

The background of the cover is a photograph of a natural landscape. In the foreground, there are green bushes and tall grasses. A river flows through the middle ground. In the background, there are rocky, brown hills under a clear blue sky. The title text is overlaid on the upper portion of the image.

# THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE EARLY CHURCH

*Biblical Research Library*  
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# THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE EARLY CHURCH

**The written word of God did not exist in the first century when the church was established. Copies of the Old Testament existed. However, these copies were confined to the synagogues of the Jews. The New Testament Scriptures did not come about until the latter part of the first century. It was God’s plan, therefore, to directly instruct and lead the early Christians through the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit. When we study through the history of the early church, it is imperative that we understand the work of the Holy Spirit in the context of the miraculous gifts which were given to enhance the establishment and ministry of the saints. This exciting study opens the door for understanding the development of the church in the first century until the completion of the written word of God. As the New Testament Scriptures were inscribed by the holy writers, the miraculous gifts of the Spirit passed away. They passed away in order to give way to the great blessing of the written word of God. Our ministries today, therefore, are enhanced by the entire Bible.**

## INTRODUCTION

In Joel 2:28 the prophecy concerning God’s outpouring of the Holy Spirit included “all flesh.” Therefore, the actual outpouring of the Holy Spirit that occurred in the first century in fulfillment of this prophecy must have reached beyond the apostles. Old men, young men, sons, daughters, servants and slaves must be included in the fulfillment of this prophecy. In this chapter it will be my purpose to investigate how this prophecy was fulfilled in the early church of the first century and how its fulfillment affects the church today.

The baptism with the Holy Spirit was promised specifically to the apostles.

They received such in Acts 2. The effects of this baptism would go beyond the apostles to “all flesh.” Technically speaking, however, there is a difference between the “baptism with the Holy Spirit” upon the apostles and the “outpouring” of the Spirit upon all flesh. The apostles alone received the baptism with the Spirit which was specifically promised to them by Jesus (At 1:5). In a similar manner the Spirit came upon the household of Cornelius. However, the outpouring of the Spirit on the household of Cornelius must not be confused with the unique empowering baptism that the apostles alone received in Acts 2. The

“outpouring” of Joel 2 includes “all flesh.” Therefore, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in a baptismal manner in Acts 2 would have consequences upon “all flesh.”

Though the apostles alone were baptized with the Spirit in Acts 2, the effect of that baptism immensely affected the early church. This effect is usually underestimated by biblical interpreters. Regardless of what one’s view is of the work of the Spirit today, we have consistently found that Bible students in this area of study have generally failed to understand the permeating miraculous work of the Holy Spirit in the first century church. This is especially true in understanding the miraculous gifts of the Spirit that were prevalent throughout the churches of the first century.

In an effort to activate a direct operation of the Spirit today on the hearts of men, some have unfortunately applied passages to Christians today that should be interpreted and applied only in the context of the first century church. Passages that define the direct work of the Spirit in the affairs of the New Testament church in the first century through signs and miracles are too often used to affirm the work of the Spirit today. In doing this, there is a **weakening** of the miraculous work of the Spirit in the early church. Those passages that talk about a direct and miraculous activity of the Spirit in the early church are “watered down” in their first century interpretation in an effort to make them real and applicable to us today. By forcing passages that discuss the miraculous work of the Spirit

into a historical context today where the Spirit has chosen not to work miraculously, we often lose the real meaning and actual work of the Spirit in both the first century and today. Interpreters who do not make a distinction between miraculous and non-miraculous work of the Spirit actually fail to see the purpose of the Spirit in confirming the messengers of God and their message in the first century. In their efforts to make the Spirit’s work the same today as it was in the beginning and establishment of the church, they fail to understand the work of the Spirit both in the first century and today.

There are those who are arguing for miracles today as in the early church. They claim that miraculous gifts prevail today as they did in the first century church. But this is actually an attack against the miraculous work of the Spirit in His historical setting of miraculous work in the early church. The modern-day pseudo-miracles of over zealous religionists are compared with true miraculous works of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament church. By equating these “presumptuous miracles” with the true miracles of the New Testament, the New Testament miracles lose their power. The “powerless miracles” of today are read into the pages of the New Testament. As a result, the New Testament miracles become powerless as those which some claim to have occurred today. This is an unfortunate theological inversion of modern-day experiential religion into the pages of the Holy Scriptures.

The hermeneutics of the above interpreters have led to a misunderstanding

of the direct work of the Spirit in the early church. In our failure to understand the New Testament in its historical setting, we have clouded our interpretation of passages that relate specifically to the miraculous work of the Spirit in the first century. We must remember that the New Testament letters were written to those early churches wherein the Spirit worked openly in directing the assemblies and edification of the church in order to firmly establish the church. The church had no New Testament as we have today. The members did not have many copies of even the Old Testament. In the absence of such inspired-written guidance, they sat in Bible classes that were conducted **directly** by the inspired prophets. In order for us to receive an adequate and accurate interpretation of the letters that were written to those Spirit-inspired churches, we will have to step into an “interpreter’s time machine” and return to the first century context. In order to understand their Sunday assemblies without any copies of the Bible, we will through historical hermeneutics, have to somehow mentally sit in their assemblies and watch how the Spirit worked through the miraculous gifts.

If you are trying to understand the first century assembly by your modern-day needs, or experiences, I am sure that your understanding of the Spirit’s work in the early church and today will be distorted. We must remember that **we are secondary recipients of the letters of instruction that were first written to churches almost two thousand years ago.** The Spirit intended that we should

have enough common sense to “rightly divide” the word of truth (2 Tm 2:15). And by this Paul meant more than dividing the Old Testament from the New Testament. We must be able to divide what applied to the Spirit’s miraculous work in the early church from His work that is applicable to us today. If we cannot make this division, then assuredly we will be confused.

In the following material, it will be my endeavor to investigate the significant part the Spirit played in the establishment of the New Testament church. We will credit the Spirit with His complete work there. In other words, we must first of all understand all passages in the context of the Spirit’s work in the early church before we make application of scriptures to our personal needs today. In doing this I am sure that some of your favorite passages on the Holy Spirit will probably be taken from you and placed in their historical context. You will argue with me. That is your privilege. **Nevertheless, it is imperative that we must first understand the Scriptures in their historical setting before we can understand or apply them to our needs today.** I am not so presumptuous as to claim something today that God never promised us in the first place. I am sure you feel the same. We must prove all things and hold fast that which is true and applicable to us today (See 2 Co 13:5).

I have always been amazed at the earnestness by which Bible students will apply the above rule to other subjects of Bible study, but fail to apply such principles to a study of the Holy Spirit. Sub-

jects as the head covering for women, foot washing, and evangelism are earnestly interpreted in the historical setting of the early church, and rightly so. Foot washing and the head covering must be studied in the cultural and religious context of the early church. Evangelistic methods must also be understood and applied accordingly. However, because of man's yearning for something that is not there, he often seeks to apply almost every New Testament statement concerning the Holy Spirit to himself today. Such is an unfortunate and inconsistent hermeneutic for understanding the Bible.

I again stress that the Bible student will fail to grasp a correct understanding of the Bible unless he can mentally find himself sitting on the front bench in Corinth or Ephesus in the first century, listening to a reading of Paul's instructions concerning the Holy Spirit or any other subject. I challenge you, therefore, to first place yourself in the historical context of the Holy Spirit's establishing the church in its early beginnings. Do this with passages that refer to the work of the Spirit. After we first do this, then we will better understand the application of the New Testament to our lives.

## Chapter 1

### Application Of The Promise To All

In this chapter we focus on the fact and reason for the expansion of the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit beyond the apostles. Since the miraculous activity of the Spirit is clearly evident in the history of the early church, we must understand that any promises concerning the work of the Spirit in a miraculous manner were to go beyond the apostles. They were to go beyond the apostles in order to affect the early church on a broader scale than the apostles themselves. Joel 2:28, Mark 16:14-20 and Acts 2:38,39 take the results of the outpouring of the Spirit on the apostles in Acts 2 beyond the realm of the apostles alone.

As the story of the establishment of the church unfolds in the book of Acts, we learn that the miraculous work of the

Spirit was taken beyond the apostles through the laying on of the apostles' hands. By understanding this fact, we can understand that miracles do not exist today because there are no Christ-sent apostles through whom the miraculous gifts can be imparted to others. Since the purpose for which the gifts were given has been accomplished, God never intended that the gifts should continue beyond the first century. When the purpose for which they existed ceased, the miracles ceased.

In Mark 16:14-20 Jesus made a very significant promise specifically to the apostles, and in general, to "those who believe" (the church) in general. This promise is often misunderstood in a religious world that is seeking for scriptural justification for behavioral extremism in

colorful worship assemblies that center more around fiction than fact. But a close examination of the context of Mark 16 clearly shows that what Jesus promised was limited in its fulfillment.

In the context of Mark 16:14-20, Jesus did not define **how** the miraculous works would be carried on by those who believed. He simply said that “those who believe” would do wonderful things. This is the primary point to be understood from this context. It is one thing to understand the fact that Jesus made the promise of the miraculous gifts. However, it is another thing to understand how these gifts would be imparted to “those who believe.”

It is probable that the event of the statements of verses 15-18 took place at a different time and occasion than the events and statements of Matthew 28:16-20 and Luke 24:44-49. There is no reason to assume that these are two parallel accounts of the same appearance of Jesus to the apostles before His ascension. After all, Jesus appeared to the disciples over a period of forty days after His resurrection and before the ascension (At 1:3). Mark 16 was only one of these appearances.

It is necessary to understand Mark 16:14-20 by first understanding that **four different meetings or events** are mentioned in the context of these verses. These events or meetings took place at different times after Jesus’ resurrection and before the disciples went forth to preach as stated in verse 20. It is important to understand the chronology of these verses in order to understand the appli-

cation of the statements of Jesus. The diagram below places the events or discourses at the approximate period of their occurrence after the resurrection and after the Acts 2 event.

### A. The indirect discourse of Mark 16:14:

Mark recorded, “*Afterward He [Jesus] appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen.*” This was an appearance of Jesus to the eleven apostles immediately after the resurrection. Mark here uses **indirect discourse**. Indirect discourse is the use of third person pronouns (he, she, they, them). Indirect discourse emphasizes the ones about whom discussion is made. Mark is here writing about Jesus and the apostles. The apostles are the ones to whom Jesus appeared on the occasion that is recorded in verse 14. Verse 14 is composed of the **words of Mark** who records this historical narrative of what Jesus said and did. The antecedent of the pronouns of the indirect discourse of Mark’s narrative is established here. The pronouns of the indirect discourses, therefore, **must refer back to the eleven apostles of this verse**. The events in this verse took place sometime **before** the speech of verses 15-18. We do not know how much time transpired between the event of verse 14 and the event of verses 15-18. There is no reason to connect the rebuking by Jesus in this verse with the speech of verses

15-18. Two different occasions are recorded by Mark that took place at different times.

### B. The direct discourse of Mark 16:15-18:

<sup>15</sup>“*And He said to them [the apostles], ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. <sup>16</sup>He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. <sup>17</sup>And these signs will follow those who believe [the church]: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; <sup>18</sup>they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.’*”

Beginning with the word “go” in verse 15 and extending through the end of verse 18, Mark records the **direct discourse** of Jesus. Mark is recording what Jesus actually said on possibly **another occasion** than the occasion of verse 14. These concluding statements in the earthly presence of Jesus that are included here are Mark’s concluding narrative of the ministry of Jesus. The group of “**those who believe**” of this worldwide call through the gospel in verse 17 finds its beginning in “he who believes” of verse 16. **All those who believe and are baptized form the group of “those who believe.”** Reference in these verses is to the group of Christians in general (the church), not specifically to the apostles of verse 14. This group (the church) would work miracles. However, the pas-

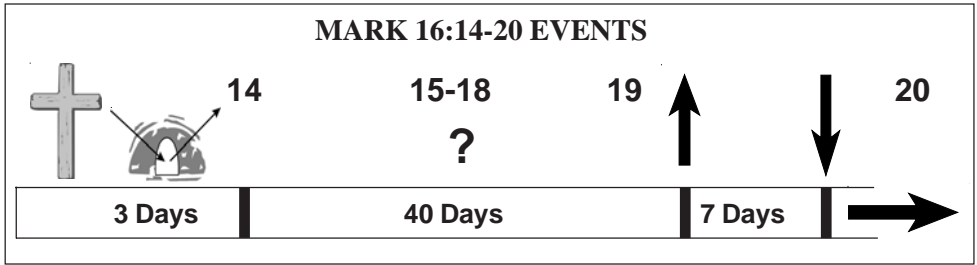
sage does not assume that everyone of the group of Christians would work miracles. The passage simply says that the signs **would follow this group** of “those who believe.”

Neither does the passage state **how** the group would be empowered to work miracles. It simply states that they would. In fact, the entire context of Mark 16 does not explain how the group would be empowered to work miracles. We learn this only when we study the early history of the church in the document of Acts. When the fulfillment of this promise of Jesus unfolds, we learn that the apostles were first given authority to work miracles. They in turn passed this authority to others by the laying on of their hands (At 8:18). Therefore, the apostles and the ones on whom they laid hands were the ones of “those who believe” who worked miracles.

### C. Indirect narrative of Mark 16:19:

Verse 19 is indirect narrative. These are the historical words of Mark who wrote, “*So then, after the Lord had spoken to them [the apostles], He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God.*” Here again is **indirect narrative**. Mark has left the direct discourse of verses 15-18. He now mentions the historical event of the ascension. Mark mentions events that are parallel to the events of Acts 1:6-9 where Luke records the ascension of Jesus. Reference in Acts 1 is to the event of the ascension of Jesus to heaven which took place sometime after the direct discourse





of verses 15-18. Therefore, keep in mind that the event of the ascension took place about **forty days after the event of verse 14**. The pronoun “them” here finds its antecedent in the indirect discourse of verse 14. Reference is to the apostles. In other words, after Jesus had spoken to the apostles, He ascended to heaven.

#### **D. The going forth of the disciples in Mark 16:20:**

In Mark 16:20 Mark recorded, “*And they [the apostles] went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.*” The event of this verse took place at least **seven days after verse 19**. The apostles went forth only after they had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:1-4. The antecedent of this verse is discovered in the indirect discourse of verse 14. Therefore, reference is specifically to the apostles who went forth to preach.

However, other disciples than the apostles went forth to preach after the establishment of the church in Acts 2. Philip went to Samaria and worked many miracles (At 8:5,6). At the time Philip and others went forth, the apostles re-

mained in Jerusalem. Though the reference of verse 20 is specifically to the apostles, the actual history of the church’s “going forth” with miracles was carried out by more disciples than the apostles. However, we are not told in the text how the disciples other than the apostles, received the authority to work miracles. We learn this from other texts.

Here is what is important to remember from the context of Mark 16:14-20. The pronoun “them” in verses 14,19,20 refers to the **apostles**. However, in Mark’s record of Jesus’ statements in verses 15-18, the pronoun “them” would refer to people **other than the apostles**. Reference is to **those who believe and obey the gospel**. Therefore, not only would the apostles do miraculous works, some of “those who believe” (the church) would also work miracles.

“Those who believe” in verse 17 would work miracles, and thus, have their message confirmed by God. This miraculous work by the church is a reference to the fulfillment of Joel 2:28. The comments of Jesus in Mark 16:15-18 also have in view what Peter would later state in Acts 2:38,39. Jesus’ statement is also a promise that the working of miraculous

signs would go beyond the apostles. However, Jesus does not explain **how** the believers would receive the authority to work signs. He does not in Mark 16:15-18 explain **when** they would receive this authority. He simply stated that signs would follow the disciples as a result of their belief and obedience of the gospel by immersion.

It is also significant to notice that Jesus is here promising that those who believe would ordinarily receive the authority to work signs. Their reception of such authority is assumed in the text. He does not specify that only a special group as the apostles would be given the authority to work signs. In fact, the nature of the promise of Joel 2:28 that “all flesh” would receive the “good things” of the Spirit is in contrast to a select group receiving the special authority to work miracles as in the Old Testament period. He does not say that there would be restrictions or qualifications for them to receive the Spirit other than “believing” and “obeying.” He simply stated that the group of those who believe and are baptized would receive the authority to work signs. Keep this in mind as we continue through the following pages with explanations as to what historically happened in the early church.

Jesus does not state in Mark 16:15-18 that the signs would necessarily follow every believer. He seems to indicate that the signs would only follow the believers as a group. The phrase “those who believe” indicates that the corporate body of believers would be followed by the signs wherever they went. Not every

one of the believers would be able to work the signs. However, there would be those in every group of believers who could. The signs would follow every believer only as long as they were a member of the church group.

In Mark 16:20, it is stated that the apostles went forth. In verses 19,20 the pronoun “them” finds its antecedent in verse 14. The “them” was the eleven apostles who were present at the time Jesus was with them – Matthias was later added to their number. The going forth of the apostles took place many days after the commission of verses 15-18, for they waited in Jerusalem until the coming of the Spirit (Lk 24:49). (There are fifty days between Passover – when Jesus was crucified – and Pentecost – the day on which the church was first established. After being in the tomb for three days, Jesus appeared to the apostles during forty of the fifty days (Acts 1:3). Therefore, the apostles waited in Jerusalem for about seven days before the Spirit came upon them on the day of Pentecost as is recorded in Acts 2.)

When the apostles went forth from Jerusalem, they preached everywhere. Actually, it was about twenty years after the events of Acts 2 before the apostles personally went forth from Jerusalem to preach to all nations. The method by which they went forth was through those who came from every nation to Jerusalem for Passover and Pentecost. The Passover and Pentecost of A.D. 30 were the beginning of their going forth when they sent out from Jerusalem those who had been taught after their conversion.

However, after A.D. 30, there were still Passovers and Pentecosts every year in the years to come. The apostles remained in Jerusalem throughout these years as different groups of Jews made their pilgrimage to Jerusalem for Passover and Pentecost. During every Passover and Pentecost, therefore more Jews were converted and taught and sent forth. Understanding this historical fact helps us understand the group (the church) that went forth and worked signs because they had received the laying on of the apostles' hands at the time of their initial conversion in Jerusalem during one of the Passovers and Pentecosts after A.D. 30.

As one studies the early history of the church as it began from Jerusalem, he must not forget the purpose for which

the miraculous signs accompanied the disciples. Throughout all records wherein miraculous works are discussed, the Lord is given credit for working the miraculous signs. His work through miraculous signs was an indication that the word of His messengers originated from Him, not man. God thus sought to give a divine stamp of approval on the disciples as they went forth to preach. Hebrews 2:3,4 states, "... *how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him. God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will.*"

## Chapter 2

### Pentecost And The Promises To All

The word "promise" is used many times in the New Testament to refer to various guarantees which God said He would give to His people. In fact, Paul said that "the promises" (plural) were given to Israel (Rm 9:4). As one studies the New Testament, therefore, there is more than one promise in the Old Testament to which reference is made in the New Testament.

In reference to Old Testament teaching concerning blessings that would come as a result of the fulfillment of the promises, there are two important promises that apply to our study of Acts 2.

Both of these promises are connected with one another in reference to the establishment of the church in Acts 2. However, both are not dependent upon one another. One promise refers to **the promise of salvation by faith in Jesus that was initially made to Abraham** (See Gn 12:3). The other promise refers to the promise of **the Holy Spirit that was made through Joel and reemphasized by Jesus** (Jl 2:28; Mk 16:20; At 1:8; Lk 24:49). In reference to Acts 2, both promises must be considered because both of the promises were fulfilled in Acts 2.

## A. The promise of salvation:

**Among other promises that God made to Abraham concerning his seed, Genesis 12:1-3 includes a promise of salvation that would come through Abraham's seed, which promise would be a blessing to all humanity.** While in uncircumcision as a Gentile, God promised that *"in you [Abram] all the families of the earth shall be blessed"* (Gn 12:3). This promise was later renewed to Abraham and to his descendants (See Gn 22:18; 26:1-4; 28:1-4,13,14). This was a promise that from the seed of Abraham would come the Seed (Christ) who would bring salvation to all men. This promise focused on the seedline of the seed of woman that would be continued through Abraham. It would be through his seed that the promise of Genesis 3:15 would eventually be fulfilled.

We must note that Genesis 12:1-3 contains more than one promise to Abraham. The Hebrew writer revealed that the multiplication of Abraham's seed which was made in Genesis 12:3 was also a promise (Hb 6:12,13). In Hebrews 7 it is stated that Melchizedek blessed Abraham *"who had the promises"* (Hb 7:6). One of the promises that God made to Abraham was that of his seed would come a great nation. His seed would be multiplied into a great nation. This promise was fulfilled in the nation of Israel. In Acts 2 the multiplied physical seed of Abraham (the Jewish nation) was represented in Jerusalem in order to receive the promise of the blessing that would go to all nations. God had physically ful-

filled His promise of the multiplied nation before Acts 2. However, Paul said, *"they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham ..."* (Rm 9:6,7). Paul's argument in this statement is that **we are all sons of Abraham by faith.** All who walk by faith in God are thus included in the promise of the spiritual nation of Israel. In this sense, therefore, one would include the children of Abraham by faith in the statement of Peter in Acts 2:39. *"For the promise is to you and to your children [all physical Israel], and to all who are afar off [children of Abraham by faith], as many as the Lord our God will call."* In making this statement, Peter was affirming that the promise of both the "blessing" and "the Holy Spirit" would go to both Jews and Gentiles who were sons of Abraham **by faith.**

**1. Romans 4:13-16:** In this passage Paul refers to **the promised salvation** that would come from Abraham's seed. *"Through the righteousness of faith"* God promised that Abraham *"would be the heir of the world"* (vs 13). Paul's argument in the context is that Abraham received the promise by faith, not by meritorious works of law. In reference to the application of the promise to us, he stated, *"Therefore it [the promise] is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed ..."* (vs 16). Paul's point is seated in the context that God poured out the promise of salvation while all men were in sin (Rm 5:8). It was not given

because of man's righteousness, for no man was righteous before God (Rm 3:9,10).

**2. Galatians 3:10-29:** This passage is another context where Paul argues justification by faith as opposed to justification through perfect law-keeping. The two major promises that were fulfilled in Acts 2 are also mentioned together in the context of Galatians 3. The "promise of the Holy Spirit" is first mentioned in verse 14 where Paul argues "*that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.*" Reference here is **not** to a promise "made by the Spirit" but to a promise of the reception **of the Spirit**. Emphasis is not on the Holy Spirit making promises. The Holy Spirit was the fulfillment of a promise that was made.

In Galatians 3 Paul continued his argument of justification by faith by saying, "*Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises [plural] made*" (vs 16). Both Jews and Gentiles are sons of Abraham by faith. All are sons of God by faith (vs 26). "*And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise*" (vs 29). According to the promise we are all heirs of the blessing of salvation that was brought into the world by Jesus.

## **B. The promise of the Holy Spirit:**

The second major promise that was made in the Old Testament is the promise of the Holy Spirit that was made in Joel 2:28. In the context of Acts 2, this

is certainly in the minds of the people because they were wondering about the miraculous events of Acts 2:1-4 that had just taken place. Peter's response is first an explanation of what had taken place. He quoted Joel 2 in order to explain that what had just happened was the fulfillment of prophecy concerning the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (At 2:16ff). His answer emphasized the fact that the event of 2:1-4 was a signal of a new beginning. This new beginning was the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham that salvation by faith in the Seed (Christ) of Abraham had now come (See Gl 3:16). The miraculous outpouring of the Holy Spirit in 2:1-4 was God's authorization for the apostles to make the first official announcement that Jesus was the Christ and Son of God who made a sacrificial offering for the sins of the world.

Many charismatic groups today have confused this point. Their misunderstanding is that they supposed that the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" that took place in Acts 2:1-4 signaled salvation, not beginning. Therefore, when the apostles were all baptized with the Holy Spirit, this meant that they were being saved by the Holy Spirit. It is thus assumed that Acts 2:38 is a command by Peter that everyone be baptized in the Holy Spirit in order to be saved. It is also assumed that verse 39 refers exclusively to the promise of salvation. However, if one contends that the promise of Acts 2:39 refers to the promise of salvation and verse 38 to the baptism of the Holy Spirit, then he is faced with the dilemma of determining where Peter makes the break

both in the context of what is said and the change of thought between verses 38 and 39. Read carefully what Peter actually stated in Acts 2:38,39.

*<sup>38</sup>Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. <sup>39</sup>For **the promise** is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”*

If we do not separate the two specific promises (the one of the Spirit and the other of salvation), we will be faced with the same interpretive confusion of Acts 2:39 that prevails among many charismatic groups. The word “promise” in Acts 2:39 is singular, and thus refers to either the promise of salvation or the promise of the Holy Spirit. We must keep in mind that the baptism or outpouring of the Holy Spirit did not bring salvation. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit was never meant to be salvational. The Spirit came in a miraculous manner in order to signal, not save. In the case of the apostles in Acts 2, He signaled the beginning of another dispensation. In the case of Cornelius, He signaled to the Jews that they must focus on the Gentiles in their evangelistic outreach.

In order to partake of the promise of the “blessing” that God promised to Abraham in Genesis 12:3, one must obey the gospel by immersion for the remission of sins. This is obedience in response to faith. What Peter is saying in

Acts 2 is that if one voluntarily partakes of the first promise by obedience (salvation resulting from immersion), then he or she will be able to partake of the second promise which also comes as a free gift. Therefore, in Acts 2:38,39 Peter is discussing both the promise of salvation and the promise of the Holy Spirit. Both promises were made through the Old Testament prophets. The day of Pentecost in Acts 2 was the time for the fulfillment of both promises. The promise of the outpouring of the Spirit was fulfilled by the baptism of the apostles in Acts 2:1-4. The promise of salvation in Christ was fulfilled when repentant believers obeyed the gospel by baptism into Christ (At 2:41).

The fulfillment of the promise of the “blessing of Abraham” is in Peter’s response of verse 38. However, in verse 39 he is referring back to his explanation of the events of 2:1-4 where the apostles “received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit” (At 2:33). The word “for” which begins 2:39 brings this out. This is a conjunctive preposition which means that the material that follows is an explanation of that which immediately precedes the conjunction. In other words, verse 39 is a continued explanation of the “gift of the Holy Spirit” in verse 38 which one receives as a result of obedience to the gospel by immersion. For this reason, therefore, I would suggest that the promise of verse 39 does not refer to the promised salvation that would come by obedience to the gospel, but would come as a result of obedience to the gospel. Reference is being made to the blessings

of the Holy Spirit that come as a result of one's repentance and immersion. Peter simply continued the meaning of the gift of the Holy Spirit from verse 38 into verse 39. He is here again reaffirming the prophecy of Joel 2:28 that the promise of the Holy Spirit is to "all flesh." It is to "*as many as the Lord our God will call.*"

Acts 2:38,39 is a parallel statement to what Jesus promised and explained in Mark 16:16-18. In Acts 2:1-4 the Spirit was poured out in a baptismal manner upon the apostles. In Acts 2:16 Peter explained, "***But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel.***" He then quoted Joel 2:28. Therefore, Peter was interpreting Acts 2:1-4 to be the outpouring of the Spirit which was prophesied by Joel. This was the baptism with the Holy Spirit which Jesus promised in Acts 1:5. Jesus had said specifically to the apostles, "*... for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.*" The promise was made to the apostles just a few days before the event of Acts 2:1-4. Acts 2:1-4 was the "*receiving of the promise.*" Peter stated clearly that the miraculous outpouring of verses 1-4, with the resulting speaking in languages and inspiration, was the fulfillment of the promise of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 2:33 he stated, "*Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.*"

Now it is significant to understand an interesting point that is made in Acts

2:33. Peter said that what the multitudes "heard and saw" was the result of the apostles' "having received" the Holy Spirit. In other words, the apostles first received the Holy Spirit, and then there was a miraculous manifestation that was "seen and heard." Though we may not understand all the implications of what Peter meant, we must understand that he made some distinction between the receiving of the Holy Spirit and the miraculous event of their speaking in languages and the sound as a rushing mighty wind. They first received the Spirit, and then the Spirit moved them to speak with languages. There is probably nothing complicated about what actually took place. The apostles were first inspired with all truth by the Spirit in fulfillment of Jesus' promises in John 14:26 and 16:13. He then signaled to the other disciples by the divided tongues that the apostles had received the fulfillment of Jesus' promise. And then, through the speaking in languages they were able to communicate to the multitudes what the attention-drawing sound of the wind signified. The initial receiving of the Spirit by the apostles, therefore, was not something that was openly manifested. It was not some convulsion in their bodies or speaking in languages. It was quiet and unknown by those who were in their immediate company. When they received the Spirit, none of the other disciples knew. It was only when the Spirit manifested His presence in them through what was "seen and heard" that others knew that something significant had happened to the apostles.

The apostles first received the prom-

ise of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit empowered them as a result of His presence in their lives. The result was a miraculous manifestation through the speaking in languages. However, both Joel 2:28 and Mark 16:15-20 state that the promise was to go beyond the apostles. Joel had stated that “all flesh” would manifest the miraculous work of the Spirit. Jesus had promised in Mark 16 that “those who believe” would work miraculous signs. The preaching and teaching of all “those who believe” in the first century was to be followed by signs according to Jesus’ promise. Therefore, Peter takes the promise of the miraculous work of the Spirit beyond the apostles in Acts 2:38,39. Upon repentance and baptism for remission of sins, Peter said they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, **for the promise was to all.**

Acts 2:39 begins with the preposition “for.” This preposition connects verses 38 and 39. It indicates that what is stated in verse 39 is in some way an explanation of what is immediately stated in the preceding statements. Bruce Terry stated,

Thus when Peter says in Acts 2:39, “the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off,” he is referring to the Holy Spirit. This is clearly shown by the “for” which begins verse 39 and indicates that it is an explanation of the preceding verse where Peter had just said, “you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” ... the promised Holy Spirit which was given to the apostles when they were baptized in the Holy Spirit was also to be given to “everyone whom the

Lord our God calls to him” (Acts 2:39).<sup>14:194</sup>

Reception of the gift of the Holy Spirit is the last concept of verse 38. Therefore, verse 39 is an explanation, or continuation of the thought of verse 38. **If we understand that the promise of verse 39 refers to the prophecy of Joel 2:28, then we would understand that the gift of the Holy Spirit in verse 38 includes blessings that resulted from the outpouring of the Spirit that was promised in Joel 2:28.** In other words, all that the Holy Spirit would do in reference to the church after Acts 2 finds its initial seat in the prophecy of Joel 2. This would thus include the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, in Acts 2, Peter is discussing not only the non-miraculous indwelling and work of the Spirit, but also the miraculous work that the Spirit would do through “those who believe”, as promised also by Jesus in Mark 16. I say this in view of the fact that it was **first the work of the Holy Spirit to reveal all truth by miraculous inspiration of the apostles and to miraculously confirm the spoken and written word by inspiration.** The non-miraculous indwelling and work of the Spirit must be an included meaning of these verses. However, it would appear that Peter emphasized the miraculous work of the Spirit by explaining the event of the outpouring of Acts 2:1-4, and then, the secondary work of the Spirit through the miraculous work of “those who believe.” And finally, he emphasized the continuation of the work of the Spirit



throughout history after the passing away of the miraculous. Reconsider the following main thoughts of Acts 2: 38,39:

**1. “For the promise is to you”:** This statement in verse 39 includes many important details that harmonize with both Joel 2:28 and Mark 16:17,18. Peter states that the promise was not only to the Jews, it was “to all who are afar off.” Others than the immediate recipients are to be included. The Gentiles were also to be included. The promise was to “as many as the Lord our God will call.” This would be the group of “those who believe” of Mark 16:17,18 who were obedient to the gospel by baptism into Christ (2 Th 2:14). The complete fulfillment of the prophecy would include those beyond the nation of Israel.

**a. Ephesians 3:6,7:** In Ephesians 3:6,7 Paul wrote a commentary thought on Acts 2:38,39. He stated “... that the Gentiles should be **fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.**” Notice that when the Gentiles believed the gospel, they became **fellow heirs of the promise**. They became **partakers** in the sense that “these signs will follow those who believe” (Mk 16:17). The Gentiles were “sealed with **the Holy Spirit of promise**” (Ep 1:13). The “good things” which Jesus promised (Lk 11:13; Mt 7:11) and that Joel promised (Jl 2), first came to “those who believed.”

These were those who were immersed for remission of sins on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 (At 2:38,39). The Gentiles were “fellow heirs” of these good things of the Spirit as the gospel went to all nations after the day of Pentecost.

**b. Hebrews 6:4-6:** The passage is another commentary of Acts 2:38,39. “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the **heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come ... to renew them.**” The promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit **originated from heaven**. It is thus the **heavenly gift** of which the apostates tasted in Hebrews 6:4-6. The whole context of Hebrews 6 is discussing the apostasy of those who once believed, but **turned away from the miraculous power of God**. It is impossible to renew them simply because they had experienced the **open manifestation of the environment of God**, and yet, they turned away. They partook of the best of God and yet gave it up. This is not surprising. Thousands of Israelites who came out of Egyptian captivity did the same when they fell away from God and worshiped a golden calf after having witnessed the power of God in passing through the Red Sea (Ex 32). The same apostates to whom the Hebrew letter directed this epistle had received the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, and yet, turned away.

We must remember that inspiration and the ability to command the miraculous did not guarantee one’s salvation.

Neither did the Spirit directly influence the free-moral character of the one who worked miracles in a way to subjectively change his moral behavior. Remember, Peter stood condemned when he withdrew from the Gentiles in Antioch in Galatians 2 even though he was an inspired Christ-sent apostle.

**c. Galatians 3:14:** This passage is another reference to the promise of Acts 2:39. Paul stated, “... *that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through [the] faith.*” (The article is in the Greek text before the word “faith”.) Here again is the concept of Mark 16. The “*blessing of Abraham*” was the **gospel of Jesus**. It was preached. Paul says that through the faith they received the “*promise of the Spirit.*” Jesus had said that those who would believe and obey the gospel would be followed by the working of signs in their going forth. Peter said that the Pentecost believers would receive the promise through obedience to the gospel. Paul said that the Galatian Christians had received the promise as a result of their obedience to the faith. Are not all of these parallel concepts of the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the early believers?

Herein is the “*renewing of the Spirit*” about which Paul wrote in Titus 3:5,6. “*He saved us, through the washing of regeneration [baptism for remission of sins] and renewing of the Holy Spirit [the promised gift of the Spirit] whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior [we*

believed on Him].” The Spirit was poured out on the apostles in a direct baptismal manner in Acts 2:1-4. Believers received the miraculous gifts through the laying on of the apostles’ hands. The “*renewing of the Holy Spirit*” Paul discusses in Titus 3:5,6 is obviously a reference to the return of the miraculous work of the Spirit among God’s people as He miraculously worked in the days of the prophets. To renew something means to do it as it was once done before. As a special class of God’s messengers in the Old Testament, the prophets worked wondrously among the Israelites through the miraculous activity of the Holy Spirit. In the same manner, Joel was prophesying that the Spirit would work among “all flesh” in the early church. Therefore, after four hundred years of silence, the Holy Spirit was again working among God’s people in a miraculous manner. It was indeed a “renewing of the Holy Spirit.”

**2. “Receive”:** Peter promised that those who were immersed for remission of sins would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is interesting and explanatory to study the word “receive” in the context of its use with reference to the Holy Spirit throughout the New Testament. When used in the context of the Holy Spirit, the indication is that the “receiving of the Holy Spirit” refers to the receiving of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit through the laying on of the apostles’ hands. In its historical usage in the New Testament, this seems to be its first and most obvious meaning. In the context of Acts 2:38, this is the first

meaning that we must assign to the phrase. Consider carefully the following commentary passages that define the word in its historical meaning and usage:

**a. John 7:39:** John recorded, *“But this He [Jesus] spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would **receive**; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”* John wrote that those who believed on Jesus would **receive** the Holy Spirit. In Mark 16:17,18 Jesus said that those who believed would work signs. These signs would come through the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. If we connected the thoughts of John 7:39 and Mark 16:17,18, we would conclude that Jesus was speaking of the same thing in both passages. Therefore, John 7:39 would refer to the reception of the Holy Spirit to which Jesus referred in Mark 16:17,18. John was thus referring to a reception of the Holy Spirit that would result in working signs.

**b. John 20:21,22:** John recorded, *“Then Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.’ And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, ‘**Receive the Holy Spirit**’.”* In this context Jesus made an **imperative command** to the apostles. The statement, *“receive the Holy Spirit”* is an imperative command. What He wanted of them is that they **willingly accept** the outpouring of the Spirit that would come on them about fifty days from the time this statement was made.

Jesus was about to depart from the

presence of the apostles. They were to be sent the Spirit in His absence (Jn 14:18). Their reception of the Spirit was not to be subjective nor against their will. Jesus was commanding them to be of a state of obedient receptivity when the Spirit came on the day of Pentecost. They must be of a state of mind whereby the Spirit could be poured out upon them.

**c. Acts 1:8:** Jesus promised the apostles that *“you shall **receive power** when the Holy Spirit has come upon you ....”* In this statement, Jesus promised that the apostles were going to be invested with miraculous power when the Spirit came upon them. In the context of the promise, **receiving** power is in conjunction with the coming of the Spirit upon the apostles. When this power was poured forth in Acts 2:1-4, miraculous activity occurred. Peter proclaimed in Acts 2 that power was manifested in the pouring forth of the promise. He affirmed that they having, *“**received** from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear”* (At 2:33).

**d. Acts 8:5-25:** Acts 8:5-25 is a historical record of Philip’s ministry of preaching in Samaria. As a result of his preaching, multitudes gave heed to his word and obeyed the gospel by immersion in water. Even Simon, a sorcerer, was baptized.

*“Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them”* (At 8:14). Peter and John prayed for the new converts *“that they might **receive the Holy Spirit**”* (At

8:15). Those who were baptized in Samaria had not yet received the Holy Spirit until the arrival of Peter and John. They had not received the Spirit, for Luke recorded, “*for as yet He [the Holy Spirit] had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus*” (At 8:16). It was then that Peter and John “*laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit*” (At 8:17). Therefore, they had not received the Spirit until an apostle had imparted the Holy Spirit to them by the laying on of their hands.

Acts 8:18 is crucial in understanding the context of Acts 8:5-25. “*Now when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money.*” Simon empirically recognized that the Holy Spirit was imparted by the laying on of the apostles’ hands. As a baptized believer, even he had a right to have hands laid on him by the apostles in order to receive the Spirit. This he had undoubtedly already received. He had “*tasted the heavenly gift*” and had become a partaker of the Holy Spirit (Hb 6:4). But this was not what Simon sought from the apostles. He wanted more than a miraculous gift. His heart was not right according to what Luke stated in verse 19. He was bitter because he had lost his position of recognition in the community. What he saw in the work of laying on of hands by Peter and John was an opportunity to regain his prominent position in the community. Therefore, Simon wanted the authority to impart the Spirit by the laying on of his hands. He said,

“*Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit.*” Though Simon’s motives were not pure, what he said does explain what he perceived the receiving of the Holy Spirit to be. **The Samaritans did not receive the Spirit until the apostles came to Samaria to lay hands on them.** When the apostles came, that which the Samaritans received was the miraculous gifts of the Spirit.

It is also evident that “all who believed” in Samaria had hands laid upon them by the apostles in order that they receive gifts of the Spirit. Once one became obedient to the gospel he had a right to receive the Holy Spirit through the laying on of the apostles’ hands.

**e. Acts 10:44-48:** When Peter began to preach to the household of Cornelius, “*the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word*” (vs 44). The Christian Jews who were with Peter were astonished “*because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also*” (vs 45). Therefore, the outpouring of the Spirit on the household of Cornelius was a miraculous outpouring of the Spirit. A miraculous gift (speaking in languages) resulted from the outpouring. After the Spirit fell upon the household of Cornelius, Peter then said, “*Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?*” (vs 47). The household of Cornelius had not been baptized, and yet, they had “*received the Holy Spirit.*” However, as discussed before, this is a unique outpouring of the Spirit and was accomplished for a spe-

cial purpose. What Luke is doing for us in this historical record, and in other contexts of Acts, is defining what it means to “receive the Holy Spirit.” In reference to this same event, Peter in Acts 15:8 stated that God **gave** the Holy Spirit to the household of Cornelius. Therefore, “receiving” the Spirit and “giving” the Spirit can refer to the same thing.

Consider also the fact that the six Jews who were with Peter had also received the Holy Spirit through the laying on of the apostles’ hands. This is true because in Acts 10:47 Peter used the pronoun “we” to refer to the six Jews who had accompanied him to the house of Cornelius. Peter said that the Spirit came upon Cornelius and his house in a miraculous manner. They, Cornelius’ household, **received** the Spirit as the others who accompanied Peter had received Him. This would certainly indicate that the six Jews with Peter had all received the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. Their reception of the Spirit was a miraculous reception, though they had not received the Spirit in a baptismal or outpouring manner as Cornelius and his household. This would indicate that those Jewish Christians with Peter had had hands laid on them by the apostles in order to receive the miraculous gifts of the Spirit.

**f. Acts 19:1-7:** This is a context wherein we see the work of another Christ-sent apostle as Peter and John in Acts 8 in the administration of the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands. We also see the teaching that every baptized believer had a right to receive the miraculous gifts of the Spirit.

When Paul returned to Ephesus on his third missionary journey, he found about twelve disciples in Ephesus who had been baptized with John’s baptism. When he found these disciples, he immediately sought to administer to them the “good things” (the miraculous gifts of the Spirit) which Jesus promised that all those who believed on Him would receive (See Lk 11:13; Mt 7:11).

When Paul first encountered this group of disciples in Ephesus, he asked them, “*Did you **receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?***” (At 19:2). One would wonder that if the reception of the Holy Spirit were automatic upon either believing or baptism, why would Paul ask this question and in this manner? **What he was asking was if any other Christ-sent apostle had been by and imparted to them the miraculous gifts since the time they had obeyed the gospel.** They replied, “*We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit*” (At 19:2). This reply is not made with the meaning that they did not believe in the existence of the Holy Spirit. To make this statement mean this would certainly be ignoring the common knowledge of these disciples. **What is meant is that they did not yet know that the Holy Spirit had been poured out.** At least, they did not know that they had a right to the Spirit by the laying on of the apostles’ hands, which blessing came to all who were baptized in the name of Jesus.

Since Ephesian disciples did not know that they could receive the Holy Spirit, Paul then inquired further by asking, “*Into what then were you baptized?*”

Since reception of the Holy Spirit was a right for every believer who was baptized in the name of Jesus, then their lack of knowledge as to whether the Holy Spirit was given sparked Paul's question concerning that into which they had been baptized. They replied, "*Into John's baptism.*" Paul then explained the baptism that was by the authority of Jesus. They were then baptized. "***And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them and they spoke with tongues and prophesied***" (vs 6). Therefore, they had not received the Holy Spirit until Paul had laid hands on them. It is my understanding of this incident that Paul was seeking to accomplish his apostolic duties of imparting the Spirit by the laying on of hands on every baptized believer he encountered in his journeys. He discovered that these disciples had not yet obeyed the gospel by baptism in the name of Jesus. After their baptism, they **received the Spirit** through the laying on of his hands.

**g. Galatians 3:1-5:** The background to the Galatian letter is Paul's defense of his apostleship in the face of rising Jewish legalism in the Galatian church. In the context of Galatians 3:1-5 he uses the same argument he used with the Corinthian church to prove his Christ-sent authority as an apostle. To the Corinthians he argued, "*Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you*" (2 Co 12:12). To the Galatians he argued, "*Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*" (Gl 3:2). The situation in the Corinthian and Galatian churches concerning his

apostleship was the same. The defense was the same. **Paul had miraculously proved his apostleship in both churches.** In the Corinthian situation he had laid hands on the baptized believers in order that they receive the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. This was something only a Christ-sent apostle could do, and thus, it was a sign of his apostleship. In the Galatian situation he had imparted to them the Spirit through the laying on of his hands, which thing they received, not because of works of law, but by the grace of God. This harmonizes perfectly with our understanding that the receiving of the Holy Spirit refers to the miraculous reception of the miraculous gifts.

Consider Galatians 3:1-5 from another contextual viewpoint. In the Galatian letter Paul is arguing the superiority of the law of Christ, grace and faith, over the judaizers' legalistic use of the Old Testament law to gain justification. In the Galatian church some judaizing teachers had convinced some of the brethren that the Old Testament law was better. After defending his apostleship in the first two chapters, he then turned to an **empirical defense** of Christianity. He presented in 3:1-5 his first defense. He presented an evidence that they could **observe**, that is, a miraculous manifestation of the Spirit through the laying on of his hands. This evidence was not a "good feeling", for false teachers could present the same. Paul used the evidence that only a true Christ-sent apostle could use. He thus presented the evidence, "*Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*" Or,

when you believed and obeyed the gospel, were you given the miraculous gifts as a result of obedience to the gospel or meritorious obedience to law? (See Mk 16:16,17). He was using the “receiving of the Spirit” as an empirical evidence that Christianity is true and superior to law.

Paul also used the miraculous evidence of the Spirit with a similar problem in the Corinthian church. He stated, “*Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you...*” (2 Co 12:12). The truth of the gospel that was preached to the Galatians and the evidence of a true apostle in Corinth were all proved by Paul in the same way, by the miraculous impartation of the miraculous gifts. This was an empirical proof. It was one that they could see. In the Corinthian situation, the signs of the apostle confirmed the messenger of God. In the Galatian situation, the miraculous confirmed the message of God.

Paul continued the argument of Galatians 3 by referring to the reception of the Spirit as a confirmation of the source of the truth of the gospel. “*Therefore He who supplied the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by works of the law, or by the hearing of faith*” (vs 5). It must first be noted in this verse that the capitalization of the “He” is only the opinion of the translators. The “He” could just as well refer to a Christ-sent apostle, and in particular, to the apostle Paul. However, the argument is still the same. It was God working through His messenger, Paul, in order to supply the Spirit to the Galatians.

Paul used the same statement as Galatians 3:5 as an apostolic defense against those who added affliction to his chains in Rome. He was confident that God would grant to him “*the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ*” (Ph 1:19). In the Galatian 3 context Paul interprets the “receiving of the Spirit” in verse 2 by what is stated in verse 5. God, through Paul’s obedience of faith, supplied the Spirit to the Galatians **by the laying on of his hands**. This should be understood in the same manner as Acts 8:18 where Simon **saw** “*that through the laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Spirit was given.*” Paul asks that the Galatians remember what they **saw** him do when he was present with them. This is exactly what Paul did in Acts 19 when he laid hands on about twelve disciples in order that they receive the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. It was something that could be **seen**. The reception of the Spirit was an evidence of the truth of Christianity. Paul had laid hands on the Galatians, though it was not, as he said, as a legalistic work of law. This also was not something the Galatians felt. **It was something they saw. It was an evidence they could not deny nor could the false teachers copy.**

**h. Galatians 3:13,14:** Paul wrote, “*Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.*”

Paul continues the thought of 3:1-5 in verses 13 and 14. Here we are reminded of what Peter said, “*The promise is unto you ...*” (At 2:39). We must correct in the 3:1-5 context an unfortunate deletion that was made by some translators. In the Greek text, the article is before the word “faith.” Therefore, the translation should read, “... *that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through the faith [dia tais pisteus].*” The phrase “**the faith**” refers to the truth of the gospel, not to one’s personal faith. The passage with the article makes sense and harmonizes perfectly with Mark 16:16-18 and Acts 2:38,39. Through the Galatians’ acceptance of and obedience to the truth of the gospel (the faith), they received the miraculous gifts of the promise by the laying on of Paul’s hands.

**i. Galatians 4:6:** The above interpretation now explains Galatians 4:6 which is so often twisted to fit some preconceived ideas surrounding the receiving of the Holy Spirit. Paul stated, “***And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, ‘Abba Father’.***” This statement says that the Spirit was sent into their hearts **after they were already sons**, not at the time they became sons. The emphasis here is not on receiving the Spirit at the time of adoption (baptism). The Spirit is received here at the time the Father sent the Spirit. The Spirit was sent **because they were sons**. It seems clear that Paul is using the sending of the Spirit here in the same manner as the receiving of the Spirit in 3:1-5. It is the same empirical argument that Paul used in 2 Corinthians

12:12. The signs of an apostle were worked in Corinth to miraculously prove Paul’s apostleship. In the Galatian context, Paul was using an empirical evidence to prove his apostleship by the miraculous giving and receiving of the Spirit. He is proving in Galatians 4:6 their sonship by their miraculous receiving of the Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:3 is an obvious miraculous passage in the context of the miraculous gifts. It is a parallel concept with Galatians 4:6. In the Corinthian passage Paul said, “*Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Spirit.*” In the Galatian passage, the meaning is parallel. Both passages are discussing **inspiration**. The crying “Abba, Father” and “Jesus is Lord” are literary statements that are used to express the meaning of what was happening. The Spirit originated the “cry” (Gl 4:6) and “statement” (1 Co 12:3) by inspiration of the individual who made the cry or statement.

Galatians 4:6 and 1 Corinthians 12:3 are a good commentary on what Paul means in Romans 8:14,15. “*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father’.*”

Galatians 4:6, 1 Corinthians 12:3 and Romans 8:14,15 are surprisingly similar. They are parallel passages, and thus, express the received promise of the Spirit among the churches of the first century.



The Spirit was miraculously working to build up the body through the medium of the miraculous gifts and inspired spoken word. The “good things” from the Spirit were coming forth in the spiritual growth of the church. This was the reason for the giving and reception of the promise. The church was being firmly established by the direct work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the early church. However, after this was accomplished, the Spirit did not need to function in a direct manner through the miraculous gifts. For this reason, the miraculous gifts passed away.

**j. 1 Timothy 4:14:** Paul wrote to Timothy, “Do not neglect the gift that is in you, **which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.**” Paul here speaks of “the gift” that was given to Timothy by prophecy. This passage surely refers us back to Joel 2:28-32. In the prophecy of Joel 2 God was intending that those who ministered in the early church be given miraculous gifts. In particular, the early evangelists were given the gift of prophecy, that is, the gift of speaking the word of God by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The evangelists did not have New Testaments by which to guide their teaching and preaching. It was only by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that they could deliver the truth to the church.

The statement, “**with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery**”, must not be confused with what Paul stated in 2 Timothy 1:6. In 2 Timothy 1:6 he said that the gift came “**through the laying on of my hands.**” Two different prepo-

sitions are used in these two passages. The gift came **through** (*dia*) Paul’s authority (2 Tm 1:6), but it evidently happened at the same time the presbyters set forth Timothy as an evangelist by the laying on of their hands. Therefore, the gift was received **with** (*meta*) the laying on of the presbyters’ hands to send out Timothy (1 Tm 4:14), but the gift came to Timothy through the laying on of Paul’s hands.

**k. 1 John 2:20,27:** John wrote, “<sup>20</sup>*But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things.* <sup>27</sup>*But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.*”

John’s use of the word “anointing” is taken from the Old Testament’s anointing of kings, priests and prophets of Israel (1 Sm 10:10; Ex 29:7; Is 61:1). Jesus was also anointed (At 4:27). He was anointed by the Holy Spirit (At 10:38). The anointing of someone was something that was **visible** to all. It was not hidden. In the same sense John uses the Holy Spirit as an “anointing” manifestation of the true disciples to whom he wrote. Campbell wrote, “The oil, the pouring of the oil, and the head on which it was poured, are all **external and visible**. Hence the Holy Spirit descended on the head of the Messiah **visibly**, and sat upon the head of the apostles in the resemblances of fiery tongues. Thus were Jesus and the Apostles anointed.”<sup>41:279</sup> In this

same sense John’s readers openly and visibly received the Spirit and exercised their gifts. Such was proof that they were born out of God.

<b>“RECEIVING” OF THE HOLY SPIRIT</b>		
Miraculous		Non-miraculous
John 7:39		← ? →
Acts 1:8; 2:33	X	
Acts 8:5-25	X	
Acts 10:44-48	X	
Acts 19:1-7	X	
Galatians 3:1-15		← ? →
Galatians 3:13,14		← ? →
1 John 2:27	X	
<b>Acts 2:38</b>		← ? →

said that He who anoints us is God “*who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a deposit*” (2 Co 1:21,22). Paul referred to this anointing in

In this context, the use of the word anointing (*christoi*) is a play on words in the Greek text. John was arguing against the gnostic antichrist (*antichristoi*). John’s faithful readers were *christoi* (anointed). The gnostic false teachers were *antichristoi* (antichrists).

In 1 John 2:20 John stated, “*But you have an anointing [christoi] from the Holy One, and you know all things.*” How did they know all things as a result of this anointing? Reference is certainly to the miraculous gift of prophecy. Jesus was anointed (*christoi*) “*with the Holy Spirit and with power*” (At 10:38; see At 4:27; Hb 1:9). As a result He “*went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him*” (At 10:38). John’s audience had received the same anointing of the Holy Spirit. This anointing allowed them to do the same as Jesus in exercising the miraculous gifts.

This anointing (*christoi*) was in contrast to the antichrists (*antichristoi*) who were not speaking the truth. Paul also

reference to himself, Silas and Timothy who had been commissioned to preach. They had been anointed with the Spirit, and thus empowered by the Spirit. We would naturally conclude that the reference to the anointing of inspired New Testament prophets (Paul, Silas, and Timothy) is the same anointing to which John refers in 1 John 2:20,27.

In 1 John 2:27 John said that they **received** the anointing. John’s audience **received** “the anointing” from God. John said that this “*same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie ...*” (vs 27). Through the inspiration of the New Testament prophets, the early church was taught all truth. All truth was initially delivered to the church by the apostles as promised by Jesus (Jn 14:26; 16:13). However, the inspired prophets were “living New Testaments” in the churches. By the laying on of the apostles’ hands, the gift of prophecy was spread throughout the churches. No false teacher could justly deliver to John’s audience any new teach-

ing or different teaching. The “anointing” (the Holy Spirit), through the prophets, taught them all things.

John brings out the above concept of receiving miraculous gifts of the Spirit in 1 John 4:13. In his argument against the antichrists who taught error, he used the miraculous gifts of the true disciples as **empirical evidence** that they were of the truth. He stated, “*By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.*”

The phrase “*of His Spirit*” comes from the Greek phrase *ek tou pneumatou autou* (also in 1 Jn 3:24). Thayer’s lexicon points out that the emphasis of this phrase is on “origin, source, cause.” Thayer lists the verse under the definition, “**of the supply out of (from) which a thing is taken, given, received ....**” In other words, John’s audience had received the miraculous gift of prophecy **from the Holy Spirit**. The Spirit was the origin or source from which they “*knew all things.*” (More on this later.)

In the immediate context of the above arguments of John, John is teaching against the arrogant assertions of gnostic teachers. These teachers claimed to know “all things.” The gnostics claimed a hidden knowledge or awareness by which they based their salvation. John’s statements are an argument against gnostic false teachers and an encouragement to the faithful. The faithful should not be intimidated by the assertions of the so-called “special” knowledge of the gnostics. The faithful had the truth which had been miraculously delivered to them by inspired prophets in their midst. The

anointing (the Holy Spirit) taught them all things through the inspired prophets. They needed nothing from the gnostics.

The gnostics, as Jude wrote, did not have the Spirit (Jd 19). In other words, they did not have the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. In this sense John and Jude are discussing the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. John affirmed, “*And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us*” (1 Jn 3:24). How could they empirically know that God abode in them by a non-miraculous indwelling? They could not. This is why we must affirm that the anointing about which John speaks refers to the miraculous manifestation of the Spirit through the gifts.

John’s readers **received** this anointing. They received the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. The gifts were an open manifestation of their belonging to God and that God abode in them. They were taught all things by the Spirit and were able to discern the falsehood of those who claimed to speak from inspiration. He wrote, “*Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world*” (1 Jn 4:1). In view of the fact that they did not have copies of the written word of God, we must conclude that they tested those who claimed to be prophets by the gift of discerning spirits. There is no other answer for what John asked them to do. Therefore, we must conclude that the anointing of the Spirit that they had received was the miraculous gift of discerning spirit and not the non-miraculous in-

dwelling of the Spirit that Christians have today.

The following chart illustrates an important point concerning a consistent interpretation of receiving the Spirit. In examining passages in the New Testament that refer to “receiving” the Holy Spirit, we must seek to be consistent in our interpretations. It is a general rule of Bible study to allow the Bible to be its own interpreter. Above all, we must be consistent in interpreting similar phrases and concepts alike though they are found in different passages. We must use this rule in order to understand what the Scriptures refer to when talking about the reception of the Holy Spirit.

In the context of the above passages that are marked “miraculous”, it is clear that miraculous activity resulted from the reception of the Spirit. One must conclude, therefore, that in all contexts where the phrase “receive the Spirit” is used, reference is primarily to a miraculous reception of the Spirit. This would be in harmony with what Jesus promised the apostles, “*But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you ...*” (At 1:8). When the early disciples “received the Spirit”, therefore, it would be a fair conclusion to say that they received power. Though one might disagree, Guy N. Woods does conclude with a point that is worthy of consideration.

It is a gross misinterpretation of Acts 5:32, to say that this teaches that all who obey the gospel receive the Holy Spirit. The Samaritans, though they had believed and had been baptized (Acts 8:12), and

were saved (Mark 16:15,16), had not received the Spirit at all: “Peter and John who, when they were come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit for as yet he was fallen upon none of them; only they had been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.” (Acts 8:15,16.) To “receive” the Spirit then means a miraculous measure thereof. This, they had not. It follows, therefore, that they had not “received the Holy Spirit,” and the Holy Spirit had “fallen on none of them”. To insist otherwise, is to controvert the passage. If the reception of the Spirit—apart from the word—always follows obedience to the gospel, since the Samaritans had obeyed the gospel, they had received the Holy Spirit. We have it on the testimony of inspiration, however, that such did not occur. It follows, therefore, that the reception of the Spirit does not necessarily follow the obedience of the gospel. Acts 19:1-9, is a similar instance. These men, baptized at the behest of Paul, were saved; but the reception of the Holy Spirit resulted from the laying on of his hands.<sup>4:23</sup>

In conjunction with the preceding thoughts, we must add that the reception of the Spirit’s word is in a sense a reception of the Spirit. James wrote, “*Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word ...*” (Js 1:21). The Spirit inspired the word of God to be written (2 Tm 3:16). Therefore, when one receives the word of the Spirit, he is in a sense, receiving the Spirit. In the same sense one can receive the message

of the gospel (1 Co 15:1-3). However, we must be careful with our terminology. The Scriptures do not make the exact statement that one receives the Spirit by receiving the Spirit-inspired word. This would be a concept that is our interpretation and deduction. We say that if one

accepts another's word, he accepts or receives that person. In a similar sense, if we accept the word of the Spirit, we accept ("receive") the Spirit. Such is a common interpretation of communication.

## Chapter 3

### The Gifts In The Church

It would be correct to say that in our discussions today in the religious world concerning both the Holy Spirit and the New Testament church, that many Bible students do not understand the work of the Holy Spirit in the early church. In our efforts to make the New Testament relevant and contemporary we bypass the historical context of the inspired letters of the New Testament that were sent to churches and individuals almost two thousand years ago. In doing such we make some things in the New Testament applicable to us today that God never intended. We apply passages and concepts to ourselves which were never meant to be so applied.

The preceding problem is especially true in reference to studies concerning the Holy Spirit. On the assumption that everything in the Bible must somehow be applied to our lives today, we bring all teachings in the New Testament concerning the Holy Spirit into our theology as applicable to the church today. It is often difficult in biblical interpretation to detach ourselves from our 21<sup>st</sup> century culture in order to place ourselves in the church pews of the first century church.

However, in order to properly understand the New Testament, we must do this. We must first interpret the New Testament from the perspective of those to whom the letters were first written.

It is crucial in one's interpretation concerning the Holy Spirit **to first study all passages in their first century setting**. Since the Spirit did actually play a miraculous part in the early church, we must approach our study of the Spirit's work from the historical context of the early church. If we do not, we will do one of two things or both on the supposition that what the Spirit did then He does now: First, we will affirm that the Spirit worked then as we experientially affirm He works now. In other words, we will use our experiences today as a commentary to understand how the Spirit worked in the first century. However, this invariably devalues the true nature of the miracles of the first century. When we transpose so-called modern-day miracles into the New Testament, we devalue the first century miracles to nothing short of tricks and show-business religion.

Second, there are also those who affirm that the miracles of the first century

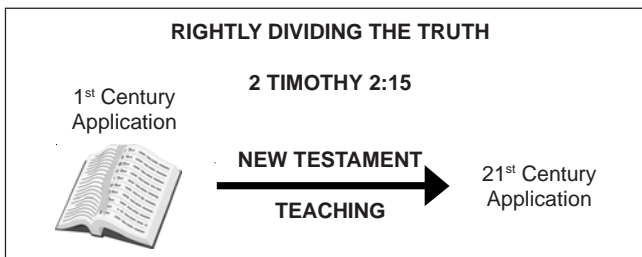
are worked today in the true nature of how they were worked in the first century. In other words, the dead are raised, broken limbs are healed, and the lepers are instantaneously cured. If we do not make a distinction between the work of the Holy Spirit in the first century and His work after the close of the initial establishment of the church, we will interpret the New Testament with the conclusion of one of the above two understandings of miracles. Both understandings lead one to misinterpret the Scriptures in reference to the miraculous work of the Spirit. It was certainly for this purpose that Paul wrote the exhortation of 2 Timothy 2:15. *“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”* When Paul wrote this passage, he had in mind more than dividing the Old Testament from the New Testament. He was teaching that we must also divide New Testament events and teachings that applied to the first century church from the lives of those who would live after the initial establishment of the first century church. Therefore, not all that is in the New Testament would apply to us today.

There is a difference between the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit in the first century and His work today. The Spirit still works, but His work is indirect in the environ-

ment in which we live. His direct work that presented itself to the sense perceptions of man in the first century was meant to confirm the word of God. But the word has been confirmed, and thus, His miraculous work is no longer needed today in order to confirm the already confirmed word of God.

Our task is to first study the work of the Spirit in His initial miraculous work of the church in the first century which was meant to confirm the word of God to unbelievers, but also edify the church of believers. All scriptures that refer to the work of the Spirit must first be understood in reference to the early Christians to whom they were first written. We are secondary recipients of these same letters. Therefore, we must interpret the New Testament as secondary recipients. This approach to New Testament study will invariably rob some emotional interpreters of their coveted passages which they have used as proof texts for supposed miraculous happenings today. It will also arouse the unjust criticism that the New Testament is a dead letter. Regardless of the criticism, however, we must rightly divide the word of truth in order to determine what applies to us and what applied to them. When we come to a study of the work of the Holy Spirit,

therefore, there are some risks involved. The risk is that in our objectivity, we may lose



some favorite passages that we first thought applied directly to the church for all time. Regardless of the risk, however, we must allow the Bible to interpret itself. We must deal with every verse, sentence, phrase and word in Scripture. We must not allow our emotions to dictate our objective interpretation of the Bible. All our beliefs, emotions and preconceived ideas must be submitted to the guidance of the Scriptures in every detail and point that is made by the Holy Spirit through the word of God.

### A. Definition of terms:

We must remember that the work of the Holy Spirit in the first century was directed both toward the unbeliever and the believer. Toward the unbeliever, the Spirit worked to **miraculously confirm the word of God** (See Mk 16:20; Hb 2:3,4). Paul wrote, “*For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power ...*” (1 Th 1:5). Luke wrote of Paul and Barnabas’ work in Iconium, “*Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands*” (At 14:3). In His miraculous work that was clearly witnessed by the unbelievers, the Spirit signaled to the world that the messengers of God were speaking the message of God.

The Spirit’s work also included the building up or edification of the early church through the miraculous gifts. It is in the context of this miraculous work that most of the scriptures of the New

Testament were written that refer to the work of the Spirit. This work of the Spirit is communicated in the New Testament by various terms that define His miraculous work among the early churches. Therefore, when we read passages in the New Testament that refer to the work of the Spirit, we must first interpret them as they referred to the direct work of the Spirit in the lives of the early Christians. The Spirit was working to build up the infant church in the absence of the written word of God. When we read this historical work of the Spirit, therefore, we must be cautious about making application of these statements to us today. The following words and phrases are examples of references to the work of the Spirit in the early church:

1. “***In the Spirit***”: Revelation 1:10 states that John was “*in the Spirit*” [*en pneumatos* - the article is not present] *on the Lord’s Day*” when he received the visions of Revelation (See also At 10:10f; 22:17). The passage would literally read that he was “*in spirit*”, not “*in the Spirit*.” The meaning is probably that he was in a state of vision or inspiration by the Spirit. Regardless of the meaning that would be attached to which reading one would prefer, reference is to a miraculous work of the Spirit in connection with the inspiration of the one who is “*in spirit*” or “*in the Spirit*.” This is Paul’s argument to the Galatians. “*Having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect by the law?*” (Gl 3:3). In other words, in the context they were converted to the miraculously confirmed messenger who bore witness to the word they obeyed.

Paul wonders why they think they would be perfected by legalistic law-keeping after they had obeyed the gospel which came to them by the grace of God.

Consider also John 4:24. “*God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.*” The article “the” is not before the word “spirit,” therefore, **quality is emphasized**. Romans 1:9 is the commentary explanation. Paul stated, “*For God is my witness, whom I serve with [literally, “in”] my spirit ...*” The spirit in John 4:24 refers to God as being spirit as Paul refers to the **spirit of man**, not the Holy Spirit. Since God is spirit in nature, we can worship Him only through spiritual means. John 4:24, therefore, is not discussing Holy Spirit-inspired worship of God as some contend. John is simply identifying God as spirit who must be worshiped after the spiritual nature of man.

**2. “Of the Spirit”:** When the phrase is used in the New Testament, reference is to receiving something that is given by the Spirit. The phrase *ek tou pneumatos* does not refer to the giving of the Spirit Himself but to that which comes as a result of the reception of the Spirit. Emphasis is on coming that originates out of the Spirit. (More on this later.)

**3. “With the Spirit”:** This is another New Testament phrase (*to pneumatiki*) which refers to the guidance of the Spirit in a miraculous manner. Seated in the context of miraculous gifts, Paul said, “*I will pray with the Spirit ...*” (1 Co 14:15). This is a reference to inspired prayer that was part of the gift of prophecy in the

first century. The prayer, teaching, preaching or singing as a part of the gift of prophecy, was guided by the work of the Spirit. Since the early Christians who were converted out of idolatrous religions did not have copies of the Bible, the Spirit was their “Bible.” He directed their worship and lives through the inspired work of the prophets.

**4. “Gift” or “gifts” of the Spirit:** The word “gift” is a general term that is used to refer to the miraculous work of the Spirit. Though the word “gift” is used in other contexts in a non-miraculous manner, it is also used in the context of the miraculous. In the miraculous contexts, the singular word “gift” is used to refer to all of God’s miraculous works or “gifts” (plural). Therefore, the “gifts of the Holy Spirit” fall under the “gift of the Holy Spirit”, which phrase is found only twice in Scripture (At 2:38; 10:45).

## B. The gift of the Holy Spirit:

As stated before, the “gift of the Holy Spirit” that is mentioned in Acts 2:38,39 refers to all that the Spirit would do in this dispensation of time. In the first century context, reference would be to the miraculous work of the Spirit in fulfillment to the promise of Joel 2:28. At least this seems to be the primary emphasis in the historical fulfillment of what actually took place in the first century church. This was the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel 2:28 and acknowledged by Peter in Acts 2:16,17,33. The promise was made by Peter in Acts 2:39 to “those who believe.” This interpretation has been



promoted by various Bible students throughout the years. Franklin Camp stated,

I believe that the Scriptures teach that the gift of the Holy Spirit refers to miraculous endowments that belonged to the period when these miraculous gifts were for the purpose of confirming the apostles of Christ as His apostles and providing the church with inspiration through these gifts that came through the laying on of the hand of an apostle.<sup>5:131</sup>

Harper added,

Thus we see the “gift of the Holy Spirit” was ...

1. The **revelation** of God’s great scheme of redemption for man.
2. His **confirming** it by miraculous demonstrations beyond the power of men to perform, and
3. **Sealing** it **once** and **for all time**. This, having been complied with, the Holy Spirit “sealed” (stamped) his approval upon them, and this COMPLETED 1 Corinthians 13:8-10, it was **never** to be “opened again for new revelations and new confirmations.” **This** was the completion of his “gift” to us.<sup>7:xxxv, xxxvi</sup>

David Lipscomb wrote, “The gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38) is the bestowal of the Spirit, possibly in his miraculous manifestations.”<sup>12:644</sup> Biblical interpreters would not be alone in affirming that the “gift of the Holy Spirit” refers primarily to the miraculous work of

the Spirit in the early church.

There have been numerous efforts that suggest that the Spirit is measured out to the believer. It is agreed that the Spirit works in different ways, some perceived by the senses of man and some not perceived. However, to assume that there are “measures” by which the Spirit works does not do justice to the work of the Spirit. He worked in an open manner in the first century in order to confirm both the message and messengers of God. However, since the first century He continues to work. I do not believe this work would justly be classified as a less “measure” of the Spirit. It is simply less recognized. It is perceived through faith and not sight.

I feel that efforts to measure out the work of God in His creation have confused the relationship between the Holy Spirit and His work. This is especially true of one’s understanding of Acts 2:38,39. In an effort by some to affirm a “direct”, and yet, non-miraculous work of the Spirit upon the moral behavior of the Christian, some have portioned out the Spirit in measures of influence. But is this a biblical approach to understanding the work of the Spirit? When Jesus promised the time of the Spirit in John 7:38,39, it would be a time when the Spirit would do His work in His way. He would be given, that is, sent. When He was given He would accomplish His work in this dispensation. I therefore question the idea of “measures” of the Spirit’s work. The Holy Spirit simply works. He has worked in different ways in the affairs of this world. He has re-

vealed two ways He works. In the first century, His work was visual (miracles). Today, His work is not visual (providence). Whether miraculous or non-miraculous, it is still the Spirit working in a manner that is not according to the natural occurrence of physical laws. Anytime the Spirit works, it is out of the ordinary in reference to the normal occurrence of the natural laws of this world. We use the words “miracle” and “miraculous” to identify His work that is perceived through the senses. Though the word “providence” has much to be desired in reference to defining His work, we use this word to identify the non-miraculous work of the Spirit. Regardless of what word is used, the Scriptures teach that

the Spirit is working, whether it is perceived by sight or perceived by faith.

For the above reason, I believe that one cannot separate the work of the Holy Spirit from the Holy Spirit Himself when reference is made to the “gift of the Spirit.” The time of the Spirit began with the baptism of the apostles with the Holy Spirit. “Those who believed” had access to the miraculous work of the Spirit upon obedience to the gospel by immersion. We today live with the benefit of the outpouring of the Spirit. That benefit is the Spirit-produced church which was and is founded upon the revelation of the word of God. Our benefit is also the Spirit Himself as He works in the lives of Christians for their benefit.

## Chapter 4

### The Gift Of The Holy Spirit

A study of the word “gift” as it is used in reference to the work of the Holy Spirit reveals some very interesting points concerning the work of the Spirit in the lives of the early Christians. We must keep in mind that the context of the word must be allowed to define the meaning of how the word is used in reference to the Holy Spirit. As we study through these contexts, it will not be difficult to understand that the primary use of the word “gift” is in reference to the miraculous work of the Spirit in the lives of the early Christians. Upon obedience to the gospel, the early Christians who came into contact with a Christ-sent apostle were freely given the gifts of the Spirit in order to

enhance the establishment of the church.

To the Samaritan woman, Jesus said, *“If you knew the gift of God ... you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water”* (Jn 4:10; see also At 8:20). This is the first reference in the New Testament to the concept of a “gift” that would originate from God. This would not be the person of God. It would be a gift (*dorea*) that would proceed from God. This is the first use of the word “gift” that refers to something that God had in store for man. The gift of God in John 4:10 probably refers to all things concerning salvation that God was about to give to man. Salvation would be the free gift of God that would

come as a result of His grace. This general use of the word would certainly include the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit and the indwelling of the Spirit. All would come from God as a gift. No man could have worked for that which is a gift of God. The gift was offered to man on the basis of God's grace. God gives to man those things that man could never earn through meritorious works.

In John 4:10 Jesus was in His earthly ministry and looking forward to that which was to come. In Acts and the epistles, the gift of God was poured out for man as a result of the cross. The word "gift" is used several times in reference to the Holy Spirit. We must first seek to consistently understand the "gift of the Spirit" in all contexts in the sense of allowing all contexts to be the commentary of one another. We would not assume that the Scriptures would be written in a manner that would use the same word or phrase to mean different things every time the word or phrase is used. Our first rule of Bible study principles would be to consistently understand the same word or phrase to have reference to the same thing in all contexts in which the word or phrase is used. It is for this reason that we must compare all contexts wherein the word "gift" or "gift of the Holy Spirit" is used in order to allow each context to add more definition to what reference is made. The following is a list of scriptures wherein the word "gift" is used in reference to God or the Holy Spirit:

#### A. The gift of God:

**Acts 8:20** is a clear reference to the miraculous aspects of the gift of God. Simon, who asked, "*Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit*" (At 8:19), was rebuked by Peter for he "*thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money*" (At 8:20). What Simon saw was the miraculous power of Peter and John to impart miraculous gifts. Peter and John had laid hands on the newly immersed Samaritans. The Samaritans received the Holy Spirit by this action. What Simon wanted to purchase was the authority or power to do the same. Therefore, the gift of God in this context refers to the miraculous work of God through the Spirit, specifically to the authority to impart the miraculous gift of God through the laying on of hands.

#### B. The gift of the Holy Spirit:

**Acts 10:45** also is a reference to the miraculous activity of the Holy Spirit. After the Holy Spirit had just fallen on the household of Cornelius, in astonishment Peter proclaimed that "*the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.*" There is little question concerning this explanation of Peter that the outpouring of the Spirit on the household of Cornelius was the "gift of the Holy Spirit." If we use this passage as a commentary passage of Acts 2:38, then we must affirm that what is promised in Acts 2:38 is similar to, or directly connected with, what happened to Cornelius and his household. The gift of the Holy Spirit in the case of Cornelius was a miraculous

endowment of the Spirit. Cornelius and his household miraculously spoke in languages.

Though the reception of the Spirit in Acts 10:45 was not connected with water baptism as it is in Acts 2:38, the results were the same. Those of the promise of Acts 2:38,39 would receive the miraculous gifts of the Spirit by the laying on of the apostles' hands as in Acts 8:18 and 19:1-6. In Acts 10:44,45 Jesus directly administered the Spirit in order to give an open manifestation of the Gentiles' right to the promise. The circumstances were different, but Peter states that the gift of the Holy Spirit was the same. The Spirit came on the household of Cornelius in a miraculous manner. The result was that they spoke with languages.

There had been Gentiles who were baptized from the time of the beginning of the church on the day of Pentecost to the time of the events that happened at the house of Cornelius in Acts 10. However, in view of Peter's statement of Acts 11:17, hands had not been laid on the Gentiles in order that they receive the "gift of the Holy Spirit."

Now here is a challenge for Bible interpreters. If the Gentiles who were baptized before the event of Acts 10 had received the "gift of the Holy Spirit" when they were baptized, what is the "gift of the Holy Spirit" about which Peter speaks in Acts 10:45? Did the Gentiles receive another gift of the Holy Spirit after their baptism that would have been different than the gift that they received at the time of their baptism? Or, does Acts 2:38,39 refer to the miraculous reception of a gift

of the Holy Spirit? If Peter's explanation of the gift of the Holy Spirit is the commentary on Acts 2:38,39, then the phrase "gift of the Holy Spirit" refers to a miraculous reception and action of the Holy Spirit. If it does not, then the early Christians received a gift of the Holy Spirit when they were baptized, and then another gift of the Holy Spirit when the apostles laid hands on them.

We could correctly assume that God took the opportunity in the case of Cornelius to officially manifest to Jewish Christians that the Gentiles had a right not only to full scale evangelism, but also to the gift of the Holy Spirit. There could possibly have been a misconception on the part of the disciples that only the Jews were to receive the gift. At least, the disciples were not evangelizing among the Gentiles as God wanted them. However, the outpouring of the Spirit on the household of Cornelius signaled to the Jewish Christians that the Gentiles had a right to the gift of the Holy Spirit as the Jews.

### C. The same gift:

**Acts 11:17** is Peter's proclamation to the Jewish Christians of Jerusalem who confronted Him when he and his company returned from the house of Cornelius. After Peter's explanation of the events, he said, "*If therefore God gave them the **same gift** as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?*" The gift about which Peter speaks here is not the gift of salvation. Neither was this a non-miraculous indwelling of

the Spirit. The miraculous event of Acts 10:44,45, and Peter’s comparing of this event in Acts 11:17 to that which the first Christians had received as a result of their belief, refers us back to the miraculous endowments of the Spirit that were first poured out on the apostles in Acts 2:1-4. In Acts 10:45 Peter refers to the gift as the “gift of the Holy Spirit.” In Acts 11:17 he refers to it as “the same gift” that the apostles had received at the beginning of the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. The result of the gift of the Holy Spirit that was poured out on the apostles at the beginning and the same gift being poured out on Cornelius and his household may be different. However, the fact is that Peter identifies the “gift of the Holy Spirit” (“the same gift”) with that which was poured out on the apostles in Acts 2. It is for this reason that the “gift of the Holy Spirit” that is mentioned in Acts 2:38,39 must include the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit in the first century. Though the indwelling of the Spirit continues with all Christians today, the fact is that when Peter spoke of the promise being to all who were afar off in Acts

2:39, he included the miraculous work of the Spirit in the lives of the early Christians.

This is in complete harmony with Paul’s statement to the Galatians in Galatians 3:2, “*Did you receive the Spirit by ... the hearing of faith?*” They were of those who were “afar off” (At 2:39). However, they received the Spirit. When the first Christians believed, they were immersed and “*through the laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Spirit was given*” (At 8:18). The gift came to them by the grace of God through the laying on of the apostles’ hands. The Galatians did not work for the gift. It was free. In the cases of the apostles on the day of Pentecost and the household of Cornelius, it was freely given by God. The apostles, Cornelius’ household and the Galatians all received the “gift of the Holy Spirit”, which gift came from the Holy Spirit in its initial effect in the lives of Christians.

**D. The gift of the grace of God:**

In **Ephesians 3:7** Paul refers the Ephesians “*to the gift of the grace of God*”

<b>THE GIFT</b>	
MIRACULOUS	NON-MIRACULOUS
1. Acts 8:20: “Gift of God”	X
2. Acts 10:45: “Gift of the Holy Spirit”	X
3. Acts 11:17: “The same gift”	X
4. Ephesians 3:7: “The gift”	X
5. Ephesians 4:7: “The gift of Christ”	X
6. Acts 2:38: “Gift of the Holy Spirit”	?

*given to me by the effective working of His power.*” In the context of Ephesians 3 Paul is not using the phrase “the gift of the grace of God” with a salvation meaning. This is not the context of Paul’s argument. Neither is this what He said in the statement. Paul is discussing what happened **after** he was saved. The Ephesians had “*heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to*” Paul for them (Ep 3:2). However, the mystery of Christ “*has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets*” (Ep 3:5). This mystery was made known to Paul by miraculous revelation (Ep 3:3; Gl 1:11,12). After he received it, he preached it to the Ephesians. The gift was his reception of the revelation of the mystery. Once he received the revelation, he “*became a minister according to the gift.*” The passage does not say that he was made a minister **of the gift**. He was made a minister of the mystery that came to him by revelation. As a result of the revelation, he preached the mystery (the gospel).

Notice how Paul explains the above in verse 8. “*To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.*” There is a difference here between the “grace” that was given to him and the unsearchable riches that he preached. It was his work “*to make all people see what is the fellowship of the mystery*” (Ep 3:9). His calling and commission were by the miraculous work of God. By miraculous endowment he was commissioned with the authority of a

Christ-sent apostle. This was the gift. **The gift was the receiving of that which he preached.** The reception was miraculous. It was by revelation. The subject of the preaching was the gospel. Therefore, the gift of Ephesians 3:7 refers to the miraculous activity of God through the Holy Spirit in the life of Paul to preach to the Ephesian church.

### **E. The measure of Christ’s gift:**

**Ephesians 4:7** is a statement that refers to the gifts of the Spirit in the Ephesian church. Jesus had stated to the apostles, “*It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper [the Holy Spirit] will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you*” (Jn 16:7). Though this statement is made as a direct promise to the apostles, the sending of the Spirit was taken outside the realm of the apostles in Ephesians 4. In Ephesians 4:8 Paul quoted Psalm 68:18, “*When He [Jesus] ascended on high, He led captivity captive and gave gifts to men.*” Psalm 68:18 refers to the sending of the Holy Spirit after the ascension of Jesus. Paul had said in verse 7, “*But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift [Gr., gift of Christ].*” In this context “gift of Christ” (gift of the Holy Spirit) is associated with the gifts (plural) of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the individual miraculous gifts of the Spirit come under the singular term “gift of Christ.” The gift of Christ in Ephesians 4:8 refers to the “gift of the Holy Spirit” which includes the gifts of the Spirit. This is why

I affirm that all work of the Holy Spirit in this dispensation must come under the “gift of the Holy Spirit.” How the Spirit works in the life of a Christian is different now from the first century. He worked miraculously with the apostles and those on whom they had laid their hands. He worked non-miraculously in the lives of those who did not have hands laid on them by the apostles. However, He still worked in their lives to work all things together for good, to comfort and to strengthen. In this same way He continues to work today. Therefore, it is erroneous to say that the Spirit has stopped working simply because I cannot see, touch, taste, feel or hear His working.

When Jesus, who is the administrator of the Spirit, ascended He sent the Holy Spirit. He did such in order to fulfill all things (Ep 4:10). Therefore, He “gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers” (Ep 4:11). Though particular ministries are mentioned here, I would suggest that those in this first century context in the church functioned in their ministries with the miraculous gifts. In other words, Jesus did not directly call these apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. The apostles in this context were not the Christ-sent apostles as the twelve who Jesus personally called (Lk 6:13). Reference is to church-sent apostles as Barnabas, Titus and Epaphroditus. However, Jesus did directly administer the gift of the Spirit upon many of the individuals of the ministries of Ephesians 4:11 by the laying on of the Christ-sent apostles’ hands

(At 8:18). The church-sent apostles, prophets, evangelists, etc. here worked for the “*equipping of the saints ... for the edifying of the body of Christ*” (Ep 4:12). The miraculous gifts which they possessed and exercised in the church were for the building up of the church, that we “*should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine ...*” (Ep 4:14).

In its primary context, Ephesians 4:11-16 refers to the early church in Ephesus as the Holy Spirit through the gifts built up the church. Through the inspired preaching of the church-sent apostles as Timothy, the church was grounded in the truth in order that members not be tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine. Paul first commended the Ephesian church unto the word of God (At 20:32). The word unto which he commended them was first spoken. However, by the time the Ephesian letter was written, the truth was being recorded for their continued growth. We have the same truth today unto which we are commended. By the direction of this word we are equipped unto the ministry of the saints through the ministries of church-sent apostles, pastors, evangelists and teachers. The ministries of teaching and edification continue, though the miraculous gifts of the Spirit that enhanced the ministries of individuals has ceased. The superior influence and impact of the Spirit’s working through the word of God was always considered more complete than the miraculous gifts. Therefore, the ministry of the preachers, pastors, teachers and church-sent apostles (missionar-

ies) has been enhanced by the written word of God.

## F. The gift of the Holy Spirit:

In view of the above, consider Acts 2:38. Peter promised that those who repented and were baptized would receive the “*gift of the Holy Spirit*” From the Spirit would also flow the blessings of His word. When John 4:10, Ephesians 4:7 and Acts 2:38 are considered together, the indication is on what all three personalities of the Godhead are doing in reference to the salvation and life of believers. In order to bring the meaning of these verses together, here are some thoughts to consider.

Thus in the meaning of these passages [Jn 4:10; At 2:38; Ep 4:7], the *dorea* (gift) of God, and the *dorea* (gift) of Christ, and the *dorea* (gift) of the Holy Spirit, are all used in the special sense – specifying what God and Christ and the Holy Spirit **are doing**. The **dorea of God** in John 4:10 was that which proceeded from God, the living water, the **dorea of Christ** was that which proceeded from Christ – the measure of grace to each several member in the distribution of the spiritual endowments. On precisely the same premise the **dorea** of the Holy Spirit was that which proceeded from the Holy Spirit – the salvation and blessing of the all-inclusive promise mentioned without even a break in the context.<sup>9:40</sup>

Now in order to understand what those who were baptized would receive,

there are some grammatical structures one must consider in reference to Acts 2:38. In the grammar of the text, the phrase “gift of the Holy Spirit” is either an objective genitive or a subjective genitive. If the meaning is after the **objective genitive** understanding, then Peter would be saying, “You will receive the Holy Spirit which is a gift from God.” This meaning would make the Holy Spirit the gift that would be received.

If the meaning is the **subjective genitive**, then Peter would be saying, “You will receive the gift which is from the Holy Spirit.” Emphasis would be on something that the Holy Spirit would give.

The difficulty is that **the grammar alone of the verse does not define whether the meaning is objective or subjective genitive**. Only the context can define whether the subjective and objective genitive is being used. However, in reference to Acts 2:38 **it is difficult to make a distinction even by the context of the verse**. A broader context New Testament, therefore, is necessary in order to understand that to which reference is made. And in the broader context, reference could be made to both. That is, at the time of baptism one receives the Holy Spirit. In the first century context in reference to the laying on of the hands of the apostles, one had a right to the promise about which Peter spoke in Acts 2:33, that is the gifts of the Spirit.

In the context of Peter’s proclamation concerning the fulfillment of Joel 2:28, and this statement concerning the



promise in Acts 2:33 and 2:39, the subjective genitive would be the most logical meaning. In other words, they would receive the gift which would come from the Spirit. But in the context of the gospel which had been prophesied and preached in Acts 2, the meaning could also be the objective genitive. Those who were baptized would receive the Holy Spirit.

The discussion concerning this point has been carried on for many years. I am sure this discussion will carry on until the Lord comes. Nevertheless, as Bible students we must first recognize the difficulties we have in understanding some passages. I would, however, ask that you seriously consider both the objective and subjective genitive possibilities in interpreting this passage. There are some things that are certain concerning the person and work of the Spirit in this dispensation of time. He indwells the Christian, though we must understand what is meant by "indwell." We also understand that the Spirit worked openly, that is, miraculously, in the first century. And, He still works today, though not miraculously as He did in the confirmation of the message and messengers of God.

In Acts 2:38, Some have argued for the objective genitive (the Holy Spirit is the gift) on the basis of the Greek word that is used in this passage for gift. The word that is used is *dorea*. *Dorea* denotes that which is given. *Chrisma*, which is also translated "gift" in the New Testament, emphasizes the giver. *Dorea* is in Acts 2:38 and it is often argued that the clause is epexegetical, that is, the

Spirit is the actual gift.

The above reasoning is fine, except it still does not help us determine whether the miraculous or non-miraculous work of the Spirit is in view in the text. The same word, *dorea*, is used in the same phrase in Acts 10:45 with clear reference to the miraculous outpouring of the Spirit upon Cornelius and his household. If Acts 10:45 is used to be the commentary passage of Acts 2:38, then one would lean more toward the miraculous work of the Spirit being emphasized in Acts 2:38. The *dorea* would refer to the miraculous work of the Spirit which was the promise that was made in Joel 2:28, and to which Peter referred in Acts 2:33.

It is important to understand Acts 2:38,39 in the context of all scriptures that refer to the "gift" that came through the work of the Holy Spirit. If Acts 2:38,29 is taken out of the context of the ones to whom it was first stated, it is difficult to correctly understand. As with all the New Testament writings, Acts 2:38,39 must first be understood in the context of how the immediate audience understood the statements. I would urge Bible students to view this text through the total work of the Holy Spirit in the work of the early church as a fulfillment of Joel 2:28.

In view of Joel's prophecy of 2:28, "all flesh" in the church would benefit from the outpouring of the Spirit. **I would view all work of the Spirit since Pentecost as a fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel 2:28. In the same sense, therefore, all work of the Spirit since Pentecost is seen in the statements of**

**Acts 2:38,39.** Peter said, “*For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.*” This is a very all-inclusive promise. Regardless of your personal view of the work of the Holy Spirit, **such a view must have its seat in the “gift of the Holy Spirit” as stated in Acts 2:38,39.** Since all work of the Spirit that is mentioned in the New Testament finds its seat in the prophecy of Joel and promises of Jesus, then we must assume that when the apostles first mentioned the “promise” and “gift of the Holy Spirit” in the context of Act 2, we must assume that they had in mind the work of the Spirit throughout the dispensation of the Spirit’s work. It is for this reason that we must consider the promise of Acts 2:38,39 to refer to more than the indwelling of the Spirit.

**The miraculous and non-miraculous work of the Spirit must be included in gift of the Spirit of Acts 2:38.**

If one affirms that Acts 2:38 promises only the miraculous gifts, then he would exclude the person and presence of the Spirit in the life of the Christian. Other passages clearly manifest the person and presence of the Spirit in the lives of the early Christians. If one affirms that only the person of the Spirit is in the gift, then he would exclude the miraculous gifts that were also obviously present in the early Christians’ lives, which gifts have to originate from the promise of Joel 2. Because both the miraculous gifts and the Spirit Himself were present in the early Christians’ lives, we must conclude that both are in the prophecies and fulfillment

of the promise of both Old Testament prophecies and the prophecies of Jesus. Whatever one’s view of the Spirit is, therefore, he must base it in the context of Acts 2 when Peter referred to the gift of the Holy Spirit the promise that was to go to all. On this point Winters wrote,

This verse [Acts 2:38] contains two commands and two promises. The commands are to **repent** and be **baptized**. The promises are **the remission of sins** and the **gift of the Holy Spirit**. It seems incredible to me that anyone could understand this verse in any sense but that those (“every one of you”) who obey the commands will receive the promises. It would be as Scriptural to separate the commands and say that only one of them applies as it would be to separate the promises and say that only one of them can be received. Both promises are made to those who obey both commands.<sup>10:12</sup>

We would also add that the gift of the Spirit would include the blessings Christians enjoy in Christ in this dispensation. The inspired record of the gospel event (the New Testament) proceeded from the work of the Spirit. We would never have known of Jesus if it were not for the Spirit. If it were not for the revelation of the Spirit through the inspired word of God, we would never have known, as the apostles and early believers, that the crucifixion of Jesus was for the redemption of man. We would never have known of God’s will for our living if it were not for the Spirit directing us through the words of the Bible. The early

church would never have lasted with a true knowledge of Jesus if it were not for the work of the Holy Spirit. Even at the time Luke wrote the record of Luke there were false ideas being circulated concerning the life and ministry of Jesus (Lk 1:1-4). Luke wrote, therefore, that Theophilus, might “*know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed*” (Lk 1:4). It is our blessing of the Holy Spirit that Christianity has continued throughout the centuries by the guidance of His work through the inspiration of the word of God.

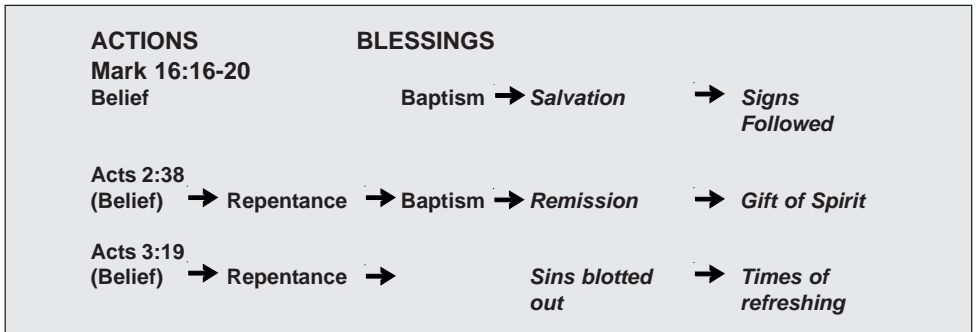
Peter’s commentary statement of Acts 2:38 is in Acts 3:19. He defines this dispensation of time as the “age of the Spirit.” “*Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.*” These “times of refreshing” are the times when God “*has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ*” (Ep 1:3). These are those times about which Peter and Paul wrote. These are the times of refreshing and spiritual blessings.

The following diagram is a comparison between Mark 16:16-20, Acts 2:38

and Acts 3:19. All three of these contexts harmonize in concepts and teaching that one receives the remission of sins and the blessing (gift) that proceeds from the Holy Spirit upon obedience to the gospel (immersion). We must first understand these passages in the context of the first century, as well as to our application today.

There is a conditional action to which adherence must be made before one receives any blessing from God. In other words, God’s blessing is free, however, one must respond to the will of God in order to receive the benefit of the blessing. This does not mean that we earn God’s gifts. The fact is that His gifts are so great that there is no way we can meritoriously earn them. The concepts, “gift of the Holy Spirit,” “times of refreshing” and “signs followed those who believe” indicate free blessings that one would receive as a result of obedience to the gospel. These phrases indicate the same thing in reference to the miraculous work in the first century. If we seek to be consistent in understanding these three passages, they must be understood together.

The preceding passages that we have



discussed indicate two blessings that come as a result of obedient response to the gospel on the part of the believer. First, one's sin problem is dealt with by the forgiveness of sins. Second, the times of refreshing come from the presence of the Lord (At 3:19) by the "*renewing of the Holy Spirit*" (Ti 3:5). Therefore, could all three passages refer to the miraculous work of the Spirit in the lives of the early Christians?

Though we must affirm that the personal indwelling of the Spirit would have to find its origin in Acts 2:38,39, I would suggest that the emphasis of the passage is on all that proceeds from the Holy Spirit since the outpouring of the Spirit on the apostles in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost. When one is baptized, he receives all that the Spirit has to offer for him that is applicable to him at the particular time in history when he is converted. The Spirit is the source of what the Father would accomplish in any dispensation of time through the work of the Spirit.

In Acts 2:38, "of the Holy Spirit" is a prepositional phrase. **It is not the direct object of the verb "receive."** "Gift" is the direct object. "Of the Holy Spirit" is not the objective ablative. The prepositional phrase, "of the Holy Spirit," is in the possessive case. The fact is that the verb "receive" **cannot** have two direct objects that are of two different cases. In other words, Peter is not saying that they would receive both the "gift" and the "Holy Spirit." They would receive the "gift" which originated from the Holy Spirit. The "gift" is the direct ob-

ject of the verb "receive."

Though one might affirm that in the gift would be the person of the Holy Spirit, consistent grammar here would emphasize the "gift" as that which would be received. **Therefore, in view of the tremendous miraculous work of the Spirit in the early church, it would seem that this part of the gift would be the primary emphasis of the gift in Acts 2:38.** In fact, in the context of the early church this is without doubt the primary understanding the early church placed on the "gift" of the Spirit. Nevertheless, the presence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Christians would also seem to be a part of the gift. After all, how could one have the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit without having the Spirit? The indwelling relationship the Spirit has with Christians must begin at the time when the obedient believer submits his will to the Lord in immersion. However, we must not assume that when one receives the Spirit, he will subsequently receive the miraculous work of the Spirit. The Spirit would certainly work in the lives of the obedient believer, but would do so in a non-miraculous manner.

I would emphasize the miraculous work of the gift of the Holy Spirit because this was the first manifestation of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the manner by which He came upon the apostles. The miraculous was the primary work of the Spirit in confirming the Spirit-inspired word to the lost and to the church. The miraculous gifts were a major work of the Spirit in establishing the early churches. It is an obvious con-

clusion, therefore, to emphasize the miraculous work of the Spirit in the passages in the New Testament that state His work.

We must not assume, however, that the Spirit has ceased to work simply because we do not openly perceive His work. All things are working together for the good of the Christian. Though I may not understand how this work is being carried out in my life, does not mean that God the Holy Spirit is not working. The Spirit will do His work in my life regardless of my understanding of His work. Our knowledge of the Spirit's work in our lives is not a regulator of His work.

Acts 2:38 should be considered in the whole text interpretation of the gift of the Spirit as used in other passages. Here again, the New Testament should be allowed to interpret itself. We could conclude that the "gift of God" (At 8:20), "gift of the Holy Spirit" (At 10:45), "the same gift" (At 11:17), "the gift of the grace" (Ep 3:7), "the gift of Christ" (Ep 4:7) and the "gift of the Holy Spirit" (At 2:38) all refer to the same thing. Reference is primarily to the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit at the beginning of this dispensation of the Spirit. As a result of this miraculous work, especially the work through inspiration, we sit with Bibles in our laps today through which the Spirit continues to work on our moral behav-

ior. Apart from that word, we perceive through faith that the Spirit works in a providential way in the lives of Christians. Such is an extended result of the gift of the Holy Spirit that Christians enjoy as a result of their obedience to the gospel by immersion.

We must also caution ourselves concerning the unfortunate tendency of man to "humanize" God the Holy Spirit by localizing Him in some place in our physical environment. We must remember that we cannot use human terms of location to place Deity in a particular spot or location. To say that the Holy Spirit is "here" or "there" is to force the meanings of our human vocabulary on the existence and presence of Deity. How can we possibly localize Deity? To say that the Spirit is "in" or "by" according to our definition of these words as physical human beings, seems to miss the metaphor of the close relationship the Spirit seeks to have with the believer. The metaphorical use of words as "indwell", "in" and "by" seek to convey a close relationship God the Holy Spirit seeks to have with those who have submitted to His directions. Much of the debate on the Holy Spirit throughout the years has resulted from our "humanization" or "literalization" of metaphors where the Spirit is trying to convey a much deeper meaning than earthly concepts.

## Chapter 5

# Miraculous Gifts In The Early Church

The New Testament contains a historical record of the church during the early days of its existence. In the early beginnings of the church, the New Testament word of God was not written. We must understand the New Testament, therefore, from the standpoint of churches that were directed by the miraculous inspiration of the Holy Spirit through the spoken, not written, word. The apostles did not pass out Bibles in the beginning of the church. They passed out the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit. In view of the historical fact that the early members of the church were converted out of idolatrous religious practices, God intended that their conduct as the church of Christ be directed through the miraculous gifts.

Recollect the proposition is this: That the whole worship and edification of the primitive church, in its infancy, was directed by inspired men; and that the Spirit suggested the songs, prayers, exhortations, and, indeed, all the discourses which were useful to the congregation; and that every thing incompatible with these suggestions was reprobated by the Apostles and those judges who had the gift of discerning spirits.<sup>15:Vol. 11, No. 7</sup>

When we read the New Testament, therefore, we must interpret what is said from the viewpoint of Christians who

were directed by the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. The instructions of the epistles of the inspired writers were directed to those who had recently come out of non-Christian religions. We must read these instructions from the viewpoint of those to whom they were first written. Biblical interpreters have made many unfortunate and erroneous conclusions in rightly dividing the word of truth by applying scriptures to the church today concerning the Spirit that were originally directed to churches and assemblies in the first century when the church was under the miraculous direction of the Holy Spirit. It is for this reason, that we must reconsider some of the principal concepts of the purpose for which the miraculous gifts were given to the early church. When these principles are discovered, we can easily come to the conclusion that the miraculous gifts were not meant to continue throughout history.

### A. The purpose of miraculous gifts:

In the absence of written directions (the New Testament), the early disciples in the first century were in the hands of those who spoke and worked by the direct operation of the Spirit. This direction came through the ministry of disciples who had received the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. Paul explained that such was necessary ...

... till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive ... (Ep 4:13,14).

The gifts were to be in existence until “that which is **perfect** has come ...” (1 Co 13:10). That which is perfect in 1 Corinthians 13 is the “*perfect law of liberty*” (Jas 1:25). We must not under-emphasize the vital and necessary role the complete recorded truth played in the continuation of the church after the first century and the passing away of the miraculous direction of the Spirit. Through inspiration, the faith “*was once for all delivered to the saints*” (Jd 3). God’s “*divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness ...*” (2 Pt 1:3). These things were recorded “*that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work*” (2 Tm 3:17).

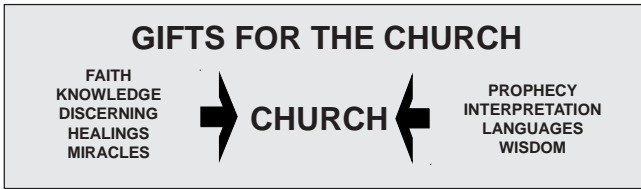
While the written record was being produced in the first century by inspired writers, the Spirit worked through the gifts in order to direct the early church. However, when the New Testament was completed, the gifts passed away. This is why Paul wrote with reference to mi-

raculous gifts, “*But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away*” (1 Co 13:8-10). The gifts were “in part.” The inspired word is complete (2 Tm 3:16,17). It is able to furnish the Christian unto all good works. It contains all things that are necessary for godly living. It has once and for all time been delivered to the saints. Therefore, the word has supplanted the miraculous gifts in that the word of God has assumed the purpose for which the gifts were given, that is, to equip the saints unto the work of the ministry of both evange-

lism and church edification (Ep 4:11-16).

**B. The nature of the miraculous gifts:**

It is difficult to determine the exact nature of some of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 lists nine general areas of the miraculous work of the Spirit through the gifts. However, I would not view this list to be a conclusive description of each gift that Paul mentions. The Spirit did not work only one way under each heading as might be assumed from the listing of the gifts. In other words, “tongues” (languages) meant more than just the speaking of one language. One individual could have the



gift to speak many different languages (1 Co 14:18). As we will discuss later, prophecy included more than just inspired preaching. Paul's intention for giving the list of 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 was to give an umbrella list of the gifts in order to bring to mind the gifts that were already familiar to the Corinthian church.

It is difficult to understand the exact nature of many of the gifts. We were not there when they were in action in the early church. Therefore, we have no experiential learning as to their nature, or how they were used to enhance the ministry of members to the membership of the congregation. Any understanding of the exact nature of any particular gift must be defined by what we read in the pages of the New Testament. We must not read into the definition of these gifts our own experiences today. The use of our natural gifts that everyone has must not be used to define the function of the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit. After all, it was the Spirit working in a miraculous manner through the gifts in order to edify the church until the coming of the inspired written word of God. If we use the definition of our natural gifts which each member has today to define the miraculous gifts, then we lessen the impact of the Spirit on the early church through the miraculous gifts. In fact, if we take the position that there is no difference between the use of natural gifts and the miraculous gifts about which Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians 12, then we must take the position that the Spirit is working today in the same way that He worked

through the miraculous gifts of the first century. This is the position of the Pentecostal charismatic movement that started in the twentieth century. However, as we study through the miraculous work of the Spirit, there are several problems with this position.

It is important to first form a general definition of the miraculous gifts that Paul mentions. A definition of each of the miraculous gifts will help us to understand that this manner by which the Spirit worked then is not the manner by which He works today. The following is a suggested definition of each of the gifts what Paul mentions in 1 Corinthians 12:

**1. *The gift of wisdom:*** Reference here is probably to the inspired wisdom about which Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians 2:6,7. "*... we speak wisdom among those who are mature ... we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory.*" Though this statement refers to the wisdom of God concerning the salvation of man, we must assume that the wisdom about which he refers in 1 Corinthians 12 is wisdom that was necessary to direct the early churches. This would be the wisdom which originates from God as opposed to that which originates from man (See Js 3:17).

Keep in mind that the early converts came out of idolatrous religious practices that had no connection with how a church should function. Read Paul's description in Ephesians 2:1-3 concerning the nature and behavior of the Ephesians before they became Christians and you will under-



stand why there was a necessity for the direct leading of the new converts through the gift of wisdom.

*And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.*

From reading this description of the social conduct out of which people were converted in the first century, it is easy to understand the purpose for which the Spirit worked through the gift of wisdom. Understanding the “pagan” environment of those who had been swept away by idolatrous practices, helps us to also understand the necessity for the gift of knowledge.

Wisdom certainly exists today in the church. In fact, James said, “*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him*” (Js 1:5). However, there is a difference between the acquisition of this wisdom and the manner by which it comes than the receiving of the miraculous gift of wisdom. The wisdom would be the same, but the means and way by which the wisdom came was different. The miraculous gift of wisdom of the first century came immediately and by the laying on

of the apostles’ hands. The wisdom for which James said we must pray does not come in the abundance and immediate nature by which the wisdom of the miraculous gift came. We pray for wisdom today, and then seek for the blessing of the wisdom over a period of time. When the Spirit provided the wisdom that was needed for the edification of the church in the first century, there was no question as to whether the wisdom was given. The wisdom was given immediately for the occasion for which it was needed.

Wisdom was needed to apply the direction of law. For example, when two women had a dispute over a babe during the reign of Solomon, Solomon acted wisely in reference to determining who the real mother of the babe was (1 Kg 3:16-28). In reference to the decision of Solomon, the writer of 1 Kings recorded that the people “*saw that the wisdom of God was in him to administer justice*” (1 Kg 3:28; 4:29-31). Everyone knew the law, however, wisdom was needed to apply the law. Another example would be the occasion when the church came to the apostles concerning the problem of the neglect of Grecian widows in the distribution of food (At 6:1-6). Everyone knew the law that widows and orphans must receive care (Js 1:27). However, men full of wisdom needed to be designated in order that the law be carried out in a proper manner on this occasion when a problem developed (At 6:3).

The inspired prophets and teachers of the first century church could deliver what God’s will was for the direction of the church. Wisdom was needed to ap-

ply the will of God in the particulars of what was needed in order to carry out the law. Wisdom is our application of what we know must be done. The gift of wisdom activated in the lives of the early Christians the knowledge that came through the gift of knowledge.

**2. *The gift of knowledge:*** The gift of knowledge was the inspired ability to organize and direct the function of the churches according to the will of God. Churches had to be organized according to the will of God. Colossians 1:9 would be a commentary passage. *“For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.”* In the absence of the written will of God, the Spirit miraculously provided that which was needed to direct the infant churches.

Now suppose for a moment that you were the product of an idolatrous environment. You were then converted to a membership of others who had also been recently converted out of non-Christian religions. Would you and your fellow brothers and sisters know how to conduct the affairs of your working together as a church to accomplish the will of God? In order to function as a church, you could not refer to even denominational groups in the community. There were none. You could not refer to your fathers who were members of the church before you. You had no “church history”, and thus you could not refer to your past. Herein was the definition and necessity for the gift of knowledge. This knowl-

edge was not revelation of truth that was binding on the church. It was simply knowledge of how to do things. It was knowledge of how to conduct the interaction of the membership in carrying out the will of God.

**3. *The gift of faith:*** Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ (Rm 10:17). One grows in faith through knowledge of God’s faithful work in the lives of men in the past (Hb 11). However, in the absence of this knowledge – the absence of the written record of God’s work in the lives of men – there was the need in the early church for strong faith for the churches of newly converted believers. The great faith that was necessary to bring the church through the relentless trials of early church establishment could not be established on the foundation of God’s faithful work throughout the centuries. This was true because there was no record of such work that was available to the church. There were no copies of the Old Testament that were circulated among the churches. Copies of the Old Testament were found only in the Jewish synagogues. There were no records of the faithful work of Paul and Peter. Through the gift of faith, therefore, men of faith within the fellowship of the churches were able to be the stability of the churches in times of great trial. New converts would be tempted to return to their former way of life in idolatrous belief. However, those who had the gift of faith would be the foundation of stability for the new converts.

Once the inspired documents of Mat-

thew, Mark, Luke and John were written, the gift of faith passed away. The document of John was written specifically to produce faith (Jn 20:30:31). Once churches had copies of this document in their hands, there was no more a need for the miraculous gift of faith. They could read the evidence of John concerning the life and ministry of Jesus. This document alone would produce faith. After inspired documents as John were written, therefore, the Holy Spirit intended that Christians should study the New Testament documents instead of seeking faith directly from the Holy Spirit.

**4. *The gifts of healings:*** Paul uses the plural words “gifts” and “healings” to refer to this work in the early church. His thought may be centered around the different types of sicknesses or infirmities that were healed. There were those who were sick because of viruses or bacteria that causes sickness. There were also those who were physically impaired with deformed limbs or birth deformities.

The gift to heal went with those who went to the unbelievers with the message of the gospel. Philip went to Samaria *“and the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed”* (At 8:6,7; see At 5:15,16; 19:11,12; 28:8,9). In Philip’s work the word “miracles” is from the Greek word *saimeia*. The word is used in the context to refer to the signaling by

Philip’s works that he had power over the world of Satan by the casting out of demons. He used the word “healing” in reference to the paralyzed and lame who were restored to normality. In Mark 3:14,15 it is stated, *“then He [Jesus] appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, and to have power [authority] to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons.”* Philip’s miraculous work in Samaria was the same as Jesus’ commissioning of the apostles in Mark 3:14,15. However, keep in mind that in both cases, the ministry was in reference to evangelism to the unbelievers, not work among the disciples. Jesus empowered the apostles in their work to the unbelievers. Philip’s work in Samaria was to the unbelievers. The healing that took place in both cases, therefore, **was for a witness to the unbelievers.**

In fact, it was the unbelievers who were healed, not the believers. It is for this reason that I would suggest that the gift of healing was not for the benefit of the believers, but only for unbelievers as an act to confirm the preaching of the word of God (Mk 16:20; Hb 2:3,4). Members of the early church were not miraculously healed as a result of the gifts of healings. This miraculous gift was directed toward those who were unbelievers.

In support of the above thought, consider some very significant situations wherein the gift of healing **was not used in reference to believers.** In 2 Corinthians 12:7-9 Paul spoke of a “thorn in the flesh” that buffeted him. In reference

to this thorn he said, “*Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me*” (2 Co 12:8). Paul could not heal himself of this thorn. God did not heal him. When he was in Jerusalem in Acts 15, he was with other apostles of Christ. However, they did not heal him.

In 1 Timothy 5:23 Paul wrote to Timothy, “*No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach’s sake and your frequent infirmities.*” Timothy evidently had some problem with his stomach. If he had this problem in the presence of Paul, why would Paul not have healed him? Could it have been that the miraculous gift that Paul possessed to heal was not meant for the believers?

While in prison, Epaphroditus came to Paul from Philippi. While in Paul’s presence, Paul wrote, “*For indeed he [Epaphroditus] was sick almost unto death; but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow*” (Ph 2:27). This statement of Paul does not say that Paul healed Epaphroditus. It speaks of what God did in a special way in order that Paul in prison not have “sorrow upon sorrow.” Our question would be concerning why Epaphroditus became so sick in the first place if he were in the company of one who could supposedly heal him of the “sniffles”? Epaphroditus almost died. Why could Paul not heal him? Was it because the gift of healing was not for the healing of members of the church?

Consider also the case of Trophimus

in 2 Timothy 4:20. Paul left Trophimus sick in Miletus. This case will puzzle those who believe that the gift of healing was meant for the benefit of the disciples. Why did Paul leave Trophimus sick in Miletus? Would Paul have been so unconcerned that he simply left Trophimus without healing him? Or, was it because the gift of healing that Paul possessed, which gift he used to heal the father of Publius on Malta (At 28:8), was not meant for the benefit of Christians?

Consider this point from the viewpoint of the fellowship of the church itself. Suppose the gift of miraculous healing was meant for the church. Everyone who became a member of the church in the first century, therefore, was miraculously healed of any disease. Members of the church who became ill would simply be healed by those who had the gift of healing. There would thus be no sicknesses among the members of the church in the community. What impact would this have on the community? The impact would be that people would not come to Christ for the healing of the spirit, but for the healing of the body. The church would become known for its lack of physical sicknesses, rather than a body of people who had come to the foot of the cross for spiritual healing.

**5. *The gift of miracles:*** The Greek word that is used here (*dunamis*) refers to the powers that were manifested by unleashing the supernatural environment of God. These special miraculous works of the church were meant to confirm the messengers and message of God (Mk 16:20; Hb 2:3,4). This gift, therefore,

would refer to the confirming work of God through the Christians to the unbelieving world. This gift would not have been designated for the benefit of the church. They already believed. The miraculous confirming power of God that was worked through the early disciples was directed toward those God wanted to move toward belief in both His messengers and His message. The believers did not need their belief continually confirmed by the revealing of the supernatural world of God. Once they believed, their ministry was to the unbeliever. If their faith had to be continually reaffirmed by the miraculous work of God, then their faith was weak. How could they have anything to offer to the unbelieving world if they themselves had little faith in what they believed? It is for this reason that the confirming miraculous work of the Holy Spirit was not meant for believers. We must assume that the miraculous gifts were designated to enhance the ministry of the saints, both to the unbeliever and for the believer. The miraculous gifts of healing and powers, therefore, were directed toward confirming the message of Christians who went out as evangelists.

**6. The gift of prophecy:** Of all the miraculous gifts, this one was the most important and diversified in reference to the edification of the church and the evangelization of the world. Paul encouraged the church to seek the gifts, *“but especially that you may prophesy”*, for *“he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men”* (1 Co 14:1,3). This was the gift of in-

spired speaking. In other words, what was said was directed by the Holy Spirit. Under the umbrella of inspired speaking, the gift of prophecy included four areas of ministry.

**a. Preaching:** Agabus was a New Testament prophet (At 21:10). He preached by inspiration of the word of God, but also on at least one occasion spoke concerning what would happen in the future of Paul’s life. Judas and Silas were also inspired prophets (At 15:32). Their work consisted primarily of evangelizing the unbelieving world through preaching of the gospel. We could correctly assume that all evangelists we read about in the New Testament were inspired preachers. However, the work of a prophet, at least in the context of the Corinthian church, would be with local churches. Their work as preachers would be to build up churches through the preaching of the word of truth to the church, whereas, the evangelist’s work was directed toward establishing churches. Today, we commonly refer to the prophets who work in edification of local church as preachers. They speak to edify the church today, not by inspiration as the New Testament prophets, but by proclaiming the inspired written word. Direct inspiration of the preaching is not needed today because the preacher can study the Spirit-inspired Bible in order to prepare His lesson.

**b. Teaching:** Preaching is directed toward the proclamation of the word of God. Teaching, on the other hand, is the logical communication of

truth for the specific purpose of the edification of the audience. There is teaching in preaching, but the word “preaching” is generally used to convey the public proclamation of a message to an audience. In the New Testament, the word “teaching” or “teacher” refers to both men and women. However, the word “preaching” or “preacher” is never used in reference to the work of women in their ministry of the word of God to others.

Philip, the evangelist, had four virgin daughters who were prophets (At 21:9). They were not public preachers, for Paul instructed that women not publicly speak in the assemblies of the church (1 Co 14:34). However, Paul told Titus to instruct older women, who were possibly prophets, that they teach younger women. He wrote, “... *the older women likewise, that they be ... teachers of good things ...*” (Ti 2:3). In the New Testament church, therefore, there were those who taught Bible classes by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. There were those who preached to the lost by inspiration. I would not confine the gift of prophecy to the assembly of the saints alone. The gift of prophecy was directed toward the edification of the church throughout the week.

**c. Praying:** With no New Testament to direct their request according to the will of God (1 Jn 5:14), new converts from idolatrous worship needed direction as to what must be requested of God and how to ask of God. The early disciples of Jesus were godly Jews. However, they asked Jesus to teach them to pray (Lk 11:1). When the Holy Spirit

came, it was His work to teach the new Christians how to pray. Inspired prayer is in the meaning of statements as Ephesians 6:18, “... *praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.*” Jude wrote, “... *building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Spirit*” (Jd 20). Reference here is not to spiritual prayers, but prayer directed by the Spirit. The Corinthians also prayed in tongues (1 Co 14:14). Such Spirit-guided prayer was praying “*with the Spirit*” (1 Co 14:15). Seated in the context of the inspired prayers of the early church is the statement of Paul in Romans 8:26,27. “*Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*”

**d. Singing:** The early church had no songbooks. However, they were to teach one another through singing (Cl 3:16). What was taught through the songs, therefore, was directed by the Holy Spirit. In the contexts of the miraculous gifts of 1 Corinthians 14, Paul mentions this. “*I will sing with the Spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding*” (1 Co 14:15). As prophets were inspired to preach and teach by the inspiration of the Spirit, so those who came to the assembly with an inspired song were to teach the church the song (1 Co 14:26).

Through the gift of prophecy the early church was “taught by God.” Paul wrote to the Thessalonians who had no written New Testament, “*But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another*” (1 Th 4:9). How were they taught? He later commanded them to “*not despise prophecies*” (1 Th 5:20). This one statement alone signifies the presence of the gift of prophecy in the Thessalonian church, by which they were taught to love one another. They were not to despise the teaching and preaching of the prophets, for they were delivering the word of truth to the church for the purpose of edification.

### **7. The gift of discerning of spirits:**

This was a gift to test those who came to the churches and claimed to be Christ-sent apostles or inspired prophets. John instructed his readers to exercise this gift with those gnostic teachers who claimed to be of God. He wrote, “... *test the spirits, whether they are of God...*” (1 Jn 4:1). In the absence of written Scriptures, the only means by which a church could determine if a supposed prophet was preaching by inspiration was to test them by the miraculous gift to discern spirits. The Ephesian church “*tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars*” (Rv 2:2). Here are those who claimed to be church-sent apostles with the gift of prophecy. The Ephesian church tried them and found them false. Many such deceivers had gone out among the churches in the first

century (2 Jn 7). To protect the innocent infant believers from such deceivers, the miraculous gift of “discerning spirits” was given to the churches in order that no contrary teaching be taught.

**8. Languages:** This is the speaking in a foreign language that the speaker had not previously studied. This miraculous ability was given by the Spirit for a sign to unbelievers (1 Co 14:22). The gift of languages aided in the rapid evangelism of the world because evangelists would not be slowed down by the months of language learning in order to preach to a new tribe or culture.

**9. The gift of interpretation of languages:** This was the gift of being able to understand one who spoke in a foreign language that one had not previously studied. From the context of 1 Corinthians 14 one who spoke in a language evidently did not have the gift of interpretation. Paul stated, “*therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret*” (1 Co 14:13). The one who had the gift of languages had had hands laid on him by an apostle in order to receive this gift. Paul stated that he pray in order that the Spirit distribute to him also the gift to interpret what he was speaking in the language.

The gift of languages also benefitted the local church. It benefitted the local church by providing visiting brethren who did not speak the local language an opportunity to understand what was being preached. One who had the gift of interpretation could translate for a preacher who did not have the gift of tongues. However, in the context of the

urgency for world evangelism, the gift of languages was for the benefit of the unbeliever. The problem that prevailed in the Corinthian church centered around those who had the gift of languages using their gift in a prideful manner in the assembly of the saints. Their misuse of the gift led to Paul's exhortation that if no one understood the language that was spoken, then the one speaking the language should remain silent (1 Co 14:28).

### C. The environment of the miraculous gifts:

A common mistake that biblical interpreters make today is failing to see the assemblies of the first century church as they were guided by the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. The early church worshiped God "*in the Spirit*" (Ph 3:3). Prayer, singing, teaching and preaching were "*by the Spirit.*" In the assemblies, Paul said he would "*pray with the spirit and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding*" (1 Co 14:15). Though the word "spirit" in this verse in the translation of the *New King James* is not capitalized, it must be understood that this is the translator's opinion. It is my opinion that it should be capitalized because it is a reference to the Holy Spirit. Since the verse is stated in the context of the use of the miraculous gifts, it would be consistent to understand that Paul was speaking of inspired prayer and singing.

It was a work of the apostles to impart the miraculous gifts to all baptized believers with whom they came into con-

tact. Therefore, they traveled among the churches to impart these gifts. This was the reason for Peter and John's going to Samaria. They had heard that Samaritans had obeyed the gospel, and thus the apostles sent them to Samaria in order to impart the miraculous gifts to the new Christians. Luke recorded, "*Now when the apostles ... heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit*" (At 8:14,15). The reason the Christ-sent apostles Peter and John went to Samaria was to impart the miraculous gifts to the infant church. They did not go to evangelize. That had already been accomplished through the preaching of Philip. They did not go to conduct a gospel meeting, or any other type of meeting. They went to impart the gifts.

Luke records that Peter and John prayed that they might receive the Holy Spirit (At 8:15). The fact that they had to pray that they receive the Spirit indicates that it was the choice of the Spirit as to whom He would work miraculously. Though the apostles laid hands on an individual to manifest their discretion that such an individual should receive the gifts, it was ultimately the Spirit's final choice as to give the gifts. Therefore, the apostles prayed that the Spirit would choose to miraculously work through the individual on whom they laid hands.

Throughout the New Testament world, the Spirit was given by the laying on of the Christ-sent apostles' hands (At



8:18; Rm 1:11). The assemblies of the churches were directed by the gifts. Many times, therefore, when one reads of the work of the Spirit in the New Testament epistles, the inspired writer is often discussing something in the context of the miraculous gifts of the first century. It is not good hermeneutics to twist “miraculous” passages of the Spirit out of their historical setting in order to justify something today that God never promised in the first place. Misguided emotionalists have too often sought biblical justification for their mystic wanderings and hysterical performances that have no relevance to worship or biblical context. Camp was right when he wrote,

It is a mistake to read passages that were written to churches that had miraculous gifts and the references to their having received the Spirit, and equate that with our situation today when there are no miraculous gifts, nor do we need them. Confusion results when we fail to make this distinction.<sup>5:159</sup>

We must study the New Testament in the historical context of the gifts of the Spirit that flourished throughout the churches in the first century. Duncan stated,

In order to understand properly the Bible verses that deal with the Holy Spirit it is necessary that the reader keep in mind the fact the New Testament was written largely **to churches and individuals who possessed supernatural gifts of the Spirit. When a letter written to a**

**church or an individual possessing supernatural gifts referred to that church or individual’s possessing the Holy Spirit, such reference would most naturally be understood to refer to those supernatural gifts** (emphasis mine, R.E.D.).<sup>11:n.p.</sup>

#### **D. The manifestation of the miraculous gifts:**

Those who possessed the miraculous gifts worked in an environment of false teaching. While the written word was being revealed in the church, the Spirit was working by inspiration through inspired preachers and teachers. However, false teachers also claimed inspiration. Paul referred to these as “*deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ*” (2 Co 11:13). For this reason, the miraculous work of the Spirit in confirming the truth was **manifested** to beholders. It was **demonstrated** to those to whom the truth was preached. These two concepts permeated the visible nature of the miraculous gifts.

**1. *Manifestation of the Spirit:*** When introducing the miraculous gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:7, Paul said, “*But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all.*” The manifestation of the Spirit refers to something that is perceived through the five senses. On the day of Pentecost the Spirit manifested Himself through a rushing mighty wind (At 2:1-4). The apostles thus spoke in languages. Peter referred to this manifestation in the following manner, “... *He*

*poured out this which you now see and hear*" (At 2:33). When Philip worked miracles in Samaria, the Samaritans "saw and heard" the miracles which he did (At 8:6). Because a true miracle could be seen or heard, it could be a confirming witness to those who saw it as a supernatural manifestation of God.

In the above sense, therefore, the truth was confirmed by the manifestation of miraculous works. When the Scriptures speak of the manifestation of the truth, reference is to the manifestation of the truth by the confirming miraculous work of the Spirit. Paul wrote, "*But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth ...*" (2 Co 4:2).

**2. Demonstration of the Spirit:** Paul did not come to the Corinthians with "excellence of speech" or of wisdom (1 Co 2:1). The false teachers among them came with flattering words and deceitful wisdom. Paul came with empirical evidence of what he preached. He said, "*And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wis-*

*dom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power*" (1 Co 2:4). He wrote to the Thessalonians, "*For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit ...*" (1 Th 1:5). In other words, the word came "in the Spirit" (it was inspired). But it was also demonstrated to be of God by the confirming power of the Spirit. "*For this reason ...*," Paul wrote, "*you received the word of God which you heard from us ... not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God ...*" (1 Th 2:13).

When the New Testament defines spiritual gifts, the words "**manifestation**" and "**demonstration**" explain that the gifts were something that appealed to the senses of men. The manifestation and demonstration of the gifts was not something that was secret or hidden from the senses of individuals. This distinguished the miraculous work of the Spirit from the crafty deceit of those who proclaimed something that was false. It is important to understand, therefore, that the miraculous work of the Spirit in the early church was empirical evidence for those who spoke the truth in love.

## Chapter 6

### Key Passages On Miraculous Gifts

The possession of a miraculous gift **did not change the moral behavior of the one who possessed it**. Neither did the miraculous gifts, when distributed among the members of a local church, subjectively change the nature of the entire congregation. Change in moral be-

havior or congregational character was accomplished in an indirect manner. In other words, the prophet or church was changed only insofar as individuals submitted to the inspired word that was spoken. The church was changed spiritually insofar as all members as a congre-

gation submitted to the spoken words of the prophets. Winters correctly stated,

Except by serendipity, the gifts did not change one's free will; they did not change his attitude; they did not remove desires or temptations to sin; they did not make one stronger in the faith; they did not make one less forgetful; they did not make one successful and happy. One could have a miraculous gift and neglect it – not use it for its intended purpose.<sup>10:21</sup>

The miraculous gifts **were subject to the one who possessed them.** Paul said, *“The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets”* (1 Co 14:32). One could neglect his use of a miraculous gift as did Timothy (1 Tm 4:14). The Spirit did not subject the prophet or one speaking in tongues in a manner by which He took over the behavior of the individual.

The Thessalonian church is a good example of the above thoughts. Paul had laid hands on the Thessalonians in order that they receive the gifts of the Spirit as God had given him the Spirit (1 Th 4:8). He urged this church, *“Do not quench the Spirit”* (1 Th 5:19). In this context, Paul is referring to those in the church who would be working against the preaching or teaching of the inspired prophets. The next verse after 1 Thessalonians 5:19 states, *“Do not despise prophecies”* (1 Th 5:20). This is the commentary on what it means to not quench the Spirit. If we keep our understanding of these two statements in the historical context in which they were first written, then **Paul would be discussing the**

**Thessalonians' attitude toward the use of miraculous gifts in the Thessalonian church.** He is urging them not to discourage the work of those who were exercising the gifts in the edification of the church. In other words, do not quench or despise the work of the Spirit to guide the church through the preaching and teaching of the word of God. If they discouraged the preachers and teachers in their efforts to edify and build up the church through preaching and teaching, they were not working against the individuals who were preaching and teaching. They were working against the Spirit.

Only because some in the Corinthian church had a problem with their carnal, puffed up attitudes did the church need direct instruction by revelation from the Spirit concerning the use of the gifts in their assemblies (1 Co 12-14). If other churches would have had the same division because of carnal thinking, Paul could have written the 1 Corinthians 12-14 instructions to them also. Unfortunately, there are some biblical interpreters who believe that only the Corinthian church had the profuse use of the gifts and the other churches that are mentioned in the New Testament did not. This erroneous understanding of the wide spread giving of the miraculous gifts and their use among the New Testament churches has hindered many people from grasping the extensive work of the Spirit through the gifts in the first century churches to which Christ-sent apostles went. However, when we understand that the miraculous gifts were necessary in

order to firmly establish the early church through the edification and training of the newly converted members, then we are driven to understand letters that were written to these churches in the context of what God was doing through the gifts.

The following are passages that I would challenge you to reexamine. Re-examine these passages in the historical context of the direct work of the Spirit through the use of the miraculous gifts. We must first interpret these statements in the historical context of the miraculous gifts **before** we make application of them for us today.

### A. Acts 5:32:

Luke recorded, “*And we [apostles] are His witnesses to these things, and also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him.*” This statement of Peter fits perfectly into the whole text of the miraculous work of the Spirit that was promised by Jesus in Mark 16:17-20. Consider the following points:

**1. Miraculous context:** In Luke’s defense of Christianity before Theophilus, to whom the document of Acts was written, he records that “*through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people*” (At 5:12). “*They brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them*” (At 5:15). Jesus had promised that this miraculous work would follow “*those who believe*” (Mk

16:17-20). What Luke recorded was the very thing that Jesus had promised in reference to the group of those who believed (the church). Through the Spirit, Peter was accomplishing what was promised. Therefore, when reading Luke’s defense of the movement of Christianity in Acts 5:32, we would naturally assume that Luke is referring to the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit among “those who believe.”

**2. The apostles were obedient:** Luke’s initial statements in the historical narrative of Acts mentioned the miraculous work of the apostles. However, Jesus had promised that “those who believe” would work miraculous signs (Mk 16:17,18). This was true since the apostles were a part of those who believed. They were, however, only a part of the entire group of the obedient. Peter used the phrase “those who obey” which is the same as Jesus’ teaching in Mark 16 that “those who believe” would do these great works (Mk 16:17,18). Both passages are teaching the same thing. Those who believe (obey) would be given the Holy Spirit. In the context of Acts 5, Luke affirmed that they (the apostles) were the ones who were obeying. Their obedience was in contrast to the Jewish religious leaders who refused to obey (See At 5:24). Therefore, **sign of the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit had been given to the apostles as a sign that they were the obedient.** The apostles’ ability to do the miraculous was God’s testimony that they were of God. This is exactly what Mark said happened in Mark 16:20. “*And they went*

*out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs.”*

Peter used the phrase “those who obey” to refer to the group of the church. In contrast to the Jews who did not obey, God had given the Spirit to the church of those who did believe and obey the gospel. The miraculous work of the Spirit was poured out on the church of believers as proof that God was with them. He was no longer with the Jews as a nation. He was now working through the church. In the context of Acts 5, Peter was using the miraculous work of the Spirit as a sign that God was with the church, not national Israel. God was signaling to Israel that the church was now the nation of God’s people.

**3. *The Spirit testified:*** John 15:26,27 is a commentary passage of Acts 5:32. Jesus promised the apostles that “*the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. And you also will witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.*” In Acts 5:32 the apostles are doing what Jesus promised in John 15:26,27. The promise was a **miraculous testimony by the Spirit as the apostles testified of Jesus**. This was not something that was hidden from the view of the unbelievers. It was not the non-miraculous indwelling of the Spirit that could be questioned by the unbeliever. The witness was miraculous and open before all. In this open and miraculous manner, Jesus stated in John 15:26,27 that the Spirit would testify of Him. In his historical record of what was actually happening, Luke af-

firmed that the Spirit was doing this through the miraculous work of the apostles.

Another commentary passage of what was happening in the early beginnings of the church is Hebrew 2:4 where it is stated, “***God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will.***” God, through the miraculous work of the Spirit, bore witness to the apostles in Acts 5. The witness was made before the unbelievers. The miraculous works of the Spirit signaled to the unbelievers that God was with the church. The context of Acts 5:32, therefore, must be understood to refer to the miraculous work of the Spirit.

## **B. Romans 5:5 – Titus 3:5,6:**

Paul wrote that “*the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us*” (Rm 5:5). This passage discusses the love of God that was poured out. The aorist tense is used in this passage in the Greek grammar in order to communicate a **onetime event in past time**. The Holy Spirit was given (aorist participle). Titus 3:5,6 talks about the renewing of the Holy Spirit “*whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ ...*” The aorist tense is again used to refer to a onetime happening when the Holy Spirit was poured out. If these passages (Rm 5:5; Ti 3:5,6) find their interpretation in Acts 2:33, then reference is to the “onetime happening” of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in

Acts 2. Peter interpreted, "... *having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear*" (At 2:33). Paul's application to the benefits of the outpouring in Acts 2:1-4 is that the Roman Christians and Titus had received the miraculous benefits from the endowed apostles by the laying on of the apostles' hands.

One might use the outpouring of the Spirit about which Paul speaks in both Romans 5:5 and Titus 3:5,6 to refer to an "outpouring" of the Spirit at the time one obeys the gospel. If we assume this outpouring, then we would have difficulty in separating the miraculous outpouring about which Joel 2 speaks, which outpouring happened on Pentecost and in the case of Cornelius, and a non-miraculous "outpouring" at the time one is baptized. If we would consistently understand the word "outpouring" to refer to the miraculous coming of the Spirit, then we must interpret Romans 5:5 and Titus 3:5,6 to refer to a miraculous event. Though Paul speaks to the Romans and Titus with reference to the "outpouring" of the Spirit, their benefit would be secondary in reference to the primary outpouring on the apostles on the day of Pentecost. This interpretation is acceptable since Joel 2 speaks of the Spirit being poured out on **all flesh**. The outpouring of the Spirit on all flesh did not happen on Pentecost. The result of the outpouring on Pentecost, however, did affect the group of "those who believe" in a secondary sense. In other words, everyone after Pentecost on whom the apostles had laid their hands received the Spirit through the medium

of the apostles. In this way, therefore, they partook of the outpouring of the Spirit that happened in a miraculous manner in Acts 2.

### C. Romans 8:

The entire chapter of Romans 8 is a **contrast** between the **law of the Spirit** (the law of grace and faith) and the **law of sin and death** (legalistic law-keeping in order to earn one's salvation) (vs 2). Paul's argument centers around obedience in response to the grace of God as opposed to an effort to be justified by perfect law-keeping. The difference between salvation by grace and meritorious deeds and law-keeping is that in salvation by grace one depends on God and in salvation by meritorious obedience one depends on himself. "Obedience" to the law of sin and death is an effort to meritoriously earn salvation on the basis of one's ability to keep the Old Testament law perfectly. Therefore, it was a law of "sin and death" simply because no one could keep law perfectly in order to demand salvation on the basis of obedience. Paul's answer to those who would seek justification by good works and perfect law-keeping was, "*All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*" (Rm 3:23), and the wages of sin is death (Rm 6:23). It is necessary to understand Paul's argument in Romans 8 in order to better understand his references to the Holy Spirit. Consider the following key points that Paul makes:

#### 1. *Law is weak because men are*

**weak.** In verse 3 Paul wrote, “*For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh ....*” The Old Testament law (or any system of law) was weak to produce salvation simply because men (flesh) were unable to keep it perfectly. One sin makes a sinner. Since “*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*” (3:23), no one can be saved on the basis of trying to keep law perfectly in order to be justified before God. The Old Testament law was a perfect law for its purpose. However, the problem was that no man could keep all the ordinances of the law perfectly in order to claim he had no sin. Law, therefore, cannot be considered a means to salvation in and of itself. Paul’s argument is that ordinances become a “law of sin and death” because one is condemned on the basis of breaking just one law. There is no salvation if we are left to save ourselves only by keeping law.

In the context of Romans 8, the word “law” is often without the Greek article (“the”). Therefore, Paul’s reference was not only to the Old Testament law but any religious law that men would strive to keep in an effort to be justified before God. In the context of Romans 8 he is addressing both the Jews (those under the Old Testament law) and the Gentiles (those who were a law unto themselves). Under neither law no one could keep law perfectly. Therefore, neither the Jew nor the Gentile could be saved through law along.

**2. The Christian must walk according to the Spirit.** In verse 4 Paul continued, “... *that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*” Emphasis in this statement is on the word “walk” (obedience). Christians are not seeking salvation through obedient performance of the “flesh”, the body of this life. In the context of the contrast, **the word “flesh” is defined to refer to one’s effort to religiously discipline his body in a meritorious effort to gain justification by perfect law-keeping and meritorious works.** It is true that one must discipline his body in order to bring it under subjection to Christ’s law (1 Co 9:27). However, one cannot live perfectly according to law in order to justify himself before God. Paul clearly stated, “*Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight ...*” (Rm 3:20; see Gl 2:16; 1 Jn 1:8).

The word “Spirit” is used in Romans 8 to refer to the Christian’s walk by the “**obedience of faith**” (Rm 1:5). When he walks by the Spirit, he walks by the direction of the Spirit. Walking by the Spirit and the obedience of faith are the same. The legalist’s walk of obedience is a trust in himself to keep law perfectly in an effort to demand salvation. The one who walks by faith seeks justification by grace as a result of one’s faith (See Rm 1:17; 5:1,2). His walk that is directed by the Spirit is in contrast to the one who seeks to walk by his own direction.

**3. Christians set their minds on the things of the Spirit.** In verse 5 Paul con-

tinued, “for those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.” Notice the emphasis in the statement on the word “live.” Emphasis is on obedient behavior. Paul makes a contrast to minding the things of the flesh and the things of the Spirit. His contrast is to whether one is obeying God after the manner of law-keeping or obeying God according to the law of the Spirit, which obedient walk is a walk of grace and faith.

#### **4. Christians are spiritually minded.**

In verses 6-8 Paul explained, “For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.” The one obeying the law of the Spirit (the spiritually minded) trusts in God’s grace (vs 6). On the other hand, the one who is trusting in his own meritorious obedience (the carnally minded) is working against God’s grace, for he feels he can acquire salvation on the merit of his obedience apart from grace. Therefore, those who seek justification on the basis of their own ability to keep law perfectly cannot please God because they carnally believe that they can perform the works of law in order to save themselves. The problem is, therefore, that they cannot be saved by perfect obedience because **they cannot keep the law perfectly** (vs 8; see Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16).

**5. Christians are in the Spirit.** In verses 9 & 10 Paul explained, “But you

are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.” In these two verses, Paul continues the contrast between the “law keeper” and the “faith and grace keeper.” The one who seeks justification by grace and faith maintains a close relationship with the Spirit’s direction. The Spirit, therefore, is in him by his submission to the Spirit-guiding word. Christ is in him because he keeps the word of Christ in response to the grace that was revealed through the sacrificial offering of Jesus. In this sense he is in the Spirit. Christians have crucified the old man. They have crucified the man that lived after himself (Rm 6:6; Gl 5:24). Therefore, they are of Christ because they allow their lives to be directed by the Spirit.

We could change the negative of verse 9 to the positive in order to better understand the passage. “Now if anyone does have the Spirit of Christ, he is of Christ.” Therefore, the thought of verse 10, “Christ is in you” is a parallel thought to the “Spirit of Christ” being in you. The phrases convey the same thought which is explained by Paul in Galatians 2:20, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me ....” Christ and the Spirit are living in us as we allow the inspired word of Christ to permeate our lives.

**6. The Spirit dwells in the Christian.** In verse 11 Paul wrote, “But if the



*Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.*” In the context, Paul’s terminology is clear. **When one continues his walk “in the Spirit,” the Spirit is in him in the sense that his life is directed by the Spirit.** In other words, when one obeys the “law of the Spirit” (the law of grace and faith), he is “in the Spirit” and the Spirit is in him. The Spirit indwells the obedient in the sense that the spiritually minded have submitted their lives to the direction of the law of grace and faith. The one who lives after the indwelling Spirit will be raised to life.

Paul’s emphasis in verse 11 defines the concept of the indwelling of the Spirit. He is not changing thoughts in the context to a location of the Spirit. His emphasis is on the responsive attitude of the one who seeks to be led by the grace of God as opposed to a meritorious walk of perfect law-keeping. In the context of his argument, the evidence of whether one was in Christ was whether or not he was “led by the Spirit.” His argument concerning the indwelling of the Spirit is on the inward obedient submission of the one who is driven by a response to grace rather than trusting in the meritorious law-keeping of the flesh. This obedience was the spontaneous response of faith in the grace of God. It was not the response of arrogant self-seeking legal obedience that moved one to take pride in good works or works of law.

Those living after the “law of sin and death” could claim obedience to law. But

they could not claim obedience to the law of the Spirit that demanded faith in the grace. Paul is not only discussing what they **believed** about the matter, he was also discussing what they were **doing**. If one believed that law-keeping saved, then he would walk accordingly. In contrast, Paul argued that if one were listening to the inspired Roman prophets and believed and trusted in the grace of God, he was walking by faith. This was the empirical evidence of sonship. If the non-miraculous indwelling of the Spirit were under discussion, both sides would claim such, and then walk which ever way they desired. **The emphasis on indwelling here is that one is obedient to the law of the Spirit. The Spirit indwells, therefore, insofar as one walks according to faith and grace.**

Paul added that God would “*give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.*” This passage does not teach that the indwelling is a condition for the bodily resurrection in the last day. The passage does not say this. It cannot and still harmonize with John 5:28,29 where Jesus stated that both the righteous and **unrighteous** will be bodily raised in the final resurrection. The Spirit does not indwell the unrighteous. However, they will be raised in the last day. Therefore, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is not a condition for the bodily resurrection about which Paul speaks in Romans 8:11.

What Paul is saying is that the Father will raise Christians “through His Spirit.” The Spirit will be the medium through which all will be raised in the

last day. It will be the work of the Spirit in the last day to raise all the dead, not to raise only those whom He had previously indwelt when they were alive as Christians in this world. Bales added,

Unless the Bible affirms that a certain work of the Spirit is done by virtue of His indwelling, we cannot affirm it. For example, the same Spirit which dwells in us is the same Spirit by which we shall be raised (Rm. 8:11). This does not mean that we shall be raised by the Spirit in His indwelling capacity. All the Christians in Rome who read this statement of Paul passed away long ago. Their mortal bodies returned to the dust. The Spirit does not dwell in those particles of dust, so that as the indwelling Spirit He shall raise them in the last day. The quickening will not take place through the Spirit dwelling in us, but by the same Spirit which now dwells in us.<sup>47:538</sup>

**7. Christians are led by the Spirit of God.** In verses 12-14 Paul concluded, *“Therefore, brethren, we are debtors – not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.”* As Christians in debt to Christ (see 1:14,15), we are obligated to **live** (obey) the directions of the Spirit-inspired word of God. Here again is the empirical proof of sonship. John said the same. *“By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His com-*

*mandments”* (1 Jn 5:2). When we see someone “led by the Spirit of God”, we can know that that person is a son of God. This is not a subjective guess. It is objectively discerned. The indwelling of the Spirit here refers to the one who is submitting his life to the word of God that has come to us through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Paul’s argument is that if we live according to the principle of trusting in the performance of the flesh, then we will die. We will die because *“There is none righteous, no, not one ... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Rm 3:10,23). The fact is that the flesh cannot keep law perfectly in order to save itself. On the other hand, if we live according to the Spirit—trusting in the grace of God—we will live.

**8. Christians received the Spirit of adoption.** In verse 15 Paul added, *“For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’”* Christians do not need to fear because of their inability to keep law perfectly to save themselves. They trust in God’s grace. *“We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God”* (Rm 5:1,2).

Paul carried the preceding argument of the Romans 8 context to the outward manifestation of the miraculous work of the Spirit in the early church. His evidence lies in the statement, *“... by whom [the Spirit] we cry out, ‘Abba Father’.”* He uses the same outward manifestation

as proof of sonship in Galatians 4:6, “*And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, ‘Abba Father’.*” “Abba” is the Hebrew children’s reference to their earthly fathers. The intimacy in relationship that is expressed in the term “Abba” is probably here used to express the close relationship the Christian maintains with the Father. In the context of the early church, this intimacy was certainly manifested through their possession of the miraculous work of the Spirit in the church.

The Spirit motivated the **outward** cry. Therefore, in some way the cry “Abba, Father” has to refer to the miraculous influence of the Spirit. It certainly cannot be some symbolic cry as is so interpreted by some today. The cry was real and actual “by the Spirit.” It was not silent. It was an outward evidence of their sonship. Paul uses the outward cry as an empirical evidence. It is not a cry that was meant simply as an address to God, the Father. It was meant as a proof of sonship in the same sense as Paul’s meaning in 1 Corinthians 12:3: “... *no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.*” This statement is seated in the historical context of the miraculous gifts in the Corinthian church. Romans 8:15 is seated in the context of the miraculous gifts of the Roman church. The cry of “Abba, Father” and “calling Jesus Lord,” therefore, are Paul’s terms to refer to the miraculous work of the Spirit in the early churches.

Many in the religious world today verbally call Jesus Lord. However, they have not submitted to obedience of the gospel. They are not Christians because they have not submitted to Jesus’ lordship by establishing a covenant relationship with God. Nevertheless, they call Jesus Lord. Can one make himself a Christian according to 1 Corinthians 12:3 and Romans 8:15 by simply confessing Jesus’s lordship and proclaiming “Abba, Father”? Certainly not. Paul’s reference to the cry, “Abba, Father,” has more meaning than just an outward cry of the words. For this reason I say that Paul makes reference to the miraculous manifestation of the Spirit through the gifts in the churches of Rome and Corinth in the context of Romans 8 and 1 Corinthians 12.

**9. *The Spirit bears witness to the Christian.*** In verse 16 Paul stated, “*The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.*” Here again is the Spirit bearing witness as promised by Jesus (Jn 15:26,27). Acts 5:32 parallels this thought as the Spirit miraculously “*bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.*” If the non-miraculous indwelling of the Spirit was under discussion here, we would wonder how such would be a “witness” of sonship. There are some who believe that the witness of the Spirit in this passage is manifested solely in one’s obedience to the word. As the Christian’s life is permeated by the word of God, it is witnessed that one is a Christian. This is certainly a true concept. However, Paul possibly has more in mind than the

Christian's obedience to the word of God. He speaks of a "witness" of the Spirit. The word "witness" assumes that there is someone to whom witness is made. It also assumes that the one to whom witness is made can determine or perceive the witnessing. The witness, therefore, is not guesswork. It is not hidden.

In the Greek text of Romans 8:16, the use of the Greek word *auto* seems to indicate the concept of an outward witness. This word, especially when used in the nominative case, places emphasis on the antecedent. The *New King James* translators translated the verse "*the Spirit Himself [auto] bears witness ....*" *Auto* is commonly translated with the demonstrative pronoun "that" in cases as Luke 13:1 and Matthew 3:4. In Matthew 3:4 the *King James Version* rendered a phrase in reference to John to read, "... *and the same [auto] John ...*", meaning that very John who was mentioned in Matthew 3:1-3. Luke 13:1 is a similar use of *auto* where Luke states, "... *at that [auto] season ....*" The *American Standard Version* reads, "... *that very ....*" Thus, in **that very** season some told Jesus about the Galileans.

Now place the above translation of the use of the word *auto* in the text of Romans 8:16. One can delete the capital "S" on the word "spirit" since this would be a translator's interpretation. (Reference does not have to refer to the Holy Spirit.) Beginning from verse 14, the text would be literally translated as follows:

*... for all who are led by the Spirit of God, these are children of God; for you have*

*not been given the spirit of slavery again to fear, but you have been given a spirit of sonship, in which we cry "Abba, Father"; that same [auto] spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God and if children, heirs also: heirs of God and heirs with God.<sup>55:10</sup>*

The spirit of sonship bears witness with our spirit that we are sons. *Auto* in the nominative case is used in the above verse with the noun "spirit", to which it gives emphasis. Therefore, the emphasis is on **that very** spirit, the spirit of sonship.

The context must be the final authority in making the above translation. This is one of those places in the Scriptures where the theology of the translator greatly affects the translation. In view of the fact that most translations are produced by theologians who are slanted toward the doctrine of the direct operation of the Spirit on the soul of man, it is not without surprise that the above passage is usually translated with reference to the Holy Spirit.

On the other hand, if the passage is emphasizing the witness of the Spirit, we must allow the historical context to be our second source to determine the meaning of the text. Therefore, in the context of the Roman church, we would naturally interpret the passage to refer to a miraculous activity of the Spirit. This is also a true concept and one that is taught in the New Testament.

If emphasis is on the work of the Holy Spirit, consider the passage in view of the work of the Spirit in the early church.

Reference to the Holy Spirit would emphasize His miraculous confirmation of the Roman Christians through the gifts that they had received through the apostles while in Jerusalem on or after the Pentecost of A.D. 30 (See Mk 16:20; Hb 2:3,4; Rm 12:6ff). The Spirit, as Jesus promised, bore witness to the early Christians, that they were God's sons (Jn 15:26,27; At 5:32). But the Holy Spirit today bears witness with our spirit of obedience. Our spirit of obedience to the will of Jesus and becoming slaves of righteousness (Rm 6) bears witness that we have accepted the lordship of Jesus. Therefore, both the Holy Spirit through the gifts, and our spirit through obedience to the gospel (the spirit of sonship), bear witness that we are sons of God.

**10. *The early Christians had the firstfruits of the Spirit.*** In Romans 8:23 Paul wrote, "*And not only they, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.*" The "firstfruits" of the Spirit refers to the first outpourings of the Spirit. Paul and the first Christians first received the benefit of the outpouring of the Spirit. The apostles were first, then through the laying on of their hands, the benefit of the outpouring went forth to all the church.

The word "firstfruits" assumed that there was more to come. Therefore, after the initial work of the Spirit in a miraculous manner in the early church, the Spirit would continue to work in some way. We must not develop a reactionary theology here by stating that after the

Holy Spirit did His miraculous work in the first century that He parked Himself in inactivity. God continues to work through the Spirit. Though He does not work in a miraculous manner, He continues to work behind the scenes in a providential manner on behalf of the saints. Paul affirmed this in Ephesians 3:20. "*Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us.*" All that the Spirit does in this dispensation of time is the result of His coming in the first century.

**11. *The Spirit directed the prayers of the Christians.*** Concerning the prayers of the early church, Paul wrote,

*"Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God"* (Rm 8:26,27).

This is one of the most controversial passages in the Bible. It is also one of the most misunderstood. In order to understand this passage we should first remind ourselves that this passage must first be understood in its historical context. We must understand it in the historical context of Paul's teaching in Romans 8 wherein he is writing to a church that possessed the miraculous gift of prophecy. Therefore, it is imperative that we not read into the passage any precon-

ceived ideas of modern-day invention. And we must understand that it is a unique passage in some ways because it is a commentary passage of other similar statements in the New Testament concerning prayer.

This scripture has often been used to teach that the Holy Spirit somehow stands between the believer and the Father in some type of translator's position. The Father is supposedly unable to hear, understand, interpret, etc. the believer's innermost feelings and requests, and thus, it is the work of the Spirit to "interpret," "express," "convey" the prayers of the saints to the Father.

It is true that only one scripture will prove a point. However, to build a major belief as the above on the foundation of only one passage is certainly precarious. This passage alone is used to substantiate the belief in the preceding intercessory work of the Spirit. However, the lack of parallel passages to substantiate this belief would initiate our questions concerning the validity of the concept that the Spirit works as an interpreter in prayer between man and God. It is not good hermeneutics to construct a major doctrine simply on the basis of one passage, especially if that passage is dealing with something that is the work of the Holy Spirit outside our realm of perception. What the Spirit is supposed to be doing in Romans 8:26,27, is not of this world. Therefore, one should be cautious about his interpretation concerning those things that are beyond this world. Nevertheless, I do not feel that the above interpretation contradicts any Bible

teaching. Because the above teaching is a supposed work of the Spirit beyond the physical environment of the Christian, it does not contradict passages that deal with the behavior of the Christian in his physical environment. On the other hand, I would like to propose an alternative interpretation that seems to better fit the historical context in which Paul made the statements of Romans 8:26,27.

In order to view what Paul says in a different light than the preceding interpretation of this passage, consider the following thoughts:

**a. God is omniscient.** God knows all that is to be known. "*And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account*" (Hb 4:13). The Lord said, "*I the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind*" (See Jr 17:9,10; also 11:20). God sees the "*mind and heart*" of all (Jr 20:12). "*The Lord looks at the heart*" (1 Sm 16:7). David affirmed, "*O Lord, You have searched me and know me. You understand my thought afar off*" (Ps 139:1-4). Solomon wrote, "*The eyes of the Lord are in every place*" (Pv 15:3). These passages clearly affirm that God has always known us better than we know ourselves. God knows and understands our inner most feelings and thoughts. He knows our hearts. There is nothing inside us that God does not understand. God knows what we need and what we should ask of Him. Therefore, we must not construct any theology that would attack the omniscience of God. Any interpretation that

infringes on the omniscience of God must immediately be suspect.

In view of the above, our question concerning Romans 8:26,27 is **why the Holy Spirit would have to reveal to the Father our innermost yearnings when He already knows them?** The Holy Spirit said that David was a man after God's own heart. In order for this statement to be made in the Old Testament, God must have been able to fully know the inner heart of every individual **before** the age of the Holy Spirit which began in Acts 2. God knew the hearts of all those who prayed to Him before the coming of the Holy Spirit. He heard the prayers of Abraham, David, Isaiah, Daniel and all the other Old Testament patriarchs.

**b. God heard the prayers of the Old Testament faithful.** I find it hard to believe that the Holy Spirit works in some advantageous manner in the Christian's prayers which He did not do with the prayers of Abraham, David, Moses and other great men and women of faith in the Old Testament. This is what some would be saying in teaching that the Christian has some special advantage with the Holy Spirit in prayer today over the Old Testament faithful. But God was not ignorant of the innermost feelings of man until the supposedly intercessory work of the Spirit in prayer that came thousands of years after the creation of man.

God heard the prayers of the Old Testament faithful. He heard their innermost cries. If we would interpret Romans 8:26,27 to be a special divine system of

prayer interpretation before God for those of this dispensation, we would wonder why God waited thousands of years before He sent the Spirit to do such. Was He deaf to the innermost cries of humanity until Acts 2?

What is under discussion in Romans 8:26,27 has nothing to do with salvation. It has nothing to do with one's spiritual growth, for a supposed intercession of the Spirit would be carried out beyond the realm of the Christian's environment. The only benefit one might receive from such intercession in the spirit realm is the knowledge that somehow the Spirit is interpreting one's prayers before an omniscient Father who already knows our innermost thoughts. If one does not believe such, will the Spirit do it anyway? Unbelieving Cornelius "*prayed to God always*" (At 10:2). The angel said that his prayers "*have come up for a memorial before God*" (At 10:4). Could God not understand the innermost yearnings of Cornelius while he was still in unbelief? What Luke recorded in the preceding statement seems to indicate that He could.

God has always heard the prayers of the righteous. He has always known the innermost yearnings of the faithful. If it is a work of the Spirit to "interpret" or "transmit" in the spirit realm our yearnings to the Father, then the Spirit has always done such. It would be difficult to believe that God waited millennia before He made this supposed intercession possible in this last dispensation of earth history.

The belief in the intercessory prayer

interpretation work of the Spirit actually leans toward the belief of those who promote deistic teachings. Deistic theology moves God far off to somewhere in the universe where He cannot hear or understand the pleas of His sons. This “far off god” must be connected with man through the Spirit. However, it is my understanding that God is near to us, if we can actually use the human word “near” to explain the presence of Deity. He is not a “far away” God, but is nigh unto us at all times, listening to our innermost pleas. He is an omnipresent God that is not located in some place. He is not a deaf God who needs a personal interpreter. Paul said, “... *for in Him we live and move and have our being ...*” (At 17:28). It is difficult to assume that our being in the midst of God as Paul here affirms makes it impossible for Him to know our innermost feelings.

It may be that the doctrine of the supposed intercessory prayer ministry of the Spirit originated out of the struggles of men who have found it difficult to verbalize what they want to say in prayer. However, the fact that all Christians struggle to voice their feelings in prayer to God should not move us to distort scriptures out of their context. Every Christian struggles with putting into words that which is on his heart. But we must not assume that God does not know what we want to say. The God in whom we live, move and have our being already knows what we are going to say before it is said.

It is true that the Spirit is a part of the eternal Godhead. What He knows of us

is what God the Father and God the Son know. Assuming that one part of the one God knows something that another part does not know separates into different intellects the one Godhead. As God is not split into different personalities, so He is not separated into different intellects. No one manifestation of God knows more or less than any other manifestation of God. The Holy Spirit does not know more than the Father. Neither does the Son know more than the Spirit. God is one in personality, intellect and being. These are concepts about the oneness of God that those who believe in the supposed intercessory interpretation work of the Spirit should seriously consider and answer. Any teaching that brings into question the omniscience and oneness of God, should be questioned.

**c. God inspired prayer in the early church.** In the historical context of the miraculous gift of prophecy, Romans 8:26,27 finds a parallel with 1 Corinthians 14:15 where Paul said, “*I will pray with the Spirit.*” Consider this. The apostles had been with Jesus long enough to realize that they needed help with their prayers. They probably realized that their prayers were after the manner of the Pharisees’ prayers (See Mt 6:5-15). Therefore, they asked of Jesus, “*Lord, teach us to pray*” (Lk 11:1). This seems to be a peculiar request when considering the fact that these men were some of the most spiritual Jews of Israel. Nevertheless, they realized that there was something wrong with their prayers. They asked Jesus to teach them how to pray in a manner that would be accept-



able to God.

Think of those who were converted in the seat of Roman idolatry. Would they have the same need to learn how to pray? The first disciples were good Jews, and yet, they knew they needed to know how to pray according to the will of God. How could these Roman Christians, and others in the idolatrous first century, know how to pray? Paul said in Romans 8:26, ***“For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought.”*** Because of their idolatrous background, they did not know how to pray according to biblical principles. They had no New Testament to direct their speech. Therefore, through inspiration the Spirit directed their intercession for them with groanings (prayers) which they did not know how to utter. The Father, who searches the hearts of men and is one with the Spirit, accepts the Spirit-inspired prayer because the prayer is *“according to the will of God”* (1 Jn 5:14). The Romans did not know how to pray correctly. The Spirit, who knows and reveals the will of the Father, directed the wording and requests of the saints in order that the prayer be in accordance with the will of God. **This was done, not for the benefit of God, but for man.** Those who prayed in the assemblies of the saints were directed in prayer in order to pray according to the will of God.

As in the gift of prophecy, and even inspiration of the Scriptures, I do not believe that the system was always by dictation. Paul preached and wrote by inspiration. However, the Spirit allowed him to use his own wording and writing

style. The same would be true concerning inspired prayer. The Spirit only made sure that they were not praying in the name of the Greek god Zeus and asking for the mediatorship of the mythical god Hermes. Today we have the word of the New Testament to direct us in correct prayer. We pray according to the will of God by allowing the word of God to direct our prayers.

I would add that inspired prayer was of special benefit to the early Christians. This was one of the blessings of the Spirit through the gift of prophecy. However, this was a blessing that was for the benefit of the early establishment of the church in a miraculous manner. It is for this reason that **the gift was of benefit to the church on earth and was not for the benefit of the Father in heaven.** The doctrine that the Spirit must interpret the inner yearnings of the believer to the Father is an attack against the omniscience of the Father. In other words, the supposed intercessory interpretation would be for the benefit of God, not man.

In concluding the preceding point, we must be cautious about developing any theology that limits God’s omniscience or His power. If we contend that the Father does not know or hear our innermost yearnings, we limit His omniscience. We make Him a distant God. If we believe that the Spirit must have internal and direct contact with our minds before He can do anything, then we limit the work of God in our lives by working in our environment.

In the discussions over the indwell-

ing of the Holy Spirit, which we will discuss more in detail later, some have argued that the Spirit must have direct contact with the heart of man before He can do His work. But if Jesus could heal a sick servant from a distance, certainly the Spirit could help a sick soul from a “distance.” In reacting against one theology, the biblical interpreter always has a tendency to go to an extreme. In his extremism he develops teachings that have unbiblical conclusions. We do not worship a God of location, but an omnipresent and omniscient God.

#### D. 1 Corinthians 12 & Ephesians 4:

The concepts of 1 Corinthians 12:12-31 and Ephesians 4:1-16 are parallel in instruction for the church to edify itself through the ministries of the members. We must first understand these two contexts in the historical context of the miraculous gifts which prevailed in the churches. However, at the same time we understand that the ministries which are mentioned in the contexts continue unto this day. The direct work of the Spirit in the lives of the ministries in the first century context enhanced the ministries. However, the ministries continue today, being enhanced by the inspired word of God. The purpose that stimulated the writing of each context is different. Nevertheless, Paul’s instructions are similar in relation to the miraculous work of the Spirit enhancing the work of the ministries.

The problem in the congregational background of both the Corinthian

church and the Ephesian church was division. **The Corinthians were divided because of their pride.** Their pride manifested their carnality (1 Co 3:1-4). **The Ephesian church was divided because the Jewish Christians were prejudiced against the Gentile Christians** (See 2:14-22). In a similar sense, therefore, pride was involved. The Jews were manifesting pride against the Gentiles. Paul argued for unity in the Corinthian church on the premise that there “*are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit*” (1 Co 12:4). “*For as the body is one and has many members but all the members of that one body, being many are one body ...*” (1 Co 12:12).

To the Ephesians Paul argued for unity between Jew and Gentile based on the premise that in all differences of work we must endeavor “*to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*” (Ep 4:3). Every work must function in the whole body, “*joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share*” (Ep 4:16).

It is significant to point out in 1 Corinthians 12:28 the difference between the ministries of work (apostles, prophets, and teachers) and what those who were carrying out these ministries did as a result of their ministry’s being enhanced by the direction of the Holy Spirit. The difference is clearly indicated in the Greek text. After listing the three ministries of apostles, prophets and teachers in 1 Corinthians 12:28, the Greek word *epeita* (then) emphasizes the gifts that follow. The word “then” separates the min-

istries and the miraculous enhancement of the Holy Spirit that the apostles, prophets and teachers were enjoying in their edification of the church. This is an important point because we must understand that there was a difference between the ministry and the aid of the Holy Spirit by which the ministry was carried out.

Consider Ephesians 4:30 in view of the time of the Spirit's work among the Ephesians and other churches. *"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for [Gr., "until"] the day of redemption."* Paul urges them not to suppress the miraculous work of the Spirit, which work was an open seal that manifested their sonship. The word "for" in this passage should be translated "until." They were sealed by the Spirit

**until** the day of redemption. In other words, the Spirit would remain a seal of their sonship before men until the day of redemption.

The "day of redemption" either refers to the Ephesians' physical death or to their redemption by the coming destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70). Keep in mind that Paul is personally addressing the Ephesian church. The statement "day of redemption", therefore, would first refer to the situation of the Ephesians. Consider, therefore, that the "sealing" would first refer to their being sealed with the miraculous work of the Spirit. It would indirectly refer to our sealing today. Christians today are manifestly sealed by the Spirit before men in the sense that they walk according to the

## THE WORK & PURPOSE OF GIFTS & MINISTRIES

### 1 CORINTHIANS 12

**1. Oneness of the body:** Though the one body has many members who function in different ministries, it is one and functions as one body (vss 12-27).

**2. Each member functions in different ministries:** There are apostles, prophets and teachers who minister in order to edify the body through their ministries (vss 28-31).

**3. Miraculous gifts were given to enhance the ministries of the members:** In this context Paul emphasizes the gifts of the Spirit in the ministries to the church. Apostles, prophets and teachers worked with the enhancement of the miraculous direction from the Spirit. They preached and taught the word of God by inspiration of the Spirit (vss 4-11).

### EPHESIANS 4:1-16

**1. Oneness of the body:** We must keep the unity of the one body (vss 2-6). Each member must fulfill his or her function in the one body (vs 16).

**2. Each member has been given responsibility to function in different ministries of the word:** Some function as apostles, others as prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers (vs 11).

**3. The ministries of work were set in the church in order to equip the saints:** In this context Paul emphasizes the **purpose** of the different ministries of work that the miraculous gifts enhanced. These gifts were given when Jesus ascended to reign on the throne in heaven (vss 12-16).

Spirit-inspired word. To the Ephesians, however, the manifest mark of the seal was the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. Remember, the seal leaves a **visible** mark. The visible mark with the Ephesians was the miraculous gifts among the members of the church.

If the sealing of the Spirit referred to the miraculous work of the Spirit and the day of redemption refers to the destruction of Jerusalem, then the gifts continued as a visible seal of their sonship until A.D. 70.

The preceding interpretation would certainly be consistent with God's work in a miraculous manner to confirm the disciples as the true nation of God. From the period beginning with the establishment of the church in A.D. 30 until the destruction of national Israel in A.D. 70, God sought through the miraculous signs to signal that the church of Christ was the group of His people. He did not work with national Israel in order to confirm the nation through signs to still be His chosen nation. Therefore, between the time of the establishment of the church and the destruction of Jerusalem, the miraculous gifts existed. However, after the church was manifested to be the church of God's people, there was no more a necessity for the miraculous gifts of the Spirit.

Paul was encouraging the Ephesians in Ephesians 4:30 not to discourage those who possessed the gifts. They should not discourage them because the exercising of their miraculous gifts was a continual manifestation that the Ephesian church was the group of God's people in Ephe-

sus. He encouraged them by stating that the Spirit was the seal, the visible stamp of God's approval of the church until the destruction of Jerusalem. If this is what Paul is saying, then the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit continued as an open manifestation of the Ephesians' sonship until the destruction of Jerusalem. By the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, all truth had been revealed and confirmed. The churches had established the truth in their hearts and behavior. The letters of the New Testament were in the process of being copied and distributed throughout the churches. Christianity was completely separated from Judaism. It was no longer considered a sect of Judaism after A.D. 70. The perfect law of liberty (the New Testament) was recorded in order to carry the church to the end of time. After the destruction of Jerusalem, therefore, there was no more a need to give a visible seal of approval of the church. It had by A.D. 70 been confirmed to be the people of God (See Hb 2:3,4).

**Ephesians 4:11-16** is a very important passage where Paul defines the purpose of key ministries in the work of the church. Though the Spirit worked miraculously through gifts He gave to those who worked in these ministries in the first century, applications of this context can be made for both then and now. The Holy Spirit directly worked through members who carried out these ministries in the lives of the early Christians. He did so by the gifts and the inspired spoken word of the prophets. However, the Spirit continues to work through these ministries

today in the church. That which enhances these ministries is the inspired written word of God. Though there are no Christ-sent apostles today, we do have **church-sent** apostles as in the first century church (See in Gr. *apostolos* in 2 Co 8:23). The word *apostolos* is a generic word that simply means one who is sent. It is used in reference to Barnabas (At 14:14), Epaphroditus (Ph 2:25) and James, the Lord's brother (Gl 1:19), who were church-sent apostles. These men were sent out by churches for world evangelism. A church-sent apostle was simply a missionary who was sent forth by the church to preach the gospel.

Prophets were local speakers of the inspired word of God. In the absence of the written word, they functioned as inspired speakers for the local churches. Biblically speaking, therefore, it is not necessary to limit the ministries that are mentioned in Ephesians 4:11 to the first century. Church-sent apostles would be equivalent to missionaries. Prophets, who were often church-sent apostles in the New Testament, were preachers and teachers. In the context of 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4, the Spirit enhanced the work of the church-sent apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. However, their function of ministry continues today. The direct inspiration of those who carried out these ministries in the first century has ceased. The miraculous gifts have ceased. Nevertheless, members continue to be sent out by churches. Preachers continue to proclaim the word of God. Evangelists establish churches. Pastors shepherd flocks.

Teachers instruct the church. We must not confuse the miraculous work of the Spirit in the first century to enhance the ministry of the ministers with the ministries themselves. Though the miraculous ceased, the ministries continue. The inspired word of God is the motivation and message that is used today to equip the saints unto the work of the ministry.

The following progression of thought is linked together with key conjunctions in the context of Ephesians 4:11-16. In the context of the first century, this was Paul's definition for the ministries of work.

**PURPOSE OF MIRACULOUS GIFTS  
and  
THE INSPIRED WORD  
through  
CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES  
(Ephesians 4:11-16)**

**VERSE 11**

*"He gave some to be"*

Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors,  
Teachers

**VERSE 12**

**"FOR"**

Equipping of the saints  
Work of ministry  
Edification of the body

**VERSE 13**

**"TILL"**

We come to the unity of the faith  
We come to the knowledge of the Son  
We come to the perfect man  
We come to the measure of the stature of Christ

**VERSE 14**

**"THAT"**

We no longer be children  
We no longer be tossed to and fro  
We no longer be carried about by false doctrine

**VERSE 15****“BUT”**

We speak the truth in love  
We grow up in all things unto Him

**VERSE 16****“FROM WHOM”**

The whole body stimulates growth of the body

8. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit (vs 30).
9. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, malice and evil speaking be put away (vs 31).
10. Be kind to one another (vs 32).
11. Forgive one another (vs 32).

**E. Ephesians 4:25-32:**

In verse 30 of the context of Ephesians 4, Paul gives the imperative command, “*Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God.*” This statement is in the context of a series of commands concerning Christian living. It is placed in a series of commands that were given to the Ephesians. They were personally subject to obey each of the commands that Paul gave. The command of Ephesians 4:30 not to grieve the Spirit is not given as the foundation principle to carry out the other commands. It is simply listed as one of the commands. For this reason, this command in this context should not be used to teach that the Spirit is here **directly** producing the other commands. It is simply of a series of commands that Paul gave to the Ephesian church. Consider the command not to grieve the Spirit in the context of all the instructions that Paul gave.

**COMMANDS OF EPHESIANS 4:25-32**

1. Speak truth to one another (vs 25).
2. Do not sin when angry (vs 26).
3. Do not let the sun go down on your wrath (vs 26).
4. Do not give place to the devil (vs 27).
5. Do not steal (vs 28).
6. Do not speak with corrupt speech (vs 29).
7. Speak edification (vs 29).

It seems perfectly clear that if Paul means that the command to not grieve the Spirit is to be taken in its historical context of miraculous gifts, then the command makes sense. As he told Timothy to stir up his miraculous gift (1 Tm 4:14), he is telling the Ephesians to do the same. They must not discourage those who have been empowered with miraculous gifts. He is giving them instructions concerning the miraculous gifts as he also gave the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 12 - 14. Paul’s instruction concerning all the above are related directly to their spiritual needs in their historical context.

Paul does the same thing with the Thessalonian church (1 Th 5:14-22). Notice the list of instructions and the place in the list of the miraculous works of the Spirit.

**1 THESSALONIANS 5:14-22**

1. Warn the unruly (vs 14).
2. Comfort the weak (vs 14).
3. Do not render evil for evil (vs 15).
4. Pursue what is good (vs 15).
5. Rejoice always (vs 16).
6. Pray without ceasing (vs 17).
7. In everything give thanks (vs 18).
8. **Do not quench the Spirit** (vs 19).
9. **Do not despise prophecies** (vs 20).
10. Test all things, hold the true (vs 21).
11. Abstain from evil (vs 22).

The miraculous gifts were a very important part of the work of the Ephesian and Thessalonian churches’ ministries

among themselves. In Corinth, those who spoke in languages exercised pride and a divisive attitude toward those who prophesied. To some extent the same problem must have existed in the Thessalonian church. Thus, this is why Paul wrote these instructions in the context of other problems they had in their spiritual growth. The miraculous work of the Spirit was for the edification and establishment of the church. Those who rejected the word of God, intimidated those who had the gift of inspired preaching and teaching. Paul, therefore, is commanding the churches to allow the preachers and teachers to communicate God's word. The instructions to not quench the Spirit and not despise prophecies were instructions to the church as a whole not to discourage those who had the gift of prophecy.

Paul's instructions to the Ephesians and Thessalonians apply today. Though the miraculous gift has passed away, the ministries of communicating the word of God continue. Anyone who despises the preaching and teaching of the Spirit-inspired word of God is doing the same as those who opposed preachers and teachers in the Thessalonian church. They are quenching the Spirit's impact upon the moral behavior of the church. Stiff-necked and hardheaded brethren quench the Spirit by refusing to submit to the preached and taught word of the Spirit. 1 Thessalonians 5:20 is a direct command that preachers and teachers not be discouraged in their efforts to preach and teach God's word. Those who would discourage them because they do not

want to listen to their message from the word, are sinning against God.

### F. 2 Timothy 1:6,14:

In the context of 2 Timothy 1, verse 6 explains verse 14. In verse 6 Paul wrote, "*Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.*" And in verse 14 Paul stated, "*That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.*" The gift of God (the good thing) was to be kept by the Holy Spirit which dwelt in Timothy. Timothy received this gift by the laying on of Paul's hands. Reference, therefore, is to a miraculous gift. The indwelling of verse 14, therefore, would be a miraculous indwelling, though there was a difference between the gift itself and the Holy Spirit. The Spirit was the engine who drove the gift. The indwelling, therefore, referred to the Holy Spirit's close relationship with Timothy in the miraculous work of the spiritual gift which he possessed.

### G. 1 Peter 4:10:

Peter instructed, "*As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*" Paul had told Timothy to "*stir up the gift*" that he had received (2 Tm 1:6). He commanded the Ephesians to "*be filled with the Spirit*" (Ep 5:18). And he commanded the Thessalonians to "*not quench the Spirit*" and not to "*despise prophecies*" (1 Th 5:19,20). They are

all references to the miraculous gifts of the Spirit that were commonly distributed among the churches in the first century. Peter's instructions of 1 Peter 4:10 was an exhortation that the gifts be used for the edification of the church.

Since a gift was subject to the one who possessed it, the possessor could become discouraged. He or she could be intimidated as Timothy into not using the gift for the edification of the church. Peter and Paul, therefore, wrote to the churches in order to encourage those who had the gifts to use them for the edification of the church. Passages that refer to the work of the Spirit in the church must first be understood in the context of the use of the miraculous gifts in the churches. 1 Peter 4:10 is a statement to encourage Christians to use their miraculous gifts in their ministry to the church. Ephesians 4:11-16 is a commentary on this passage. Both passages are instructions to churches in the historical context when miraculous gifts were used for the edification of the church.

This point cannot be overemphasized because there is so much confusion in this area of biblical interpretation. The ministries that are used to equip and edify the church are the same today as they were in the first century. Individual natural abilities that originate from God have always existed. We are born with talents that we can use either for the glory of God or for our own selfishness. Every individual has God-given talents. However, in the first century, the Holy Spirit directly enhanced the individual talents of individuals, as well as, revealed knowl-

edge, wisdom and truth to those who had the special blessing of prophecy. The written word of God has since replaced the miraculously revealed truth from God. However, the talents that one has to minister to the saints and sinner alike, are still with every individual today.

We must rightly divide the word of God in the sense of making a distinction between the miraculous enhancement by the Holy Spirit in the first century (miraculous gift), and the exercising of our natural God-given abilities today which we use to minister the word of God. Prophecies in the Thessalonian context referred to the inspired speaking of the prophet. Today, however, the preacher is not miraculously inspired to preach, **he is preaching an inspired book**. One may have the natural gift to speak, but the content of his message comes from the written word of God. Some in the Thessalonian church were evidently discouraging the preachers (prophets). They were despising their preaching (prophecies). Paul's instructions command them not to do such. Those today who despise the preaching of the Spirit-inspired word are quenching the Spirit. They are despising preaching. They are sinning against the Spirit.

### H. 1 John 3:24; 4:13:

In 1 John 3:24, John wrote, "*Now he who keeps His commandment abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.*" John added to this thought by revealing, "*By this we know*



that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us **of His Spirit**" (1 Jn 4:13). These two passages illustrate the evidential nature of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit in the early church. In the historical context of 1 John there were those going about in the church who claimed to have the Spirit and the truth (2 Jn 9,10). A gnostic heresy was growing in the church at the time of John's writing. These two verses must be understood in the light of John's argument against these gnostic false teachers who were infiltrating the church and were claiming special enlightenment concerning that which was beyond the physical world.

The gnostics were claiming to have "special knowledge" which gave them a special advantage in spirituality and salvation. They were claiming to be the true spiritual people of the church because of their supposedly self-awareness of that which was beyond the physical. By their arrogant pious character they prided themselves as the spiritual elite of the church. In view of this problem that prevailed in the church to whom John wrote, it would have been a weak argument on his part to ask the faithful to simply exalt the "fruit of the Spirit" as evidence that they were right and the gnostics were wrong. The gnostic Christians would have mocked this subjective argument because it was they who claimed to possess the true spiritual character. For John to instruct them to use the fruit of the Spirit in their lives as the evidence of their possession of the Spirit, would have instigated a "spiritual" competition be-

tween the faithful and the gnostic. Therefore, It was not John's meaning in these verses to use the non-miraculous indwelling of the Spirit as proof of those who were the true Christians.

Read carefully what John said. "*And by this we know [this is empirical evidence] that He abides in us, by the [Gr., ek tou, literally, "out of the"] Spirit whom He has given us*" (1 Jn 3:24). And again, "*By this we know [empirical evidence] that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of [ek tou] His Spirit*" (1 Jn 4:13).

John's whole argument is based on the concept, "*He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world*" (1 Jn 4:4). In this context John is arguing for the outward evidence of the Spirit through the gifts as the evidence to separate the faithful from the gnostic spiritualists. He calls on the "witness" of the Spirit through the gifts to signal as an open seal those who are of God. He affirms, "***The witness of God is greater***" (1 Jn 5:9). In other words, the manifestation of the Spirit in the demonstration of the gifts is greater than the supposed spirituality of those who claimed to have a higher enlightenment of the spirit world. John reaffirmed, "*He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself ...*" (1 Jn 5:10). This is the same thought that Jesus promised in Mark 16:17-20. Jesus had promised that "*these signs will follow those who believe*" (Mk 16:17). And when those who believed went forth to preach, the Lord was "*working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs*" (Mk 16:20; see Hb

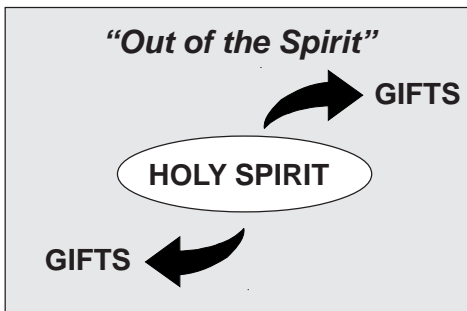
2,3,4). The context of the confirming signs about which Jesus spoke referred specifically to the disciples being confirmed before the unbelievers. John's argument is toward the believers. However, there were those who were in the fellowship of the church who had given up the truth. They were deceivers who presented themselves as spiritual leaders in the church. I believe that John is using the miraculous gifts of his audience of 1 John in the same way that Jesus said the signs would signal those who believe before the unbelievers. There were those in John's audience who were not "of them." They were false prophets in their midst who assumed a pseudo spirituality. These teachers were confusing the disciples. And thus, John resorted to the miraculous gifts of the Spirit as the proof to separate the pseudo spiritual gnostics from those who were truly abiding in God.

In 1 John 4:13 the pronoun "we" would certainly include the apostles. The "we" of verse 13 "have seen" and "testify" in verse 14 that the Father sent the Son. They, the apostles, had **heard, seen, and gazed upon** the Word of life (1 Jn 1:1,2). This "we", therefore, "**was given**

**of His Spirit."** We must conclude that reference here is to the miraculous manifestation of the Spirit. The apostles had been baptized in the Spirit (At 1:4; 2:1-4). They had been endued with power from on high (Lk 24:49). The same Greek phrase that is used in 1 John 4:13, "of His Spirit" (*ek tou pneumatos*) is also used in 1 John 3:24 in reference to John's audience. They too had received of the Spirit. In contrast, the gnostic Christians did not receive of the Spirit. Jude states that **they did not have the Spirit** (Jd 19). In other words, they did not have the miraculous gifts of the Spirit in order to confirm their erroneous teaching.

The actual Greek phraseology of 1 John 3:24 and 4:13 will not allow the Spirit Himself to be the evidence to which John refers. The evidence that John proposes must be seen and heard. The evidence, therefore, is the outward work of the Spirit in the lives of John's audience.

John uses the phrase, "... *He abides in us, by the Spirit [ek tou pneumatos] whom He has given us*" (1 Jn 3:24). And, "... *He has given us of His Spirit [ek tou pneumatos]*" (1 Jn 4:13). In 3:24 John is literally saying, "*Out of the Spirit, which to us He gave.*" Arndt and Gingrich state that the Greek preposition *ek* in the context of this and similar passages means "to denote origin, cause, motive, reason." An example that better expresses the thought would be 1 John 3:9, "*Whoever has been born of God [ek tou Theou] does not sin ...*" (See also in Greek the readings in 1 Jn 5:1,4,18). Christians are sons of God because they have been born out of submission to His



will. Another example is John 3:6, “*That which is born of the flesh [ek tais sarkos] is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit [ek tou pneumatos] is spirit.*” The definition is brought out here. **Reference is to origin from a source.** Arndt and Gingrich more specifically refer to the construction in which *ek* is used to refer to “the source from which something flows.” The source or origin from which the miraculous gifts flowed was the Spirit. John, therefore, refers to that which was given to them from the Spirit. The gifts originated from the Spirit. John argues that the true Christian in the historical context of 1 John is proved to be such because he or she has been given out of the Spirit, the miraculous gifts. His evidence for them being of the truth rested in that which the Spirit did, not the Spirit Himself. However, the manifested evidence was proof that they possessed the Spirit.

This understanding corresponds perfectly with the “Anointing” which John said instructed the faithful “all things” (1 Jn 2:20,27). He wrote, “*But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things*” (1 Jn 2:20). “*But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him*” (1 Jn 2:27). The Anointing came from the Holy One and was the source of their knowledge (See Cl 1:9). This would obviously be a reference to the gift of prophecy that came as a result of the

inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the anointing. This is an exact parallel to the use of the gift of prophecy in the Thessalonian church. Paul wrote, “... *for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another*” (1 Th 4:9). In this teaching through inspired prophecy, the Thessalonians were not to despise prophecies (1 Th 5:20). They were taught through the inspired preaching of the prophets to love one another.

The Greek construction of 1 John 3:23 and 1 John 4:14 do not refer specifically to the Spirit Himself, but to that which the Spirit does once He has been given and received. That which the Spirit offered was miraculous wisdom and knowledge (1 Co 12:8,10). John’s readers were being taught by the Spirit who had been given to them. In fact, John affirmed that they could know those who were of God by their attitude toward the message they were preaching. He wrote, “*He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error*” (1 Jn 4:6). Those who did not despise prophecy, but listened to the inspired preached and taught word of God, were of God. Those who refused to listen, were not of God.

John’s readers had been given understanding (1 Jn 5:20). They had miraculous understanding, knowledge and wisdom in order to be able to discern the spirits (1 Jn 4:1-3). Those who did not receive their teaching were not of God (1 Jn 4:6).

Because miraculous gifts were to be terminated with the completion of the

perfect law of liberty, the New Testament, the Holy Spirit does not place overemphasis on their use in the early churches. The fact that they are there in every church where a Christ-sent apostle had gone is without doubt. The Spirit, however, knew that they would pass and the churches would then be subject to the written prophecy of the New Testament. For this reason, therefore, we do not have pages of inspiration dedicated to their use. Because of the problem of pride in the Corinthian church, the Spirit of necessity had to produce some written instructions for correct use of the gifts. Because these instructions are not in the other New Testament writings as they are in 1 Corinthians, should not mislead the cautious student. The Spirit worked abundantly through the gifts in all churches.

The “passing out” of the gifts of the

Spirit by the apostles through the laying on of their hands would be the same as our passing out Bibles today. The early Christians had no written word of God to distribute among the people. They had no Bibles to open in their laps during the preaching of sermons or in Bible classes. They had no way to personally study in their homes in order to be prepared for the Sunday morning Bible class. Those things we casually consider to be a part of our Christian life, they did not have in the area of written revelation. Nevertheless, God distributed among the churches the spoken word of God through the inspired prophets who moved among the churches. The apostles freely received the Holy Spirit from the Lord, and thus, they freely distributed what they had received to all with whom they came into contact. In the spirit of how they received, they freely gave.

## Chapter 7

### Clarification Of Tongues

Several confusing matters have entered into the religious world concerning the subject of speaking in tongues. Many religious groups throughout the world today are claiming that “speaking in tongues” is a religious experience that indicates great spiritual growth and a direct contact with the Holy Spirit. It is believed that religious people should seek for this gift. For example, R. A. Brooks wrote in the *Charisma Digest* that ...

... speaking in tongues opens up a new

dimension in personal prayer, which can affect deep changes and blessings in your Christian life. For the most part, this is not a gift to be displayed openly, but as a private language of adoration, praise, devotion and intercession between you and God.<sup>27:19-21</sup>

It is taught in charismatic religious circles that one should seek and expect to receive the gift of speaking in tongues.<sup>See 28:49</sup> It is affirmed that we today can speak in tongues just as the

apostles did on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2.<sup>See 29:109,110</sup>

This wave of modern-day “tongue speaking” accelerated in growth in the last half of the last century and continues to grow today throughout the world. If this is the work of the Holy Spirit, we would wonder why the Holy Spirit has waited for almost two thousand years to begin influencing men to speak in tongues as He supposedly does today. It is my belief that this is not the work of the Holy Spirit. It is only a misguided result of religious people who have failed to allow the Holy Spirit to define His own work through the word of God.

In a religious world that has given up a knowledge of the Bible, we would expect that religious people would allow themselves to be misguided by emotions and traditions. And we would expect that misguided religious people would allow their emotions to carry them away in uncontrollable assemblies of people who are enslaved to their own emotions.

It is the purpose of the next three chapters to clarify the unique miraculous gift of speaking in tongues as it is defined in the New Testament. By limiting our definition of tongues to the New Testament, we will discover that the tongues of the New Testament are not the phenomenon of “tongue speaking” that is practiced today by some religious groups. We will also discover that the miraculous gift of tongues (languages) of the first century does not exist among Christians today.

If we restrict our definition of tongues

to that which is given in the New Testament, then we will be forced to define the “tongue speaking” that exists today by another source. The fact that people utter sounds today that cannot be understood, cannot be denied. The fact that they are speaking the tongues that are mentioned in the New Testament, can be denied. However, since the New Testament teaches that the gift of miraculous speaking in languages has passed away, then we must find another definition for the phenomenon of what is happening throughout the charismatic world today. But in order to understand what is happening today among many religious groups, we must first confine our understanding of speaking in tongues to the source that first mentions such in history. In other words, we must search the New Testament and allow it to be our only dictionary in making any definition in reference to speaking in tongues.

One of the first things we must do in studying this subject is to define words in the context of their ordinary use. This means that we must define Bible words as they were originally used in a biblical context by the inspired writers. Many confusing doctrines of men have been read into the Scriptures simply because men have defined words by their modern-day experiences. Modern-day definitions have thus been read into the Scriptures. The result has been an assortment of confused interpretations of the Bible that have led to great religious division.

In order to begin a study of tongues, we must first define the words that are used in the Bible in reference to tongues.

In other words, the phrase “speaking in tongues”, and other similar phrases, must first be defined as they are used in a biblical context. In our efforts to define biblical words, there are some complications that have been developed by the charismatic religious world. The complications are those preconceived definitions we want to attach to words. These are the definitions that we formulate from our own personal experiences. The first concern that the biblical interpreter must have, therefore, is the fact that his or her experiences in determining definitions will affect biblical interpretation. We cannot escape the fact that all of us have a tendency to read into the Bible through the use of our words, definitions that are not in the Bible. If we recognize this problem, then we will be cautious when developing our interpretation of biblical contexts.

### A. Definition of key words:

The phrase “speaking in tongues” has a variety of meanings in the religious world today. The term that is commonly used in this field of study is the word **glossolalia**. This is an anglicized word that is constructed from the two Greek words *glossa* (tongue) and *lalia* (speech). When the two words are combined they mean “tongue-speech” or “speaking in tongues.” Glossolalia has become a term that is used in the religious world today to refer to the entire field of speaking in tongues.

It must be understood that we are here talking about two different phenom-

ena in reference to speaking. First, there is the speaking in languages in the New Testament that happened as a result of the Holy Spirit miraculously enabling an individual to utter a foreign language that he had never before studied. This was a gift of the Holy Spirit that happened only in the first century.

Second, there is the psychological phenomenon that is called “ecstatic speech” that occurs today in many religious circles throughout the world. This is a real happening that individuals experience today while in a hyper-emotional state. In the context of this study, I will use the phrase “ecstatic speech” or “ecstatic gibberish” to refer to this psychological phenomenon. However, in the religious world in general, the word “glossolalia” is commonly used to refer to ecstatic speech or tongue speaking.

Both speaking in languages by the aid of the Holy Spirit and ecstatic speech are real. One was directed by the Holy Spirit in the first century in order to accomplish specific purposes. The other is generated by the emotional hysteria of individuals, whether religious or nonreligious. In order to distinguish between the two, a clear definition of the mention of speaking in languages must be determined from the New Testament.

**1. Biblical definition of speaking in languages:** The English word “tongues” is translated from the Greek word *glossa* that is used in two different contexts in the Bible. In the first sense, it is used to refer to the physical organ of the body (Mk 7:33; Lk 1:64; 16:24; Rm 3:13;

14:11; Js 1:26; 3:5,6,8). In a second sense, it is used to refer to the languages that people speak. It is used in this sense in Revelation 5:9. “*You ... have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue [glossa] and people and nation ...*” (See also 1 Jn 3:18; Rv 10:11; 11:9; 13:7). In the New Testament this is the primary use and meaning of the word *glossa*.

When we discuss “tongues” in the New Testament in reference to languages, we are talking about individuals speaking in languages by which men communicate with one another. This is intelligent speech. It is not ecstatic utterances or gibberish that cannot be understood by any man.

**2. Non-biblical ecstatic utterances or gibberish:** Modern-day religionists have experienced what would be correctly defined as “ecstatic utterances.” This is often referred to as “ecstatic gibberish.” Since this is a common occurrence among many religious groups, this speaking phenomenon is read into the Bible where the word “tongues” has been used to translate the Greek word *glossa*. Therefore, those interpreters who read their personal experiences of ecstatic utterances into the Bible, claim that the speaking in tongues in the New Testament is the phenomenon of ecstatic utterances that they experience.

Modern-day ecstatic speech is the phenomenon of uncontrollable utterances or gibberish in speech. The sounds that are spoken are unintelligible sounds that result from a hysterical compulsion and excitement on the part of the individual.

Ecstatic gibberish is not a phenomenon that is unique with some modern-day religious groups. The fact is that ecstatic speaking has been practiced by various religious groups throughout the world and throughout history. L. Carlyle May wrote, “This survey [of the phenomenon of glossolalia in history] has shown that speaking-in-tongues is widespread and very ancient. Indeed it is probable that as long as man has had divination, curing, sorcery, and propitiation of spirits he has had glossolalia.”<sup>30:92</sup>

One of the interesting characteristics of glossolalia (ecstatic speech) is the fact that this psychological phenomenon is not related exclusively to religions that believe in Christ and claim to be Christian. Donald Burdick wrote that “... it is clear that pagans as well as Christians have their glossolalic experiences.”<sup>31:667</sup> After studying the history of glossolalia among religious people, Jimmy Jividen wrote, “Incidents of glossolalia can be multiplied from religions ancient and modern; eastern and western; established and heretical. The glossolalia experience is to be found in all different cultural strata from non-Christian priests to medicine men.”<sup>32:74</sup> This is a devastating fact that must be faced by those of the religious world today who believe that tongue speaking is the work of the Holy Spirit that is unique in the “Christian” world. Jividen added,

Such subjective personal experiences, when found in non-Christian religions like Islam, present a practical problem to the glossolalist who claims to follow

Jesus Christ. If a Christian finds validation in such subjective religious experiences how can he reject the same kind of subjective religious experience in a Moslem who denies Jesus and rejects the Bible?<sup>32:76</sup>

The practice of ecstatic gibberish (glossolalia) occurs throughout the spectrum of the religious world. Jividen again stated, “It [ecstatic tongue speaking] is common in all world religions, both ancient and modern. It is found in pagan religions, spiritualism and throughout the broad spectrum of Catholicism and Protestantism. **Often times it is found completely outside the religious context** [emphasis mine, R.E.D.].”<sup>34:23</sup>

Since the phenomenon of speaking in ecstatic gibberish is found among non-Christian religions, we should immediately begin to question as to where this speaking phenomenon originated. Since the Bible would never teach that the Holy Spirit works among the Hindus, Muslims and other non-Christian religions, then we must conclude that the phenomenon of glossolalia in those religions that claim to be Christian, is not the “speaking in tongues” that is mentioned in the New Testament. Donald Burdick correctly stated,

Present-day glossolalia is deceptive. It often is a psychological attempt to recreate the supernatural gift of the first century. Because of the complexity of human nature, when the proper conditions are present man is able to work himself into an experience which he thinks to be

the same as New Testament glossolalia. Careful examination, however, has shown us how different such experiences seem to be from the phenomenon clearly described in Acts 2.<sup>31:83</sup>

Since the phenomenon of glossolalia occurs among those who do not claim the existence of the Holy Spirit, how can one claim that such originates from the Holy Spirit? Does the Spirit work among non-Christian religions? Does the Spirit work among the confused and divided denominational world? The *Encyclopedia Britannica* stated,

“The same morbid and abnormal ‘trance utterances’ recur in Christian revivals in every age, eg. among the mendicant friars of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, among the Jansenists, the early Quakers, the converts of Wesley and Whitefield, the persecuted Protestants of the Cevennes, the Irvingites, and the revivalists of Wales and America.”<sup>33:283</sup>

If glossolalia occurs among non-Christian religions, as well as Christian religions, then we must affirm that this is a pagan practice and a deception of Satan that has been brought into “Christianity” under the umbrella of spiritual experiences. We must keep in mind that it has its origin in non-Christian religions. It is thus a non-biblical experience that has been brought into the Christian experience, and thus claimed to be from the Holy Spirit.

The emotional counterfeit of modern-day ecstatic utterances that is experienced



among Protestant and non-Christian religions today must not be identified with the true speaking in tongues we read about in the New Testament. Any effort to read such emotional distortions into the pages of the Sacred Scriptures is a flagrant example of self deception and apostate religion.

One must not be confused here. Though there is a psychological phenomenon of gibberish utterances that results from uncontrollable emotional feelings in individuals, we must not be deceived into believing that this is a **direct** work of Satan. In an indirect sense, Satan is the father of all lies (Jn 8:44). And truly, ecstatic utterances is a deception of Satan. However, our understanding of the human mind leads us to believe that it can be powerfully self-deceived. Ecstatic utterances is a simple case of self-deception. And we must attribute this self-deception to Satan. Psychologically speaking, the phenomenon of glossolalia can be explained in reference to the ability of the emotionally uncontrolled person to speak unintelligible sounds. After much research on this subject, Anthony Hoekema rightly stated in his book, *What About Tongue Speaking*,

To the same effect is a statement by Psychiatrist Stuart Bergsma, Superintendent of the Pine Rest Christian Hospital in Grand Rapids, Michigan. After mentioning a number of experiences which have helped him arrive at an evaluation of glossolalia, he says, "**All these [experiences] have left me with the conviction that glossolalia especially**

**can be psychologically explained and is not, in general, a 'spiritual' phenomenon.**" Another Christian psychiatrist gives a similar evaluation, in an article in which he analyzes the phenomenon of tongue-speaking: "**The product of our analysis is the demonstration of the very natural mechanisms which produce glossolalia. As a psychological phenomenon, glossolalia is easy to produce and readily understandable**" [emphasis mine, R.E.D.].<sup>35:120</sup>

Psychiatrists understand that glossolalia ("tongue speaking") is a natural psychological experience of many people when they are in a high emotional state. Uncontrollable utterances of sounds from hysteria are nothing new nor unusual with individuals who are emotionally out of control. This is not the Holy Spirit working. It is the mind of individuals who have lost conscious control of their speech while in a state of hyper-emotionality.

## **B. The promise of the gift of languages:**

The first mention of speaking in tongues in the New Testament is made in a prophecy of Jesus in Mark 16:17. Jesus said, "*And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with **new tongues.***" In the context of this statement, Jesus spoke of "signs" and "casting out demons." Mark 16:17 is thus a miraculous context in which people would speak with "new languages." We would con-

clude, therefore, that there would also be something miraculous about the speaking in the “new” languages.

**1. *Jesus referred to a new manner by which languages would be spoken.***

The Greek word *kainos* (new) is used in Mark 16:17 in reference to tongues, or languages. This word refers to a **newness in quality**. Reference is not to a newness in chronological order. In other words, there would not be a new kind of language spoken that had never before been spoken by man. **Emphasis was on a fresh new way of knowing and speaking language.** In the fulfillment of the prophecy of Mark 16:17, the fresh new way would be the manner by which men would speak languages. What Jesus was prophesying was that the Holy Spirit would empower individuals to speak in languages that they had never studied. The new manner by which they would speak languages would be in contrast to having to spend months and years to learn a language. They would speak “new” languages without going through the ordinary process of learning and speaking a language. Therefore, the newness of the language would be to the individual who had never before known or studied the language. It would be new to the speaker because he would have never before studied the language.

**2. *The new languages would be visibly perceived:*** In the prophecy of Mark 16:17 Jesus said that the tongues would be a **sign**. This is precisely what is stated in Hebrews 2:3,4. God bore “*witness both with signs and wonders.*” A sign is some-

thing that is perceived through the senses of men. A sign is perceived through hearing, seeing, smelling, touching or tasting. The languages about which Jesus spoke would be heard and seen. Therefore, when Jesus’ prophecy of tongues was fulfilled, it had to be something that was heard and seen. And because the tongues could be heard and seen, they would be an empirical evidence that would confirm the spoken word of God.

The Mark 16:17 prophecy of Jesus gives one of the first purposes for which the gift of languages would be given to men. The Spirit-inspired ability to speak unstudied languages was to be a clear manifestation of God’s confirmation of those who preached the gospel. In the context in which Jesus gave the prophecy, He spoke of those who went forth to preach (Mk 16:20). The sign of the miracles in the text did follow them in order to confirm the word. Therefore, the use of the gift of languages had something to do with the preaching of the gospel. As the story of the fulfillment of the prophecy of Jesus unfolded in the first century, the definition and purpose of the gift of languages became clear. The gift was meant not only to be a sign that God was working with those who preached the gospel, it also aided in the proclamation of the gospel to the world. In other words, those who went forth to preach did not have to spend months or years in learning new languages in order to preach the gospel. The Holy Spirit inspired the preachers to be able to preach immediately in the language of the people to whom they went.

## Chapter 8

### Languages

In the New Testament four cases are recorded when men and women spoke in languages in fulfillment of the promises of Joel 2:28-32 and Mark 16:17. As we examine each of these cases, one can clearly define the meaning of tongues and the purpose of the gift in the context of the evangelistic work of the early church.

#### A. Languages spoken in Jerusalem:

On the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:1-13, Jews and proselytes to Judaism from every nation of the Roman Empire were gathered in Jerusalem (vss 9-11). The apostles were in an upper room in Jerusalem on this day when the Holy Spirit came upon them. They were empowered by the Holy Spirit and began to “*speak with other tongues [glossais], as the Spirit gave them utterance*” (vs 4). Verse 6 states that “*everyone heard them speak in his own language [dialekto]*.” Those who were present asked concerning what was happening, “*And how is it that we hear, each in our own language [dialekto] in which we were born?*” (vs 8). They also stated, “*We hear them speaking in our own tongues [glossais] the wonderful works of God*” (vs 11). If one would simply read these verses without reading into them any modern-day ecstatic utterances, he would clearly understand that Luke is describing a miraculous endowment of speaking in languages

that had been received by the apostles.

On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit inspired the apostles to speak in the languages of the people who were present. The people heard them speak in their own dialects the wonderful works of God. The people understood what was being said by the apostles because they said they did. Luke records that they heard the apostles speaking the wonderful works of God. Therefore, the apostles were not speaking gibberish because of emotional hysteria that could not be understood. They were not speaking some language that was unknown to man. They were speaking the wonderful works of God with the languages of men. There is nothing difficult in understanding that the apostles miraculously received the ability from the Holy Spirit to speak the gospel in “new languages” (Mk 16:17) to those who were present.

In the context of Acts 2, there are two different Greek words that are used in reference to the languages that were spoken. The Greek word *glossa* is used in the plural (*glossais*) in verses 3,4,11 and 26. This word refers to a **known foreign language**. It is used in this manner in the context of these passages. The apostles were not speaking a language that was unknown to man. They were speaking known foreign languages that were new to them, for they had never before studied these languages.

In verse 4 the apostles “*began to speak with other tongues [glossais], as the Spirit gave them utterance.*” The tongues here are defined in verse 11 where the word *glossais* is used again. “*We hear them speaking in our own tongues [glossais] the wonderful works of God.*” Without doubt, the meaning is that the apostles were speaking in the languages of the people who were present from every nation. They were speaking languages that could be understood.

The Greek word *dialektos* is used in verses 6 and 8. This term can refer to either a **dialect** or **language**. It is used in this way in the context of Acts 2. Those from every nation who heard and saw the apostles preaching, stated, “*And how is it that we hear, each in our own language [dialekto] in which we were born?*” Not only were the apostles speaking in the languages of the people who were present, they were also speaking in the dialects of the people. A mother language may have several dialects that are unique to regions other than where a mother language is spoken. What seems to be indicated is that the apostles not only spoke the mother languages, but also the regional dialects of the mother languages. This fact may be what truly stimulated the curiosity of those who heard. They could not understand how these Galileans could fluently speak in their dialects.

From the use of the above two Greek words in the same context, it is evident that in some way Luke uses *glossa* and *dialektos* interchangeably. *Dialektos* is used in verses 6 and 8. *Glossa* is used in verses 4 and 11. Both of these words are

actually used **by the people** in the context which Luke records. In other words, the audience used these two words interchangeably in the context. Therefore, we would understand that these were synonymous words in the culture when used in reference to spoken languages. At least we must conclude that the people not only hear their languages spoken (*glossa*), they heard the derivatives of their languages (dialects) spoken. The miracle of the apostles speaking in languages was magnified in the sense that the Spirit not only inspired languages to be spoken, but He also inspired all the dialects of the mother languages to be spoken.

The Jews in Acts 2 came from areas where hysterical (or, ecstatic) gibberish was undoubtedly practiced in pagan religions. However, when they came to Jerusalem and experienced the events of Acts 2, they recognized that what the apostles spoke were the languages of their homelands. The apostles were not speaking hysterical nonsense. They were speaking the actual languages of the people who were present. The proclamation of those who heard on the day of Pentecost proves that the tongues which the apostles spoke were languages.

In Acts 2:13 Luke recorded, “*Others mocking said, ‘They are full of new wine.’*” This statement has been used by some to affirm that the apostles were actually speaking in gibberish that sounded like men who were drunk. But this is not the case. Keep in mind that the apostles were speaking in different languages. Those from Parthia would not

understand the language that was spoken by those from Libya. Since those from Galilee who knew that the apostles were from Galilee, would not understand either the language of those from Parthia or Egypt, then to them the apostles' speaking in any other language than what they understood would only sound like men who were drunk. Therefore, the irreverent mockers dismissed as drunken the apostles who were speaking in something they did not understand.

**This event of the apostles speaking in “tongues” on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 becomes the dictionary to define the rest of the New Testament when “tongues” are discussed.** This is a consistent manner by which we must allow the Bible to interpret itself. Therefore, when we come to the next three records of miraculous speaking in languages, we must understand these biblical contexts from what is learned in the Acts 2 context.

## **B. Languages spoken in Caesarea:**

Luke recorded in Acts 10,11 that when Peter and his company went to the house of Cornelius, he began to speak to them concerning the gospel. However, as he spoke he was interrupted by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the entire household of Cornelius. The other Jews who were with Peter “*heard them speak with tongues [glossa] and magnify God.*”<sup>10:46</sup> There are two things that are evident about this passage which forces us to understand that the household of Cornelius was speaking in lan-

guages and not in any hysterical gibberish or “unknown” language.

**1. Peter identified this experience with the Acts 2 experience of the apostles in Jerusalem.** In Acts 11:15 Peter explained to those in Jerusalem concerning the Cornelius event that “*the Holy Spirit fell upon them [Cornelius’ household], as upon us [the apostles] at the beginning.*” The fact that the Spirit had fallen on them was evidenced by the fact that the household of Cornelius spoke in languages. The speaking in languages by the household of Cornelius was the same as the apostles speaking in languages in Acts 2. In Peter’s explanation to the Jerusalem brethren, therefore, he identified the languages of the household of Cornelius with the languages of Acts 2. Cornelius and his house, therefore, spoke in languages, not in gibberish or unknown languages.

**2. The household of Cornelius was heard to be glorifying God.** If the Jews who were present in Cornelius’ house could not understand what Cornelius and his household were speaking, then how could they have known what they were saying? Verse 46 plainly states that they heard them **magnify God**. If the languages were some unknown hysterical gibberish, then they would not have known if they were magnifying God. The fact is that Cornelius and his household were speaking in foreign languages that they had not before studied. They were thus speaking in “new languages.” This is why the speaking in languages in this context was a sign. The gift to speak in

languages was a sign to the Jews that the Gentiles had a right to the message of the gospel and the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit.

### C. Languages spoken in Ephesus:

When Paul came to Ephesus in Acts 19, he found about twelve disciples who had not been baptized in the name of Jesus. After he had taught them, and *“they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus”* (vs 5), Paul laid hands on them. As a result of the laying on of Paul’s hands, *“the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues [glossa] and prophesied”* (vs 6).

Paul’s authority to lay hands on them in order that they receive the gift of speaking in languages manifested proof that he was a Christ-sent apostle. Paul here gave them the “sign of an apostle” about which he spoke in 2 Corinthians 12:12. According to Mark 16:20, their speaking in languages after he had laid hands on them proved that he was from God. The speaking in languages by the Ephesians, therefore, was also a fulfillment of the promises of Joel 2:23-32 and Mark 16:17.

The speaking in tongues in Acts 19:6 is not defined in the immediate context to be a spoken language. However, tongues do not need to be defined. In recording the incident, Luke assumes that we will use common sense in understanding the tongues here as we understood their miraculous happening in chapters 2 and 10. Luke is writing to Theophilus who undoubtedly does not have any other

New Testament letter than the letter of Luke. Theophilus would understand that languages are under discussion in chapters 10,11 and 19 just as inspired speaking in languages was explained in chapter 2. We must understand these chapters in the same manner.

In the context of Acts 19, Theophilus would understand the speaking of the Ephesians as the speaking in the languages of men. Luke would certainly not be stating that Acts 2 and 10 are references to languages, and at the same time, and without explanation, infer that the Ephesians spoke in hysterical gibberish. We must understand the context of Acts 19 as Theophilus would have understood it. To be consistent, we must allow Acts 2 to be the dictionary by which we understand the speaking in tongues in Acts 19 to be the speaking in languages that the Ephesians had not studied.

### D. Languages spoken in Corinth:

1 Corinthians 12 – 14 have been some of the most controversial texts of the New Testament. They have been controversial simply because misguided interpreters have allowed their personal emotional experiences to be the dictionary by which they have understood what Paul was discussing. Therefore, these chapters in the New Testament have often been used to support the belief that Paul is discussing hysterical utterances or gibberish in the church. However, I believe that a consistent interpretation of these chapters indicates that the tongues about which Paul spoke must be understood to be the

spoken languages of men. In fact, the instructions Paul gives in these chapters makes sense only if the tongues in the Corinthian church were the languages of men.

The letter to the Corinthians was written to correct sin in the Corinthian church. The Corinthians were boastful about their forbearance of immorality. Therefore, arrogant in questioning the authority of Paul. Paul's letter was a direct and loving condemnation of their present situation in a last minute effort to correct their sin before his arrival. In the context of his judgments, he discussed their misuse of the miraculous gifts which he had imparted to them by the laying on of his hands (2 Co 12:12).

This discussion of miraculous gifts in the context of the first century church is made in the New Testament only because there were problems in the Corinthian church. We would not have the record of this material if it were not for the problem of arrogance that prevailed in the Corinthian church. Since we do not have similar discussions in the New Testament concerning the miraculous gifts as Paul gives in this context, we would assume that the Holy Spirit did not consider the gifts to be a primary function of the church. They were only temporary gifts in order to initiate the beginning of the church in the absence of the written word of God. Edward Fudge correctly stated,

One wonders if tongues would have been mentioned in even this epistle had the Corinthians not been so confused and

abusive regarding their proper use. The gift does not seem to demand attention apart from a problem. Even here, most of what Paul says about tongues is designed to play down their importance and to urge the Corinthians to completely revamp their attitude toward this gift.<sup>36:20</sup>

It is firmly believed by some that Paul speaks of ecstatic gibberish or utterances in the context of 1 Corinthians 12 – 14, specifically in the following areas:

1. The speaking was addressed to God (14:2,28).
2. The speaker was speaking mysteries (14:2).
3. The speaker edifies himself and not others (14:4).
4. The speaker's understanding is unfruitful (14:14).
5. The hearers may not understand what is said (14:19).
6. Outsiders would call the disorganized speaking to be madness (14:23).

Though some affirm that the above thoughts of Paul should be understood in view of supposed gibberish or “unknown” languages, the fact that he talks about known languages is the consistent understanding of the context. Simply because the above points of Paul are twisted to mean that he is referring to hysterical gibberish, does not mean that the context bears out this interpretation. In the following material, I want to emphasize the fact that Paul was discussing **the misuse of the gift of languages**, not some strange gibberish that arose from some

misguided emotionalism in the Corinth church. In fact, understanding the context of these three chapters can be realized only when we understand that Paul is discussing the misuse of the gift of languages in the context of the Corinthian church assembly.

The Greek word *glossa* is used throughout the context of Paul's instructions. We must interpret this word as we would in Acts 2 and 10. If we are to be consistent in our interpretation of the speaking in tongues in the New Testament context, we must bring the same thoughts of speaking in languages we learn in other contexts into the context of 1 Corinthians 12 – 14. When this is done, we interpret Paul's meaning of tongues in the context of 1 Corinthians 12 – 14 to refer to different languages that the Corinthians spoke as a result of the direction of the Holy Spirit.

The original *King James* translators unfortunately inserted the word “unknown” in 1 Corinthians 14:2. This word, however, **is not in the Greek text**. It is an addition by the translators of that version who sought to add an interpretive meaning to the text. On the other hand, they possibly added the word to explain the fact that the tongues that were spoken were unknown to those who heard. The tongues (languages) were languages of men, but unknown to the audience. Regardless of the intentions of the *King James* translators, the charismatic movement of this century has assumed that the speaking was a gibberish that was unknown to man. Therefore, the addition of the word “unknown” has caused

much confusion concerning the understanding of 1 Corinthians 12.

In a similar manner, the *New English Bible* translators used the phrase “ecstatic speech” to translate *glossa* in 1 Corinthians 14:2. This is another unfortunate translation and one that has again caused much confusion. There is no reason why these translators should have added either the words “unknown” or “ecstatic” with the word *glossa* in this verse. Both textual additions reveal a bias on the part of translators who are seeking to interpret rather than translate. The word *glossa* should be translated as it is in Acts 2 and other passages in the New Testament where it is used. In those contexts, it is translated “tongue” or “language.”

The following points clarify some supposed problem areas of Paul's discussion of 1 Corinthians 12 – 14. I make the following points in view of the charismatic world in which there has been much confusion concerning the context of these chapters. We must keep foremost in our minds while examining these contexts that our personal experiences must not be the judge by which we interpret what Paul writes. We must simply allow Paul to make clear statements concerning the misuse of tongues without the addition of our emotional experiences.

Keep in mind that what is discussed in the New Testament concerning tongues after Acts 2 must be defined by the context of Acts 2. The Holy Spirit would not confuse us by speaking of two different kinds of “tongue speaking” in the New Testament without alerting us to the fact. Since languages of men is clearly



understood in the context of Acts 2, then the same is under discussion by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12 – 14.

### 1. “Kinds of tongues” (1 Co 12:10):

It is believed by some that this is a reference to different ecstatic utterances. However, the word “kinds” (*genos*) that is used by Paul refers to that which is different, **but of the same nature, kind or species**. In other words, Paul is referring to the different languages the Corinthians spoke. Though they were different, **they were all languages of men**. He is speaking of the different kinds of languages that are spoken by men.

### 2. “Tongues of angels” (1 Co 13:1):

Paul wrote, “*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become as a sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.*” This is not some heavenly language that was being spoken by some in the Corinthian church. It is not necessary to assume that Paul even speaks of a real language of angels. This is indicated by the use of the subjunctive mood in the text. The word “though”, which is sometimes used to translate *ean*, should actually be translated “if.” *Ean* is subjunctive. The subjunctive “if” (*ean*) suggests probability. In other words, Paul uses the subjunctive mood in this verse to express a hyperbole, that is, an exaggeration to express a truth. This is the logical interpretation of this passage since angels are not physical beings. They are spiritual beings who do not have literal tongues and vocal cords by which to express speech. In the Bible, angels were mani-

festated at different times and spoke in the languages of men in order to communicate the will of God. However, in their natural habitation, they are not as men who must use their supposed mouths in order to formulate words by which communication is made possible. When any angel spoke, he always spoke with the language of man by which he could be understood by man.

We could paraphrase 1 Corinthians 13:1 to say, “Just suppose that it might be that one could speak in the language of angels.” What Paul is saying is that even if he had the ability to speak with the languages of angels, but did not have a loving behavior, such an ability would be useless. Therefore, it is ridiculous to suppose that Paul or any of the Corinthians actually spoke in the tongues of angels. He spoke in the tongues of men, but he never claimed to have spoken in the tongues of angels. If the Corinthians were actually speaking in the tongues of angels, then they were blessed with a greater ability than even the apostles on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, for the apostles spoke only in the languages of men, not the languages of angels.

Paul uses this same manner of argument in Galatians 1. He wrote, “*But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed*” (vs 8). Paul is not saying that an angel would actually preach the gospel to the Galatians. He is emphasizing a point. **He uses an exaggeration in Galatians 1:8 to prove his point. Even if it were possible, the Galatians should**

**not even listen to angels, who if they could, preach another gospel to them.**

1 Corinthians 13 and Galatians 1 are not affirming either a language of angels or the preaching of another gospel by angels. Paul is emphasizing an important point by using a hypothetical situation.

**3. “Speaking mysteries” (1 Co 14:2):** As stated before, the word “unknown” is not in the Greek text of 1 Corinthians 14:2. Therefore, Paul is not talking about some language that is not known by man. The word “mystery” in the verse does not refer to something that is ecstatic. Paul is simply using the word “mystery” as it is commonly used to denote spiritual truth which is communicated to man by God (See Rm 16:25; 1 Co 2:7; Cl 1:25-29; Ep 3:3-5). The phrase “in the Spirit” refers to inspiration. As previously discussed, a consistent understanding of this phrase as it is used in the Bible would lead us to understand that inspiration to speak in a language by the Holy Spirit is under discussion in the context of 1 Corinthians 14:2. Therefore, it was by inspiration of the Spirit that the Corinthians spoke the mysteries of the truth.

In the context of 1 Corinthians 14:2, **no one understands what the speaker is saying simply because there is no one present who has the gift of interpreting the specific language that is being spoken.** This is why Paul made the exhortation of verse 13, *“Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret.”* This is also why Paul prohibited one from speaking in tongues when there was no interpreter present.

*“But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in the assembly, and let him speak to himself and to God”* (vs 28).

The phrase, *“does not speak to men but to God”* does not assume that the speaker cannot understand what he is saying. 1 Corinthians 14:28 emphasizes the fact that if there is no interpreter present, the individual speaks **to himself** and to God. Therefore, he does understand what he is saying, though those around him do not. This is why Paul gives the instruction that this person should keep silent if there is no interpreter present. He should not disturb the assembly of the church for his own benefit.

All the churches of the New Testament to which a Christ-sent apostle went exercised the use of the miraculous gifts. Because of the problems that prevailed in Corinth, confusion arose concerning the use of the gifts. The confusion that was occurring in the Corinthian assemblies led to Paul’s writing of the instructions of 1 Corinthians 12 – 14.

**a. The Corinthians were speaking without love.** The gift of tongues was being used in Corinth without brotherly love. They were speaking in foreign languages in the assembly without respect to foreigners who did not understand the particular language that was being spoken. Because no interpreter was present, therefore, those in the assembly could not understand.

**b. They were speaking in confusion.** Those who were speaking were speaking simultaneously. They were thus

causing confusion in the assembly by exercising a gift that was meant to edify instead of manifesting pride.

**c. They were speaking out of order.** Those exercising their gifts were not respecting the orderliness by which the gifts were to be used in the assemblies. In 14:2, therefore, Paul gives them instructions concerning an orderly manner of using the gift of tongues.

The point is that those who were speaking, were speaking mysteries because they could not be understood by the audience. They were only manifesting their pride by speaking. They were thus speaking in a manner that caused confusion in the assembly. Paul exhorts them to check both their attitudes and the manner by which they used their gifts. 1 Corinthians 14:26-35 are Paul's instructions to correct the disorderly practices of those who were causing confusion in the assembly. They had been ignoring these courteous procedures because of their pride and divisive spirits.

**4. "He edifies himself" (1 Co 14:4):** Some have used this statement to prove that those who speak should be seeking to edify only themselves and not the church. But in the context of 1 Corinthians 12 - 14, the edification of the entire assembly is under discussion. The use of speaking in languages was to be for the benefit of the assembly, not any particular individual in the assembly.

1 Corinthians 14:5 states that the assembly is not edified if there is no interpreter present who can translate the lan-

guage that is spoken. Verse 6 states that there is no profit to the assembly unless there is communication of the teaching that is spoken. And verses 7-11 affirm that such speaking is useless unless it can be understood by the entire assembly. For this reason, Paul exhorted, "*Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret*" (vs 13). What Paul is saying in the context is that **if there is no understanding, there is no edification.** If ecstatic or hysterical gibberish is what is being discussed in the context, then the meaning of what is said must be understood in order to edify both the individual and the assembly. But if the assembly cannot be edified by what is said, then neither can the one who supposedly utters the gibberish. This is why I affirm that ecstatic gibberish is not in the context of 1 Corinthians 12 - 14. Ecstatic gibberish cannot be interpreted. It is simply unintelligible sounds made by one who is emotionally out of control at the time he or she makes the sounds.

Paul does not speak of one's speaking in tongues as something that is self-edifying. What is spoken must edify. The action of speaking is not what edifies. In other words, the gift of languages was not meant to be for the benefit of the one who was speaking simply because he was inspired with the ability to speak. This would also be true of the one who would utter ecstatic gibberish. If his actual speaking such sounds was meant to be for himself alone, then the one speaking has missed the purpose for which the gift of languages was given in the New Testament. All gifts were given for the pur-

pose of ministering to the needs of others. **No gift was given for the purpose of one to edify himself or to manifest pride in the gift before others. The gifts were given to individuals for the purpose of aiding the individuals in their ministry to others.** Therefore, any gift that was used in the assembly that did not function in edification of the entire assembly, according to Paul's instructions, must be silenced.

5. ***“Pray that he may interpret” (1 Co 14:13):*** This passage is used to affirm that one should pray for the gift of interpretation even though he has never had hands laid on him by an apostle in order to receive a miraculous gift. But the case here is in reference **to those who already had the apostles' hands laid on them in order to receive the gift of languages or some other gift.** We must remember that it is the Spirit who distributes the particular gifts (1 Co 12:11). Therefore, they were to pray that the Spirit might give them the gift of interpretation if they already had hands laid on them to receive another gift, specifically the gift of languages.

We cannot assume that Paul is teaching here that they pray for a miraculous gift if they had not had the apostles' hands laid on them. It took more than praying to receive the gift of tongues. This gift did not come only in answer to prayer. The Corinthian situation proves this. They were in a situation where there was no interpreter of various languages that were being spoken. **If prayer was the only thing necessary in order to receive the gift of interpretation, then there**

**would never be a situation where an interpreter was not present, for one could simply pray and receive the gift from God.** God would give the gift of interpretation in order to stop the confusion. But in this case in Corinth, there were languages being spoken without an interpreter of that language being present. Paul's instructions in this case are mentioned in verse 28. **If no interpreter was present, then the one who was speaking in a language that could not be understood by the assembly, must be quiet.**

Other contexts prove that more than prayer is needed in order to receive a miraculous gift. If prayer alone were the only prerequisite for receiving a gift, then why did Paul desire to go to Rome in order that he might impart to them some spiritual gift (Rm 1:11)? Could he not simply have instructed them through the Roman letter to pray for gifts to be added among the Roman Christians? Why did the apostles Peter and John have to go from Jerusalem to Samaria in order to lay hands on the newly converted disciples in order that they receive miraculous gifts (See At 8:18)? Could not Philip have instructed them to pray for the gifts? The answer to these questions is simple. It was only through the laying on of the apostles' hands that the gifts could be given. Prayer concerning the gifts was for the purpose of receiving from the Spirit another gift of personal choice, since it was the initial choice of the Spirit to distribute the gifts according to His will (1 Co 12:11).

Keep in mind also that 1 Corinthians

14:13 speaks to the brother who **already had** the gift of languages. **Paul said that he must then pray that he interpret.** Therefore, he had already had hands laid on him to receive the gift of languages. His prayer would be that the Spirit also distribute to him the gift of interpretation (1 Co 12:11). Since one could possess more than one gift, then we assume from what Paul said that one could pray for the gifts if he had already had hands laid on him by a Christ-sent apostle.

1 Corinthians 14:13 could refer to one praying that an apostle be able to be present in order that one receive a spiritual gift (At 18:8). One should “*desire spiritual gifts,*” and pray that the medium through which they came would come into his or her presence. One who had not had hands laid on him by an apostle could not receive a spiritual gift simply by praying for it. A Christ-sent apostle had to be present in order that the gift be imparted by the laying on of his hands. Only if one had already had hands laid on him could he pray for another gift. Since there are no Christ-sent apostles today, it would be futile to word a prayer for a miraculous gift. This would be asking for more than what God has promised for us today. It would be a direct attack against the sufficiency of the inspired word of God which God says is sufficient to supply us unto all good works (2 Tm 3:16,17).

There is a practical argument concerning praying for the gift of interpretation that must also be considered in understanding what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 14:13. The one who was speak-

ing in tongues was speaking the word of God. So it would be today if one stands up and preaches in a language others do not understand. If we have the miraculous gift of interpretation today, then certainly a brother could immediately pray for the gift of interpretation, and thus, translate into our language the meaning of the language being used to speak the message. In this way we could understand the message. If the speaker spoke in Mandarin Chinese, some brother could pray for the gift of interpretation in order to translate for all those who do not understand Mandarin. The fact that this does not happen proves that we do not have the gift of interpretation today. In a practical way, it proves that the gift of interpretation could not be arbitrarily received in Corinth.

**6. “Understanding is unfruitful” (1 Co 14:14):** This statement is misunderstood by some to refer to one not understanding some gibberish the speaker was supposedly speaking. Those who make this unfortunate interpretation affirm that they do not have to understand what they are saying. The fact is that if they are speaking gibberish they do not and cannot know what they are saying. However, this is not what Paul is discussing in 1 Corinthians 14:14. Such interpretations of the context of 1 Corinthians 12 – 14 are certainly beneath the dignity of the Scriptures and certainly outside logical reasoning concerning the work of God. And above all, such interpretations make God use men as talking toys for His own amusement. The Holy Spirit does not work in a way to make God

speak to Himself through the medium of men.

What Paul means is **if the audience does not understand what is being prayed in a language**, then there is no fruit born from the prayer by those in the audience. If the audience does not understand the communication in prayer, then the prayer is useless to them.

The entire context of 1 Corinthians 14 is centered around the edification of the church in the assemblies (1 Co 14:26). The prayers that are under discussion refer to those prayers made in the assembly of the church. The church is not edified, therefore, if the prayers are in a language that cannot be understood by the assembly. This is why Paul said, *“I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding ...”* (vs 15). In other words, **if God’s revelation flows through the inspired individual, but straight back to God, then the assembly benefits nothing. It was not the work of the Spirit in the first century to inspire people to speak to God in public prayer in a language that could not be understood by the audience.** This would be God speaking to Himself.

**7. “Strange tongues” (1 Co 14:21):** This statement in the original *King James Version* is also used to read ecstatic utterances into the context of 1 Corinthians 14. From the English word “strange”, it is assumed that the language that is spoken is unknown by any man. However, Paul is here quoting from Isaiah 28:11. In the context of Isaiah 28:11, Isaiah referred to the language of the Assyrians who took Israel into captivity in 721/722

B.C. He is not referring to ecstatic utterances, but to a language that was known by man.

The fact that Paul uses the quotation of Isaiah 28:11 is proof that he is discussing languages in 1 Corinthians 14. Isaiah meant languages when he wrote Isaiah 28. The same meaning must be carried with the passage into the context of 1 Corinthians 14. The “strange tongues” about which both Paul and Isaiah spoke were “foreign languages.” In fact, this passage is better translated in recent versions to read “other” tongues or “languages.” The *Revised King James Version* reads, *“With men of other languages and other lips I will speak to this people ....”*

**8. “Interpretation”:** Some have misunderstood the meaning of the gift of interpretation. It has been claimed that Paul means that one is to “decipher” an ecstatic utterance or gibberish, not interpret a foreign language. However, the Greek word *diermaneutias* (interpretation) is used in thirteen different places in the New Testament in one form or another. **It is used to refer to the translation of words from one known language into another known language** (See Jn 1:38,41; 9:7; At 13:8; Hb 7:2). An exception to this would be Luke 24:27 where Jesus interpreted the Scriptures for the disciples. But even in this context it is the interpretation of thought from one known language into another that is under consideration. In the context of 1 Corinthians 14, therefore, we must understand that the word *diermaneutias* is being used in its most common manner.

It is not used to refer to the translation of gibberish into a language of man. The word is never used to refer to the translation of some unheard of language into a language that is known by man. It is used in the sense that the interpreter translates a spoken language which is known by mankind into the language of others who are present.

There is no justification to read ecstatic utterances into the context of 1 Corinthians. Fudge concluded,

The idea of some ecstatic language, some unintelligible gibberish, or a mystical prayer-language finds absolutely no support in the text of First Corinthians. Any teaching growing out of that notion is based entirely on supposition and assumption, and finds no ground in the Scriptures – here or elsewhere.<sup>36:21</sup>

In most modern-day environments where ecstatic utterances and uncontrollable gibberish are used in religion, it is often the women of these movements who practice such. In the prophecy of Joel 2 there is mentioned the fact that women would prophesy (See At 2:18). In Acts 21:9, Luke records that Philip had four virgin daughters who had the gift of prophecy. Women did pray and prophesy in the early church. However, they did not do such in the public assemblies of the church, for in doing such they would have been acting contrary to Paul's instructions that they not usurp authority over men (1 Co 11:5; 1 Tm 2:12). **There is no evidence in the New Testament that the gift of languages was ever**

**given to women to be used in the public assembly of the church.** The reason women were not given this gift for the public assembly of the church was that they could not use it in the assembly if they did have it. Paul told women to keep silent in the assemblies. In the context of Paul giving instructions to correct the Corinthians' misuse of the gifts in the assembly, he specifically told the women to keep silent in the assembly. "*Let your women keep silent in the assemblies, for they are not permitted to speak ...*" (1 Co 14:34). He said, "*... it is improper for women to speak in the assembly*" (1 Co 14:35).

In religious groups today who believe in the present day use of inspired languages, most of their assemblies have a majority of women supposedly speaking in "languages." This is further evidence that what is being experienced today is not what is discussed in 1 Corinthians 12 – 14 in reference to speaking in tongues. These modern-day misguided religionists are not speaking in the inspired languages of the New Testament. They are speaking in the gibberish of uncontrolled hysterical emotionalism. Though they are speaking in ecstatic gibberish, they must keep silent in the assemblies of the church if they are to obey the instructions of 1 Corinthians 14:34,35. If what they are saying is not understood by the assembly, and thus giving intellectual encouragement to the assembled church, they must keep silent in the assembly.

There are no unknown languages discussed in the context of 1 Corinthians 12 – 14. There was no ecstatic gibberish in

the assembly of the Corinthian church. When Paul discussed the subject of tongues, Bible students must understand that he was speaking of languages of men. In fact, his instructions concerning tongues throughout the context of 1 Corinthians 12 – 14 can be understood

only if we understand that he is speaking of known languages of men in the context of his instructions. This is the only consistent manner by which 1 Corinthians 12 - 14 can be understood. Any other means brings only confusion.

## Chapter 9

### The Passing Of The Gifts

In the middle of Paul's discussion of miraculous gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 – 14, is seated the instructions of chapter 13. Therefore, we must understand chapter 13 in reference to the Corinthians' problem in their misuse of miraculous gifts. In chapter 13 Paul exalts brotherly love. This is his long term solution to unity in the church. However, in exalting love as the long term solution to the Corinthians' problem, he de-emphasizes the miraculous gifts. He speaks of their passing in order that love be the bond that unites the church together throughout history.

The statements of 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 are seated in the context of Paul's discussion of miraculous gifts of chapters 12 and 14 in order to show that gifts were only temporary in the establishment of the church. Love among brethren must be exalted above miraculous gifts. Therefore, the subject of love in 1 Corinthians 13 is stated by Paul as the "*more excellent way*" and the long term solution to the Corinthians' problems concerning the misuse of gifts (1 Co 12:31).

After emphasizing the greatness of love in chapter 13, Paul then explained

the temporary activity of the miraculous gifts. The gifts would pass away, whereas the attitude of love would carry on. Paul's argument, therefore, is to de-emphasize the gifts in view of the greater attitude of love by which the disciples must be known to be of Christ (Jn 13:34,35). Paul wrote,

*<sup>8</sup>Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, **they will fail**; whether there are tongues, **they will cease**; whether there is knowledge, **it will vanish away.** <sup>9</sup>For we know in **part** and we prophesy in part. <sup>10</sup>But when that which is **perfect** has come, **then that which is in part will be done away** (1 Co 13:8-10).*

#### A. The part and the perfect:

Paul affirms that when the "perfect" (that which is whole) has come, then that which is in "part" (the miraculous gifts) will be done away (vs 10). In this context the perfect refers to the "*perfect law of liberty*," the law of Christ in its fully revealed form (Js 1:25). This is defined by Paul in the context. Though there is



often much discussion concerning the “perfect” about which Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians 13:10, it is my belief that the context of Paul’s discussion necessitates reference to the final revelation of what God would have the church depend until the coming of the Son of God at the end of time.

Since the Corinthians exalted the gifts, Paul in contrast, exalts that which would carry the church until the end of time. Love, not miraculous gifts, would identify the disciples before the world until Jesus comes again. John wrote, “*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another*” (Jn 13:34,35). We must view Paul’s statements in 1 Corinthians 13 in reference to what Jesus stated in John 13:34,35.

The perfect would refer to that which would sustain the church until the end of time. Paul referred specifically to the gifts of prophecy, languages and knowledge. These three gifts would be replaced with the written and complete word of God that could easily be translated (interpreted) into every language of man. For this reason, I would affirm that the perfect of 1 Corinthians 13:10 would refer to the written word of God for the following reasons:

**1. *The perfect is contemporary with faith, hope and love.*** That which is whole (the perfect) would exist at the same time when faith, hope and love existed. The object of hope and faith will

be realized when Jesus comes again. That for which we have been hoping will have arrived at the final coming of Jesus. In other words, after Jesus comes, faith and hope will no longer exist because we will have realized that for which we hoped (See Rm 8:25; Hb 11:1). Paul is saying, however, that faith and hope co-exist with that which is perfect. Therefore, the perfect must exist during this dispensation before the coming of Jesus. The perfect cannot be something that is yet to come.

**2. *The perfect is in contrast to the part.*** That which is perfect in verse 10 is greater than that which is in part. The perfect is greater because it will take the place of the part. The perfect would specifically be greater than the gifts of knowledge and prophecy which stand for all the miraculous gifts.

**3. *The perfect is the complete revealed will of God.*** The gifts of prophecy and knowledge were means through which only parts of the revelation of God were made known to man. In contrast to this partial information, Paul says that the perfect or complete revelation of God’s word will take the place of the partial. The completion of the revelation of God in written form made the gifts of prophecy and knowledge unnecessary. The gift of languages was made unnecessary because the written word could be translated into other languages. The perfect law of liberty made the miraculous gifts redundant. They were not necessary after the faith “*was once for all delivered to the saints*” (Jd 3). God’s power “*has given to us all things that pertain to life*

*and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue”* (2 Pt 1:3). Through the inspired Scriptures, the Christian is made “*complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work*” (2 Tm 3:17).

If the purpose of the miraculous gifts was to establish and edify the church in the first century, then the purpose for which the word of God was put into written form made the gifts unnecessary. The purpose of the written word of God was to be God’s direction for the church until the final coming of the Son of God (1 Pt 1:25). The establishment of the written word through the pen of the inspired writers, therefore, signaled the end of the gifts.

The gifts were limited to those on whom the apostles had laid their hands. However, the written word of God could go to all without the condition of the laying on of the apostles’ hands. In view of the purpose for which God intended the written word of God to be among believers, it is difficult for us to understand the perfect of 1 Corinthians 13 to refer to anything other than the inspired word of God.

1 Corinthians 13:8-10 teaches that miraculous gifts – the gifts of prophecy, knowledge and tongues are used in the context as examples of all the gifts – were to be done away (vs 8). Paul teaches that these gifts were only a part of the whole. They were part of the whole that was to come (vs 9). When the perfect came, then the partial would be done away (vs 10). The complete revelation of God, there-

fore, was to replace the partial revelation that existed at the time Paul was writing the letter and was coming to the Corinthians through the gifts of prophecy and knowledge.

As the destruction of Jerusalem approached in reference to the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit and the writing of the New Testament letters, the miraculous gifts were coming to an end. Throughout the letters that were written to the early church, little emphasis was placed on the miraculous gifts in those letters that were written a decade or so before A.D. 70. It would be a correct assumption to say that the miraculous activity of the Holy Spirit ceased by A.D. 70. It would also be a fair assumption to say that all New Testament books, including Revelation, were written before A.D. 70.

## **B. The purpose of the gift of languages:**

There were three purposes for the gift of languages in the first century. It is important to understand why God worked through this gift in order to understand why the gift passed away. When the purposes for all the miraculous gifts were accomplished, there was no more need for their use. And thus, the Holy Spirit ceased to work in the church through these gifts.

**1. *Inspired languages were a sign to unbelievers.*** Speaking in languages was one of the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, and thus, the gift was referred

to as a sign. Jesus had promised that signs would go with those who believe (Mk 16:17). When the early disciples went forth, therefore, the Lord worked with them, “*confirming the word through the accompanying signs*” (Mk 16:20). God bore “*witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will*” (Hb 2:4). “The gift of tongues, as well as other miraculous abilities, were ‘signs’ designed to convince unbelievers of the heavenly origin of Christianity.”<sup>37:n.p.</sup> A sign was to signal something greater than the sign itself. The gift of languages was a sign in the sense that the inspired languages signaled the presence of the Holy Spirit.

God intended that the miraculous speaking in languages that had not been studied, to be a sign to the unbelievers. Paul wrote, “*Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers ...*” (1 Co 14:22). The gift of languages was an open manifestation that God was miraculously working in the church. Unbelievers who were acquainted with local Christians in any particular area witnessed their friends speaking in languages that they knew their friends had never before studied. The languages, therefore, became a signal to the unbelievers in communities that God was with the believers.

**2. Inspired languages were for individual edification when no interpreter was present.** Paul wrote, “*He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church*” (1 Co 14:4). If an interpreter were not

present when one spoke in tongues, then only the one who spoke was edified. However, if an interpreter were present, **then the speaking in languages could edify the entire congregation by the speaking of the word of God.** 1 Corinthians 14:4 refers to a time when no interpreter was present in the assembly. In this case, Paul commanded the one speaking in languages to keep silent in the assembly because he would only be disrupting the assembly of the church by his edification of himself through the use of his gift. However, if an interpreter were present, then the entire assembly could enjoy what he had to say.

We could assume that the one who spoke in a language that only he could understand edified himself by what he was saying. But he was saying it to himself, not to the congregation. He was thus to keep silent in the assembly if the congregation could not understand. Self-edification, therefore, would probably be only in the sense that he knew he had the gift because he knew he had never studied the language. It is probable that Paul made this statement only to emphasize a point. The point was not that the gift of languages was given for the purpose of self-edification. He simply made the statement to emphasize the point that if one speaks in a situation wherein only he understands, then only he reaps edification from what is said or his experience of speaking in the language. However, self-edification through the gift of languages was not a primary function for the giving of the gifts. The gifts were given for the benefit of others. They were

not given to be used for selfish reasons. In fact, selfish uses of the gifts would work against the very reason why the gifts were given. They were given in order to enhance one's ministry to others, not to oneself.

Paul desired to go to Rome in order that he might impart to the believers some spiritual gift (Rm 1:11). Such would profit the entire church in firmly establishing them in the faith (1 Co 12:7). The gifts would enrich them as a group and confirm them in the faith (See 1 Co 1:4-9). The early Gentile converts were converted out of the pagan religions of Greek and Roman mythology. In the absence of the written word of God, the Holy Spirit had to directly guide the early churches in the faith. The gifts were under the control of the possessors of the gifts (1 Co 14:27-34, 40), though the type of gift was evidently determined by the will of the Spirit (1 Co 12:11). Thus the Spirit ministered to the infant churches through the individuals in the congregations who had received the laying on of the apostles' hands. All the gifts were given for the building up of the body of Christ. The individual who possessed the gift was only indirectly encouraged as he or she administered to others through the use of his or her gift.

**3. *Miraculous languages were given for evangelism.*** Not only were the assemblies of the early churches composed of those who spoke many languages, the early evangelists were commissioned to go to every ethnic group of the world (Mt 28:19-20). In order to effectively preach and teach in a new language, it takes six

months to a year and a half of hard study and practice. It would be difficult to imagine Paul taking this much time just to be able to speak in the language of one particular group of people to whom he went. He said in 1 Corinthians 14:18, "*I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all.*" Paul was gifted by the Holy Spirit to speak in many languages. This allowed him, as well as other evangelists, to be able to rapidly evangelize the first century world. Their going forth was to the ends of the world in order to accomplish the commission of Jesus. The gospel "*which was preached to every creature under heaven*" went forth in every language of every creature (Cl 1:23).

### **C. The cessation of the gift of languages:**

The New Testament teaches that the open manifestation of miracles to confirm the spoken word of God— this would include speaking in languages— has passed away and that there is no more a need to confirm the word by miracles today. Miraculous gifts, as speaking in languages, were given to the early Christians for the purpose of confirming and firmly establishing the church in the faith (See Mk 16:17-20; Hb 2:3,4; Ep 4:11-16). When the evangelists in the first century went forth to preach, the gospel was confirmed wherever it was preached by the power of the Holy Spirit (See At 20:23; 1 Co 4:19,20; 1 Th 1:5). Paul's preaching was confirmed by miracles. The preaching of the prophets and evan-

gelist was also confirmed by God (Rm 15:18,19; Hb 2:3,4). However, when the word was confirmed by the miracles, and the New Testament was completed in written form, the miraculous gifts ceased because they had fulfilled their purpose (1 Co 13:8-10).

There is no need to confirm the faith today by miracles. A select number of the miracles of the first century were recorded for this purpose. We have the record of the confirming miracles (the New Testament). John recorded only a few of the miracles of Jesus. However, He affirmed that his record of miracles **was sufficient to produce faith in the hearts of men for all ages** (Jn 20:30,31). Men today, therefore, can believe on Jesus and have eternal life without the gift of speaking in languages. God says that what is recorded in His written word is able to make the man of God complete, *“thoroughly equipped for every good work”* (2 Tm 3:17).

Zechariah prophesied that miraculous revelation from God would eventually be terminated (Zc 13:2-5). He did not say when this would take place. He simply prophesied that the cessation of the miraculous would take place in the future from his time of writing. In 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 Paul also affirmed the cessation of the miraculous. He also taught such in Ephesians 4.

In the context of Ephesians 4, Paul affirmed that the miraculous gifts were to last only until the time when **the faith** had been completely delivered to the saints (See Jd 3). Though in this context one might argue the presence of natural

gifts, it cannot be denied that in the historical context of the Ephesian church, Paul was also discussing the work of miraculous gifts in the lives of those who ministered to the church with their natural gifts. This is clearly understood in verse 8. *“When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.”* The word “gifts” here would not refer to natural gifts that we possess, which gifts should be used in the edification of the church. Natural gifts were possessed by men **before** Jesus ascended on high. Every individual is given natural gifts by God when he is born. However, the miraculous gifts were given **after** the ascension of Jesus. They were given for special purposes. One of those purposes was to miraculously signal God’s work in the early church in order to let the world know that God was with His people (Hb 2:3,4).

After Jesus ascended to heaven, He gave miraculous gifts to Christians. These gifts were given for the *“equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ”* (Ep 4:12). The duration of the miraculous gifts is explained in Ephesians 4:13. *“Till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”* “Coming to the unity of the faith” refers to the church being unified upon the fundamentals of the truth of the gospel. Coming to “the knowledge of the Son of God” refers to the foundation upon which our unity is based (Mt 16:18,19). Through the inspiration of the apostles, all truth

was delivered to the saints (Jn 14:26:16:13; Jd 3). Since this truth has been recorded, there is no more need for the church to be maintained in unity by the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit through the miraculous gifts. The unity of the church is now maintained through the saints' study of and obedience to the truth of the New Testament Scriptures. In other words, the duration of these gifts was until the church had received the complete revelation of **the faith**, the final and completed revelation of truth from God. Once this was accomplished, the miraculous gifts ceased. Unity and growth of the church now depend on the saints' study and application of the word of God to their lives.

The word "faith" in Ephesians 4:13 is not used to signify a simple belief in Jesus. The use of the article "the" with faith indicates that Paul is using the word in the same sense as in Jude 3 where Jude wrote, "... *I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for **the faith** which was once for all delivered to the saints*" (See also Rm 10:8; Cl 2:7). **The faith is a reference to the totality of Christian knowledge as revealed through the Scriptures from the Father.** Jude said that this faith had once and for all time been delivered to the saints. Therefore, miraculous gifts, including the speaking in tongues, were to exist only until the completion of the final revelation of the truth. This revelation was completed in the first century. The gifts ceased, and thus, tongues have also ceased.

#### **D. The curse of subjective religion:**

A subjective religion is submission to emotional suggestions of the individual or the group as a whole with disregard to direction by inspired written revelation. The practice of ecstatic gibberish falls into the category of subjective religion. As a subjective religious practice, it is contrary to biblical teaching that is against subjective religions. Subjective religions originate from within the individual and are dependent on the mood of the individual. In subjective religion man becomes the central authority of the religion. Man becomes the final authority upon which the beliefs of the individual rest. There are many biblical warnings against such religions because they lead one away from God.

God calls men today unto obedience through His word. He continually pleads with men through His word to submit to His will (See Mt 11:28-30; Mk 16:15). A subjective religion leads one to reject the call of God through His word. It encourages people to trust in the authority of their own feelings. A subjective religion leads one to reject the Bible as the only authority for religious belief and behavior. Many of those who are of this type of religion claim that the "ecstatic speech experience" and the feelings that result from such an experience, are more important proofs of spirituality than obedience to the written word of God. It is generally true that those who are of a subjective religion will trust their feelings more than they will trust objec-

tive Bible teaching. They thus stumble over one of the most basic principles of the Bible that Jeremiah mentioned in Jeremiah 10:23. *“O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.”* This fact is true simply because God said it was true. It is **not in man** to direct his own behavior. Any religion that teaches submission to human emotions and feelings as the authority of belief cannot be from God.

When one properly understands 1 Corinthians 13, he can understand why the charismatic movement is degenerated movement into a subjective religion that is contrary to the word of God. This is true because it is often believed among charismatic churches that when one preaches or teaches, he or she does not have to depend on a study of the word of God. It is affirmed that one should allow “the Spirit to take control,” and thus allow whatever is spoken to be from the Spirit. This belief sets aside the word of God. It diminishes the importance of the Bible. It attacks the very reason why the Holy Spirit inspired the Scriptures to be written. Therefore, charismatic churches are often a digression from the truth of God’s word into a religious chaos that leads men and women into destruction (2 Th 2:10-12).

The Bible claims to be the only authority for religious belief and behavior (See 1 Co 14:37; Gl 1:6-9; 2 Tm 3:16,17; Rv 22:18,19). The Bible teaches that it is the Christian’s source of faith (See Jn 20:30,31; Rm 10:17). Therefore, if anyone desires to come to the Father, he or

she must come through the written word of the Father. If one ignores the direction of the word of God in belief and behavior, he will not draw closer to God. He will be drawn by his own subjective feelings to that which is contrary to the will of God.

To accept any authority for belief and behavior in one’s religious life other than the Bible is to submit to that which will lead one from God. It is rebellion against God to follow either the religious traditions of men or religions that have been invented after the misguided emotions of man (See Mt 15:1-9; Mk 7:6-9; Cl 2:8; 2 Th 3:6). If we reject the Bible as authority in religion, then we have no authority for belief and behavior. This is true because the traditions of men are always contradictory to one another and always changing. For this reason God expects us to submit to His revelation. Only in doing this can religious believers be one in the Spirit.

Christianity has never been a subjective belief or behavior in the sense that God leaves us to be carried about by our own emotions. Paul wrote, *“And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets”* (1 Co 14:32). The Holy Spirit did not subject the individual possessor of any gift to His own will. The use of the miraculous gift was always subject to the one who possessed the gift. Paul had to command Timothy, who had power over the use of his gift, to stir up the use of that gift (2 Tm 1:6). He told Timothy not to neglect his gift (1 Tm 4:14). Paul told the Thessalonians, who could voluntarily suppress the miraculous

gifts, not to quench the Spirit's work through the gifts (1 Th 5:19,20). This picture of the first century church is certainly different from that which we see today in subjective religions, especially the charismatic movement throughout the world.

Religions that thrive on the emotions of those who are out of control are completely foreign to the New Testament church. These religions are the work of the uncontrolled emotions of misguided religionists who are persistent to maintain their humanistic religion. These are religionists who would do well to read again Proverbs 14:12. *"There is a way*

*that seems right to man, but its end is the way of death."* In this context, we must always remember what Paul said God will allow to happen in the religious life of the one who does not follow the direction of the word of God. Paul wrote, *"... and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness"* (2 Th 2:10-12).