernment Paul wrote about to the elect at Corinth. This ability is much different than the use of lots in that no device is used:

"But the manifestation of the spirit is given to each one to profit. For to one is given by the spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same spirit; To another faith by the same spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another kinds of languages; to another the interpretation of languages: But all these work that one and the same spirit, dividing to each one severally as he will" (1.Cor.12:7-11 KJV Para.).

The English word *profit* is translated from the Greek word *sumphero*, which in the context of verse 7 means to contribute. Later in chapter 12, Paul explains that, in order for the church to function as it should, each person must contribute.

In verse 10, the English word *discerning* is translated from the Greek word *diakrino*, which can mean to separate thoroughly, to discriminate (by implication, decide) i.e., recognize a distinction. The contribution a person with the ability to recognize good or evil spirits, influence, or presence in a person, place, or thing is immeasurable to the health and safety of the church as a whole and the elect individually.

The English word *spirits* is translated from the Greek word *pneuma*; which in the context of verse 10 means a spirit-being, influence from the spirit realm, or mental disposition.

The discernment of spirits the Father authorizes a person to use is a mental ability; it is a knowing and understanding beyond a person's natural intuition.

While explaining about Christ being a high priest of the order of Melchisedec forever, the writer to the Hebrews said he had other things to tell them about Christ's priesthood, but could not, because they had not matured spiritually to the level, which would enable them to understand:

"Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing you are dull of hearing. For when the time you ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again some of the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that uses milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongs to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Heb.5:11-14 KJV).

All of the elect should have enough discernment to know and understand the basic differences between good and evil. However, an in-depth knowledge and understanding of subtle differences between good and evil will only come through a diligent and prayerful study of the biblical record, meditation on what one finds there, and insight given through the holy spirit. But as mentioned by Paul to the elect at Corinth, not all of the elect are given the supernatural ability to recognize and identify a spirit influence or presence.

This chapter explores the many reasons that discernment of spirits is important to us in our survival as one of the Father's earthly children and in the performance of our functions and responsibilities in the work we are called to do individually and collectively.

Before the advent of Christ, there are many examples in the biblical record of prophets and other individuals meeting spirit-beings or being led by a spirit influence to do certain things. But, how did these people know that these beings or the spirit influence was good or evil? The answer is that, in the case of individuals whom God was dealing with, he gave them the ability to recognize the difference between good or evil beings or their influence. And so it is in the gospel age of salvation.

The apostles, Peter and Paul wrote the following about the dangers posed to us by evil spirits:

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, walks about as a roaring lion seeking those he may devour" (1.Pet.5:8 KJV).

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph.6:12 KJV).

Evil spirits and evil influence do exist and people from every walk of life inadvertently or purposefully make contact with evil spirits or their influence in various ways. But, most people do not realize the tremendous danger and the impact that these spirits can have on them, their loved ones, and other people around them.

We of the Father's earthly family should be aware of the extreme danger posed to us by evil spirits and their influence, and we should be able to take the appropriate action when confronted by an evil spirit or influence.

Not knowing and understanding the dangers posed by evil spirits and how to counter this threat to our physical and spiritual life puts us in jeopardy of being abused by these powerful, intelligent, and extremely dangerous spirit-beings who roam the earth exerting their influence into every aspect of society.

Recognize Evil

Although comparing a person's words, attitude, and behavior against God's standard of righteousness is certainly one way to determine if a person is influenced or possessed by an evil spirit, the method Paul writes of to the elect at Corinth is very different and involves an ability given through the holy spirit by the Father.

The apostle Paul wrote that the use of the holy spirit within a person provides them with the ability to make correct spiritual evaluations and judgements:

"But as it is written, Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of a human [i.e., other people], the things which God has prepared for them that love him. But God has revealed them to us by his spirit: for the spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God" (1.Cor.2:9-10 KJV Para.).

It is through the holy spirit that revelation is given and inquiries are made into all things, which include the mysteries of God and the recognition of evil spirits and an evil influence.

"For what man knows the things of a man, if not the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God no man knows, but the spirit of God" (1.Cor.2:11 KJV Para.).

The spirit in man is man and it contains the knowledge of things pertaining to the physical realm of existence. The spirit of God, which is the holy spirit, contains the knowledge of the things pertaining to God and the spirit realm of existence.

"Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the holy spirit teaches; comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (1.Cor.2:12-13 KJV Para.).

Paul reminds the Corinthians they are not like other human beings, because they have been given the Sovereign Father's holy spirit, which gives them access to spiritual knowledge, understanding, and insight. Additionally, in Paul's letters to the Corinthians, he lists many supernatural abilities given by the Father, one of which is the ability to recognize evil spirits and an evil influence.

The English word *comparing* in verse 13 is translated from the Greek word *sugkrino*, which basically means to determine the difference between one thing and another.

"But a natural man does not receive the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he is not able to know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But truly the spiritual one judges all things, but he is discerned by no one. For who knew the mind of the Lord? Who will teach him? But we have the mind of Christ" (1.Cor.2:14-16 KJV Para.).

The English word *judges* in verse 15 is translated from the Greek word *anakrino*, which means; properly, to scrutinize, i.e., (by implication) investigate, interrogate, determine, i.e., a person who makes a careful analyses before making a decision.

The knowledge taught by Paul, the other apostles, and elders was not obtained from the spirit of man; it was knowledge conveyed to them through one of the functions of the holy spirit which resided within them.

Humans with only the spirit of man can neither receive or understand the things of God, because they are of the original human creation. However, sons of God are not of the original creation; they are a new and different creature and have different potentials and abilities (2.Cor.5:17; Gal.6:15).

All of the elect should be able to recognize the difference between good and evil and know with certainty when individuals are practicing or promoting an evil attitude or behavior, plus have a sense when there seems to be an evil influence.

However, this is not the same as having the supernatural ability to recognize evil spirits or an evil influence. A person with this ability knows with certainty that their judgement is correct.

This person is not merely making an educated guess as to whether or not a person is influenced or possessed by an evil spirit or that there is an evil presence based on an observation of a person's words, attitude, or behavior; this individual has a knowing beyond the normal physical senses.

Christ's Discernment

Matthew and Mark both record the conversation Jesus had with his disciples when he asked them who people thought he was. After getting the correct answer from Peter, he begins to tell them of his impending death and resurrection, after which Peter takes him aside to speak with him privately:

"Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!" But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men" (Matt.16:21-23 NKJV).

Because Christ had the holy spirit without limit, he had the ability to recognize that an evil spirit or influence was present. The holy spirit also gave him the ability to know the thoughts and intent of individuals. See Matt.12:22-25; Lk.6:6-9.

Ananias and Sapphira

The following account shows that Peter had the gift of discernment to know the thoughts and intent of individuals.

Shortly after the beginning of the early church, Ananias and Sapphira, a married couple, dedicated all the money that they had received from a land sale to God. Because this money was dedicated to God, it was considered holy and belonged to God. But, Ananias and Sapphira violated the law of holiness by first stealing a part of what they had dedicated to God, and then lying about the price of the land:

"But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the holy spirit, and to keep back part of the price of the land? While it remained, was it not your own? and after it was sold, was it not in your own power? why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men, but to God. And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and died: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him" (Acts 5:1-6 KJV).

About three hours later, Ananias' wife Sapphira came in and Peter questioned her about the price of the land, she also lies to him and then promptly died.

Because Peter had the gift of discernment, he immediately knew that Ananias was lying to him and that it was Satan who influenced him and his wife to make their fatal decision.

Simon the Sorcerer

Acts, chapter 8, contains the account of Simon offering money for the ability to lay hands on people to give them the holy spirit:

"Give me this authority, so that I may do the same thing by laying my hands on people. But Peter said to him, Your money parish with you into perdition, because you think that God's gift can be purchased with money. You have no part or lot in this matter, because your heart is not right in the sight of God" (Acts 8:19-21 Para.).

Peter's reply to Simon shows Peter's discernment of spirits and his ability to know a person's thoughts and intent, which allowed him to know the spiritual condition of Simon.

Paul Harassed by an Evil Spirit

The account of the apostle Paul and others who ministered with him being harassed by a young woman who was possessed by an evil spirit shows that Paul had the gift of discernment:

"Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. This girl followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved." She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so troubled that he turned around and said to the spirit, "In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!" At that moment the spirit left her" (Acts 16:16-18 NIV).

Besides showing that Paul had the gift of discernment and that those with God's spirit do not have to tolerate harassment by an evil spirit, this account tells us the following five things:

1. Evil spirits recognize the servants of the true God.
2. Some evil spirits will harass the elect until they are removed from the person whom they are controlling.
3. Authority to remove evil spirits comes through Christ.
4. Paul was able to speak directly to the evil spirit.
5. Evil spirits must comply with the legitimate demands of true servants of God the Father and Christ.

A Gift of Discernment

Within a congregation I once attended, there were two men who had a long history of spiritual leadership and were talented speakers in the pulpit; however, there was something about these men that seemed a bit odd and inconsistent with a righteous thought process.

When giving a sermon before the congregation, one of the men would always subtly inject a thought that would question the validity of God and the Bible. The other individual was always subtly promoting controversial subjects, questioning established doctrine, or insinuating things which could cause controversy. Both of these men were very clever in their speech, so it was difficult to detect the deception in their words.

Because of their behavior, several elders suspected they and some other individuals who occasionally associated with the congregation were either highly influenced or possessed by evil spirits, but could not prove this suspicion beyond a shadow of a doubt. Therefore, they could not take the appropriate action without causing chaos within the congregation.

During one of the annual festival days, a man visiting the congregation for the first time came to one of the elders and told him that there were several individuals there who were possessed by evil spirits, and that one individual was highly influenced but not possessed. Hearing this, I asked the elder to have the man write a note documenting his allegations in order to see if his observations matched ours.

Upon inspecting his list along with his comments, we found that what he was able to discern about these individuals matched perfectly with what we had been thinking all along. His list and comments confirmed that he had the gift of discernment of spirits, which is one of the gifts from the Father noted by the apostle Paul (1.Cor.12:10).

False Brethren

"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write to you of the common salvation, it was necessary for me to write to you, and exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord, and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 3-4 KJV Para.). See also Gal.2:1-7.

Individuals creep into some congregations and cause many problems. Why does this happen? It happens because the ministry and the elect lack the ability to discern the difference between good and evil and/or to recognize evil spirits, evil influence, or an evil presence in a person, place, or thing.

Evil spirits continually attempt to frustrate and disrupt the work of the church and destroy the elect. The historical record of the early church and the church in this age shows that these evil spirits have been very successful in frustrating and disrupting the work of the church and destroying some of the the elect.

However, this situation does not need to continue if the elect will pay attention to the instructions in the scriptures regarding how to protect themselves and the church against evil spirits and their influence.

Because one of the abilities given to specific individuals within the Father's earthly family is the ability to recognize evil spirits, individuals influenced or possessed by an evil spirit(s), and when evil is present in animals, places, or things, it is more than evident that both collectively and individually there is a tremendous need for the discernment of spirits in this age of the church.

Because of the many forms of evil present in this world and its extreme danger to us personally, the work of the church, and our loved ones, each of us should ask our heavenly Father to increase our ability to recognize evil in all its forms so that we can more effectively and efficiently perform our calling.

From the accounts of the early church, it is apparent that it was necessary for the apostles to have the ability to recognize evil spirits and an evil influence because of their responsibility to proclaim the good news message and to effectively carry out their other functions and responsibilities.

It is also apparent that elders need this ability if they are overseeing a congregation or are performing the work of an evangelist. Additionally, both men and women of the elect need this ability under certain circumstances.

Resisting Evil

In his letter to the elect at Rome, the apostle Paul wrote the following about the attitude a truly converted person must have toward all evil:

"Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good" (Rom.12:9 KJV).

In verse 9, the English word *abhor* is translated from the Greek word *apostugeo*, which means to detest utterly. The English word *cleave* is translated from the Greek word *kollao*, which means to glue, i.e., (passively or reflexively) to stick.

An important point to consider is that Paul is speaking of evil which violates the precepts and principles of righteousness as set forth in the biblical record; he is not saying to detest the person committing an evil act or being influenced by evil, but to detest the act or influence of evil (i.e., all things that are in opposition to God's laws, precepts, and principles).

Be Sober

Along with the warning to beware of evil because it is an enemy that must be resisted, the apostle Peter gave us the following keys to prevent influence from Satan and other evil spirits:

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world" (1.Pet.5:8-9 KJV).

In verse 9, the English word *afflictions* is translated from the Greek word *pathema*, which means something undergone, (i.e., hardship or pain).

Although Peter's warning is directed to the Sovereign Father's earthly family of king-priests, these same dangers also exist for everyone in the world. The reality is that Satan and other evil spirits will destroy anyone if given an opportunity. But, they especially want to destroy those whom the Father has personally called to salvation during this gospel age.

To prevent Satan or any other evil spirit from having an opportunity to destroy us, we must resist evil and pay careful attention to our surroundings and how we conduct our lives. We must make sure our surroundings, our associations, and the various situations in which we find ourselves do not place us in jeopardy of being influenced or controlled by Satan or other evil spirits.

In 1 Peter, chapter 5, verse 9, the English words *resist*, *steadfast*, and *faith* are translated from the Greek words *anthistemi*, *stereos*, and *pistis*, which respectively mean to stand against (i.e., to oppose), be solid or stable, and persuasion (i.e., credence; moral conviction of religious truth).

In order to resist the devil as instructed by Peter, we must not only be well grounded in the faith but also able to know when evil is present in a person, animal, place, or thing.

If you are well grounded in the faith, you will be able to resist an evil spirit or evil influence with the assurance that you have the authority and power to successfully protect yourself from being harmed or corrupted by it.

Note: In certain situations you will also be able to protect others from being influenced or harmed by an evil spirit or evil influence. For details about this issue get a copy of the Book *Our Place in the Spirit Realm Gods, Angels, and Demons*, ISBN 987-0-9844608-7-8 or visit www.bibleresearch.org.

Passive Resistance

When dealing with Satan, other evil spirits, an evil influence or presence, passive resistance is no resistance at all. There can be no neutral response to evil. Either you accept evil into your life or you resist it. To not resist evil is tacit approval of evil.

For resistance against evil spirits to be effective, you must be armed with the proper knowledge and weapons which will enable you to successfully resist and thwart evil. Resistance must be well thought out and swiftly executed.

After the apostle James lists a number of attitudes which are in opposition to righteousness, he notes that these attitudes are the result of the pulls of human nature and he gives the following advice:

"... Therefore he says, God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore, submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double minded" (Jms.4:6-8 KJV Para.).

In his letter to the elect, the apostle James sets forth the following seven important principles to which each of us should pay close attention in order to successfully keep ourselves from being controlled by Satan or other evil spirits, or being influenced by an evil presence:

1. God opposes a person who has an arrogant, superior, or disdainful attitude.
2. God is gracious toward a person who has a humble attitude.
3. We must live in obedience to God's laws, precepts, and principles.
4. We must resist evil.
5. We must draw near to our Father if we want him to draw near to us.
6. Sin creates a barrier to a harmonious relationship with our Father and our Savior; therefore, sin must be eliminated from our lives.
7. If we want to have a harmonious relationship with our Father and our Savior, we cannot vacillate between good and evil.

Be Proactive in Resisting Evil

In his letter to the elect at Ephesus, Paul gave them a long list of attitudes and behaviors to cultivate and to discard. In the middle of this list, he says, *"Neither give place to the devil"* (Eph.4:27).

One of the keys to successfully defeating an evil influence is to first recognize its presence, be it an evil spirit, or an evil influence in a person, animal, place, or thing. If evil cannot be recognized, it cannot be resisted, controlled, or conquered.

Peter, James, and Paul all make the point that proactive opposition to Satan, other evil spirits and an evil influence is necessary in order to make sure evil avoids contact with us. Proactive resistance is the opposite of acceptance or tacit approval.

Although knowing there are evil spirits who are intent on influencing, harming, controlling, or possessing humans is extremely important, the most important thing to know is how to recognize evil and eliminate the possibility of being influenced or controlled by it.

The absolute best way to make sure we do this is to be proactive in our resistance to evil and resolved to maintain our righteousness through drawing near to our heavenly Father and the way of life he wants us to practice.

Stir up the Gift of God

Paul reminds Timothy of the spiritual gifts he had been given through the holy spirit and encourages him to increase this power in his life:

"For which cause I remind you to fan the flame of the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God did not give a spirit of fearfulness to us, but of power, and love, and of self-control" (2.Tim.1:6-7 Para.).

This is also good advice for us in this age of the church. Because evil in all its forms is ever present and is on the increase.

If we are serious about our salvation and performing the work to which the Father called us, each of us needs to stir up and increase the spiritual gifts we already have and also ask the Father to give us individually and collectively the ability to recognize evil spirits and their influence in order for us to more effectively perform our functions and responsibilities as his earthly children.

By B.L. Cocherell

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NOTES AND COMMENTS

CHAPTER

NINE

LANGUAGE AND INTERPRETATION OF LANGUAGES

Two important supernatural abilities given to some in the early church were the ability to speak and interpret languages they could not formerly speak or understand.

There are many differing beliefs and opinions about the gift of languages given on the Festival of Pentecost after the death and resurrection of Christ, and Paul's reprimand and instructions regarding these supernatural abilities given to the elect at Corinth.

A major problem in understanding the use of these supernatural abilities is that we are dealing with a subject whose history has been lost, with the exception of the biblical account. There is a reason for everything God does, and so it is with the supernatural ability to speak and interpret languages.

Christ's Promise

"Afterward he appeared to the eleven as they sat eating, and reprimanded them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe the ones who saw him after he had risen. And he said to them, you go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved and he that does not believe shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name they shall cast out devils; they shall speak with new languages. They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Mk.16:14-18 Para.).

Many people feel that Christ said that all true Christians will speak in new languages. However, a careful analysis of his statement *"These signs shall follow them"* shows that he was making a general statement. There does not seem to be anything in the original Greek language indicating that all of the signs (i.e., supernatural abilities) Christ mentioned would be given to each of the elect. The apostle Paul confirms this analysis in 1 Corinthians, chapter 12 when he wrote of different supernatural abilities being given to individuals.

Christ mentions the supernatural ability to speak new languages (i.e., new to the individual) as one of the things that will be evident among the elect as they proclaim the good news message. And the apostle Paul speaks of the interpretation of languages along with many other supernatural abilities given to the elect:

"But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same spirit; To another faith by the same spirit; to another the gift of healing by the same spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another different kinds of languages; to another the interpretation of languages" (1. Cor. 12:7-10 KJV).

The following are four questions about the supernatural ability to speak and interpret languages that need to be answered in order to understand why these abilities were necessary in the early church and why they will be necessary to fulfill Christ's prophetic statement: *"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations; and then shall the end come"* (Matt. 24:14):

1. Why is there a need to speak in a foreign language?
2. Why is there a need for an interpreter?
3. Are these abilities just an enhancement of a person's existing abilities or are they totally new?
4. Are the accounts found in Acts, chapter 2 and 1. Corinthians, chapters 12, 13, and 14 speaking of the same things?

A good place to begin finding answers to these questions is in Acts, chapter 2 where the gift of languages is first mentioned.

In the Fullness of Time

"When the Day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the holy spirit and began to speak in other languages as the spirit enabled them" (Acts 2:1-4 NIV Para.).

No biblical or historical record of a similar event can be found before the advent of Christ. Moreover, nowhere in the record of the early church does the exact same thing happen again, and we do not find it happening in this age of the church. This was a one-time event, which was performed at a specific moment in history for a specific purpose. For an explanation of verses 1-4 get a copy of the Book Synagogue of Satan and Doctrines of Demons, ISBN 978-0-9844608-8-5 and review Chapter 19, The Tongues Question or visit www.bibleresearch.org.

The Meeting Place

In Acts, chapter 2 verse 2, the English word *house* is translated from the Greek word *oikos*, which means a dwelling (literal or figurative).

The scriptures seem to indicate that the apostles and the others were meeting in one of the open rooms available for the use of people located in the area adjacent to the temple where the money changers and the merchants who sold sacrificial animals were located. This makes sense because of what happens after verse 4.

Four Events

The following are the four supernatural events shown in verses 2-4:

1. There was a loud sound of wind.
2. There was an appearance of something like flames of fire resting on these people.
3. All of these people were filled with the holy spirit and transformed into the Sovereign Father's earthly children.
4. Each of these individuals was given the supernatural ability to speak languages that they had not previously known.

Tongues of Fire

The writer of Acts very concisely relates the events of this Pentecost which makes it difficult to determine exactly what it was that came to rest on each person:

"They were all filled with the holy spirit and began to speak in foreign languages as the spirit gave them the gift of speech" (Acts 2:4 TLB).

This verse describes a group of people (both men and women) beginning to speak in languages that they had not known how to speak before that moment.

Jerusalem was an international city where many people were most likely already multilingual; however, this supernatural ability enabled them to speak in languages they had not known or learned. This would not only have been surprising to the ones speaking, but also to the ones who knew that some individuals in the group could not speak or understand certain languages or dialects.

"And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was spoken about, a multitude came together and were puzzled, because everyone heard them speak in their own language" (Acts 2:5-6 Para.).

This shows that there were people passing by who heard the elect speaking in their own language.

Perhaps a group of individuals passing by heard one of the elect say something about God in a language that they understood and said to their companions, "Did you hear those Galileans speaking about God in my native language"? And another might have said, "They were speaking in my native language."

Because so few details were recorded about the speaking and hearing of these languages, and because this specific type of event has not been repeated according to the historical record, we are left to speculate about the details. However, we can know with certainty why this ability was necessary at that time. The biblical record is very clear about the reason it was given that day, why it was given to other individuals after that Pentecost, and why it will again be given before Christ returns.

"And they were all amazed and wondered, saying one to another, See, are not all these which speak Galileans? How does it happen that each of us hears them in our native language where we were born? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, those residing in Mesopotamia, Judaea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, parts of Libya about Cyrene, and residence of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we hear them speak in our language the wonderful works of God" (Acts 2:7-11 Para.).

These Galileans were all heard speaking in the various languages and dialects of the individuals who came from many different countries and language groups.

Perhaps this supernatural ability to speak other languages was not only a miracle of speaking, but also of hearing (i.e., words spoken in one language being translated into the recipients language either audibly or into their mind).

There are at least 17 different languages referred to in Acts, chapter 2. What was so astonishing to those present was the fact that each person heard the wonderful works of God spoken in their own native language.

"And they were amazed and were in doubt, saying one to another, What does this mean? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine [i.e., wine with a high alcohol content]" (Acts 2:12-13 Para.).

Many people clearly understood what was being said, whereas others apparently did not, because they thought those speaking were drunk. This seems to indicate that those who did not understand what was being said thought they were hearing meaningless gibberish.

It seems clear that both speakers and hearers were the beneficiaries of a special miracle. There was no incoherent speech, no unknown languages to decipher, no interpreters were needed—all those who were intended to hear and understand what was being said did.

But, did those who were speaking know what they were saying in another language? If those speaking knew what they were saying in another language, they must have been extremely surprised at their new knowledge and ability. One possibility is that those who spoke, did so in their native language and then what they said supernaturally translated into another language or as many languages as necessary for the people listening. But we will not know what the speakers experienced until this ability is given to those who need it to perform their functions and

responsibilities as members of the Father's earthly family a short time before Christ returns. See Matt.24:14.

Fulfilment of Prophecy

What we know for certain is that the giving of this supernatural ability to the early church was a fulfillment of a prophecy recorded by Joel. In order to explain why the apostles and the others with them had the ability to speak in languages foreign to them, Peter quotes the prophet Joel and says that this was being done in order to fulfill this prophecy about events which would happen in the end of the age of human rule:

"But Peter, stood up with the eleven, and said to them, You men of Judea, and all you that dwell in Jerusalem, know this, and pay attention to my words: For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day [about 9 a.m.]. But this is what was spoken of by the prophet Joel; And it will come to pass in the last days, says God, I will pour out my spirit on all flesh: and your sons and daughters shall prophecy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out my spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy" (Acts 2:14-18 Para.). See Joel 2:28; Isa.44:3.

The English phrase *they shall prophesy* in verse 18 is translated from the Greek verb *propheteuo*, can mean to foretell events, divine, speak under inspiration, or exercise the prophetic office. Depending on the context in which *propheteuo* is used, it can express more than one of its meanings. Perhaps, both the foretelling of future events and the speaking of divine counsel were being manifested by those speaking.

There is no doubt that on this Festival of Pentecost, both the speakers and the hearers were the beneficiaries of a special miracle. There was no incoherent speech, no unknown languages to decipher, no interpreters were needed—all those who were intended to hear and understand what was being said to them understood it clearly.

Types of Gifts

In his letters to the elect at Corinth, Rome, and Ephesus, the apostle Paul mentions over twenty individual supernatural abilities given to the elect in order for them to perform various functions and responsibilities during the gospel age of salvation. He also states that each of these abilities is given for the purpose of benefitting the entire church and its work:

"But the manifestation of the spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same spirit; To another faith by the same spirit; to another the gift of healing by the same spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another different kinds of languages; To another the interpretation of languages" (1.Cor.12:7-10 KJV Para.).

The record in the Books of Acts and 1.Corinthians show the following four primary purposes for the gift of languages:

1. To supernaturally proclaim the good news message to people in their native language
2. To show that the person proclaiming the good news message is sent from God
3. To educate, instruct, and inspire the elect
4. To reveal God's mysteries to the elect

Languages within the Congregations

What Paul says about the giving of different supernatural powers to specific individuals in 1.Corinthians, 12:8-10 is the first indication that 1.Corinthians, chapters 12 through 14 may not contain the exact same subject matter discussed in Acts, chapter 2.

"Pursue godly love, and desire the spiritual gifts, but much more that you may prophesy" (1.Cor.14:1 KJV Para.).

The English word *spiritual* in verse 1 is translated from the Greek word *pneumatikos*, which refers to the supernatural (i.e., things pertaining to the spirit realm). The use of the word *pneumatikos* tells us that Paul is urging the elect at Corinth to desire to be spiritual (i.e., righteous) in their thought, attitude, and behavior.

The word *gifts* is not in the Textus Receptus and was added by the King James translators. The addition of the word *gifts* obscures Paul's intent to urge the elect to desire things pertaining to godly spirituality (i.e., godly characteristics).

The English phrase *you may prophesy* is translated from the Greek word *propheteuo*, which can mean to foretell events, divine, speak under inspiration, exercise the prophetic office. In the context of verse 1, *propheteuo* means to speak things which are divinely inspired.

The attribute which is to be most sought after and increased is godly love in one's life. And we should desire to have other gifts of the spirit, but even more so the ability to say things which are divinely inspired.

"Therefore speaking a supernaturally acquired language does not speak to people, but to God: for nobody else understands; but in the spirit he speaks mysteries. But he that speaks under divine inspiration speaks to people edifying, and exhorting, and comforting. He that speaks in a foreign language edifies himself; but he that speaks under divine inspiration edifies the church" (1.Cor.14:2-4 Para.).

In order to understand what Paul is attempting to convey to the elect at Corinth in verses 2-4 about their misuse of the gift of languages, we need to remember that there seems to be a problem with some of these elect misusing their supernatural abilities and/or thinking that their supernatural abilities from the Father are the most important. This seems to be especially true with the gift of languages, because Paul goes on to explain in great detail that this ability is to be used to serve, edify the elect, and proclaim the Father's message of salvation.

Edify the Elect

If a man speaks in a language that only he understands, he is only speaking to himself and to God. The phrase *edifies himself* seems to imply a selfish motivation. In essence, Paul says that a man who is inspired to speak or teach the elect, whether to educate, instruct, inspire, reveal God's mysteries, or foretell future events, should do so to edify the elect, not for personal enjoyment or aggrandizement:

"I would that you all speak with languages but rather that you prophesied: for greater is he that prophesies than he that speaks with languages, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying" (1.Cor.14:5 KJV Para.).

The English words *prophesied* and *prophesies* in verse 5 are both translated from the Greek verb *propheteuo*, which can mean to foretell events, divine, speak under inspiration, or exercise the prophetic office. Because Paul is writing about edifying the elect, it seems logical that in verse 5 *propheteuo* means to speak under inspiration of the holy spirit.

Paul says that he wished all those who spoke to the congregation in Corinth had the supernatural ability to speak in other languages. However, he wished even more that these men would be inspired speakers who were able to explain God's truth, because the one who can explain God's truth has a far better gift than the one who is multilingual, unless the multilingual preacher or teacher can also explain and expound God's truth in the foreign language with clarity.

The most plausible reason that Paul wanted all who speak to the congregation in Corinth to be multilingual like he was is that the church of Corinth was a multilingual congregation. Remember, this church was in a city that was an ethnic melting pot. Because of this, language would naturally be a barrier to learning. Therefore, multilingual preachers and teachers who could expound the truth of God would be of great benefit to the entire church.

Speak to Convey Understanding

"Now, brethren, if I come to you speaking with languages, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?" (1.Cor.14:6 KJV).

Paul tells them that it would not benefit them if he said something they could not understand, but revealing knowledge and understanding to them was what benefitted them. In verses 7 through 11, he continues this line of thought to reinforce the need to speak in a language that can be understood by everyone in the congregation and to clearly explain what was being said.

"And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped? For if the trumpet gives an unidentifiable sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? So likewise you, except you speak a language and words easily understood, how can it be known what you are saying? for you speak into the air" (1.Cor. 14:7-9 KJV Para.).

Why would a person speak in a language that others do not understand? The only reasons that make sense are self-importance, pride, ego, or vanity.

"There are, it may be, many kinds of sounds in the world, and none of them is without signification. Therefore, if I do not know the meaning of the sound, I shall be to him that speaks a foreigner, and he that speaks a foreigner to me" (1.Cor.14:10-11 KJV Para.).

If there is not intelligent and understandable communication between two people, neither one benefits.

Speak to Edify

"Even so you, forasmuch as you are zealous to be spiritual, endeavor to edify the church. Therefore, let him that speaks in a foreign language pray that he may interpret" (1.Cor. 14:12-13 KJV Para.).

In verses 12-13, Paul mentions the zeal of these men to be spiritual and tells those who were exercising their supernatural ability to speak in other languages that they should endeavor to be extremely proficient in building the congregation.

The English word *interpret* in verse 13 is translated from the Greek word *diermeneuo*, which means to explain thoroughly, and by implication, to translate.

If a man is going to speak before the congregation, he should be able to explain in detail what he is saying; otherwise, it is of no benefit to those listening. Therefore, Paul tells the speakers to pray for the ability to explain clearly what they are saying.

Verses 12 and 13 reveal that the elect who use either the gift or natural ability to speak other languages to a multilingual congregation of the elect should ask the Father for the ability to translate (i.e., interpret) what they are saying to those of the congregation who cannot understand the language they are speaking.

When the gift of languages is being used to proclaim the gospel to the unconverted, they hear the message in their native language as documented in Acts, chapter 2, "*How does it happen that each of us hears them in his own native languages?*" (Acts 2:8 TLB). Therefore, there is no need for an interpreter: But, within a multilingual congregation, there may be a need for individuals who have the ability to translate different languages because the same situation does not exist as with the unconverted of Acts, chapter 2.

Verses 14 through 17 are very confusing in most translations because of the beliefs held about the gift of languages by those who did the translating. Additionally, many words have been added that are not in the Textus Receptus.

The King James translators rendered verse 14: "*For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful.*"

The Living Bible's rendering of verse 14 makes what Paul said more understandable: "*For if I pray in a language I don't understand, my spirit is praying, but I don't know what I am saying.*"

In verse 14, Paul speaks of one of the functions of the holy spirit which allows a person to speak in different languages:

"What is it then? Pray with the spirit and pray with understanding also: sing with the spirit, and sing with the understanding also. Otherwise when praising with the spirit, how are those with you to understand and agree with your thankfulness, seeing they do not know what you said? For you truly gave thanks well, but the others are not edified" (1. Cor. 14:15-17 KJV Para.).

The English word *sing* in verse 15 is translated from the Greek word *psallo*, which is derived from *psao* (to rub or touch the surface). But seems to be referring to playing on a stringed instrument (perhaps to celebrate worship with music and accompanying odes).

Although the definition of *psallo* is difficult to determine, it is not difficult to understand that Paul is not speaking of making unintelligible sounds, but of sounds which are easily understood.

When Paul refers to praying, singing, praising, and giving gratitude in the spirit, he is referring to the supernatural ability to communicate in a foreign language which can be understood—not in some unknown language.

Scripture indicates that, if a man who is speaking to the elect in a congregational meeting, speaks in a language that others do not understand, it is only God who understands what is being said.

What also seems to be apparent from the scriptures is that the ability to speak in a supernaturally acquired language is within the control and discretion of the individual with this ability; that person can either speak in their native language or other languages, depending on the circumstances.

Paul Was Multilingual

Because the elect at Corinth knew that Paul could speak many languages, to emphasize the point he was making about using the gift of languages within the congregations of the elect, he said, *"I thank my God, I speak with languages more than you all"* (1.Cor.14:18 KJV Para.).

Why was Paul thankful that he was multilingual? The following are two plausible answers to this question:

- Paul not only spoke his native tongue, Aramaic, but also he could read and speak many languages, including the dead language of ancient Hebrew in which the Hebrew scriptures were written. This ability gave him great credibility with the common Jews, as well as the Levitical priesthood, because only the most educated people could read and understand the Hebrew scriptures.
- Paul was the apostle to the non-Israelites, and the houses of Israel and Judah. Because his travels took him to many distant lands, he needed to know many languages in order to fulfill his commission to preach the gospel to those with whom he came in contact. More than likely, the apostle Paul had the natural ability to speak many languages along with the gift of languages mentioned in the Book of Acts and his letters.

BE MATURE CHRISTIANS

Paul clearly understood that the misuse of the gift of languages by the elect at Corinth was hindering their spiritual growth; therefore, he continued to stress the proper preaching, teaching, and conduct within the congregational setting:

"Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, so as to instruct others also, than ten thousand words in a foreign language. Brethren, do not be children in understanding; but, you be children in wickedness, but in understanding be of full age" (1.Cor.14:19-20 KJV Para.).

Because of the confusion being caused by those who were multilingual within the congregation, Paul instructs them to stop thinking as children, but to keep the innocence of a young child and think as adults.

Unbelievers and Believers

"In the law it is written, With other languages and other lips will I speak to this people; and yet for all this will they not hear me, says the Lord" (1.Cor.14:21 KJV Para.). See Isa.28:11-12.

Verse 21 is another indication that, when the gift of languages is being exercised, everyone God wants to understand his message will understand it clearly, but those who he intends to hide it from will not understand it.

In verse 22, Paul explains the two distinctly different uses of the supernatural ability to speak in various languages:

"Therefore languages are for a sign, not for them that believe, but for those who do not believe. But prophesying does not serve those who do not believe, but those that believe" (1.Cor.14:22 KJV Para.).

The evidence for the difference in the usage of this ability is found in the Greek language. The following seems to be a more accurate translation of verse 22 that makes what Paul wrote clear:

"The gift of languages is not a mark or indication for people who believe, but for people who do not believe. But inspired preaching or revelation of divine counsel does not serve people who do not believe, but does serve people who do believe" (1.Cor.14:22 Para.).

The simple truth that Paul explained to the church at Corinth was that, if a man is given the supernatural ability to speak in foreign languages, it is to be used to preach the gospel in an evangelistic manner and for the benefit of the church through teaching and revelation of God's truth and mysteries. It is not to be used as a display of intellectual vanity.

Chaos Versus Order

"If therefore the whole church comes together in one place, and everyone is speaking different languages, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that you are mad?" (1.Cor.14:23 KJV Para.).

Paul says that for the church as a whole to speak in different languages at the same time would give the impression that those who speak are insane.

In verses 24-25, Paul explains the effect a proper use of speaking in foreign languages will have on a person who is visiting a congregation of the elect and is being called to salvation by the Father:

"But if all give divinely inspired messages, and some come in who are ignorant and do not believe. They will be warned by everyone and known by everyone. The secrets of their heart being made public; and so falling down on their face they will worship God, and report that God is actually in you" (1.Cor.14:24-25 KJV Para.).

The ability to speak in many different languages and to interpret what is said is a powerful tool when used to evangelize, instruct, and teach within a multilingual congregation of the elect.

"How is it then, brethren? when you come together, everyone of you has a psalm, has a doctrine, has a foreign language, a revelation, an interpretation. Let all things be done to edifying" (1.Cor.14:26 KJV Para.).

Perhaps the elect at Corinth felt peer pressure to have something spiritual to say when they met together; otherwise, they would feel inferior to other members. Or perhaps this was just an expression of self-importance, ego, pride, or vanity. Whatever the reason, Paul reprimanded them for their wrong attitude and behavior regarding how they were conducting themselves when they met together:

"If any speak in a foreign language, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one translate. But if there is no one to explain what is said, keep silent in the church; and speak to yourself, and to God" (1.Cor.14:27-28 KJV Para.).

In order for Paul's instructions in verse 27 to be followed, the congregation must have either a person who has the supernatural ability to translate languages and explain what is said, or a person who has the natural ability to translate and explain what is said.

Whichever is the case, these men must be known to be in the congregation before the person or persons with the gift of languages can speak to the congregation.

In verses 27 and 28, Paul gives detailed instructions to multilingual speakers about how they should conduct themselves. He says that, if any man is going to speak in multiple languages, he must not use more than two or three languages during his dissertation and he should not mix these languages as he speaks, but he should speak them consecutively. Paul further instructs the speaker to search out interpreters for these languages, but if none can be found, the speaker should not speak to the church; instead, he should keep his thoughts between him and God.

The Interpreter

Several times Paul addresses a need for an interpreter when someone is going to speak to the congregation in a language other than the one commonly spoken. The reason for this is that, if a speaker is to transmit understanding, the hearer must be able to comprehend what is being said. How could the entire congregation benefit if the speaker were to expound some wonderful truth but some in the congregation could not understand what he was saying?

The whole tone of Paul's instructions regarding multilingual preachers and teachers shows that there must be a logical orderly progression of events whenever a speaker feels he has to use several different languages in order to express his thoughts to the church. It is evident that Paul was not advocating the practice of spontaneous outbursts of speaking in foreign or unknown languages, which is the common practice of many charismatic churches today.

"Let the divinely inspired speakers, speak two or three, and the others stay seated and reflect on what is being said" (1.Cor.14:29 Para.).

Paul establishes the order in which inspired speakers are to present a subject and instructs other inspired speakers to refrain from interrupting.

"If a revelation comes to another that sits by, let the first keep silent" (1.Cor.14:30 Para.).

Obviously, if another inspired speaker has something to add or to clarify, this man should either wait until the one speaking is finished with what he has to say or get the attention of the speaker—perhaps by lifting the hand to indicate that he would like to speak. Whatever these signals are, this should be worked out in advance, so there is no unexpected interruption during the speaker's presentation.

"For you may all speak under inspiration one by one, that all may learn, and all may receive encouragement. And the spirits of the inspired speakers are subject to the inspired speaker. For God is not of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints" (1.Cor.14:31-33 Para.).

A man who is gifted as an inspired speaker must not be vain, but must be humble, respectful, and willing to listen to what others have to say in order to receive more knowledge, understanding, and correction if necessary for the benefit of himself and others. Clearly, order must be maintained in a congregational setting if there is to be an atmosphere where people can worship respectfully and learn God's truth.

Men and Women

Is the gift of languages only for men? The answer is no? The Book of Acts shows both men and women receiving the gift of languages. Under certain circumstances, such as witnessing about Christ or women teaching other women and children the Father's truth, the gift of languages might be necessary for a woman. See Mk.16:17; Acts 2:16-18.

However, within the setting of a formal congregational worship or teaching service women are not allowed to speak or teach:

"Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted for them to speak; but to be subordinate, as also says the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church. What? came the word of God out from you? or came it to you only?" (1.Cor.14:34-36 KJV Para.).

Paul only states what the law states in reference to who is to be a spiritual leader among God's people and in keeping order in the congregation for the benefit of all.

"If any think they are an inspired speaker, or spiritual, he will recognize that the things that I write to you are the commandments of the Lord. But if anyone is ignorant, let them stay ignorant. Therefore, brethren, desire to speak with inspiration, and do not forbid the speaking in foreign languages. Let all things be done decently and in order" (1.Cor.14:37-40 KJV Para.).

SUMMARY

There is a proper time and a place for the exercise of the gifts of the spirit. And the proper use of the supernatural ability to speak other languages and to translate them is important for the following reasons:

- It provides someone with this gift the ability to proclaim the Father's message of salvation to people in their native language.
- It enables a person with this gift to teach and inspire the elect in a multilingual group.

The supernatural gift to interpret languages seems only to apply in a multilingual congregational setting where there is a need to interpret what is being said by a speaker to the congregation so that everyone will understand what is being said.

Although it is not stated by Paul, there seems to be an indication that, sometimes when a person with the gift of languages speaks to a multilingual crowd of people, this gift of languages acts the same as it did on the Day of Pentecost where what a person said in their native language was translated into the mind of a person who speaks a different language.

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CHAPTER

TEN

HEALING AND EVANGELISM

One of the supernatural abilities or gifts given to the elect is the power to heal mental and physical illnesses or disabilities. This ability is viewed by many people as the most important, but according to the apostle Paul it is not. See 1.Cor.13:1-13.

Although the ability to heal is not the most important gift the Father gives to the elect, it is extremely important during this age in order to benefit the elect and to proclaim the Father's message of salvation:

"And these signs shall follow those who believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with languages new to them; they shall cast away serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Mk.16:17-18 KJV Para.).

"And God [i.e., the Father] has set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, different languages" (1.Cor.12:28 KJV Para.).

The English word *healing* is translated from the Greek word *iama*, which means a cure.

Before the Gospel Age

The following are two accounts of healing before the advent of Christ in which specific procedures were to be followed to effect the healing. These two healings show that God is companionate and he authorized some of his representatives with the power to heal.

Naaman

The Book of 2 Kings contains an account of an Israelite slave telling her master's wife that there was a prophet in Samaria who could heal her master Naaman of his leprosy. The biblical record of this event shows Naaman who is in charge of the Syrian army going to the prophet Elisha's home to be healed.

"So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha's house. Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, "Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed" (2.Kgs.5:9-10 NIV).

Because Naaman was not expecting to be sent away without being healed and thought Elisha's instructions were ridiculous, he went away in a rage. But later, he was convinced to follow Elisha's instructions and was healed:

"Naaman's servants went to him and said, 'My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, 'Wash and be cleansed!'" So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy" (2.Kgs.5:13-14 NIV).

Naaman's healing tells us the following:

- The Prophet Elisha was well known by the Israelites for his ability to heal people
- A person must sometimes also have faith in a person's ability to perform healing when his instructions are followed.
- Healing can be performed by a prophet who is authorized to perform supernatural works without laying hands on an individual or anointing with oil.
- The person who requests healing must follow the prophet's instructions in order to receive healing.
- Verses 15 and 16 of this account tells us that healing is a gift for which no payment of any kind is required nor to be received by the one bestowing the healing.

King Hezekiah

The Creator sent the prophet Isaiah to King Hezekiah to tell him to set his house in order because he would soon die. After Hezekiah beseeched God to heal him, the Creator sent Isaiah back to tell him that he heard his prayer and he would live.

"And it came to pass, before Isaiah was gone out into the middle court, that the word of the Lord came to him, saying, Turn again, and tell Hezekiah the captain of my people, This says the Lord, the God of David your father, I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears: behold, I will heal you: on the third day you shall go up to the house of the Lord. And I will add to your days fifteen years; and I will deliver you and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for my own sake, and for my servant David's sake. And Isaiah said, Take a lump of figs. And they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered" (2.Kgs.20:4-7 KJV).

Although it was the Creator who was going to do the healing, the instruction Isaiah gave is important for several reasons.

1. The king's sickness would only be healed if the prophet's instructions were complied with.
2. A fig poultice helps remove poisons from an infected area.

Fig poultices are an ancient remedy used to help heal abscessed gums, boils, carbuncles, warts, blisters, ulcers, abnormal growths, scar tissue, and more. Poultices seem to work by drawing poisons to the surface of the skin and neutralizing them, and imparting beneficial nutrients which are absorbed by the skin and passed into the blood stream.

This account also tells us the following:

- God is merciful and hears a righteous person's request for healing.
- Although healing is promised, a person must follow the instructions given to them by God's representative.

Would Hezekiah have been healed if he had not followed Isaiah's instructions? The answer is no. If he did not follow Isaiah's instructions, he would have died because these were given by one who was representing the Creator God and his authority to heal.

During Christ's Ministry

During Christ's ministry, he healed hundreds and perhaps thousands of people of various disabilities and illnesses. Some individuals asked him to heal them, some were healed when other people asked him for healing on their behalf, some were healed without their asking for healing when Jesus saw their condition and had compassion on them, and some were required to follow specific instructions before their healing would take effect. See Jn.5:1-13; 8:1-11.

The accounts of Christ healing individuals and his authorizing his twelve disciples and the seventy other men to heal is important to an understanding of the various aspects of healing individuals during this gospel age.

These accounts not only give insight into Christ's approach to healing individuals but also provide examples to those who are to heal people as they proclaim the Sovereign Father's good news message.

All Disabilities and Illnesses Healed

As Jesus traveled about teaching the true meaning of the scriptures, and proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom of God, he healed people of all kinds of disabilities and illnesses, none of which were beyond his authority and ability to heal. See Matt:8:16; 9:35; 12:15; 14:14.

"And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people" (Matt.4:23 KJV).

The English words *sickness* and *disease* in verse 23 are translated from the Greek words *nosos* and *malakia*. *Nosos* can mean a malady (rarely figuratively, of moral disability). *Malakia* means softness, i.e., enervation and is derived from *malakos*, which means soft, i.e., fine (clothing); figuratively a catamite (i.e., a pubescent boy who was the intimate companion of a young man in ancient Greece and Rome, usually in a pederastic relationship).

The Greek words *nosos* and *malakia* in the phrase *sickness and all manner of disease* seem to indicate that Christ's authority and power to heal all sickness included mental conditions that are manifested in a person's immoral behavior, such as the perverse sexual orientation of a catamite.

When verse 24 is reviewed in the Greek text, it tells us that Jesus released people from the control of evil spirits and the mental and physical problems caused by such control:

"And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought to him all sick people that were taken with various diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them" (Matt.4:24 KJV Para.).

In verse 24, the English words *diseases* and *torments* are translated from the Greek words *nosos*, which can mean a malady (rarely figuratively, of moral disability) and *basanos*, which means a touch-stone, i.e., (by analogy) torture. The Greek words *nosos* and *basanos* together in the phrase *diseases* and *torments* indicate an extremely painful illness.

In verse 24, the English words *lunatick* and *palsy* are translated from the Greek words *seleniazomai*, which means to be moon-struck (i.e., insane) and *paralutikos*, which basically means paralytic.

Evil spirits are often the cause of a mental or physical disability or illness and often torment people they possess. See Mk.5:1-5; 9:17-27; Lk.13:10-16. Clearly, not all mental or physical disabilities or illnesses are the effect of demonic possession or harassment, but are the result of many other natural causes such as a birth defect, chemical imbalance, physical injury, traumatic emotional experience, and more. Regardless of the cause, Jesus had the authority and ability to cure all forms of mental and physical disabilities and illnesses.

Verses 23 through 24 tell us that the healing of mental and physical disabilities and the removal of evil spirits is a way to get people's attention and to convince them that the person doing the healing and casting out of evil spirits is someone who has authority over the physical and spirit realms.

The Withered Hand

Mark and Luke record that a man with a withered hand was in a crowd of people listening to Jesus and when Jesus asked him to extend his hand, his hand was instantly healed as those in the crowd watched:

"And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand" (Mk.3:1 KJV).

Here, the English word *withered* is translated from the Greek word *xeraino*, which by implication means to shrivel and is derived from the word *xeros*, which means to desiccate.

This individual did not have use of his hand because the muscles were atrophied and shriveled making his hand useless:

"And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the Sabbath day; that they might accuse him. And he said to the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth. And he said to them, Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace. And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he said to the man, Stretch forth your hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other" (Mk.3:2-5 KJV) See also Lk.6:6-11.

This account gives no indication that the man believed Jesus could heal him, only that he did as Jesus asked and extended his hand. This account reveals that Jesus did not touch the man or say anything else to him in order to effect the healing. Jesus' intent was to heal the man's hand and to show that it was lawful to do good works on the Sabbath. Therefore, he healed this man without his asking for healing.

Blind Man At Bethsaida

Mark records the following account of Jesus healing a blind man at Bethsaida. Many assume when Jesus attempted to restore this man's sight, he failed in his first attempt and had to lay hands on him a second time in order to totally restore his eyesight. But, is this what happened or is there a more logical explanation of this account?

"And he came to Bethsaida; and they brought a blind man to him, and implored him to touch him. And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands on him, he asked him what he could see. And he looked up, and said, I see people as trees, walking. After that he again put his hands on his eyes, and he looked: and he was restored, and saw everyone clearly" (Mk.8:22-25 KJV Para.).

The English word *blind* throughout the New Testament is translated from the Greek word *tuphos*, which means opaque (as if smoky). Although *tuphos* can mean a total loss of sight, it can also mean a partial loss of sight as well as an allegorical, intellectual, moral, or spiritual blindness. Knowing that the Greek word *tuphos* has many meanings helps in determining why Jesus did what he did.

It makes no sense that Jesus had to try a second time to heal the man's eyesight. What makes more sense is that Jesus stood in front of the man, spit on his eyes, rubbed them to unstick his eyelids, and then asked him what he saw to determine his degree of blindness. Jesus had absolute faith in his authority and power to heal any type of physical disability or illness and he had healed many blind individuals before this man was brought to him. In addition to the narrative account of how Christ healed this man, it also shows a person who has the authority to heal is not constrained in how he conducts the healing process.

The Centurion's Servant

When Jesus was in Capernaum a centurion ask him to heal his servant and Jesus replied that he would go and heal him.

"And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came to him a centurion, beseeching him, And saying, Lord, my servant lies at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus said to him, I will come and heal him. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that you should come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goes; and to another, Come, and he comes and to my servant, Do this, and he does it" (Matt.8:5-9 KJV).

Although Jesus was willing to go with the centurion to heal his servant, the centurion being a man of authority himself clearly understood the power Jesus could wield and knew that it was only necessary for Jesus to exercise his authority and his servant would be healed.

"When Jesus heard it, he marveled, and said to them that followed, Truly I say to you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say to you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And Jesus said to the centurion, Go your way; and as you have believed,

so be it done to you. And his servant was healed in the same hour" (Matt.8:10-13 KJV). See also Matt.15:21-28.

This tells us that the centurion was absolutely convinced that Jesus had the authority to heal, which made it unnecessary for Jesus to go to the centurion's home to heal his servant. This also gave Jesus an opportunity to teach that a person who exercises faith when requesting another person's healing can effect the healing of that person. See also Jn.4:46-48.

A Blind Man Washes at the Pool of Siloam

After leaving the temple grounds where he had been in a heated discussion with some Pharisees and other Jews, Jesus saw a blind man and healed him to show the goodness of God and that he was doing a work for his heavenly Father:

"And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night comes, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay" (Jn.9:1-6 KJV).

The English word *anointed* in verse 6 is translated from the Greek word *epichrio*, which means to smear over. Clearly, the spit and dirt from which Jesus made the clay that he applied to the man's eyes had no therapeutic or ritualistic value. So, why did Jesus do this when he could just as easily have used his power to instantly remove the cause of the man's blindness? Verse 7 reveals the reason for the smearing of clay on the man's eyes and Jesus' instructions to him:

"And said to him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing" (Jn.9:7 KJV).

The instruction to wash in the pool of Siloam seems to be for the following reasons:

- By following Jesus' instructions the blind man showed that he believed he would receive his sight when he washed his eyes in the pool of Siloam.
- Because the man was blind he would need help to find the pool of Siloam; therefore, his healing would be a witness to those who guided him to the pool and saw his blindness removed as he washed the mud from his eyes.

After the man received his eyesight, the rest of the narrative in John chapter 9 shows that this healing was proof to the man himself and those who knew him that Jesus was sent from God and was the Messiah. This healing was also a powerful witness to the Pharisees who rejected Jesus as the Messiah.

Power to Heal Not Limited

The many accounts in the New Testament of Jesus healing people of various disabilities and illnesses reveal that no disability or illness is beyond supernatural healing through the power of the holy spirit.

In the examples of Jesus healing individuals, no specific pattern, ritual, or method is established. Instead, what we see is Jesus using the method which fit the circumstance in which healing was to be performed. All the examples of Jesus healing individuals show that the healing was instantaneous or happened very quickly after a command was given to heal, or occurred after the person followed instructions to perform a certain act.

We are not told everything that Jesus did or did not do as he went about healing people and proclaiming the Kingdom of God. But, we are told enough to know and understand that healing people is not only an act of compassion but also a major part of any powerful ministry proclaiming the Kingdom of God.

Commission to Believers

Shortly after Jesus was resurrected, he first appeared to Mary Magdalene, then to two individuals as they were walking to the village of Emmaus, after which he met with the remaining eleven disciples and gave them what is commonly called the great commission recorded by Matthew and Mark:

"Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshiped him: but some doubted. And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. You go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy spirit: Teaching them to observe all things whatever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of this age" (Matt.28:16-20 KJV Para.).

Jesus told his disciples to teach what he taught them, which includes what he said regarding the elect healing people of disabilities and illnesses.

These Signs Will Follow Believers

Both Matthew and Mark record that the disciples were to go throughout the earth proclaiming the good news message which Jesus brought from his heavenly Father and to baptize repentant individuals into his Father's earthly family. But only Mark records Jesus stating that certain supernatural signs would be evident among true believers:

"You go into all the world, and preach the good news to everyone. Those who believe and are baptized will be saved. But those who refuse to believe will be condemned. And these signs shall follow those who believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with languages new to them; They shall cast away serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Mk.16:15-18 KJV Para.).

Jesus makes a statement of fact about supernatural abilities which will be evident among believers who will have the authority and power to cast out evil spirits, speak languages new to them, have protection against poisonous snakes and liquids, and heal every type of physical disability or illness, and spiritual and mental disorder through laying their hands on individuals.

Although Jesus promised these supernatural abilities in the context of proclaiming the gospel message and accepting those who believe into the Father's earthly family of believers, Jesus did not place restrictions on who can be healed through the laying on of hands. Therefore, it seems logical that healing through the laying on of hands can be applied to the elect as well as the unconverted.

Laying on of Hands

After the writer to the Hebrews acknowledges the validity of Christ as the high priest of the Sovereign Father's earthly children and reprimands these Hebrews for their lack of skill in the use of the foundational knowledge about righteousness, he makes the following statement:

"Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on to perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit" (Heb. 6:1-3 KJV).

The English phrase *of the doctrine* in verse 2 is translated from the Greek word *didache*, which means instruction. The writer urges these Hebrews to go forward in knowledge and understanding from foundational teachings, which include the instruction in the practice of laying on of hands. This tells us that this practice was firmly established as a foundational teaching in the early church. Therefore, its symbolism and its practical application should be clearly understood and practiced by the elect today.

There are many accounts in the New Testament where hands were laid on individuals for various reasons. There are several accounts which show the ritual as symbolic acknowledgment that a person is being placed in a position of responsibility and service.

These accounts document that the ritual of laying on of hands accomplish tangible results in the physical realm, one of which is healing of the elect through the ritual set in place by the apostle James for the elect to follow in order to be healed:

"Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord" (Jms.5:14 KJV).

This aspect of healing is apart from the authorization to heal unconverted people as an act of compassion and to get people's attention when proclaiming the Father's good news message.

For detailed explanations of the concepts and principals contained in the healing ritual set in place by the apostle James, get a copy of the Book *Survive and Thrive as a Follower of Christ*, ISBN 978-0-9844608-6-1 or visit www.bibleresearch.org.

Ananias and Saul

After Saul who became the apostle Paul encountered Jesus near Damascus and was rendered blind, he saw a vision of a man named Ananias coming to him and laying his hands on him. A short time after this vision, Ananias entered the house where Saul was, told him Jesus had sent him and why he was sent. Then Ananias put his hands on Saul and he received his sight and was filled with the holy spirit. See Acts 9:1-18.

The following accounts of healing are in the context of proclaiming the gospel message and show that whether or not the laying on of hands is applicable depends on the circumstances in which healing is performed:

Paul at Melita

The apostle Paul was stranded on the island of Melita after being shipwrecked. While there, he laid his hands on a man who was sick and healed him, after which he healed many other people on the island. This account shows that Paul understood he was authorized by Christ to use the ritual of laying on of hands to heal unconverted people as he carried out his responsibility to proclaim the gospel message. See Acts 28:1-9.

Not all people who were healed by the apostles had hands laid on them. Paul healed a man who had been a cripple from birth by just telling him to get up and walk. He also sent cloth that he had handled to people to effect the healing of sicknesses and the casting out of evil spirits. See Acts 14:8-10; 19:11-12).

There are many scriptures which show the apostles healing people as acts of mercy and compassion while going about fulfilling their commission to proclaim the Father's good news message and to establish congregations of believers wherever they went. The scriptures clearly show that, when healing people, those doing the healing did so through the discretionary use of their authorization to heal.

Peter Heals a Lame Man

In the following account, Peter uses his authority to heal a man who had been lame from birth:

"Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour. And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple; . . . Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed to them, expecting to receive something from them. Then Peter said, Silver and gold I have none; but such as I have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise and walk" (Acts 3:1-2, 4-6 KJV). See also Acts 3:16.

Before performing this act of mercy, Peter said, *"Such as I have I give you"*, which makes it clear that Peter had the power to heal at his discretion. When Peter said, *"In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise and walk,"* he was not only announcing by whose authority he was removing this man's paralysis and making him whole, he was also commanding the act of healing to be performed through the authority and power he had been delegated from the Father through the office of Jesus Christ.

After issuing this command in the name of Jesus, Peter confidently reached down, took the man's hand, and began to lift him to his feet. Instantly, the man was healed of his paralysis and had enough strength to stand, walk, and leap up and down. See Acts 3:7-8.

By Whose Authority?

While being questioned by the high priest and other religious leaders of the Jews about his authority to heal the lame man, Peter told them that he received his authority and power to perform this healing through Jesus Christ who was also the Savior of humanity:

"If we be examined of the good deed done to this man, by what means he is made whole; Be it known to you all, and to all people of Israel, that by the name [i.e., authority] of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him does this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:9-12 KJV).

This and other accounts of the apostles healing people reveal that it is not necessary for a person who has the authority to heal, to touch a person, lay hands on them, or anoint them with oil in order to effect a healing.

Because of a lack of understanding in today's world regarding God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, a man who is authorized to heal should clearly explain who has given him his authority to heal in order for those who are healed and those who are aware of the healing to clearly understand that all credit, praise, and honor for any healing performed by them belongs to God the Father. Although it is the Father who bestows the ability to heal, it is through Christ's sacrifice that an individual is made worthy to receive this ability and it is through his office of authority that healing is performed.

Summary

The authorization to perform supernatural healing is mentioned as an independent gift given to the apostles of the early church, as well as to the prophets, some of the ministry, evangelists, those with the gift of miracles and wonders, and to some who were not elders.

From what we see in the New Testament, the authorization to heal is to be used by men. These men are in one way or another involved in proclaiming the gospel or in relieving illnesses and disabilities where no elder is present to administer the healing ritual set forth by the apostle James.

The following are several things the biblical record tells us about the Father's gift of healing and the discretion that the man with this gift has when performing a healing:

- Healing is a gift, for which no payment of any kind is required nor to be received by the one bestowing the healing.
- Sometimes a person must have faith in a man's ability to heal and sometimes no faith is required by the person being healed.
- A person can request healing for another person without that person's knowledge and that person can be healed by a man who has the gift of healing.
- A person does not have to be present with a man who has the gift of healing in order to be healed by him.
- People were healed in private, with other people, or not present with the man performing the healing
- No mass healings, public prayer, singing, or ritualistic incantations to invoke healing are documented in the biblical record.

A man with the gift of healing has the discretion to heal people in many ways, some of which are as follows:

- Giving an audible command to heal
- Acknowledging healing has already been performed for a person
- Giving an instruction for a person to follow before healing will be performed
- Predicating healing on the faith of the person requesting healing for themselves or another person
- Healing a person as an act of compassion without their asking for healing
- Touching the person to be healed, laying hands on them, or making no physical contact

Getting People's Attention

Healing people of mental and physical disabilities and illnesses not only shows the compassion that our heavenly Father and Savior have for people but also it is an excellent way to get people's attention so they will listen to the message of salvation as Christ, the apostles, and others did when they went about evangelizing.

By B.L. Cocherell

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NOTES AND COMMENTS

____ CHAPTER ____
ELEVEN

INTERDEPENDENT GIFTS

In order for many functions and responsibilities within the Father's earthly family to be performed efficiently and effectively, it is necessary for the Father to give a person several different attributes, abilities and authorizations, many of which are interdependent. What follows is a discussion of why some gifts the Father bestows are dependent on others in order to produce the desired result.

After Christ's death and resurrection, he appeared to several people and then to his eleven disciples and said to them, *"I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high"* (Lk.24:49 NIV).

While the disciples and the other men and women with them were at the temple on the Day of Pentecost, the Father bestowed several supernatural abilities on each of these individuals, which fulfilled the following prophecy recorded by Joel:

"And I will pour out my spirit on my slaves and on my slave-girls in those days" (Joel 2:29 KJV Para.).

When the Father adopts a person into his family he places his holy spirit within them, which immediately transforms them into a new and different being with spiritual power, godly love, and self-control as a part of their nature. Along with these three spiritual attributes, the individuals gathered together on Pentecost were also given the ability to communicate in many different languages and to give divinely inspired messages to those listening to them.

This one-time event was only the beginning of the supernatural attributes and abilities the Father would bestow on his children. It seems logical that, during the forty days after his resurrection that he appeared to people, he would have taught his disciple and others what they were to do with the attributes, abilities, and powers they would be given from their heavenly Father. See Acts 1:1-4.

In his letters, Paul does not mention all of the various attributes, qualities, functions, and authorizations that can be manifested through the power of the holy spirit, but he mentions enough of them for us to know with certainty who is to use these gifts from the Father, what is to be accomplished through their use, and that some of these gifts are dependent on other gifts for them to be used effectively.

When Paul wrote to the elect at Corinth, Rome, and Ephesus he wrote about the hierarchical organizational structure of the church, the types of supernatural abilities the Father bestows on his children, and why these abilities are necessary for his earthly family to function as he intended.

The Elect at Corinth

Paul explains to the elect at Corinth that, although there are a variety of supernatural abilities and authorizations and a variety of effects produced through their use, each of these are given for the benefit of all the elect:

"Now there are a variety of gifts, but the same spirit. And there are a variety of services but the same Lord. And there are a variety of effects, but it is the same God which works all in all. But the manifestation of the spirit is given to everyone to profit" (1.Cor. 12:4-7 KJV Para.).

It is apparent from verses 8 through 12 that the supernatural abilities and authorizations the Father gives are to be used in a unified organizational structure to perform the collective work to which he has called each of the elect to participate:

"For to one is given by the spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same spirit; To another faith by the same spirit; to another the gift of healing by the same spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another different kinds of languages; to another the interpretation of languages: All these are the work of one and the same spirit, and he gives them to each person, as he wills. For as the body is one, and has many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ" (1.Cor.12: 8-12 KJV Para.).

In verses 8-12, Paul again mentions some of the abilities and authorizations that the Father personally gives to individuals and that these are necessary functions within the body of Christ (i.e., the Father's earthly family).

The Elect at Rome

Paul explains to the elect at Rome that all of the various abilities, authorizations, functions, and responsibilities the Father gives to individuals work together in a unified manner for the benefit of all the elect:

"For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of themselves more highly than they ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another" (Rom.12:3-5 KJV Para.).

The Elect at Ephesus

In his letter to the elect at Ephesus Paul lists apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers which all require supernatural abilities and authorizations in order to perform their responsibilities adequately:

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we are no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the deceitful scheming and trickery of people, whereby they lie in wait to deceive . . ." (Eph.4:11-14 KJV Para.).

It is within the organizational structure of the church that several supernatural abilities and authorizations are necessary for some of the elect to perform their primary functions and responsibilities, such as an apostle, prophet, teacher, evangelist, bishop, or pastor. Without possessing specific abilities and authorizations it would be virtually impossible for these individuals to effectively perform their work, such as the work of the ministry and the edification and perfecting of the elect.

The following is a brief overview of the functions and responsibilities that existed in the early church and the Father's spiritual gifts which allowed the elect to perform a dynamic and powerful work for him.

Apostles

The English word *apostles* in Eph.4:11 is translated from the Greek word *apostolos*, which means an ambassador. From what is written about various apostles throughout the New Testament, it seems that these men needed many abilities and authorizations in order to perform their work, such as discernment of spirits, faith, knowledge, healing, languages, miracles, teaching, and wisdom.

Although Paul mentions apostles as being first in the hierarchical organizational structure of the church, there is no indication that there will be apostles in the end of the age as a primary function and responsibility in the same way these men were in the early church.

What we do see is that a few years before the first resurrection and Christ's return to establish his Father's Kingdom on earth, there will be two dynamic and powerful men who will proclaim God the Father's good news message from Jerusalem. Because of what is said about these men in the Book of Zechariah and the Book of Revelation, it seems clear that they function as the principal leadership of the church at that time. For details about these two men get a copy of the Book Biblical Prophecies Past, Present, and Future, ISBN 978-0-9844608-1-6 or visit www.bible-prophecy.net or www.bibleresearch.org.

Prophets and Teachers

Nowhere in the scriptures is it found that prophets or teachers were ordained to their function by either the priesthood or the eldership. What is found is that prophets and teachers were personally selected to a position of authority and service by God, after which they were acknowledged by God's people as they fulfilled these positions.

The scriptures show many individuals (men and women) under the covenant with national Israel and the Father's agreement with his earthly children were given responsibilities outside of physical bloodlines or a formal ordination ritual. Therefore, there is a precedent for this same situation to exist during this age of the church.

Prophets

The English word *prophets* mentioned in 1.Cor.12:28 and Eph.4:11 is translated from the Greek word *prophetes*, which can mean a foreteller (prophet); by analogy, an inspired speaker.

If the prophets of ancient Israel are any indication of a prophet during the gospel age, these men would need many, if not all of the following gifts of the spirit: faith, prophecy, knowledge, healing, languages, miracles, teaching, and wisdom.

If prophetesses of ancient Israel are any indication of a prophetess during the gospel age, these women would need the following gifts of the spirit: faith, prophecy, knowledge and wisdom.

Teachers

The English word *teachers* in 1.Cor.12:28 and Eph.4:11 as one of the three primary functions and responsibilities in the church is translated from the Greek word *didaskalos*, which means an instructor.

The importance of teaching is self-evident. Without being instructed in the Father's truth, no progress can be made toward the goal of spiritual maturity and perfection. Although it should be the goal of each of the elect to become skilled enough in the Father's truth and the mysteries of God to be able to explain the Father's plan for the salvation of mankind to others, the apostle James gives this warning to those who assume the teaching function within the church:

"My brothers, Not many of you should be teachers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more severely" (Jms.3:1 Para.).

The function of teaching within the church carries with it the responsibility to make sure that what one teaches is truth, because if any of what is taught is not correct or not thoroughly explained, it has the potential to adversely impact a person's life and spiritual growth.

As with the function of a prophet, both men and women are noted as fulfilling the teaching function. However, teaching performed by men is much different from that of women. Men teach the entire church, whereas older, more spiritually mature women are to teach the younger women by a righteous example and direct instruction. See Titus 2:3-5.

For a person to be an effective teacher of God's truth, he or she must have more than a casual knowledge of the scriptures and may also need the gifts of languages, the interpretation of languages, knowledge, wisdom, and exhortation, depending on the situation.

Evangelists

The English word *evangelists* in Eph.4:11 is translated from the Greek word *euaggelistes*, which is derived from the word *euaggelizo*, meaning to announce good news. *Euaggelistes* in the context of verse 11 means a preacher of the Father's good new message.

Many men fulfilled the function of an evangelist in the early church. From what we see in the biblical record, any man who preached the good news message as a function of their ministry was an evangelist, such as the apostles, the men who traveled with them, the prophets, Philip who had four daughters that prophesied, and Stephen the martyr.

The function of an evangelist included not only proclaiming the good news message but also teaching the Father's truth to the elect, as noted by Paul's instruction to the evangelist Timothy:

"Therefore I charge you before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having a desire to hear what they want to hear. And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned to fables. But you watch in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, and make full proof of your ministry" (2.Tim.4:1-5 KJV Para).

The English word *ministry* in verse 5 is translated from the Greek word *diakonia*, which means attendance (as a servant, etc.) i.e., service.

Although Timothy's personal work was that of a preacher of the good news message, he was also one who served the church as a teacher of the Father's truth for the perfecting of the saints and for the building of the church as a collective entity.

Because of their contact with many diverse people, it seems that these men would need many supernatural abilities, such as discernment of spirits, faith, knowledge, healing, languages, miracles, teaching, and wisdom.

Governments and Rulers

Only the Father's elect are given an understanding of the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. One of these understandings is that the Father's kingdom fulfills the four basic requirements of a kingdom, which are a sovereign to govern it, territories to govern, people to govern, and laws with which to govern.

While explaining that the elect were the Father's priests on earth who were to offer spiritual sacrifices, the apostle Peter mentioned that they were a holy nation:

"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people; that you should show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1.Pet.2:9 KJV Para.).

Here, the English word *nation* is translated from the Greek word *ethnos*, which is derived from a word that means race. In the context of verse 9, *ethnos* means a tribe especially a foreign one.

Although the elect dwell on earth, they are nonetheless members of the Father's kingdom and are governed by its officials and laws. Not many men are born with the organizational and managerial skills necessary to manage the affairs of one or more congregations of the elect or to give direction to its members. This is one of the reasons there is a need for the gifts of the spirit to govern and rule as noted in 1.Cor.12:28 and Rom.12:8.

The English word *governments* in 1.Cor.12:28 is translated from the Greek word *kubernesis*, which is derived from *kubernao* (of Latin origin, to steer); pilotage, i.e., (figuratively) directorship. The Greek word *kubernesis* leaves no doubt that what is being spoken of is rulership and its authority. Because men in leadership positions within congregations make many decisions which directly affect the lives of those they lead and serve, having the ability to govern effectively is an extremely important gift from the Father.

In Romans, chapter 12, Paul writes about the need for unity and teamwork within the church and mentions several gifts from the Father which are necessary for elders in positions of rulership over congregations:

"Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teaches, on teaching; Or he that exhorts, on exhortation: he that shares do it with sincerity; he that rules with diligence and compassion, with cheerfulness" (Rom.12:6-8 KJV Para.).

The English word *rules* in verse 8 is translated from the Greek word *proistemi*, which is derived from a word meaning to stand before, i.e., (in rank) to preside, or (by implication) to practice. In the context of verse 8, *proistemi* means a position of authority.

In Hebrews, chapter 13, the writer mentions those in authority within the church and that these men must be shown the respect due to them for their performance of this important function:

"Remember those who have the rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct" (Heb.13:7 KJV Para.).

"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you" (Heb.13:17 KJV).

"Know you that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you. Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you" (Heb.13:23-24 KJV).

The English phrase *have the rule over* in these three scriptures is translated from the Greek word *hegeomai*, which in these scriptures means to command (with official authority).

There are many scripture that explain how men placed in authority over their spiritual brothers and sisters must conduct their personal life and their responsibility to carefully consider the welfare and protection of those placed under their care. Additionally, there are warnings to those who rule within congregations in an autocratic, dictatorial, and harsh manner. This is why they need the gifts of the spirit, which enable them to righteously govern and rule as noted in 1.Cor.12:28 and Rom.12:8.

Bishops

"This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desires a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach . . . " (1.Tim.3:1-2 KJV).

The English word *bishop* in verse 1 is translated from the Greek word *episkope*, which basically means one who supervises i.e., manages or oversees.

The English word *bishop* in verse 2 is translated from the Greek word *episkopos*, which basically means one who carefully supervises i.e., carefully manages or oversees.

The work of a bishop (i.e., a pastor over many congregations) is an extremely important responsibility, because this man must provide spiritual leadership for all those under his care and protection, just as a loving father and husband is to provide for his family. See Titus 1:5-9.

It seems that in the hierarchical structure of the church, men who were apostles, such as Paul ordained elders who were given the responsibility to supervise many churches. These men would need many gifts of the spirit, such as discernment of spirits, faith, knowledge, healing, languages, miracles, teaching, wisdom, governing, and ruling in order to perform their responsibilities adequately.

Pastors

The English word *pastors* in Eph.4:11 is translated from the Greek word *poimen*, which means a shepherd (literally or figuratively).

Those who were called to supervise local congregations of the early church had a uniquely different responsibility from others within the eldership. Not all men are suited for this type of work, because it takes a person of exceptional patience, gentleness, kindness, self-sacrifice, wisdom, spiritual understanding, and dedication to serve the elect in this capacity.

Paul cautions those who had been given the responsibility of a congregational elder to be very careful how they fulfilled their responsibility to serve the Father's children:

"Take heed, therefore to yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the holy spirit has made you overseers [superintendent or official in charge], to feed the church of God, which he [Jesus] has purchased with his blood. For I know that after I leave, grievous wolves [evil people] will come among you, that will not spare the flock. Also among you shall men arise, speaking perverse things, in order to draw away disciples after themselves . . . I have shown you all things, and that you ought to work to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, when he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:28-30, 35 Para.).

Attitude Toward Service

Although everyone the Father calls to become one of his earthly children is expected to serve their spiritual brothers and sisters, those called to be congregational pastors or elders must be especially dedicated to serving their brothers and sisters. Without question, the responsibility of the a congregational pastor or elder has the potential to be an exceptionally gratifying and joyful experience, but is one of the most demanding, time consuming, and stressful functions within the eldership.

It is logical to assume that congregational pastors and elders would need many gifts of the spirit, such as discernment of spirits, faith, knowledge, healing, languages, miracles, teaching, wisdom, governing, and ruling.

Helps

The English word *helps* in 1.Cor.12:28 is translated from the Greek word *antilepsis*, which is derived from the word *antilambanomai*, which can mean to take hold, succor or to participate. Because *antilepsis* is used in the context of a gift of the spirit, it must be an important ability in the overall work of the church.

Although the work of the ministry is extremely important to the overall work of the church, without individuals to help these men and people to perform specific tasks within the church, including helping members with specific needs, very little would be accomplished.

Even Christ who had the holy spirit without measure could not do everything he was given to do without the help of others. He chose twelve men to be his constant companions and seventy others to also help him proclaim the Kingdom of God. He sent some of these men to perform certain tasks for him like announcing that he was coming to town and preparing a place to observe the Passover.

There were also many women who helped him in his ministry. Although there are few details about the specific tasks they performed, their help and support was necessary for him to carry out his ministry.

An example of those who perhaps had the gift of helps with which to benefit other people are the seven men appointed to minister to widows in the early church and Tabitha who spent much time, effort, and money to make garments for the elect as an act of compassion. In Romans, chapter 16, Paul mentions ten men and women who were intimately involved in helping in various ways within the church.

Other individuals who helped through various means are those identified by the Greek words *diakonos*, *diakoneo*, and *diakonia*, which in most translations of the New Testament are translated as deacon, deacons, and the office of a deacon. None of these three Greek words implies anything of an official capacity or office of authority, but refer to someone who provides a service to other people. In the context of the biblical record, these Greek words simply mean someone who serves their spiritual brothers and sisters. It seems logical that these individuals were already helping and serving others and that the gift of helps enhanced and increased their ability to do what they were already doing.

The gift of helps has far reaching implications and should not be underestimated, because without men and women to provide help to the elect in various ways and to support the effort of the ministry the collective work of the church would be severely limited.

Exhort, Give, and Mercy

In Romans, chapter 12, the apostle Paul mentions the spiritual gifts of exhorting, giving, and mercy, which apply in one degree or another to each of the elect:

"Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, on our ministering: or to teach, on teaching; Or to exhort, on exhortation: or to give, with simplicity; he that rules, with diligence; mercy, with cheerfulness" (Rom.12:6-8 Para.).

In verse 6, Paul writes about four spiritual attributes the Father gives to individuals. Although the context of verses 7-8 is primary concerned with interacting with one's spiritual brothers and sisters, exhorting, giving, and mercy are spiritual attributes that can also be practiced as one interacts with other people. It is interesting that, when Paul identifies three of these godly attributes the Father bestows to individuals, he also explains them.

To Exhort and Exhortation

In Romans 12:8, the English word *exhort* is translated from the Greek word *parakaleo*, which can mean to call to, beseech, to exhort, and to comfort. The English word *exhortation* is translated from the Greek word *paraklesis*, which means to encourage.

It can be assumed (generally speaking) from the context of many scriptures that contain various Greek words which have been translated into the English words exhort, exhorts, and exhortation that the concepts being written about deal with being strongly encouraged, urged to do something or encouraging in the sense of comforting individuals who are experiencing some sort of difficulty.

There are two primary ways a person can receive exhortation and comfort. One is from the scriptures and the other is from another person.

The scriptures encourage and urge us to do many things for the good of ourselves and of others. And they have many encouraging and comforting things to say that help us to have faith in the promises of our heavenly Father and our Savior.

Not everyone has the personality or the natural ability to encourage or comfort another person in times of discouragement, loss of hope, sickness, stress, or other difficulties. But, this is an attribute that each of the elect should be able to cultivate over time with practice and experience. But for those whose function and responsibility is to be intimately involved in working with the elect on a personal level, such as the ministry and those who serve the widows, the ability to encourage and comfort is a necessary attribute for them to carry out their work effectively.

In his letter to the elect at Corinth, Paul mentions edifying, exhorting, and comforting. This seems to be a continuation of what he writes to the ministry at the end of chapter 12, in chapter 13, and the beginning of chapter 14, which also applies in some degree to all the elect:

"Pursue godly love, and desire the spiritual, but much more that you may prophesy. Therefore speaking a supernaturally acquired language does not speak to people, but to God: for nobody else understands; but in the spirit he speaks mysteries. But he that speaks under divine inspiration speaks to people edifying, exhorting, and comforting" (1.Cor.14:1-3 Para.).

Encouraging and comforting a person is mentioned over 27 times in various contexts in the New Testament, which shows this attribute, whether a natural ability or a gift from the Father, as being an important expression of godly character, the doing of good works, and the practice of a righteous life.

To Give

In Romans 12:8, Paul encourages those who give to do it with simplicity. The English words *give* and *simplicity* are translated from the Greek words *metadidomi* and *haplotes*, which in the context of verse 8 respectively mean to share and to be exceptionally generous.

In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he wrote of their past spiritual condition, their calling, their salvation, and why they were created as one of the Father's earthly children:

"That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace you are saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph.2:7-10 KJV).

A major part of a person's good works is the sharing of one's time, effort, and material goods with others.

Some people share their time, effort, and material goods because they are pressured by others, but others share because of their love and concern for others. Sharing and generosity are godly characteristics which are well documented in the biblical record. Some individuals naturally have a sharing personality and some do not; however, sharing is a godly quality which each of the elect must cultivate through practice and as one grows in spiritual maturity.

Although being selfish with one's time, effort, and material goods is clearly not a godly attitude, the Father and Jesus Christ certainly do not intend that we prove our righteousness by sharing to the point that we cannot care for our personal needs or those of our family members. Therefore, a balanced approach to giving of our time, effort, and material goods is necessary. One of the reasons the Father gives specific individuals the gift of sharing seems to be for them to set the proper example of this godly quality. In the context of generosity, Paul writes:

"Let him that is taught in the word communicate [in the sense of sharing material goods. See Phil.4:14-15] to him that teaches in all good things. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap. For he that sows to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that sows to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal.6:6-8 KJV).

Paul uses the same analogy in discussing the subject of giving with the Corinthians:

"But this I say, those who sow sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and those who sow bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Everyone as they determine in their heart, so let them give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you: that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work" (2.Cor.9:6-9 KJV Para.).

The English word *cheerful* in verse 7 is translated from the Greek word *hilaros*, which in the context of verse 7 means prompt or willing.

Jesus said the following about the principle of generosity:

"Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you" (Lk.6:38 NKJV).

Does God expect us to give all we have in time, effort, and material goods to the church, its work, and others? No, he does not! The biblical record teaches that we are expected to use good judgment and give as we are able and sometimes sacrifice if necessary.

The spiritual attribute of a giving attitude the Father gives to some of the elect not only is a blessing to that person, because it enhances their godliness, but also to others who come in contact with them and are blessed through their generosity, such as Tabitha's generosity mentioned in Acts 9:36-39. This gift can also be displayed in giving of one's time, energy, and material goods through being hospitable. See Rom.12:10-13; 1.Pet.4:8-9.

Although all of the elect are expected to cultivate the godly characteristic of sharing, some are given this gift of a sharing attitude in order to be an example to others.

Mercy

In Romans 12:8, Paul tells the elect to be merciful with cheerfulness. But, why did he need to instruct us to be cheerful when showing compassion to someone?

The English words *mercy* and *cheerfulness* in Romans 12:8 are translated from the Greek words *eleeo* and *hilarotes*, which in the context of verse 8 respectively mean to be compassionate and to be cheerful.

Being merciful is a godly quality, which is revealed in many of the laws the Creator gave to ancient Israel, such as the laws about usury, indentured servants, gleaning of crops, cities of refuge, and other laws that are examples of God's mercy toward the less fortunate and those who needed protection from harsh treatment.

Paul's instruction to be merciful with cheerfulness tells us not to show mercy reluctantly, but cheerfully, because love, forgiveness, and compassion are all godly characteristics of the Father and Christ that should also be a part of our character.

Christ who was the Creator God and the personification of his heavenly Father showed great compassion to many people during his ministry and said the following about being compassionate:

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy" (Matt.5:7 KJV).

When we analyze what Christ said about being merciful and obtaining mercy several important concepts about having a godly attitude and how one is to practice a righteous life are revealed.

The English word *merciful* is translated from the Greek word *eleemon*, which means to be actively compassionate. To be actively compassionate means that we must not only have this quality but we must also be practicing it in our interaction with other people.

The English word *mercy* is translated from the Greek word *eleeo*, which means compassion. If we expect to be blessed and receive mercy from our heavenly Father, we must be merciful ourselves (i.e., show compassion to others).

Luke records Christ instructing everyone who desires to be considered one of the Sovereign God's children about the attitude and behavior a righteous person should exhibit toward other people:

"But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and you shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind to the unthankful and to the evil. You therefore be merciful, as your Father also is merciful" (Lk.6:35-36 KJV Para.). See also Jms.2:8-17.

The English word *merciful* in verse 36 is translated from the Greek word *oiktirmon*, which is derived from a word with the sense of exercising pity. For the elect *oiktirmon* means to practice mercy (i.e., compassion) toward others.

These attitudes and behaviors Christ mentions in verses 35-36 are all godly principles which were expressed in various laws given to ancient Israel and are principles to be practiced by the elect.

Some notable examples of the expression of godly love and compassion are Christ's example of the good Samaritan (Lk.10:30-36), the second great commandment (Matt.22:39), the seven chosen to care for widows (Acts 6:1-3), and Tabitha (Acts 9:36-39).

Some people are naturally compassionate and have the ability to be merciful to others regardless of the situation. However, these individuals are rare, thus the many instructions in the biblical record to be compassionate toward other people.

It is logical to assume that apostles, prophets, teachers, evangelist, pastors, and elders need the gift of mercy in order to deal with the elect and other people they come in contact with. It is also logical to assume that each of the elect needs the spiritual attribute of mercy in order to mature spiritually and exhibit the godly characteristic of compassion.

By B.L. Cocherell

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— CHAPTER —
TWELVE

SUMMARY

This study discussed many of the supernatural attributes, abilities, and authorizations of power that the Father bestows on his earthly children in order for them to perform his purpose for calling them to salvation during this gospel age. If you are one of the Father's elect, he has given you certain supernatural attributes, abilities, and authorizations of power above and beyond those of a person without the indwelling of the holy spirit. But, do you recognize the ones you have and are you using them to effectively work out your salvation and perform your functions and responsibilities within your heavenly Father's earthly family?

SPIRIT-POWER

The use of spirit-power produces an effect in the physical and spirit realms which would not happen in the normal course of events. This is the power that God the Father and Jesus Christ authorize the elect to use as they seek to accomplish the goals which have been set for them during their physical life.

There are many different spiritual attributes, abilities, and authorizations of power that the Father can bestow on an individual through which his spirit-power can be exercised. Not everyone receives all of them (1.Cor.12:1-12), but each of the Father's elect is given what he determines they need in order to successfully perform their calling and obtain salvation.

Because the Father allows those he authorizes discretionary use of the power he gives them within certain boundaries, it is important to understand the following about this spirit-power:

- God the Father is the source of all physical and spirit-power and he has all authority and control over it.
- It is through the Father's power that he creates, energizes, sustains, and influences all that exists.
- Spirit-power is neither good nor evil in and of itself; it is energy which can be made to perform any function that the Father has determined or authorized.
- Spirit-power is similar to knowledge, which is an inanimate thing and incapable of any action of its own. It is what an individual does with their knowledge that results in good or evil. As with knowledge, the end result of using the Father's spirit-power is determined by the user and not by the spirit-power itself.

It is important to remember that being delegated authority to use the power of the Father's holy spirit is not only a great blessing and privilege, but also an awesome responsibility which must be taken seriously. Moreover, it is wise to study the biblical accounts that show how Christ, the apostles, and others of the early church used their various gifts of the spirit and authorizations of spirit-power in order to understand your authority and how to correctly use it.

Are the Father's gifts of the spirit only for the ministry? These men do need many spiritual attributes and abilities, including authorizations of power, but the scriptures clearly show that many of these attributes, abilities, and authorizations of power are given to non-elders—both men and women. Therefore, it is important to understand that each of the elect is responsible for the stewardship of the various spiritual gifts and authorizations the Father has given them to use at their discretion.

STEWARDSHIP BEGINS

Stewardship within the Sovereign Father's earthly family begins the instant you receive the indwelling of the holy spirit. From this point forward, you are responsible to manage all things that come under your control in a righteous manner, including your physical possessions and the gifts of the spirit and the authorizations the Father has or is yet to give you.

All who are called to participate in the first resurrection are expected to perform certain tasks and fulfill certain responsibilities for their Heavenly Father while living in the flesh. However, few realize this important fact and therefore many are ill prepared for their role as a steward within the Father's family, which includes exercising the supernatural attributes, abilities, and authorizations given to one at their adoption into his family. This situation primarily exists because of a lack of study into the Father's truth and an understanding of a steward's functions and responsibilities within his family. For details about stewardship within the Father's earthly family get a copy of the Book *Survive and Thrive as a Follower of Christ*, ISBN 978-0-9844608-6-1 or visit www.bibleresearch.org.

Profitable and Unprofitable Stewards

In a parable about the events that will precede his return, Jesus explains the need for each steward in the Father's earthly family to be actively working to increase the value of what has been entrusted to them, which includes the three gifts of the spirit given at the time of adoption into the Father's earthly family. See 2.Tim.1:7.

It is no accident that Matthew records the parable about profitable and unprofitable stewards after the parable of the Ten Virgins, which tells us that we should always be prepared to meet Christ at his coming.

"It will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. . . ." (Matt.25:14-15 NIV).

When Jesus returns, each steward within the Father's earthly family must give an account for what they have done with what has been placed in their trust (2.Cor.5:10). The faithful stewards are the ones who increase the value of what was placed into their care. These individuals receive a reward that is representative of their efforts (Matt.16:27). However, some individuals will not try to increase what is entrusted to them:

"Then the man who had received the one talent came. Master, he said, I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you" (Matt.25:24-25 NIV).

The elect who do nothing with the opportunities that come their way, their physical blessings, and the spiritual gifts and authorizations given to them by the Father are viewed as worthless servants:

"His master replied, You wicked, lazy servant! You knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed [i.e., You understood what I was doing and yet you did nothing]. You should have at least put my money in the hands of an investor, then I would have received my money back with some interest added to it . . . Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents . . . And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt.25:26, 28-30 NIV Para.).

The following are several important lessons which can be learned from what is said to the unprofitable servant:

- When the Father calls a person to salvation, that person has enough personal attributes to be spiritually successful and secure salvation with the help of the holy spirit dwelling in them; otherwise, that person would not have been called.
- At the proper time, each person is given additional attributes according to their potential to produce value for the Father. See Rom.12:3-8; 1.Cor.12:8-10, 28-30; Eph.4:11-16.
- Although each individual may be given different opportunities, attributes, skills, talents, and spiritual gifts to work with, each person is required to add to the value of what they are given.
- The parable clearly shows that, if a person feels inadequate or is unable because of some valid reason to do an individual work by themselves, he or she should find a way to place their skills, talents, or spiritual gifts under the direction of someone who is more able to use them to produce a positive result for the Father.

- The parable implies that, if a person will make an effort to accomplish something of worth for the Master, they will receive a reward for that effort.
- Unprofitable servants will not be punished because of a feeling of inadequacy or because of being unable to increase what they were to increase; the punishment is the result of doing nothing positive with what was given.
- The reward that the unprofitable person should have received for being a faithful steward will be given to those individuals who seize opportunity and are willing to extend themselves and produce something of value for the Father.

The following seem to be the overall lessons about stewardship in Matthew 25:14-30:

- The Father and Jesus Christ expect each of the elect to grow in grace and knowledge and to produce spiritual fruit in their life.
- Each individual is to accomplish something of value for the Father to claim as his own when they give an account of their life's work.
- If a person becomes too fearful and lazy to accomplish something positive for the Father, they are not worthy to enter the Family and Kingdom of God.
- Each individual who is called to salvation must make an effort to use what they have been given and to increase their personal worth for the benefit of the Father.

It only takes a review of the other parables Jesus gave about the necessity to do a personal work and what the apostles wrote about participating in the collective work of the church to understand that, if you do not heed these warnings, you will be in jeopardy of losing your salvation and rewards (Matt.25:14-30; Lk.12:35-40). But, if you put forth an honest effort to perform your calling, you will be rewarded above and beyond your expectations.

Be a Doer of the Word

"But you be doers of the word, not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone hears the word, and does not do it, they are like a man looking at his face in a mirror. Because he looks at himself and departs, and right away forgets what kind of man he is. But whoever looks into the perfect law of liberty, and continues in it, is not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this person shall be blessed because of their work" (Jms.1:22-25 Para.).

This analogy pictures the following two categories of the elect who start out truly understanding their calling and what is required of them:

1. The person who does nothing about fulfilling their calling will soon forget their awesome opportunity and responsibility as a child of God.
2. The person who does what they know they should be doing will be blessed for their effort.

It is what you do with what you have been given to work with and the opportunities that come your way to do good works that will determine which of these two categories you will be in when you give an account for you life.

In James' analogy, self-deception seems to be the result of truly understanding the Father's will, but believing, that it is not necessary to practice his will in one's life. To avoid becoming a worthless servant, once you understand what the Father expects of you, it is imperative that you practice to the best of your ability what you know to be your responsibility.

It is the consistent compromising of the truth which a person truly understands that leads a person into self-deception and into forgetting who they are and their awesome opportunity and responsibility as one of the Father's chosen ones. This is why it is not enough to just know that the Father requires you to do good works; you must also do good works in order to maintain a harmonious relationship with the Father and Jesus Christ.

Good Works and Gifts of the Spirit

So what does doing good works have to do with the gifts of the spirit? The answer is everything, because doing good works in a spiritual sense requires understanding who you are spiritually and exercising the spiritual gifts you have been given.

It is understood that elders in the ministry must have several supernatural attributes, abilities, and authorizations to effectively perform their functions and responsibilities. But this does not exclude non-elders, both men and women, from having some of these same gifts of the spirit, depending on gender, and one's desire to serve the Father, the elect, and other people.

There are many gifts of the spirit that are not gender specific, such as the gift of prophecy, which is given to both men and women depending on who is selected to convey the message to others. Other gifts of the spirit in this same category are discernment, exhortation, giving, governments, helps knowledge, faith, mercy, wisdom, and perhaps teaching depending on the circumstance and who is being taught. There are also the gifts of miracles, healing, languages, and the interpretation of languages, which the Father bestows to men who are not elders.

Among the many supernatural attributes, abilities, and authorizations the Father bestows, there are several that all of the elect need in order to fulfill their calling. Several of these are: spiritual knowledge, understanding, discernment, faith, and wisdom, as well as the spirit-power, godly love, and self-control which are given at one's adoption into the Father's earthly family.

The simple fact is that everyone who is adopted into the Father's earthly family of king-priests is a steward over their physical and spiritual possessions and is responsible to perfect and increase the effectiveness of each spiritual gift the Father has given them.

It is evident from the biblical record that the Father's elect are called to practice a life filled with good works while working out their salvation and performing certain functions and responsibilities within the collective work of the church. It is also clear that the Father gives each of his elect the attributes and abilities necessary for them to successfully obtain salvation and perform their specific functions and responsibilities.

Self-Evaluation

If you truly believe that God the Father has called you to salvation and made you one of his earthly children, you should regularly perform a self-evaluation in order to determine if your attitude, behavior, and performance conforms to the life you have been called to practice. This evaluation is especially necessary when assessing whether or not you are using your gifts of the spirit effectively.

If you find that you do not know or are not sure if you are doing what is expected of you, or that the Father's gifts of spiritual power, godly love, and self-control are not recognizable or are weak in your life, ask the Father to help you understand what he expects of you, how to recognize, exercise, and increase the effectiveness of these three foundational spiritual gifts plus any other ability, attribute, or authorization he has given you, and then diligently study the scriptures where these gifts are explained.

Without exercising spiritual power, godly love, and self-control, growth toward spiritual maturity and godly character cannot be achieved nor can any other gift of the spirit be exercised effectively or to their full potential.

If you desire one or more additional gifts of the spirit in order to better serve the Father, Christ, your spiritual brothers and sisters, and to be of help in performing the greater work Christ, Joel, and Habakkuk foretold, ask the Father to help you, and then diligently study the biblical record where these gifts are found and explained.

Our heavenly Father knows that we need spiritual knowledge, understanding, discernment, wisdom, faith, and other attributes, abilities, and authorizations in order for us to fulfill his purpose for our lives. The undeniable fact in the biblical record is that the Father is more than willing to give us what we need to help us successfully become one of his immortal children and to perform the work he has called us to do.

However, he requires that we are sincere in asking for attributes, abilities, and authorizations above and beyond those he gave us when he adopted us into his family, and that we ask for the right reasons. If we do both of these things we can be assured that he will give us what is necessary for us to serve him and fulfill his purpose for calling us during this gospel age.

There are basically five keys to receiving things we request from the Father. Christ reveals four of these keys and the apostle John reveals the fifth. One day the disciples asked Christ to teach them to pray, so he gave them an example of what they should say, after which he made the following promise:

"Ask and It shall be given you: seek and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For everyone that asks receives; and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened" (Matt.7:7-8 KJV Para.).

A casual reading of this promise seems to indicate that whatever a person requests from the Father will be given to them, but this is not what Christ meant. A person must first make a request, then put forth an effort to seek out what is desired, and then aggressively go after what is desired — ask, seek, and knock. These are the first three keys that guarantee the Father will fulfill our legitimate requests. What Christ says next gives us the fourth key and qualifies what the Father will give to his earthly children:

"Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?" (Matt. 7:9-10 KJV). See also Lk.11:11-12.

When ask for food, will a father who truly loves his child give them something harmful instead of the food they need to sustain their life? Of course not. If it is within his power to do so, a loving father will give what is beneficial and more. In verse 11, Christ further qualifies what the Father will give when he is asked for something:

"If you being wicked, know to give good gifts to your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the holy spirit and good things to them that ask him" (Matt.7:11 Para.).

Each person the Father adopts into his earthly family receives his holy spirit along with the gifts of spirit-power, godly love, self-control, and any other attributes and abilities the Father has decided to bestow on a person at that time. After receiving these initial spiritual endowments the Father wants us to increase in godly character through practicing a righteous lifestyle, developing unquestionable loyalty to him and his way of life, doing good works which reflect his nature and goodness, and proclaiming his message to humanity.

The apostle John gives the fifth key to receiving what we request of the Father, encouragement about the Father's attentiveness to our needs, and speaks of the confidence that we should have when speaking to him:

"This is the confidence we have in making requests of the Father. If we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us, we know that he will give us what we request of him" (1.Jn.5:14-15 Para.).

If what we request is within the Father's will and purpose for us, other elect, and his plan for the salvation of humanity, we can be assured that we will receive a positive answer. However, it is not always easy to determine if something we desire is within his will, but is not a necessity, such as additional spiritual attributes, abilities, and authorizations. Therefore, if we desire additional spiritual gifts, we should take time to do a serious self-evaluation and ask ourselves some of the following questions:

- Why do I want these additional abilities?
- Am I using the ones I already have to their full potential?
- Do I need to ask for help to increase the power and effectiveness of what I already have?

The primary key to receiving what we request from the Father is requesting things that are compatible with his purpose for us as one of his earthly children and for his overall plan for the salvation of humanity.

Remember, the apostle Paul said that all gifts of the spirit are given for the benefit, edification, and enrichment of the Sovereign Father's elect and the performance of the collective work of the church. See Eph. 4:11-16.

For the Father's elect there are two primary reasons to desire additional supernatural abilities:

1. To render service to other members of our heavenly Father's earthly family.
2. To help perform the collective work of the church to proclaim the Father's good news message of salvation and as a witness and warning to the world of Christ's return.

The Father desires to give us things that are good for us, including, but not limited to, spiritual knowledge, understanding, wisdom, and discernment. He also wants to help us increase our ability to effectively use the spiritual attributes and abilities he first gave us, which included spirit-power, godly love, and self-control. Because of this, we should take full advantage of the Father's desire for our success and heed Christ's and John's advice to ask the Father for things that are good for us and within his will for us.

It is the Father's will that we obtain salvation and that we perform the work he has called us to do, so we should ask the Father to reveal his will and purpose for us if we do not know what it is. We should also seek this knowledge and understanding through studying his written word and meditating on what we find there —ask, seek, and knock.

The Father knows each one of us better than we know ourselves; he knows our heart, desires, strengths, weaknesses, and potential. Therefore, he knows if giving us gifts of the spirit in addition to those he initially gave us at our adoption into his earthly family will be good for us, our spiritual brothers and sisters, and the work he has called us to do above and beyond working out our salvation.

Although we are sincere in our desire to have additional gifts of the spirit and authorizations to use for their intended purpose, we may not receive them because the Father has determined that it is not in our best interest or his purpose for us during this age of salvation.

Spiritual Growth

As a child of God, we must not remain static in our spiritual growth or the work our heavenly Father requires us to perform as a member of his earthly family. We either grow in spiritual maturity, do good works, and put forth an effort to fulfill our part in proclaiming our Father's message to humanity, or we regress toward our old behavior. See Jesus' admonition to the Ephesians and Laodiceans in Revelation 2:5 and 3:1-3, 15-19.

If we become lazy and refuse to put forth the effort to pray, study, meditate on our Father's truth, and do the work we have been told to do, the supernatural attributes, abilities, power, and authorizations given to us become weak and useless. When this happens, we become incapable of recognizing and serving truth and are in danger of losing the power of the spirit in our life, which results in eternal death. However, when we diligently exercise the spirit in a positive manner, we become more powerful and able to please our Father and our Savior with our life.

God the Father has made a special effort to call some in this age to salvation, and Jesus Christ came and gave his life so that those called can be saved. The Father and Jesus have committed themselves and their tremendous resources to helping us successfully obtain salvation and perform the work we are called to do during this life. And in order to succeed, all one has to do is put forth an honest effort and properly exercise the gifts of the spirit our Father has given us. See Matt.6:25-34; Heb.13:5-6; Jn.14:12-14.

What Paul wrote at the beginning of 1.Thessalonians, chapter 5 is also meant for the elect through the centuries and can easily apply to the elect today as we approach Christ's return:

"Always rejoice, continually pray, in every thing give thanks: for this is God's will in Christ Jesus concerning you. Do not extinguish the spirit" (1.Thess.5:16-19 Para.).

In order to follow Paul's warning to not extinguish the holy spirit, but to instead increase its power in our life, we must exercise it in our daily life.

Stir up the Gift of God

One cannot read the letters recorded in the New Testament without noticing that the followers of Christ are continually urged and encouraged to exercise the holy spirit in order to use their gifts of the spirit, mature spiritually, and perform the work of the church. The following are important to keep in mind:

- All who have been chosen for salvation, have truly repented, and have been properly baptized, have been given the Father's holy spirit through which we may access and use the supernatural abilities, attributes, authorizations and power the Father gives to us. See Acts 2:38; 5:32.
- Each person with the indwelling of the holy spirit has been given enough spiritual attributes, qualities, and power to allow them to grow toward spiritual maturity and perfection.
- The Father expects his children to use all of the attributes, authorizations, qualities, and power of the spirit he gives them. See Matt.25:14-30; Lk.19:12-26.
- The gifts of the spirit a person has are of no use to them, the Father, Jesus Christ, or other people if that person does not use them.
- Each gift of the spirit has an important place in the Father's family and each is meant to complement all the others and work in concert to fulfill the Father's purpose for the existence of his earthly family.

If you are serious about allowing the Father to complete the work he has begun in you, there are several important things to do. One of the first things to do, if you have not already done it, is to diligently search the scriptures to understand why the Father called you to salvation at this time in history. Once you have this understanding the next logical thing to do it to ask the Father to:

- Clearly reveal what he expects of you other than working out your salvation.
- Help you to help him complete the work he has begun in you.
- Help you recognize the talents, skills, abilities, powers, and authorizations you already have.
- Show you how to use what you already have more effectively.
- Give you any additional abilities necessary for you to perform the work he has called you to do.

Tools

The tools our heavenly Father gives us to successfully mature spiritually, build godly character, live the life he has called us to practice, and perform a work for him are the gifts of the spirit, which he bestows to each of his elect according to his purpose for their life.

At the beginning of Christ's ministry, he chose twelve men to be his disciples and close companions to help him proclaim the coming Kingdom of God. He also chose seventy others and commissioned them to proclaim the same message. It is important to note that each of the men Jesus chose had the ability to learn what he had to teach them and to perform the task set before them. All that these men needed was to be taught what to proclaim, to be given the tools with which to carry out their task, and to be sent forth to fulfill their task. See Matt.10:1-8; Lk.10:1-24.

Christ did not choose a few thousand or a few hundred men, put them through years of preparation, pick the twelve who were the most qualified for more intense instruction, and then send the seventy lesser qualified out to prepare people for his arrival and to proclaim his Father's good news message. He chose these eighty two men, because they had the ability to perform the task that they would be given to perform. The same is true of everyone whom the Father calls to salvation during this age. All that is necessary for you to succeed is to be taught what is expected of you and how to successfully perform it; to be given the tools with which to carry out the task; and to be sent forth to fulfill the task. See Isa.48:17; 2.Pet.1:10;1.Thess.5:9.

As we approach the end of this age of human rule, it becomes more and more important to use the tools (i.e., the abilities, attributes, authorizations, and power) the Father gives for our benefit and the proclaiming of his message of salvation.

It is the Father's will that we receive supernatural abilities from him and increase the power and effectiveness of the ones we already have. It is also his will that we ask him for knowledge, understanding, and wisdom to use the tools he has already given us and will give us to perform his purpose for calling us to salvation during this age.

If you truly believe that you are one of the Sovereign Father's chosen ones who has been called for a specific purpose during this gospel age, it is your duty to use the gifts of the spirit he has given you for the purpose they were given in order to become a more productive servant.

By B.L. Cocherell

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NOTES AND COMMENTS

MISSION STATEMENT

We sincerely hope that you have found these topical studies into the Bible intellectually challenging, spiritually enlightening, and beneficial.

For those wondering who authored this study, what the study's purpose is, or how to participate in this educational program, the following brief summary will give some insight into who we are and what we are trying to accomplish.

This Work

This work is a non-profit volunteer effort, there are no salaried writers, employees, or staff. The volunteers are engaged in an ongoing effort to discover, research, understand, and publish foundational truths that have been hidden in the Bible for centuries. We believe that, when these foundational truths are correctly understood and practiced, they will bring people happy, abundant, and productive lives with the promise of eternal life after physical death.

Our Goals

Our primary goal is to share our knowledge and understanding of the Sovereign God's plan and purpose for humanity with those who are interested in living according to his law, and not by the dictates and traditions of men. Our secondary goal is to proclaim the coming Kingdom of God as a warning and a witness to humanity before the Messiah returns to rule the earth.

If You Want To Know More

If you want to know more about us, the work we are doing, or how you can participate in our biblically based educational and research projects, contact us at: www.BibleResearch.org or www.Bible-Prophecy.net

OTHER BOOKS BY B.L. COCHERELL

WHO IS GOD?

WHAT IS THE BIBLE AND ITS MESSAGE?

The identity of God is one of the greatest mysteries of the entire Bible. Without understanding who God is, it is impossible to understand the biblical record, the reason humans exist on earth, and the message that Jesus brought about how to enter the Kingdom of God as an immortal spirit-being.

People all over the world are searching for a way to live longer, healthier, and happier lives. The biblical record reveals that the purpose for your existence is to give you an opportunity to live forever in a place where no evil exists and where you will have a wonderful life filled with all that is good and enjoyable. This is the good news message that Jesus Christ brought from the Sovereign God.

This book reveals the true identity of the Sovereign God, the Creator God, and Jesus Christ. Additionally, this book unlocks many of the Bible's mysteries and secrets which explain God's awesome and wonderful plan for humanity.

BIBLICAL PROPHECIES PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

The Bible is full of prophecies which speak of unimaginable pain and suffering that Jesus Christ says he is going to pour out on humanity and many of the Father's elect children before he returns to establish the government of God on earth. But why would the loving God who gave his life for humanity as the Messiah want to inflict the kind of pain, agony, and terror that is spoken of throughout the Bible as *'The Wrath of God'*?

If the wrath of God is inevitable, when will it come, and what does God hope to accomplish through it? These and many other questions are answered in this in-depth study about the major events which will precede and be a part of the return of Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth.

This book also identifies several political alliances, people, and spirit-beings and their involvement before and during the fulfillment of the prophetic events at the end of this age.

THE GIFT OF IMMORTALITY

The magnitude of the opportunities and rewards that the Sovereign God offers to those he calls to salvation through repentance, baptism, and conversion is almost beyond comprehension; nevertheless, what is offered can be obtained by those who are willing to become obedient to God's way of life.

This book answers many questions about how to enter the Sovereign God's family and kingdom as an immortal spirit-being and what he expects of his children while they live in human form.

HUMAN LIFE DEATH AND BEYOND

Is death the end of human existence? According to the Bible, the answer is, No! There are several major resurrections of the dead to physical life noted in the Bible in which an individual's eternal destiny is determined.

This book explains the four major resurrections mentioned in the Bible, who will be in each resurrection, and when each one will occur. This book answers many questions about heaven, hell, the state of the dead, immortality, predestination, reincarnation, and much more.

THE COMMANDED OBSERVANCES AND HOLY CONVOCATIONS PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Throughout human history anyone who wanted to worship the true God had to do so within the boundaries of strict rules set forth by God. The foundational elements of this worship system are shown through the sacrificial system and the commanded observances and holy convocations.

This two volume study answers many questions about the Sovereign God's plan for humanity, explains many of the literal and prophetic meanings of the various observances and convocations, and reveals a new dimension of understanding into God's plan for the salvation of humanity past, present, and future that has been hidden for many centuries.

SURVIVE AND THRIVE AS A FOLLOWER OF CHRIST

During the centuries that followed the demise of the early church, those who clung to the basic truths of God also accepted much error and made many departures from the truth once delivered. Along with this departure from truth, much knowledge and understanding was lost concerning spiritual leadership, congregational organization, government, and problem solving within the body of believers.

This book contains studies which should give any serious student of the Bible enough knowledge to be able to understand: who the spiritual leaders of the church are and are not, the organizational and governmental structure of the early church, and what one's attitude, behavior, and responsibility should be today, pertaining to the organizational and governmental structure of the church and those who govern and serve the elect of God through it.

BIBLICAL LAW PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Throughout much of Christian history there has been much confusion and misunderstanding as to what constitutes God's law and whether or not any or all of it applies to Christians today. This study gives some unique insights into the Sovereign God's purpose for humanity and shows how the first humans came under the authority of God's law, how the law applies to Christians today, how it will apply to humans after Christ returns, and how to have a harmonious relationship with the Sovereign God and Jesus Christ through the practice of God's law.

This book gives logical, concise, and meaningful answers to many questions concerning God's law and its application today.

SYNAGOGUE OF SATAN AND DOCTRINES OF DEMONS

In the Book of Revelation there is a cryptic reference to individuals Christ identifies as being of the synagogue of Satan. Additionally, the apostle Paul warned the evangelist Timothy to beware of those who would depart from the faith and pay attention to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons. Is it possible that much of what is taught as biblical truth today, is not truth, but is a clever deception?

This book identifies the Synagogue of Satan and its members and documents a number of popular beliefs held by many professing Christians which are in reality teachings of evil spirits meant to prevent an understanding of true biblical precepts, principles, and laws which if practiced will lead to life everlasting.

OUR PLACE IN THE SPIRIT REALM GODS ANGELS DEMONS

The spirit realm and the beings who inhabit it and interact with this physical realm are a reality which should not be casually dismissed as being unimportant to one's daily life.

The Bible contains much information that true Christians need to know about the Sovereign God, the Creator God, Jesus Christ, and other spirit-beings.

This book is a serious discussion about the reality of spirit-beings, the tremendous positive impact that some of these beings have had, are having, and will have in the future on mankind and the serious danger posed by some spirit-beings as they interact with humans and this physical dimension of time and space.

BOOK ORDERS AND DONATION INFORMATION

5½" x 8½" soft cover copies of each book noted in the above list may be ordered from www.BibleResearch.org or www.Bible-Prophecy.net. Copies of each book and the topical studies contained in each book may be download free of charge from the websites noted. Additionally, this book or the ones noted in the above list for mass distribution can be ordered from the printer at cost plus shipping and handling.

Donations are gladly accepted to help defray the cost of our publishing, shipping, and maintenance of our websites.