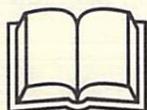


"Holding fast the Faithful Word . . ."



# *The Word and Work*



"Holding forth the Word of Life."

July, 2003

## *God's Gifts of Grace for the Body of Christ*

Every Christian has some gift,  
therefore all should be **encouraged**.

No one has all gifts,  
therefore all should be **humble**.

All gifts are for the one Body,  
therefore all should be **harmonious**.

All gifts are from the Lord,  
therefore all should be **contented**.

All gifts depend on His fullness for power,  
therefore all should **keep in close  
touch with Him**.

--A. T. Pierson

# I Couldn't Do Everything--But I Wasn't Supposed To

Howard Snyder

In 1974 I found myself working as pastor of a small church in a growing, working-class community on the edge of Sao Paulo, Brazil. It wasn't an ideal situation. I was a North American missionary living 20 miles away, clear across the city. Responsibilities at our seminary meant that I could get to the church only twice a week. But the Lord taught me a lesson that also strengthened the church.

At church planning meetings, I noticed that one man, Andre, always took notes on a little pad of paper. I was surprised. Andre was a fairly recent convert, about three years old in the Lord. He was a little older than I, perhaps 38, and had only a third-grade education. He had been a well-known alcoholic in the community before he met Christ and was carefully discipled by the former pastor.

As I got to know Andre better, I found that he had a gift for organization. He knew how to bring people together around a common purpose and get a job done. He seemed to have a sense of responsibility that would be natural for someone in an administrative role. I was impressed by the insights he would bring to bear in planning sessions. He had not learned this anywhere; it was a gift of grace.

My seminary training had taught me that administration was a big part of pastoral work. I was to be the chief church administrator. But here I was with limited time, working in a church where I had to overcome language and cultural barriers. I simply couldn't do that job of administration that should be done, and I was becoming increasingly convinced that even if I could, that wasn't God's plan.

So the Lord gave me Andre. I had 16 years' more formal education than he did, but he could do something I couldn't. As designated pastor I still had overall administrative responsibility, but I found I could turn over many organizational tasks to Andre. He became involved in the finances of the church; he helped set up the schedule for our main Sunday service.

Andre also had a natural desire to work with young people. He brought them into his home and was able to draw them together and teach them. So he was made advisor of the youth group. This led into more than administrative work for him. I maintained close contact with him, and we were able to work together in caring for the younger members of the church. The results were threefold: Andre found a

[concluded on page 223 top]

# THE WORD AND WORK

*"Declare the whole counsel of God"*

**Alex V. Wilson, Editor**

**Dennis L. Allen, Missions**

**Bennie Hill, News & Notes**

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# God's Gifts of Grace for the Body of Christ

## "An Unbiased Re-Study of the Question"

Alex V. Wilson

In 2001 the brothers in charge of the Central Louisiana Christian Fellowship invited yours truly to present three messages there. To be more specific, they asked for expositions of 1 Corinthians 12-14. That was good, for those chapters are of great significance. That also was risky, for those chapters are located in Controversy County, State of Alarm, Land of Dispute. Innumerable families, churches and denominations have fussed, fought and feuded over the meaning and practice of those chapters -- to the point of division.

The time came, the messages were presented, the hearers were both Berean (Acts 17:11) and appreciative, and no one was tarred-and-feathered. But only the Lord knows to what extent beliefs, attitudes and practices were altered, and whether for better or for worse.

Now in this and the next 3 issues, we set forth in written form our understanding of those inspired teachings of Paul. As always, "Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil." (1 Thes 5:21-22.) May the church never discard old ways merely because of the attractiveness of novelty. Young people especially are prone to do that. At the same time may we never reject new ways simply because of the grip of tradition. We older folks especially are liable to be that way.

Here's a challenge from our past: By the mid-1940s the "premill churches" had been ostracized by most mainstream Churches of Christ. Some leaders among the exiles began saying we should start our own college to train our young people. Others felt there was no Biblical warrant for a group of churches to run a school. In light of these different opinions, at the first Louisville Bible Conference (1948), preacher and leader H. L. Olmstead was asked to speak on "the autonomy of the local church." In his message he made some **perceptive observations and daring challenges which we do well to review often.** Here are key excerpts:

Our movement is set for the restoration of primitive [i.e. original] Christianity in its doctrines, its ordinances and its fruits. It is a noble ideal and from it we should never retreat. However, **it is both deplorable and deadening in its effects for any body of people who have such a high purpose to assume that they have fully arrived at their goal. For them to assume all questions of doctrine and congrega-**

tional practice were settled by the fathers long ago, so there is no need for reopening any question for prayerful study, is assuming too much. It simply means we must always think what the fathers thought, be satisfied with their findings and strive strictly to maintain the status quo. So I propose an *unbiased re-study* of the question of cooperation among congregations of the Churches of Christ, lest we be found guilty of sacrificing efficiency to a mistaken idea of liberty and congregational autonomy. (*Living Messages*, pgs. 127-8; emphasis added.)

May our Lord help us to do the same about spiritual gifts: to re-examine them with open minds. Some of the reformers in the 1500s (such as Luther) liked a motto which Stone, the Campbells, and others later exemplified also: *Ever reforming, never reformed*. They meant, We should always be reforming the church, though we will never be reformed--fully, that is. In other words, the church should always aim to reform or restore any major N.T. practices and the principles from which it has diverged. But we should always realize that the job is never completed, the goal will never be totally reached in this life. Instead it is an on-going task. Each generation should pursue it afresh.

\* \* \*

### Think About This

"Christ warned, '*You are wrong, because you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God*' (Matt. 22:29). These two factors must always be kept paramount in our ministry: the *Word of God* as the basis for all our work and teaching, and the *power of God* in our lives as we minister. The *Word of God* without His accompanying power in our lives becomes ineffective, the *power of God* in our experience, unless grounded in the Word of God, may be misunderstood and thus lead to error." (David Howard, *Hammered as Gold*.)

### **Abbreviations of Bible Versions quoted in this issue:**

asv: American Standard Version  
gnb: Good News Bible  
l.b.: The Living Bible  
msg: The Message  
nas: New American Standard Bible  
neb: New English Bible  
niv: New International Version  
nkjv: New King James Version  
nlt: New Living Translation  
rsv: Revised Standard Version

# The PRIVILEGE, PURPOSE, and POWER of Spiritual Gifts

1 Corinthians 12: 1-13

Alex V. Wilson

When I was invited to expound 1 Corinthians 12-14, my first reaction to the brother who called was, “Whom are you trying to get me in trouble with?” I was joking . . . *mainly*. Yet I remembered hearing that decades ago a respected brother was asked to expound these chapters at the Fellowship Week in Louisville, but got jumped on pretty strongly for his views. (We were in Manila already, so I don’t know if that’s an accurate assessment.)

Hey, we’ve learned to disagree agreeably, haven’t we? After all, the middle chapter here says Love is the most important spiritual trait there is. By and large *to be correct but unloving is worse than being loving but incorrect*. Of course it would be nice to be both. But an old Puritan preacher observed that while God washes our hearts clean from guilt here and now, He will wash our brains clean from error only later, in Heaven.

So I’ll explain what it seems to me the Lord said through Paul in these three chapters. But some of you may feel my interpretations are too liberal, and others may feel they’re too conservative. That’s o-k. I’ve been criticized by experts before, and I’ll just love you anyway -- whether you like it or not! In a few months you’ll have a chance for feedback.

## Introductory Background

Return now to 1st-century Corinth and the band of Christians there. Among many problems, one of the worst was divisiveness: “I’m for Paul” - “No, Peter!” - “Apollos is my man!” - “I’m for Christ!” In a similar way, today it’s pro-miracles vs. no-miracles; pro-tongues vs. no-tongues; pre-mill vs. no-mill; eternal security vs. eternal insecurity; etc.

In chapter 1:4-7 Paul thanks God because the Corinthian Christians “were enriched in every way -- in all your speaking and in all your knowledge . . . so you are not lacking in any spiritual gift.” He did *not* say, “I wish God had not given you guys these gifts, because you’ve abused them so much. It’s chaos in your meetings, so just forget these gifts.” NO! He wrote, “I *thank* God you were *enriched* in every way so you are not lacking in any spiritual gift.”

However, in chapters 12-14, Paul does clearly show that God's good gifts were producing discord, not harmony ... ugliness, not beauty, because many of the believers were using them 1) **without understanding minds**, and also 2) **without loving hearts**. Hear his words: 1) "Don't be ignorant. Stop thinking like children -- in thinking be mature" (12:1; 13:11; 14:20). 2) "The greatest is love. Make love your aim" (13:13; 14:1).

Donald Gee (not my friend Don McGee!) wrote: "If the *1st essential* for the right exercise of any spiritual gift is a **heart** that is right because it is controlled by divine love, then the *2nd essential* is a **mind** that understands because it is instructed by divine light." This leads us to 1 Cor. 12:1.

### A. Testing the Spiritual Gifts, 12:1-3

The AVW Combined-Version Paraphrase puts it this way: "Now concerning spiritual things or people: I don't want you to be ignorant, to misunderstand. You know that when you were still pagans, you were led astray and swept along in worshipping speechless idols. So I want you to know how to discern what is truly from God: No one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, 'Jesus is accursed'; and no one can confess, 'Jesus is Lord,' unless influenced by the Holy Spirit." [nasv, niv, nlt, gnb]

"I don't want you to be ignorant," Paul began. Probably their first response was, "Brother, what are you saying? *Us* be ignorant about spiritual gifts? Why, we're world champions in that field -- the cream of the crop, the experts!" The apostle disagreed. They still didn't grasp some basic principles.

Actually in v. 1 he does not use his normal word for spiritual gifts -- *charismata*, which means "gifts of grace." That's what he used in chapter 1, and later will use in 12:4, 9, 28-31, etc. Here he uses *pneumatikon*: "the spirituals" -- spiritual things or men, spirit-inspired persons. He goes on to give a warning: People who are inspired -- led and energized -- by some outside influence, might be *truly* inspired -- that is, by the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, they might be *falsely* inspired -- by evil, deceiving spirits.

"Previously the Corinthians had been familiar as idol-worshippers with inspired persons, oracles, speaking under the influence of false gods and moved by demonic influences. But even now, converted and in the church, there is still a danger that a spirit other than the Spirit of God will speak through someone in the congregation." (Michael Griffiths, *Three Men Filled with the Spirit*, 28.)

This fact should not be over-emphasized, nor should we allow it to create undue fear. After all, Paul was *grateful* God had imparted His gifts to them. But neither should this fact be ignored. Obviously, **spiritual abilities and miraculous powers are not self-authenticating. They can be counterfeited by Satan.** Pharaoh's magicians imitated some of Moses' miracles (Ex. 7:10-12, 22; 8:7). And Christ Himself warned in Matt 7:22-23, "On [judgment] day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers.'"

Prophecies, ecstatic speech and healings were quite well-known in ancient Greek religions. (Plato discussed it in his writings.) In our time, too, prophecies by non-Christians (such as Jean Dixon) have sometimes been amazingly accurate. Superhuman healings are sometimes performed by spiritists, witchdoctors or in other religions. And tongues-speaking (whether considered to be ecstatic speech or actual human languages unlearned by the speaker) is sometimes practiced among Mormons, Muslims, Hindus, and others. A graduate of Wheaton College who had been reared on the border of Tibet heard "Tibetan monks in their ritual dances speak in English ..., with profanity like drunken soldiers, or in German or French." (V. Raymond Edman, former president of Wheaton.)

I personally believe that the Lord can and does give to some Christians today these extraordinary gifts. (*Gasp!*) But it is clear that supernatural words and deeds by themselves are no proof of divine origin; they may be devilish. So we need to evaluate them carefully.

Why did Paul warn the Corinthians not to accept it if someone said, "Jesus is accursed" (v.3)? That statement is so blatantly false, what need was there to oppose it? It may be that some in Corinth were teaching ideas from early Gnostic teachers. They believed that the divine Christ-spirit, after coming upon the merely-human Jesus earlier, left him just before his death. Christ was divine, but Jesus was not. He was accursed; his death proved that (so they believed). Paul seems to imply that this awful false teaching, demonic in origin, was spoken in meetings there, probably as a prophecy or interpretation of tongues. Because some Corinthians were too easily impressed by anything supernatural and spectacular, they accepted such ideas instead of testing and rejecting them.

Paul says No! The test of truth and spirituality is believing and confessing "**Jesus is Lord.**" This statement was a **doctrinal test** by which to measure teachings and teachers. The human Jesus is the divine Lord God. Any other is a fake. The genuine Jesus is both man

and God. He is the Lord -- so worship Him, and trust Him as one greater than Caesar and his legions, superior to Satan and his hosts.

That statement was also a **moral test**, for the implied meaning is surely "**Jesus my Lord!**" Do I live in practical obedience to His commands? It's interesting to note that the word *savior* is used 24 times in the New Testament, while Jesus is called *lord* 653 times. Yet some people think you can "take Him as your savior" without surrendering to Him as your lord! They teach you can savingly "believe" in Him while planning to go your own way and do your own thing.

## **B. The PRIVILEGE, PURPOSE, and POWER of Spiritual Gifts:**

**12: 4-6, NASV:** "Now there are **varieties** [*different kinds*, niv] **of Gifts**, but the same *Spirit*. **5** And there are varieties of **Ministries** [*Service*, niv], and the same *Lord*. **6** And there are varieties of **Effects** [*Working*, niv], but the same *God* who works all things in all persons."

Notice our privilege, and the gifts' purpose and power.

**1. v. 4, the PRIVILEGE of having them: they are GIFTS.** The Greek word is *charisma* (plural: *charisma'ta*), meaning "a gift freely given, a favor bestowed; a birthday present" -- thus unearned, undeserved. Literally, they are "gifts of *Grace*" (*charis* in Greek). How privileged we are for such gifts from the gracious Holy Spirit. Are you *thankful* for God's spiritual birthday present to you?

**2. v. 5, the PURPOSE of the gifts: SERVICE, MINISTRY.** The Greek word for serve was the root of our words "deacon, minister, servant." In other words, my gifts are not a privilege to be used for myself but to be shared, given out to others in service. As our Lord said, "I came not to be served but to serve" (the same Greek root is used there). Verse 7 makes the same point: "To each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good." These presents are not for *you*, but for *you-ALL!* (Was Paul a southerner?) Question: are you not only thankful, but *using* your gifts?

**3. v. 6, the POWER behind the gifts: Paul mentions their "WORKING** [niv, rsv, asv] or **ACTIVITIES** [nkjv] or **OPERATIONS** [kjv] or **EFFECTS** [nasv]: The Greek word is *energe'ma*, energy! Compare Phil. 2:13, "God is at work (*energein*) in you." God is at **WORK**, so be *Expectant!* **GOD** is at work, so be *Humble!*

Each Person of the Godhead is associated with the gifts. Verse 4 mentions the **Holy Spirit**, verse 5 the **Lord** (Jesus Christ), and verse 6 mentions **God** (the Father). "What tremendous activity ... is encompassed in the exercise of spiritual gifts! When gifts are used by a

member of the body of Christ, the whole Trinity is at work in one individual for the well-being and blessing of others!" (Bridge and Phypers)

### C. UNITY & VARIETY in the Body of Christ, verses 7-13.

But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8 For **to one** is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and **to another** the word of knowledge according to *the same Spirit*; 9 **to another** faith by *the same Spirit*, and **to another** gifts of healing by *the one Spirit*, 10 and **to another** the effecting of miracles, and **to another** prophecy, and **to another** the distinguishing of spirits, **to another** various kinds of tongues, and **to another** the interpretation of tongues. 11 But *one and the same Spirit* works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills. 12 For even as *the body is one* and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are *one body*, so also is Christ. 13 For by *one Spirit* we were *all* baptized into *one body*, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were *all* made to drink of *one Spirit*. 14 For the body is **not one member, but many**.

Our Variety is based on Unity: We are One. We **SHARE...** the *same Holy Spirit*, the *same Lord*, the *same God*, *one and the same Spirit*. The body is a unit, *one body*. Note especially verse 13: "one...all...one...all...one."

Our Unity expresses itself in Variety: We **DIFFER**, and that's o-k, even good. We have *different* kinds of gifts; *different* kinds of service; *different* kinds of working; to *one* is given... to *another...* to *another...* etc. The body has *many parts*. We differ racially (Jews/Greeks) and socially (slave/free).

**Application #1: Beware of Irresponsible Individualism** or "Lone Ranger Christianity." A common U.S. trait is rugged individualism: "I've gotta be me." Far too often preachers, leaders and ministers each do their own thing without regard for others and with little communication with others regarding hopes or plans -- except to ask for donations!

No! **Remember our Unity.** Be committed to your congregation. Be accountable to some other believers, and to leaders. We seem to be making some improvement here. Many ministries now have boards whose members counsel and hopefully hold them accountable. (Prov. 11:14; 15:22.)

**Application #2: Beware of Cookie-Cutter Conformity.** Most cults, and some churches, try to force all members into the exact same

mold: "Believe alike, think alike, dress alike, act alike and talk alike. Don't dare to differ."

No! **Remember our Diversity.** Don't just be a "carbon-copy" (if you remember what that was). Study for yourself, think for yourself. Christ gives us freedom of conscience under His lordship. Yet be as gracious and loving to those who differ from you, as you wish them to be to you. May God spare us from dictators who would steal our freedom in Christ.

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## **THREATS to the HEALTH of CHRIST'S BODY**

**1 Corinthians 12: 14-31**

**D. THREATS to Christ's Body** (14-27 compiled from different versions -- niv, msg, l.b., rsv):

Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. 15 If Foot said, "I'm not elegant like Hand, embellished with rings; I guess I don't belong to this body," would that make it so? 16 If Ear said, "I'm not beautiful like Eye, limpid and expressive; I don't deserve a place on the head," would you want to remove it from the body?.... 17 Suppose the whole body were an eye - then how would you hear? Or if your whole body were just one big ear, how could you smell anything? 18 But that isn't the way God has made us. He has made many parts for our bodies and has put each part just where he wants it.

19 What a strange thing a body would be if it had only one part! 20 So he has made many parts, but still there is only one body. 21 Can you imagine Eye telling Hand, "Get lost; I don't need you"? Or, Head telling Foot, "You're fired; your job has been phased out"?.... 22 On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable... (You can live without an eye, but not without a stomach) 23 and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. If anything, you have more concern for the lower parts than the higher. If you had to choose, wouldn't you prefer good digestion to full-bodied hair? The parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, 24 while our presentable parts need no special treatment.

But God has so composed the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior part, 25 that there may be no discord in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. 26 If one mem-

ber suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

27 Now you are the body of *Christ*, and each one of you is a part of it.

**Notice the THREATS to Body-Life:** 1. Feelings of worthlessness and envy, 15-16. *‘I’m no good, I’m useless. I’ll never be able to do what he does.’* *Correction* for those attitudes, 17-20: God loves variety; and each part is valuable.

2. Feelings of pride and independence, 21. *“You are no good, you’ll never match me.”*

*Correction* for that attitude, 22-27: We are one, and we share each other’s ups and downs.

This is illustrated by an anonymous modern parable, “Trouble in the Toolroom”: The carpenter’s tools formed themselves into a church, which seemed logical for servants of the divine carpenter from Nazareth. But trouble developed almost immediately, with accusations, criticisms and counter-charges being hurled at one another.

Brother Plane, the preacher, was charged with being superficial, having no depth to his work. Elder Screwdriver was accused of twisting every thing he dealt with. Sister Sandpaper was condemned for her abrasive approach, always rubbing people the wrong way. They had to admit that Teacher Hammer could drive his points home, but they disliked his bluntness and noisiness. Sister Ruler was criticized for her uncompromising standards, and Brother Saw for his cutting remarks.

In the midst of these controversies the carpenter arrived to do his work. In his skilled hands he utilized the ruler, saw, plane, hammer, screwdriver, sandpaper plus all the other tools. He put their individual characteristics to proper use and made a pulpit from which he could proclaim the Good News to those who needed to hear it. As the tools began to work together under his direction, their criticisms and accusations died away, replaced by a mutual respect and love they’d never known before. Furthermore, they brought joy to the Carpenter and produced something constructive for the glory of God.

### *The Rest of the Story*

Now we read the conclusion of the chapter, verses 27-31, nas. 27“Now you are Christ’s body, and individually members of it. 28 And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administra-

tions, various kinds of tongues. 29 All are not apostles, are they? [The way that the questions here are expressed in the Greek language require a negative answer. That's why the NASB phrases it that way.] All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they? 30 All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?"

The New Testament (and church history) clearly show us the answer to those questions. Of course there were *only a few* apostles, and *not many* prophets. *Not everyone was (then) or is (now)* gifted to teach, or work miracles, or heal, or speak in tongues, or interpret them. So it is clear that Paul is once again stressing the variety of gifts which God in His sovereignty grants to His children.

Paul concludes the chapter with verse 31: "But eagerly desire the greater gifts. [We'll discuss that later.] Now I will show you **the most excellent way**" [niv] However, that most excellent way is described in chapter 13, and we shall look at that next month, Lord willing. Later in this issue [see 12 Other Questions] we look at some of the individual gifts which Paul mentions in this chapter and elsewhere. We also study the relationship between God's sovereignty in choosing which gifts to impart, and our duty to seek the greater gifts. After that, we may need to be re-reminded that Paul follows this passage with an impassioned eulogy of *Love--the greatest thing in the world!*

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## Are ALL Gifts -- even the Miraculous ones --for N-O-W, TODAY?

### The 3 MAIN VIEWS on this Question:

**#1. THE CESSATIONIST VIEW:** The miraculous gifts were only for the days of the apostles, or (others say) till the New Testament scriptures became widely available (during the mid-300s). Then they **ceased**, for their main purposes were to supply supernatural evidence of the truth of the Gospel message, and to give guidance to the churches which did not have the written NT scriptures.

If the cessationist view is true, all present-day claims to have the miraculous gifts are mistaken, and all such "gifts" today (and during the past 1600 years) are fake.

**SCRIPTURES Used for Support:** Heb. 2:3-4, Our "salvation...was confirmed to us by those who heard [Christ]. God also testi-

fied to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit....” Also Mark 16:20, Acts 14:3 and many other examples in Acts; Rom.15:18-19; & 2 Cor.12:12 where Paul says, “The things that mark an apostle -- signs, wonders and miracles -- were done among you” [by me]. Those preceding scriptures show that miraculous gifts served the purpose of certifying the truth of the gospel [this view believes such certification is no longer needed]. Also 1 Cor.13:8-10 says that prophecies “will cease,” along with tongues and supernatural knowledge ... when “perfection comes” [which this view usually interprets as the completion of the NT scriptures].

**QUOTES (first a moderate one, then an extreme one) from Supporters of this View:**

(a) “Doubts and obscurities [re: such gifts] exist. The early Church knew quite well what all these gifts were. They exulted in the exercise of them. But, in view of the fact that they disappeared so speedily and so completely that we do not even know for certain exactly what they were, we must regard them as the gift of God for the time of the Church’s infancy. They did not last for very long, and in the providence of God evidently they were not expected to last for very long. In those early days there was the outpouring of God’s Spirit to supply every need of the infant community. And some of those needs were not our needs. God still supplies all the needs of His people, but those needs do not necessarily require the *charismata* of NT days.” --Leon Morris [emphasis added in these quotes]

(b) Z. T. Sweeney was a Church of Christ preacher. In 1919 he wrote an influential book, *The Spirit and the Word*. He argued that everything that Jesus taught in John 14-16 about the work of “the Comforter” applied only to the 12 apostles, not to all Christians. The Holy Spirit as Comforter was a gift to the 12 for their one-time work of establishing the church and producing the New Testament writings. Once those tasks were accomplished, “no man has been guided, shown and directed personally by him since.” “God does no unnecessary work, and the work of [the Holy Spirit] is not necessary now. His work remains [only] in the teachings and lives of the apostles.”

This belief led Sweeney to conclude that many other NT teachings about the Spirit also have not applied to any believers since the first century. For example, none of these statements are for us now: “You were sealed with the Holy Spirit.” “Be filled with the Spirit.” “He has given us of his Spirit.” Etc. (Eph.1:13 & 5:18; 1 John 4:13.) Those and other verses applied only to first-century believers in whom God was “manifesting his presence by supernatural demonstrations.” Now that God works only through the Bible, such verses “lack meaning” for all Christians since that time. Obviously Sweeney believed the

spiritual gifts ceased also. [Quoted from an article by Leonard Allen, who disagrees with Sweeney. Thank God that brothers Boll, Chambers, Jorgenson, Olmstead, Janes, Mullins and others rejected such extremism, though most or all of them were cessationists regarding the miraculous gifts.]

**#2. THE PENTECOSTAL & CHARISMATIC VIEW: All the Gifts, including the miraculous ones, were meant for the Entire Church Age. They could and should have been in full use constantly throughout church history, just as much as they were in apostolic days. Only the deadness and unbelief of the Christians hindered this, and in times of revival the gifts are manifested again. Some who hold this view seek balance and try to avoid excesses. But others put extreme emphasis on miracles, healing and especially tongues -- to the extent of dumping guilt on those who do not experience them. Such an attitude often divides churches.**

Those taking this view naturally believe we should eagerly seek for all the gifts to be exercised today. Most of them (but not all) go lots further and say that no Christian has been baptized with the Holy Spirit or knows His fullness unless he has spoken in tongues. A Christian who has not spoken in tongues has received forgiveness and new birth from God, and will go to heaven -- but will lack power here and now in serving Christ. Some extremists go much further than that and deny a person is even saved at all unless he has spoken in tongues.

**SCRIPTURES Used for Support: Mark 16:15-20. Also the many healings and other miracles recorded in Acts or referred to in the epistles, especially the occasions when all spoke in tongues (Acts 2, 10 & 19). Also 1 Cor.12-14's recurring mention of such gifts.**

**QUOTES from Supporters of this View (first, 2 moderate ones, then 2 more extreme ones):**

**(a) "As we examine the lists of spiritual gifts and offices in the epistles, there is no indication given us that some were to be withdrawn and others persist. If teachers persist, why not prophets? (1 Cor.12:28.) If service, exhortation, acts of mercy persist--why not prophecy? (Rom.12:6-8.) How can we accept some gifts of the Spirit for today, and throw the rest back to the early church?" --Michael Harper**

**(b) "Are spiritual gifts for today? Why not? The burden of proof surely lies with those who say 'No' rather than with those who say 'Yes.' There is nothing in Scripture, reason or experience to make us believe that the gifts of the Spirit are not for today -- every one of them." --Donald Gee (But Gee emphasizes the devotional purpose of**

tongues. He believes that gift is mainly -- though not exclusively -- for private praise and prayer rather than public use.)

(c) "In our services everything is done according to God's Word. There is no fanaticism.

"We believe in speaking in tongues because the Bible teaches it. Everything that happened on the day of Pentecost should be happening in every church in the world in this very hour." --Kathryn Kuhlman

(d) "The baptism in the Holy Spirit is a 2nd encounter with God in which the Christian begins to receive the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit into his life. (Acts 1:8.) We are not speaking of the Holy Spirit in His introductory ministry but in His empowering ministry to the believer. Conversion and baptism in the Holy Spirit are not only separate experiences, they are given for separate and distinct purposes. By conversion the nonchristian becomes a Christian, while by the baptism in the Holy Spirit the Christian becomes a powerful Christian." Tongues, the Evidence: "I believe God knew exactly what He was doing on the Day of Pentecost and that He did it right the very first time and that He hasn't changed His mind since. I also believe it is the intent of God that every person receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit today should experience the miracle of speaking in tongues ...[yet] we admit not everyone does. Not because it is not God's will, but because of fear or ignorance they quench the Spirit." --Don Basham

[Actually the Pentecostal view of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, not tongues *per se*, is the main difference between Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals. See article next month, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit.*]

**#3. AN IN-BETWEEN VIEW: Spiritual Gifts in General were meant for the entire Church Age,** but as time passed much of their use became quenched by widespread spiritual deadness plus the "1-man pastor-system" -- which limited broad participation in church meetings. Usually preaching, teaching and leadership became restricted to one "clergyman" in each congregation, and thus the gifts of many Christians lay idle. [So far this view agrees with view #2 above.]

However, *one* main purpose of the "sign-gifts" (miraculous demonstrations) was and is to confirm the Gospel message, and they **are granted only when the Lord sees need for them.** The absence of healings, miracles and tongues does not *necessarily* mean that Christians are lukewarm in faith and zeal -- though it *may* mean that, so we should search our hearts in their absence. In Rom.12's list of seven gifts, only "prophecy" is miraculous. Yet there is no hint that the

church in Rome was less spiritual than the one in Corinth. In fact it clearly was more spiritual. On the other hand Paul was thankful for God's rich distribution of gifts at Corinth: see 1 Cor.1:4-7. [Here this view agrees more with #1.]

Thus this view does *not deny or denounce* miraculous gifts today, but *neither does it demand* them nor judge those who lack them. Many believe that since our era may be the closing days of the age, it is not surprising that there is a resurgence of such gifts: see Acts 2:16-18. [But also note that that passage + Heb.1:1 & 1 Pet.1:20 show that "last days" means the whole present era between Christ's 1st and 2nd comings. Yet the "last days" will have last days too, when the outpouring of the Holy Spirit predicted in Joel 2 may be *fulfilled* just as it was *prefilled* at Pentecost.]

### Scriptures and evidence from History used to Support this Approach:

This view says we should **emphasize *both* Rom. 12:3-8** (with 6 of its 7 gifts being non-miraculous), **and 1 Cor. 12-14** (with its strong emphasis on the supernatural) -- not avoiding either of these main passages. But we also should recognize that **miracles were not evenly distributed during the entire Biblical period.** There were a **few major periods when numerous miracles took place** (usually times of crisis): The eras of Moses and Joshua . . . of Elijah and Elisha . . . of Daniel . . . and of Jesus' ministry, followed by the ministries of the apostles -- mainly Peter and Paul. But those eras (except for the last one mentioned) were preceded and followed by **long periods during which few or no miracles occurred**, yet not always were those times of spiritual deadness. **A number of godly leaders performed no miracles:** Abraham did not perform any (though God performed some for him -- in particular the birth of Isaac; *notice the difference*). No miracles are attributed to King Josiah, Ezra, Nehemiah, nor John the Baptist (who was "filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb" --John 10:41; Lk.1:15), nor to Timothy, Titus or Apollos. In Acts there seems to be a noticeable decline even in Paul's miracles during the later years.

**The Lord in His sovereignty works differently at various times and places.** He miraculously freed Peter from prison and death. But just a short time before that, He allowed Herod to execute James, another of the three leading apostles. (Acts 12.) Paul healed many people, and in Ephesus "God did *extraordinary* miracles" through him. The Greek word literally means "not the usual." (Acts 19:11.) Yet Paul later left Trophimus sick in Miletus; and though his closest co-worker Timothy had "frequent illnesses," Paul didn't heal him but recommended medicine. (2 Tim.4:20; 1 Tim.5:23.) Looking at church

history, we see that God at times moves with incredible power to convict and convert multitudes. We call them revivals or the “great awakenings.” In between He works, of course, and yet not nearly in such deep and widespread ways. And we cannot always attribute those “dry” times to a lack of holy, prayerful, zealous saints and preachers. The mystery of God’s sovereign working is inscrutable.

Thus view #3 sometimes agrees with #1 and sometimes with #2. It agrees that a main purpose of miracles was to certify the Gospel message, but realizes such certification may also be needed *today* in various places. (It should be no surprise that a number of amazing healings in Jesus’ name have occurred in *China* during recent decades -- sometimes leading to numerous conversions.) Those holding this view firmly **disagree** that *all* present-day claims to have supernatural gifts are *mistaken* and that *all* such gifts today are *fake*. Yet they do not by any means believe all the *claims* about miracles that are made, either. A number are true, but some have been made up, or greatly exaggerated, or in some cases are actual but demonic. (Matt.7: 21-23; 24:24.)

This view disagrees that the gifts “did not last very long” because they disappeared quite speedily and completely, as Leon Morris said above. The verdict of church history contradicts that opinion, as an article next month will demonstrate.

What about Holy Spirit baptism and the Pentecostal claim that no Christian has been baptized in (or “by” or “with”) the Holy Spirit unless he has spoken in tongues? The “In-between view” believes such an idea is contradicted by 1 Cor.12, as well as other scriptural evidence. 1 Cor.12:13 says the Corinthians had *all* been baptized in the Spirit, but verse 30 says *not all* of them spoke in tongues. As for the notion that the only people who are born-again and heaven-bound are those who have spoken in tongues -- this is a belief so dangerous and divisive as to be heart-rending. In Acts 2 the 120 disciples spoke in other tongues, but where is any statement or even hint that the 3000 hearers who were converted that day did so or were *urged* to do so? And as we saw, 1 Cor.12:29-30 in the Greek language requires a negative answer to the questions raised. Paul asks, Are all believers apostles? (Of course not!) ... Do all speak in tongues? (Not at all.) Do all interpret? (Certainly not, as chapter 14 makes clear.) ‘Nuf said.

**QUOTES from Supporters of this View** (who differ among themselves on some points):

**(1)To say “‘miracles don’t happen today’ or (worse) ‘miracles can’t happen.’ is an impossible position for a biblical Christian to hold.** The God we believe in is the free and sovereign Creator of the

universe. He not only *can* work miracles but *has* done so. Who are we to tell him what he may or may not do? However, the opposite position seems equally untenable. In its most extreme form it is the view that almost everything God does is miraculous. But a miracle by definition is an extraordinary event, a creative deviation from God's normal and natural ways of working. If miracles were to become commonplace they would cease to be miracles. Yet some Christians detect the activity of God only in the miraculous. [We should] grasp the biblical revelation of the living God who works primarily in nature not in supernature, in history not in miracle." (See Dan.4:32; 5:23; Psa. 75:7; Matt.5:45; 6:26,30; Acts 14:17.) --John Stott in *Baptism and Fullness*.

(2) "The question inevitably arises whether we still have gifts of a miraculous nature today. While we believe that these miracle gifts are not with us today, generally speaking, yet we cannot say the sovereign Spirit is not at liberty to use them still, especially on those mission fields where the Scriptures are not extensively available. In any event, those who do profess to have these miraculous gifts must be careful to use them in accordance with the instructions of the Word (for example, the use of tongues is regulated in 1 Cor. 14)." --William MacDonald in *Christ Loved the Church*.

(3) When the Pentecostal movement began in the early 1900s, many believed it was the worst heresy ever known, while others considered it the greatest revival ever seen! As we saw above about Z. T. Sweeney, the great majority in Churches of Christ concentrated only on the Pentecostal errors, and in *over*-reaction minimized the Holy Spirit altogether. Some identified Him with the Bible, even making such dreadful statements as "You can buy the Holy Spirit in the bookstore." For decades most taught very little about what the Spirit *does* for us, only what He does *not* do!

A. B. Simpson, founder and leader of the Christian Missionary Alliance, took a different stance. As Pentecostalism spread, he carefully studied both it, and various revivals, and the Bible, and made this report to the C.M.A. churches in 1908: "We believe there can be no doubt that in many cases remarkable outpourings of the Holy Spirit have been accompanied with genuine instances of the gift of tongues and many extraordinary manifestations." [avw: As for "many extraordinary manifestations," consider the remarkable Cane Ridge, Ky. revival of 1801 where Barton Stone ministered. The July '01 *Word & Work* gave details and evaluation of that. Now we continue the Simpson quotation:] "Many of these experiences appear not only to be genuine but accompanied by a spirit of deep humility, earnestness and soberness, and free from extravagance and error. It would therefore be a very serious matter for any candid Christian to pass a wholesale

criticism or condemnation upon such movements or presume to limit the Holy One.

“But at the same time there are other developments which make it very plain that [church leaders] need to guard with fearless hand God’s truth and work. One of the greatest errors is a disposition to make special manifestations an evidence of the baptism of the Holy Ghost, as though none had received the Spirit of Pentecost but those who had the power to speak in tongues, thus leading many sincere Christians to cast away their confidence, plunging them in perplexity and darkness or causing them to seek after special manifestations from other than God himself. Another grave tendency is the disposition to turn aside from [seeking to bring the lost to Christ and build up believers in holiness, and instead to] seek for signs and wonders and special manifestations.”

In 1963, as the Charismatic (or neo-Pentecostal) movement spread, the leaders of the C.M.A. re-issued Simpson’s balanced message, adding these words of their own: “The present revival of interest in spiritual gifts cannot be ignored. We must deal with it ... with cordial understanding. Certainly some persons of impeccable Christian character are associated with the present movement. But the gift of tongues belongs in the category of things easily imitated and by the very nature of it is capable of abuses and wild excesses....”

“We believe the Scriptural teaching to be that the gift of tongues is one of the gifts of the Spirit, and that it may be present in the normal Christian assembly as a sovereign bestowal of the Holy Spirit upon such as He wills. We do not believe that all Christians should possess the gift of tongues. [It] is one of many gifts and is given to some for the benefit of all. The attitude toward the gift of tongues...should be: ‘Seek not, forbid not.’”

(4) During the 1960s David Howard was a missionary in rural Colombia, So. America. Churches were established and leaders trained - many with little Bible background. Then a few leaders (who had never met a Pentecostal believer nor heard about present-day charismatic gifts), as they were praying and praising God -- suddenly began to do so in tongues! They had not sought this, didn’t even know it was possible now, and didn’t understand it. Howard writes that in following months “many wanted to receive the gift and took every step possible to work it up. Others were repelled by it and took extreme positions against it. The churches were soon dividing up into two camps. My missionary colleagues and I found ourselves caught in a crossfire. Some of the more extreme charismatic brethren accused us of being anti-Holy Spirit because we did not speak in tongues. Extremists on the other side accused us of turning Pentecostal because we were open to what we felt the Spirit was trying to do.” (David Howard in *By the Power of the Holy Spirit*.)

Through much love, prayer, Bible study and teaching -- and many heartaches, in the following years the movement gradually stabilized and began to grow powerfully. The disciples matured, and began using their various gifts in coordinated ways. They sent out teams of members with different gifts to spread the gospel. Many unsaved folks were converted, and new churches were begun. The missionaries' attitude was a good example of "Don't seek tongues but rather the greater gifts," but also "Don't forbid tongues" (1 Cor.12:31a; 14:1, 12, 39a; and 14:39b).

## CONCLUSION

You have probably detected that this editor believes the "in-between" view is the most Biblical. It seems to me that we should encourage all of us (whatever viewpoint we take) to note Paul's emphasis and follow his instructions in the first four verses cited two sentences above: "Eagerly desire the greater gifts." "Eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy." "Try to excel in gifts that build up the church." "Be eager to prophesy."

Also let's lovingly ask Charismatics to notice that 1 Cor.12:13 says the Corinthians had *all* been baptized in the Spirit, but 12:30 says *not all* of them spoke in tongues. Thus it is unbiblical for them to tell disciples of Jesus that if they've never spoken in tongues they are not Spirit-baptized. Let us indeed urge all who've been born from above, of water and the Spirit -- and thus were also baptized in the Spirit -- to be *filled and re-filled* with that same Holy Spirit, as Paul did. But to divide Christ's body into have's and have-not's based on whether believers have spoken in tongues or not is a tragic error. [For more on this see this month's article, *What is the "Baptism in the Holy Spirit"?*]

On the other hand, if we urge our charismatic brothers and sisters to follow God's Word more fully and carefully, they may well turn the tables on us. What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, the old saying goes. So they may say, "Well, why do you ignore Paul's clear statement, 'Do not forbid speaking in tongues'?" (1 Cor.14:39b.) How will you answer?

We must be careful not to become so cautious and picky that we smother God's Spirit and squelch gifts He may give to believers. Paul exhorts, "Do not quench the Spirit [or niv: Do not put out the Spirit's fire]; do not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil." (1 Thes. 5:19-22, nas). If the church in Corinth had **too much ardor and not enough order**, Thessalonica's danger seemed to be **just the opposite**. Paul warns them not to quench God's work. That can be done by unbelief, or fear, or a spirit of criticism. May our Father help us all to experience and enjoy all the treasures He has given us in Christ.

# 12 Other Questions about Spiritual Gifts

1. What are the gifts' purposes?
2. How many gifts are there?
3. Can you define the various gifts, specifically?
4. Are all the gifts miraculous?
5. Why are there so many opinions and divisions regarding these matters today?
6. How widespread and common were the spectacular gifts in apostolic days?
7. Who decides which gifts are given to the believer?
8. When do we receive our gifts?
9. What are "motivational gifts"?
10. How are our gifts related to our talents?
11. How do the gifts operate? Am I to be active or passive?
12. How can I know what my gifts are?

## 1. What are the Gifts' Purposes?

Over and over Paul answers this question, using many different expressions: They are for *service*; for the common good [nas, rsv] or *the profit of all* [nkjv]; as a means of *helping the entire church* [l.b.]. In using them members should *care for one another*; i.e. in the body, parts should have equal *concern for each other* [nas; niv.] Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that *build up the church*. [The Lord] gave some to be apostles...prophets...evangelists...pastors and teachers, *to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up*. (1 Cor.12:5, 7, 25; 14:12; Eph. 4:11-12).

It is clear that the gifts are for *others, the whole church*, not just me -- my power, prestige and enjoyment. In addition, **the gifts are to promote unity -- not disunity!** -- in the church. All 3 main passages on *charismata* lay stress on our oneness: 1 Cor.12: 4-6, 11- 13; Rom.12: 4-6; and Eph.4: 2-6 (which leads into the discussion of gifts in verses 7-13). Gifts' *ultimate* purpose is "that in everything **God may be glorified**" (1 Pet.4:10- 11).

## 2. How Many Gifts are there?

Some writers often mention "the nine gifts" (referring to those listed in 1 Cor. 12:8-10) but minimize the rest. The nine are the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith, gifts of healing, the effecting of miracles, prophecy, the distinguishing of spirits, various kinds of tongues, and interpretation of tongues (nasb).

But why stick to that list alone? Verse 28 of the same chapter repeats three of those gifts but also adds apostles, teachers, helps, and administrations -- adding up to 13 in that chapter. And Rom.12:6-8

lists seven gifts. Four of them are included in one or both lists in 1 Cor.12 (presuming that "service" and "helps" are identical), but three are additional: exhorting, giving of finances, and showing mercy -- adding up to 16.

"Charisma," the usual word for a spiritual gift, is also used to describe the gift of self-controlled singleness! Paul writes, "I wish that all men were as I am. But each man has his own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that. Now to the unmarried ... I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I am." (1 Cor.7:7-8; see verses 9 & 32-35 too.) Some Bible teachers believe 1 Cor.13:3 adds voluntary poverty and martyrdom as two more gifts. And Eph.4:11 mentions evangelists and pastors. That totals 21 gifts. But there are other views on this: Leslie Flynn's book is entitled *19 Gifts of the Spirit*. Peter Wagner's book explains 27 various gifts (though he also agrees with our next paragraph).

**Probably there is no definite, fixed number. Each of the 4 main passages adds a few and omits a few from the other passages. Obviously no single list is exhaustive, and probably the total of them combined is not either.** For as new needs and situations arise, new gifts may be needed -- or recognized. If writing today Paul might mention gifts of Bible translating, children's work, evangelizing college students, and missionary outreach to tribal peoples, etc. For such ministries require special God-given abilities, which is what "gifts" are.

Some facts are very clear. **Nobody has every gift, and therefore we all need other believers to supply what we lack. But every Christian has at least one gift, and maybe several.** Peter had gifts of apostleship, evangelism, leadership, healing, miracles, and spoke in tongues on Pentecost. Paul was an apostle, evangelist, leader, teacher, and also healed and spoke in tongues. Apollos was gifted as a teacher, and it seems Luke was too. Dorcas' gift was showing mercy. Barnabas had the gift of exhorting -- that's what his nickname meant. James the Lord's brother was a leader. The seven men picked in Acts 6 are not called deacons, but two forms of the Greek word *diaconia* -- meaning *service* -- are used of them. One of them, Philip, later performed miracles; he is also called an evangelist. His four daughters had the gift of prophecy -- as did Silas and Agabus. **The bottom line: Nobody has all the gifts, but every disciple has at least one.**

### **3. Can We Define the Various Gifts, Specifically?**

Some are obvious but others are unclear, and there are contrasting opinions. Two obvious ones in Rom.12:8 are the gifts of **teaching**, and also **exhorting (nas) - encouraging (niv) - stirring speech (neb)**. A commentator explains, "Teaching is addressed to the *understanding*, exhortation to the *conscience and feelings*. These must always go together, for if teaching gives exhortation its *content*,

exhorting gives teaching its *force*.” Other synonyms for exhorting are consoling or comforting. The Greek word used here is *paraklasis*, obviously related to *paraklete*, the word used in John 14:16 when Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would be the disciples’ comforter and counselor. It literally meant “someone called alongside to help in times of trial.” The Christian with this gift strengthens others by speaking, whether publicly or privately.

But regarding some other gifts, various teachers take quite different views. For example, the **word of wisdom** and the **word of knowledge**. (1 Cor.12:8. See question #4 too.) One interpretation is that the word of wisdom was used to grasp and communicate deep insights such as those contained in the doctrinal part of the epistles (for example Eph.1-3), while the word of knowledge relates to the more practical truths related to conduct (as in Eph. 4-6).

The *Living Bible* paraphrase takes a non-miraculous view of these two gifts: “To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice; someone else may be especially good at studying and teaching, and this is his gift from the same Spirit” (1 Cor.12:8). Wayne Grudem agrees with that approach:

Paul is arguing against the pride and jealousy concerning spiritual gifts which troubled the Corinthian church. He is trying to show how all the gifts are valuable because they all are from the Holy Spirit. It would destroy the force of his argument if it could be claimed that some gifts are “more directly” from the Holy Spirit than others. If Paul only listed *miraculous* gifts in 1 Cor.12:8-11, it would not prove his point, because it would leave out those who had non-miraculous gifts. Therefore, in order to include *all* the Corinthians, he has to have in the list some “non-miraculous” gifts. And “word of wisdom” and “word of knowledge” are the only obvious candidates for that category.

On the other hand Frank Viola defines them as follows:

**The word of knowledge** is a word from the Lord to the believer revealing past or present facts in God’s mind.... Peter demonstrated the word of knowledge when he supernaturally knew that Ananias and Sapphira had kept back part of the price of their land (Acts 5:3). The Spirit of God revealed the battle plans of the king of Syria to the prophet Elisha .... **The word of wisdom** is a word revealing God’s purpose for the future. Agabus demonstrated the word of wisdom when he foresaw a famine coming upon the whole world (Acts 11:28).

*Faith -- a Gift?*

Why is **faith** called a spiritual gift? By definition every born-again believer has faith, so how can it be classed as a gift distributed only to some? (12:9-10.) Obviously this refers not to saving faith but to special faith granted by God to some of His servants on special occasions for performing miracles. Evidence for this is seen in 13:2, "if I have a faith that can move mountains..." (compare Matt.17: 20; 21:21-22). Also right after Paul mentions the gift of faith he lists "gifts of healing" and "miraculous powers," as though there may be a cause-and-effect relationship between them.

What about **healing**? 1 Cor.12:9 in the Greek uses the phrase "*gifts of healings*." The plural form suggests, as a charismatic writer says, that "every healing is a special gift. In this way the spiritually gifted individual stands always in new dependence upon the divine Giver. There is no formula or technique whereby he can lay hold of God's healing power" (Bittlinger). So the gifted person cannot heal whomever and whenever he wishes, but must look to the Lord to guide and empower him each time He (the Lord) decides to do so.

We will discuss the gifts of **prophecy** and **speaking in tongues** when we expound 1 Cor. 14 two months from now.

#### 4. Are All the Gifts Miraculous?

A Pentecostal writer says, "The only way to deal consistently with the whole subject is to regard these gifts as each and all involving some measure of a supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit." (Yet he then clarifies: "It is too often assumed that spiritual gifts are only manifested in ways that are spectacular to a high degree. To define the *word of knowledge* as a teaching gift does not satisfy [some people's] naive desire for something quite extraordinary ... where the supernatural element is striking.")

I agree with John Stott's important distinction: "They are **all supernatural in origin** [because God gives them], **but not in character** [the way they operate]. They may be very ordinary." For example, gifts include giving money, leadership ability, doing acts of mercy, the gift of "helps," etc. Are these miracles? Also the very fact that "workers of miracles" and "miraculous powers" are listed (12:10,28) implies that some or many of the other gifts are *non-miraculous*! Why use those two terms if all gifts are miraculous?

Usually Pentecostal Christians emphasize 1 Cor.12's lists and say little about Rom.12, while non-Pentecostals teach about Rom.12 but tend to avoid the Corinthian passages. Yet **both** are part of God's inspired Word! So we should be awfully careful not to scissor out any portion without extremely strong Biblical reasons. (To my mind 1 Cor.13:8-10, "when the perfect comes," is far from a strong reason for tossing out 1 Cor.12-14.)

Somewhere I read a challenge (or rebuke?) that went like this: "Christians claim the Bible is God's Word and the church should be guided by the N.T. scriptures. But when some of them get to the latter part of 1 Corinthians it suddenly becomes chapter 11: yes (the Lord's Supper); chapter 12: no (miraculous gifts); 13: yes (love); 14: no (tongues & prophecies); 15: yes (resurrection); and 16: yes (financial offerings). How is that consistent?"

### 5. Why are there so many opinions and divisions regarding these matters today?

There are differing interpretations of the Biblical passages, and also of the various experiences Christians have today. But in general the views boil down to four, as a writer in *Christian Standard* explained. He wrote, "There are four types of positions believers take on the gifts of the Spirit." Using his terminology, they are:

(a) "**Hard**" *Pentecostals*, who believe that all Spirit-filled Christians **must** -- by definition -- experience some miraculous gift, usually tongues.

(b) "**Soft**" *Pentecostals*, who practice tongues, healing, etc., but do not downgrade those who don't.

(c) "**Soft**" *non-Pentecostals*, who do not practice tongues, etc. and may not believe they are very important, but do not say all such manifestations are demonic or counterfeit.

(d) "**Hard**" *non-Pentecostals*, who do not practice tongues, etc., and believe that **no one** should [--that there are no genuine miraculous gifts today].

He continues, "It seems clear that the Biblical evidence excludes positions (a) and (d). We may not **insist** on miraculous manifestations, or [on the other hand] insist that they are always **false**. After all, they are supposed to be gifts of God, and He gives what He wishes to whom He wishes" (end of quote from *Christian Standard*, 1987). That writer holds view (c).

I find his 4-fold analysis very helpful, and agree that the Bible's teaching includes both (b) and (c). (Personally I would re-word (c) to say miraculous gifts are not necessarily important *at all times and places*.) Christians taking those 2 views should be able to work together in many ways. And remember, we should acknowledge as our fellow-Christians all who trust in Jesus as "the Christ, the Son of the Living God ... who died for our sins according to the scriptures, and was raised on the 3rd day according to the scriptures," believing that no one goes to the Father except through Him. I repeat, we should acknowledge such as brothers and sisters in Christ regardless of their

view on spiritual gifts (and whether they will work together with us or not!).

## 6. How Widespread and Common were the Spectacular Gifts in Apostolic Days?

Some teachers point out that Corinth is the only church we read of in the N.T. where the gift of tongues was used regularly. In 57 A.D. Paul wrote *1 Cor.* from Ephesus, saying a lot about tongues-speaking, and listing healings, miracles, etc. The next year Paul, then in Corinth, wrote *Romans*. He mentions 7 gifts in *Romans* 12:4-8 but makes no mention of tongues, healing or miracles! In 61 or 62 A.D. he wrote *Ephesians*, and listed various gifted men but again he did not refer to tongues, healings or miracles.

Some think this means that while all Christians have spiritual gifts, the obviously miraculous gifts were rarely used except by the apostles *even in the first century*. (Besides the apostles only Stephen, Philip and Barnabas are mentioned as miracle-workers.) But others point out that such reasoning is a weak "argument from silence." For *1 Cor.* is also the *only* N.T. letter that mentions the Lord's Supper, yet we know it was practiced in *all* the churches! In both cases it seems these important matters were mentioned only because they were often being *mis-used* in Corinth. So it is hard to prove points based on the fact that they are mentioned only in one or two of the epistles.

Here's another case to consider: In Acts 18 Luke tells about Paul's stay in Corinth for 1-1/2 years. He never mentions that Paul performed miracles while there, so we might conclude the apostle did none. But *1 Cor.2:4* and *2 Cor.12:12* clearly prove otherwise. Let's be careful about jumping to unfounded conclusions. *We dare not be dogmatic where Scripture is not definite.* Someone said, "**In Scripture the main things are the plain things, and the plain things are the main things.**" And the main things are what we should emphasize, while allowing freedom to differ where the Bible is not so clear.

## 7. Who Decides Which Gifts are Given to the Believer?

There are two seemingly contradictory answers to this question ("a" and "b" below). But it seems to me the contradiction can be resolved ("c" below).

(a) Scripture emphasizes repeatedly that **GOD** arranges the members of Christ's spiritual body. That's another way of saying *He* determines which gifts are given to which believers. Study these four passages: *1 Cor.12:8-9,11*, For to one is given the word of wisdom *through the Spirit*, and to another the word of knowledge *according to the same Spirit*, to another faith *by the same Spirit*, and to another gifts of healing *by the one Spirit* . . . But *one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as HE wills.*

1 Cor.12:18, Now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as HE desired. 1 Cor.12:28, God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues. Heb.2:4, God testified ... by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to HIS will.

(b) Yet there are several other verses which tell US to **SEEK** spiritual gifts, especially prophecy. Notice these three verses: But **earnestly desire the greater gifts....** Pursue love, yet **desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy....** Therefore, my brethren, **desire earnestly to prophesy**, and do not forbid to speak in tongues. (1 Cor.12:31; 14:1,39.)

(c) But why should we seek gifts, especially any particular one, if the Lord determines which gifts to bestow? I believe Michael Griffiths has a good solution to this seeming contradiction. He points out that those commands to desire specific gifts are addressed to the church as a group rather than to individuals as such. The verbs Paul uses are not singular in form, but plural -- not *you*, but *you-all*. "'Earnestly desire the higher gifts' is not so much an exhortation that I as an individual should seek an outstanding spiritual gift for myself but rather that we should seek spiritual gifts for us! We should seek the Lord for spiritual gifts for our congregation" (*3 Men Filled with the Spirit*). That is, we should pray that He will raise up people with the gifts most needed by us in our situation at this time, or bestow additional gifts to us as He sees fit.

### 8. When do we Receive our Gifts?

The basic answer is, God gives them to us at our conversion. When we are born again, into His family (John 1:12-13; 3:3-5), our Father gives us a wonderful birthday present: "the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38) -- that is, the Spirit Himself. And the Holy Spirit imparts to us one or more of the "gifts" we've been studying -- spiritual aptitudes for serving God. So no one has these gifts till they are saved. But from conversion onward, every believer has at least one. They are part of our wonderful salvation-package.

Some believers don't know that. They may even doubt it. But Paul tells us in Rom. 12:6, "We have different gifts...." He doesn't say, "*If* you have gifts," but "*You do* have gifts." All Christians have *some* gift (though not all have the *same* gift). This could only be true if we get them at the time we are saved. See 1 Cor.12:7,11 also.

But does the Lord ever impart additional spiritual gifts after conversion? Yes, He may if He so chooses. 1 Cor.14:13 shows this fact. Also we read in Acts 16 that when Paul reached Lystra he found a young disciple named Timothy. He was much esteemed by the believers there, and Paul asked him to join his missionary team. Obvi-

ously Tim was already saved, and thus had some gift(s) of the Spirit. Having agreed to join Paul's team, apparently he was then "ordained" or commissioned -- like the seven men in Acts 6 whom the apostles appointed for special service. 1 Tim.4:14 & 2 Tim.1:6 refer to this: "Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed upon you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery" (i.e. elders). "I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands." Apparently Paul took part in that commissioning service along with the elders.

What was the gift bestowed on Tim in addition to the one(s) he'd received at his new birth? Scripture doesn't say, but probably either some additional ability to equip him for evangelistic work, or some deepening of his former gifts. Yet the *emphasis* in these verses is on the need to rekindle (or stir into flame) and not neglect those gifts he already had. "These passages suggest the thought that many believers do not need to pray for the *bestowal* of gifts half so much as they need to attend to the exercise of those they *already possess*. It is no use trying to throw the responsibility on the Lord, as though He had never given the gift, or else had withdrawn it. It is almost as though God had made Himself sovereign in bestowing the gifts, and then left man sovereign as to their free and profitable exercise." (Donald Gee, *Concerning Spiritual Gifts*.)

## 9. What are "Motivational Gifts"?

I don't know who originated this term, but Bill Gothard and Charles Stanley were two who popularized it. Don and Katie Fortune have amplified it too. As with many books or theories regarding gifts, I find much of value in this while disagreeing with parts as well. The approach is based only on Rom.12 and the gifts mentioned there, so it is incomplete. It thinks of those gifts not so much as abilities but motivations -- that is, strong interests or drives that incline a person to respond toward life in some distinctive way.

I love the illustration of ten friends eating at a cafeteria. As the last one through the line heads for the table he drops his tray of food on the floor. His friends all react in various ways, for each has a different motivational gift! The prophet says, "You're too careless, Al, you must learn to be more careful" (for according to this theory prophets are motivated to correct what is wrong). The teacher says, "You dropped it because you put all the heavy dishes on one side of the tray and all the light ones on the other" (for teachers are motivated to understand and explain things). The exhorter says, "Don't feel bad, only one dish broke!" (for exhorters are inclined to encourage). The server says, "Here, let me pick up those dishes for you" (for helping is her inclination). The giver says, "Too bad, but here --I'll pay for you to go through the line again" (for his motivation is helping materially). The mercy-shower says, "I'm so sorry this happened, but don't blame yourself -- it could've happened to anyone" (for her gift is to

comfort). The leader says, "Mike, pick up the tray; Sue, ask the waitress for a mop; Ben, warn that elderly man about the tea that spilled so he won't slip; and Al ...." (for he is motivated to organize people in order to reach goals).

Well, there are some fascinating insights there. People do differ in such ways, and it is helpful to understand various temperaments with their inclinations. However, I disagree with its rather widespread idea of the "prophetic personality." Don and Katie Fortune give a list of characteristics of the "perceiver" (their term for someone with a prophetic gift). According to them such a person "...is frank, outspoken, and doesn't mince words. Is pushy in trying to get others to mature spiritually. Is intolerant of opinions and views that differ from his own. Tends to be judgmental and blunt." Now hear Acts 15:32, "Judas and Silas, who were prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the brothers." Hmmmm.

I think when we hear "prophet" we immediately think of Elijah and John the Baptizer. But what about Hosea and Isaiah, Jeremiah and Silas so far as temperament is concerned? They opposed sin strongly but also pleaded lovingly and tearfully with sinners. Some prophets -- perhaps many of them -- fit the Elijah mold, but not all of them by any means.

### 10. How are our Gifts related to our Talents?

It is obvious that unsaved people have many *talents* --such as in leadership, speaking, and teaching. But spiritual gifts go beyond those skills. **Your charisma may be entirely different from your pre-conversion talents**, as by God's enabling you become proficient in areas where you were totally inept before. Two examples of this were R. A. Torrey, and Bakht Singh of India. As a boy and young man, Torrey was shy and backward. He sometimes became almost tongue-tied, especially around strangers. Bakht Singh also was poor in conversation; he often stammered and stuttered. Yet both these men became outstanding evangelists who preached to great crowds. They also became excellent teachers. Thus the Lord, for His glory, sometimes imparts abilities very different from those which we possessed before conversion.

On the other hand, that's not God's customary method. When He wants a Bev Shea or Michael W. Smith he rarely calls a monotone! **Usually the Lord simply turns a person's natural, inborn talents into spiritual gifts by setting them aflame when he is born anew.** At that time the convert receives a new **motivation** (to glorify God), and a new **enabling power** (from the Holy Spirit), to accomplish fresh, **Christlike goals**. In such cases the basic ability, drive, and desire were already there before conversion -- but were either left unused (and thus wasted), or else used for self rather than the Lord.

## 11. In Getting Gifts, and then Using them, am I to be Active or Passive?

There are some people who elevate speaking in tongues, and fervently seek that gift -- sometimes by repeating words or phrases over and over and over, or by other techniques. They should notice that every time tongues-speaking occurred in Acts, it happened spontaneously and unexpectedly. (Compare the experiences in Colombia, South America, recorded in the article, "Are All Gifts for Now?")

True, at times in Acts they sought and prayed for the Holy Spirit to come. (See Acts 1:14, based on the earlier promises in vss. 5 & 8; also Acts 8:15-17.) But nowhere does Luke mention that tongues *per se* were sought, prayed-for or even expected on those occasions. In Acts 10, the Spirit's coming in the middle of the sermon surprised them all. It was not in answer to prayer for any certain gifts. In Acts 19 Paul baptized John the Baptizer's disciples in the name of Jesus and placed hands upon them. Then the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. But there is no mention of their seeking either or both of those experiences. Thus the Bible pattern is that if God wants to give you the gift of tongues, He will do so apart from your seeking it in particular by means of agonizing, repeating phrases again and again, or trying to start such speaking by other means.

But if He *does* give someone this gift, from then on its use is under their control. No one can say, "I just had to keep on, I couldn't stop." Just as a prophet's spirit is under his control (1 Cor.14:32), the same is true of the tongues-speaker's spirit. If not, he would be unable to obey God's directive, "If there is no interpreter, the [tongues-] speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and God" (v. 28). Moderate Pentecostal writer Donald Gee says, "Paul corrects the false idea that [in exercising the gifts] the believer is reduced to an automaton. If this were correct, then his instructions were wide of the mark; he should (absurd thought!) have sought to correct the Holy Spirit rather than the Corinthians."

## 12. How Can I Know What My Gifts Are?

This seems to be one of the most important questions, yet the Bible never answers it in so many words. Here are guidelines which seem wise and helpful, though there may be exceptions to some of them at times.

**(a) A Strong Inner Desire:** Consider what you are interested in, especially as you grow in the Lord. As you try various types of service, what gives you joy and a sense of fulfillment? All types of service have frustrations, of course, but you should also experience deep satisfaction in your areas of giftedness. **(b) Abilities:** What aptitudes be-

gin to be seen in your life? What do you do well? This does not mean the work will always be easy; it may require much effort. Also, your ability may be small at first, and need training. Yet potential capability can usually be recognized before long. Both (a) and (b) should be present. One without the other is inadequate.

**(c) Blessing from God:** The Lord will bestow some degree of blessing as time goes on. Other people will often be helped by means of your ministry as you use your gift. That doesn't mean you will always see lots of outward "results" as you minister. Jeremiah had hardly any converts, and Paul had very few at Athens. Outward circumstances differ: Some audiences or classes may be hungry for God's truth, and be converted soon, and grow by leaps and bounds. Others may be hard-hearted and never respond, or merely need more time to digest and respond to His Word.

**(d) Recognition of your gift(s) by mature Christians:** The advice of experienced disciples can be very valuable. Seek their honest opinions. For sometimes we seriously misjudge our own abilities, either over-estimating or under-estimating ourselves! **(e) The Passing of Time:** This is an important test. You may discover you are in the wrong work for the Lord. If so, try another type of work. But give your leaders time to replace you; it is unethical to leave them in the lurch! Also, don't be like a grasshopper. Give each ministry a fair trial by sticking to it long enough to make sure if you do or don't possess a gift in that area.

In conclusion, ponder these statements by Dean Merrill in the book *Practical Christianity*:

Experiment! Say yes to opportunities that come along. If for no other reason than to see if God has gifted you along a particular line. Try things. Stay open-minded. See what brings results. Don't fall for Cornford's Law, which says, "*Nothing should ever be done for the 1st time.*" Instead, opt for the perspective of Charles Schulz, creator of Peanuts: "*Life is like a 10-speed bicycle. Most of us have gears we never use*"....

A group of tourists visited a picturesque village. They saw an old man by a fence, and one of the tourists asked, "**Were any great men born in this village?**" The old man leaned on his cane and replied, "**Nope, only babies.**" That was a profound answer. Nobody starts out great. *God has no instant giants of the faith.* The most gifted Christian you know began tentatively, serving the Lord with butterflies inside, not sure if he or she would ever make an impact for the kingdom of God. But **availability turned into ability.** The Holy Spirit's gifts were welcomed and then released to help change the world.

# I Couldn't Do Everything

[Continued from Inside Front Cover]

significant ministry, many jobs got done better than I could do them, and more of my time could be given to shepherding and teaching.

Scripture teaches that the church is a community in which each person has been given one or more gifts for building the body and extending its ministry in the world. His gift of administration was needed to supply a lack and to make my ministry more effective. It was but one of several ministry gifts which the Spirit began to awaken in our little congregation.

I confess I don't yet understand fully all the New Testament teaches about the gifts of the Spirit. But through my brother Andre, God showed me that the Spirit does indeed give gifts, and that these gifts are useful in building the body of Christ.

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## A Present-Day Illustration

[This happened before Sosa's cork-bat scandal:] An ingrown toenail was all it took to put Chicago Cubs' superstar Sammy Sosa on the disabled list. What we sometimes think of as the least significant body parts are really quite important, writes Paul to the Corinthians. So it is with the body of Christ. All the parts must care for one another. -- David Mains, *Sunday Soundbyte*

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If you missed it, be sure to read the article inside our front cover, *I Couldn't Do Everything--But I Wasn't Supposed To*.

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## An Important Point

Many of us have probably seen on TV (or heard from friends) testimonies or teachings about tongues, miracles and/or Holy Spirit-baptism which were terribly far-out, unbiblical and harmful. But we must seek to evaluate a view or an experience carefully from God's Word, not from the weak arguments of the **extremists** who hold it. Many times there are more **moderate and careful Bible teachers** holding some of these views in much more balanced ways, and their positions are what we should evaluate--with open minds. For we *all* have much to learn, much growing to do. At least I do; how about you? -- avw

# NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Bennie Hill

**Louisiana:** Judge again blocks Louisiana Choose Life License Plates! A federal judge ruled Louisiana's system for issuing speciality license plates is unconstitutional because it allows for a Choose Life Plate that he claims violates the free speech rights of abortion advocates!

**Tell City Church of Christ (Indiana)** Our revival begins Sun., Oct. 5<sup>th</sup> - Wed. Oct. 8<sup>th</sup>. Bro. Dick Reuben will be with us again.

**Ky. Ave. Church of Christ (Louisville)** The elders have hired Jim Gelaspie to be the new minister. He comes from Northern Ohio. After preaching for nearly 27 years and retiring, he desires to take up full time preaching again.

**Woodland Bible Camp.** (Junior Week #1 Report - Jerry Carmichael) David Johnson and I had a good week at Woodland, although a couple of days were totally wet! The kids sure enjoyed the mud hole and water slide that Jeff Adams set up. There was a total of 80 for the week: 47 campers, 4 "wee" campers, and 29 staff. It was a wonderful week with kids from Tennessee, Kentucky, and Indiana.

**Waterford Church of Christ (Kentucky)** The Lord richly blessed in a week of revival meetings with this congregation established in 1847. Bro. Bennie Hill spoke on "Lessons from the Doctor" (Luke) and the interest in God's word was encouraging. The Community Church (Elmer Wheatly) dismissed services on Sunday night to show their support. Marcia Prather & Phyllis

Gibbs provided special singing the last night.

**Linton Church of Christ (Indiana)** Jerry Carmichael reports: "we had a great week of Vacation Bible School. There were a lot of various activities that brought us together to learn about Jesus. Our average attendance for the 5 evenings was 65. There was an indoor picnic on Friday evening."

**Lilly Dale VBS Report (Elmer Pacheco)** "We have been blessed with a good attendance in VBS this summer. We started the week with 94, then 111 and 109 and expecting numbers to increase for the two remaining nights. That may not sound like much but Lilly Dale hasn't had such attendance in VBS for many years."

**Ralph Ave. Church of Christ (Louisville)** celebrated their 50 years in their present building located at 2501 Ralph Ave. They are now announcing a fall revival September 21-25.

**SCC LOST ALUMNI...**are being located via churches, friends and the internet! You can check out George McKee's [www.myfamily.com](http://www.myfamily.com) and locate your name and update the information by following some simple instructions. If your name is not there - you can add it very quickly. Help us in locating former students of SCC.

**SCC MARKER....**project is underway! Several alumni of SCC and interested individuals have suggested placing a marker in the College Park in Winchester to