

**“The Gifts of the Holy Spirit”**  
By  
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**Thesis Statement:** The multiple gifts of the Holy Spirit as listed in Scripture are sovereignly imparted according to the will of the Holy Spirit to individual believers for the ultimate purpose of the edification and perfecting of the church body.

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## INTRODUCTION

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” James 1:17. God has endowed the human race with so many tremendous gifts, the greatest of which is salvation! Second only to that gift, however, is the Holy Spirit and His manifold gifts (Luke 11:13). The multiple gifts of the Holy Spirit as listed in Scripture are sovereignly imparted according to the will of the Holy Spirit to individual believers for the ultimate purpose of the edification and perfecting of the church body. A large amount of space and emphasis is given to Spiritual gifts in the New Testament and the topic is deserving of study by believers. Paul told the Corinthians that he did not want them to be ignorant of them (1 Corinthians 12:1). Understanding the gifts, being able to classify them, and understanding their place in modern times are issues that must be addressed in a comprehensive study of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

## UNDERSTANDING THE GIFTS

What exactly are the gifts of the Spirit? There are three Greek words translated gifts in conjunction with the gifts of the Spirit in the New Testament. *Dorea* or *dorma* is the ordinary word for gift and is found in Ephesians 4:7-8. *Charismata* is the most often used term relating to Spiritual gifts<sup>1</sup> and is a cognate of the word *charis* which means “grace”. The final word, *pneumatika*, is formed from the descriptive term “Spiritual”<sup>2</sup> and literally means “things belonging to the Spirit.”<sup>3</sup> Though the Greek term may vary the idea behind these terms remains consistent in their context. Spiritual gifts are endowments by the Holy Spirit given to believers for the service of the Kingdom.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kenneth Boa, “The Gifts of the Spirit”, *Bible.org*, 2007, [http://www.bible.org/page.php?page\\_id=440](http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=440)

<sup>2</sup> Craig L. Blomberg, “Holy Spirit, Gifts of,” *Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, (Grand Rapids, 1996), <http://bible.crosswalk.com/Dictionaries/BakersEvangelicalDictionary/bed.cgi?number=T347>

<sup>3</sup> Billy Graham, *The Holy Spirit*, (Waco TX: Word Books, 1978), 133

<sup>4</sup> Craig L. Blomberg, “Holy Spirit, Gifts of,” *Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*

What then would be a working definition of Spiritual gifts? Walvoord defines them as, "...divinely given capacities to perform useful functions for God, especially in the area of Spiritual service."<sup>5</sup> Deffinbaugh similarly states, "A Spiritual gift is the God-given capacity of every Christian to carry out his function in the body of Christ."<sup>6</sup> Such definitions adequately purvey the Scriptural understanding of Spiritual gifts.

The Scriptures are very clear that the distribution of the multiple gifts of the Holy Spirit is according to His will (1 Corinthians 12:11) and that every Christian is a recipient of at least one gift (1 Corinthians 12:7). The Holy Spirit clearly exercises His Sovereignty in this matter. There is question, however, as to whether Spiritual gifts can be imparted to men by the laying on of hands and prophetic utterances over them. The official position of the Assemblies of God denomination on this issue is that this is not a Scriptural practice. Their position is that, "Only the Holy Spirit can give supernatural gifts. There is no record in Scripture of humans prophetically imparting Spiritual gifts." This position was developed in light a particular sect's practice of such.<sup>7</sup> This position appears to focus upon the Spiritual gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8-11, and not specifically other listings. Towns acknowledges that the gifts are given sovereignly by the Holy Spirit, yet notices Paul's statements in Romans 1:11 and 1 Timothy 4:14 concerning the impartation of Spiritual gifts though him and the act of laying on of hands. Towns explains this seeming contradiction by stating that the Holy Spirit may develop a gift within a person through/under the influence of the faithful ministry of others.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Elmer Towns, *Theology for Today*, (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Group, 2002), 307

<sup>6</sup> Bod Deffinbaugh, "Spiritual Gifts (1 Corinthians 12:1-11)", *Bible.org*, 2007, [http://www.bible.org/page.php?page\\_id=4037](http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=4037)

<sup>7</sup> Assemblies of God, "Imparting of Spiritual Gifts", [http://ag.org/top/beliefs/sptlissues\\_impacting\\_Spiritual\\_gifts.cfm](http://ag.org/top/beliefs/sptlissues_impacting_Spiritual_gifts.cfm)

<sup>8</sup> Elmer Towns, *Theology for Today*, 315

One other aspect apparently affecting the distribution of Spiritual gifts is that of human initiative. 1 Corinthians 12:31 encourages believers to deeply desire the best gifts. In regards to this Towns states:

At this place the word “gifts” is plural, suggesting a Christian can get more gifts. This implies that faithfulness in seeking and exercising a gift will lead to a greater number of gifts or a greater manifestation of one’s gift. Whatever the interpretation of this “best gifts”, (its identification is not germane to the argument) it is achieved by human responsibility. When properly exercised toward the proper goals, the Christian will grow in his number (quantity) of gifts and in the effectiveness (quality) of his gifts.<sup>9</sup>

It is apparent that human initiative is important in regards to the faithful exercise of Spiritual gifts. While the Holy Spirit still sovereignly distributes the gifts He bestows them more abundantly upon faithful servants (Matthew 25:14-30).

The Roman Catholic understanding of the gifts of the Spirit is very different from the Protestant. The traditional Roman Catholic understanding of the impartation of the gifts of the Spirit is that it occurs during the act of confirmation. Through the medium of the priest the individual “receives” the Holy Spirit. Along with this conference of the Spirit upon the individual is the impartation of the seven gifts of the Spirit as recorded in Isaiah 11:1-3. These seven gifts are: wisdom, understanding, right judgment, courage, knowledge, reverence, and wonder and awe in God’s presence.<sup>10</sup> This is radically divergent from the New Testament understanding of the gifts of the Spirit and therefore does not fit into the scope of the current study.

It has been established that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are distributed through the will of the Holy Spirit. Yet, it remains to be answered as to the purpose of His distribution of the gifts. 1 Corinthians 12-14 and Ephesians 4 are careful to stress that the gifts are not given primarily for the benefit of the individual upon which they are bestowed, but rather for the benefit and

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<sup>9</sup> IBID, 314

<sup>10</sup>Rev. Thomas Richstatter, “Confirmation: Sacrament of the Spirit”, *Millennium Monthly* (August 1998) <http://www.americancatholic.org/Newsletters/MM/ap0898.asp>

prosperity of the church body as a whole.<sup>11</sup> Of course, it is impossible to divorce the intrinsic value of a gift from the exercise of that gift which would in turn also result in the benefit of the one upon whom the gift is bestowed. Ephesians 4 also makes the fostering of unity within the church is another purpose for the gifts of the Spirit. Billy Graham notes, “Thus the gifts of the Spirit should never divide the body of Christ; they should unify it.”<sup>12</sup> Ironically, the gifts that were intended to unite the church have often been a source of division in modern times.<sup>13</sup>

### CLASSIFICATION OF GIFTS

There are four separate listings of Spiritual gifts in the Scriptures found in Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, Ephesians 4:8-12, and 1 Peter 4:10-11. 1 Peter 4:10-11 is a very brief list and appears to be a classification of the gifts of the Spirit rather than an actual listing of gifts. This classification would divide the gifts into speaking gifts and serving gifts.<sup>14</sup>

There is a very wide spectrum of gifts included in the three major listings of Spiritual gives. Some gifts operate with a certain degree of spontaneity and completely independent of the efforts of the believer (i.e. tongues, interpretation of tongues, etc.) while others are built throughout a lifetime of direction and preparation by the Holy Spirit.<sup>15</sup> Some have suggested that there may be as many as twenty-two different Spiritual gifts listed in the Scriptures<sup>16</sup>. However, some (including Deffenbaugh<sup>17</sup>) are not convinced that the listing of gifts in the Scripture are exhaustive<sup>18</sup>. Although it would be very difficult to consider a quality a Spiritual gift apart from divine revelation in the Scriptures there are some valid arguments made for this case.

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<sup>11</sup> Bod Deffenbaugh, “Spiritual Gifts (1 Corinthians 12:1-11)”, *Bible.org*

<sup>12</sup> Billy Graham, *The Holy Spirit*, 136

<sup>13</sup> *Advanced Seminar Booklet*, Institute in Basic Life Principles, (Oaks Brooks, IL: 1986), 54

<sup>14</sup> Kenneth Boa, “The Gifts of the Spirit”, *Bible.org*

<sup>15</sup> Craig L. Blomberg, “Holy Spirit, Gifts of,” *Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*

<sup>16</sup> Elmer Towns, *Theology for Today* 309

<sup>17</sup> Bod Deffenbaugh, “Spiritual Gifts (1 Corinthians 12:1-11)”, *Bible.org*

<sup>18</sup> Craig L. Blomberg, “Holy Spirit, Gifts of,” *Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*

For instance, it can be difficult at times to distinguish between a natural talent and a gifting of God when the Bible seems to marry the two. Exodus 31 illustrates that the ability of Bezalel to fashion materials for the Tabernacle was influenced by the Holy Spirit and as such could be considered a gift.<sup>19</sup> Deffinbaugh points out that natural talents are not to be confused with Spiritual gifts, nor are they, however, to be completely separated from them.<sup>20</sup> The most important distinction to remember in regards to this matter is the distinct aspect of the supernatural in the realm of Spiritual gifts. Spiritual gifts involve the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, not the arm of the flesh. Leslie B. Flynn describes the relationship of Spiritual gifts and natural talents as such:

Talents instruct, inspire, or entertain on a natural level. Gifts relate to the building up of the saints (or to evangelization). Something supernatural happens in the one who is ministering when a gift is exercised. Nothing supernatural happens in one who is performing when a talent is displayed.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, what Bezalel experienced could be considered a gift from the Holy Spirit, but should be considered such as the exception and not the rule. The specific listings of Scripture should be considered the typical gifts of the Spirit for the body of believers.

A systematic classification of the gifts of the Spirit is hampered by apparent overlapping in the various lists. While it is not necessarily possible to develop a perfect classification system for the gifts of the Spirit Bill Gothard suggests a pattern<sup>22</sup> that appears to be adequate. This classification is based on the distinctive context of three significant listings of spiritual gifts. Romans 12:6-8 appears to list motivational gifts, Ephesians 4:8-12 contains ministry position gifts, and 1 Corinthians 12:8-11 lists gifts of manifestation.

### **GIFTS OF MOTIVATION**

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<sup>19</sup> Billy Graham, *The Holy Spirit*, 134-135

<sup>20</sup> Bod Deffinbaugh, "Spiritual Gifts (1 Corinthians 12:1-11)", *Bible.org*

<sup>21</sup> Leslie B. Flynn, *19 Gifts of the Spirit*, (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1974) 22

<sup>22</sup> *Advanced Seminar Booklet*, Institute in Basic Life Principles, 51-53

Bill Gothard presents a very detailed study of the seven spiritual gifts listed in Romans 12. He refers to these gifts as motivational gifts as he believes that they represent the lens through which that person views the circumstances and situations of life. It seems as though this gift is inherently connected to the bent or personality of the individual. After salvation that gift is ignited through the Holy Spirit and the person is able to use their gift or perspective to the benefit of the church. Gothard suggests that discovering these gifts occurs through a careful examination of the strengths and weaknesses of an individual.<sup>23</sup>

While it would not be possible to provide a detailed examination of each of the motivational gifts as presented by Gothard at this time, a brief overview of them will prove to be helpful.

**Prophecy (Prophet):** The motivation of the prophet is to proclaim the truth and expose sin. He is motivated by an intense desire to keep the church pure and operate with a clear conscience. His strengths include boldly standing for the right even at the risk of suffering. His weaknesses can include an overly harsh and judgmental attitude.

**Serving (Servant):** A servant (called a minister in Romans 12) desires to meet the needs of others and free others so that they can minister more effectively just as the deacons did for the apostles. They are characterized as being strong workers who seek to please those they serve. They also have a tendency to be too busy and even interfere where they are not needed or wanted.

**Teaching (Teacher):** Teachers are those who very concerned that the truth be clear and validated. They are most interested in ensuring the accuracy of Bible teachings. Their strength

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<sup>23</sup> For a more detailed examination of Gothard's ideas see *Advanced Seminar Booklet*, Institute in Basic Life Principles, 47-86. While it cannot be conclusive that this is the only and proper understanding of these particular gifts, Gothard does present some very compelling arguments in their defense.

includes an ability to research and clearly and systematically present the truths of Scripture, but have a tendency to trust human reasoning and be overly concerned with credentials.

**Exhorting (Exhorter):** The exhorter is one who has a desire to stimulate the faith of others and to see qualitative growth in the body of believers. They enjoy helping others grow by presenting steps toward the achievement of that goal. However, they also tend to be self-reliant and treat the individual as a project that needs immediate and sometimes unrealistic results.

**Giving (Giver):** The giver is one who is adept at handling resources so that they can be used most advantageously for the advancement of the Kingdom of God. The giver is characterized by an ability to exercise thriftiness and be prosperous, but can have a tendency to be selfish and take credit for gifts.

**Organizing (Organizer or Ruler):** The ruler is one who is able to plan ahead and complete tasks. They are skilled and gifted managers and supervisors who are able to see a task and get it done. They are excellent delegators, but have a propensity toward mismanaging their own authority.

**Mercy:** The person of mercy is one who is motivated to share the burdens of others and to use means to alleviate the distress in the individual lives. They are extremely compassionate people who are very loyal to their friends and desire to cultivate personal relationships. However, they also tend to be naïve in their relationships and fail to show deference in their decisions.

It is obvious that each of the above listed gifts is an important perspective of the body of Christ. Each of these gifts, present and operating within the church, will be effective in edifying and perfecting the body.

### **Gifts of Ministry Position**

Ephesians 4:8-12 provides another listing of spiritual gifts. These gifts, however, correspond not to a person's particular motivation or style of doing things, but rather to an official church office. Boa points out that while all Christians have been called of God to perform ministry, not all of them are to necessarily retain an official office within the church.<sup>24</sup> It seems apparent that the Lord understood in His divine wisdom that there should be specific leadership gifts for "the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ." (Ephesians 4:12). The Scofield Bible explains it as follows:

...certain Spirit-endued men, viz. apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, are themselves the gifts whom the glorified Christ bestows upon His body the church. In Corinthians the gifts are spiritual enablements for specific service; in Ephesians the gifts are men who have such enablements.<sup>25</sup>

Therefore, an examination of these official ministry position gifts is important to any study of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

**Apostles:** Understanding the gift of apostles is complicated by a division within scholarly circles as to its modern application. Many would claim that the gift of apostleship was only for the establishment period of the church and ceased with the death of the New Testament apostles.<sup>26</sup> In its primary meaning the gift of apostleship refers to the original apostles were eyewitness of the Lord Jesus and had the unique ministry of establishing the church and writing the New Testament Scriptures. There are others, however, who feel that it is still a viable gift for today, although not in its primary meaning, but in its secondary meaning. This would be that the office similar to that of a missionary who establishes and oversees churches.<sup>27</sup>

**Prophets:** As with the apostle, many are split on the office of a prophet. Some believe that, like the apostle, the gift of prophet is no longer available today, arguing in the same way as with the apostle that they were instrumental in the writing of Scripture and with the closing of the Canon

<sup>24</sup> Kenneth Boa, "The Gifts of the Spirit", *Bible.org*

<sup>25</sup> C.I. Scofield, *The Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1945), 1253

<sup>26</sup> Elmer Towns, *Theology for Today*, 307-308.

<sup>27</sup> Billy Graham, *The Holy Spirit*, 138-139

are no longer necessary. While others would recognize that prophetic occurrences are possible today (although rare and non-binding upon believers), they would tend to understand the role of the prophet in a secondary meaning. A modern day prophet would often be associated with one who has insight into the Scriptures and is able to present God's truth in a powerful way.<sup>28</sup>

**Evangelists:** Evangelists are those who are skilled in leading others to salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. The scope of this gifting may be on an individual level (as in street or door-to-door witnessing) or it may be through preaching to larger crowds in revivals, church services, or crusades.<sup>29</sup> There appears to be no contention regarding the validity of this gift of the Spirit for modern day believers.

**Pastors:** The term pastor comes from the Greek *poimen* meaning to shepherd. Its primary spiritual reference is to Christ as the Great Shepherd, but in this passage it refers to pastors who act as the spiritual shepherd of the local flock (congregation or body).<sup>30</sup> Like the gift of evangelist there is no seeming contention over its present day application.

**Teacher:** The office of teacher would obviously best be suited to someone with the gift of teaching. Blomberg believes that the lack of a second demonstrative adjective in the expression "some to be pastors and teachers" implicates a particular codependence of the one upon the other. He also believes that every teacher of the Scripture should function in a pastoral role as he cares for the training of those he is entrusted with.<sup>31</sup>

## GIFTS OF MANIFESTATION

The final category of gifts to be examined is that of the gifts of manifestation found in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10. These nine gifts have been categorized into three separate headings. These headings are gifts of revelation (word of wisdom, word of knowledge, and discerning of spirits),

<sup>28</sup> Elmer Towns, *Theology for Today*, 307-308 & Billy Graham, *The Holy Spirit*, 139-140.

<sup>29</sup> Kenneth Boa, "The Gifts of the Spirit", *Bible.org*

<sup>30</sup> Spiros Zodhiates, *The Hebrew-Greek Study Bible*, (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers rev. ed. 1991), 1750

<sup>31</sup> Craig L. Blomberg, "Holy Spirit, Gifts of," *Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*

gifts of power (faith, miracles, and gifts of healings), and gifts of utterance (tongues, interpretation of tongues, and prophecy).<sup>32</sup>

### **Gifts of Revelation**

The gifts of revelation are categorized as such because they all reveal something.

**The word of wisdom** is considered by some to be the ability to skillfully apply Biblical principals and insights to specific situations.<sup>33</sup> As such a word of wisdom “will reflect God’s plans, purposes, and ways of accomplishing things”<sup>34</sup> providing His insight for the solution.

**The word of knowledge** is subject to two interpretations. One understanding of this gift is that it is the ability to organize truths for the benefit of others.<sup>35</sup> It is also considered by many to involve an aspect of supernatural revelation from the Lord into a certain situation providing knowledge available only to God.<sup>36</sup>

**Discernings of spirits** is indicated in the plural which can indicate a variety of expressions. It is essentially the ability of an individual to distinguish between the spirit of truth and error as indicated in 1 John 4:6.<sup>37</sup> Peter manifested this gift in the book of Acts when he understood that Ananias and Sapphira were lying.

### **Gifts of Power**

The gifts of power are those gifts which the Holy Spirit imparts to believers to empower them in the arena of the supernatural. Two of the gifts of power are listed as plural and this may indicate various manifestations of these gifts.

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<sup>32</sup> William W. Menzies and Stanley M. Horton, *Bible Doctrines: A Pentecostal Perspective*, (Springfield, MO: Legion Press, 1993), 166.

<sup>33</sup> Kenneth Boa, “The Gifts of the Spirit”, *Bible.org*,

<sup>34</sup> David Lim, *Spiritual Gifts: A Fresh Look*, (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1963), 29

<sup>35</sup> Kenneth Boa, “The Gifts of the Spirit”, *Bible.org*

<sup>36</sup> William W. Menzies and Stanley M. Horton, *Bible Doctrines: A Pentecostal Perspective*, 166.

<sup>37</sup> Kenneth Boa, “The Gifts of the Spirit”, *Bible.org*

**The gift of faith** is not considered to be the same as regular or saving faith. Rather it is a supernatural manifestation of faith to “claim God’s power for present needs.”<sup>38</sup> It can also be the endowment of the persistence to see the fulfillment of divinely inspired vision in the midst of difficult circumstances.<sup>39</sup>

**The gifts of miracles** are broader in their nature than the gifts of healings. They are instances of the supernatural occurring through an individual for the purpose of the advancement of the kingdom of God.<sup>40</sup> As with the gifts of healings the gifts of miracles are plural which may indicate a variety of applications. The book of Acts includes many instances of this gift, particularly in association with missionary activities.<sup>41</sup>

**The gifts of healings** are essentially the Holy Spirit healing a sick individual through the medium of a believer. The plurality of the gift is believed by some to indicate that there are sickness specific gifts, i.e., one may be gifted to heal cancer, etc.<sup>42</sup> There are those who would also include inner healing in this category as well, i.e., someone gifted in healing bitterness, bad memories, etc..<sup>43</sup>

There is controversy concerning the gift of healing, due in large part to frauds and charlatans who have taken advantage of believers through their exploitation of this gift.. As a result there are many today who would deemphasize the physical aspect of healing and emphasize the relational or inner healing elements. Physical healing is often equated with medical attention.<sup>44</sup> However, to equate the gift of healing to medicine seems to confuse the issue of spiritual gifts and natural abilities as previously highlighted.

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<sup>38</sup> Limm, *Spiritual Gifts*, 74-75

<sup>39</sup> Kenneth Boa, “The Gifts of the Spirit”, *Bible.org*

<sup>40</sup> William W. Menzies and Stanley M. Horton, *Bible Doctrines: A Pentecostal Perspective*, 167

<sup>41</sup> Kenneth Boa, “The Gifts of the Spirit”, *Bible.org*

<sup>42</sup> William W. Menzies and Stanley M. Horton, *Bible Doctrines: A Pentecostal Perspective*, 167 and Blaine Bartel, *Youth Express Curriculum*, Volume 3, Willie George Ministries

<sup>43</sup> Kenneth Boa, “The Gifts of the Spirit”, *Bible.org*,

<sup>44</sup> Billy Graham, *The Holy Spirit*, 158-165

### **Gifts of Utterance**

The gifts of utterance are those gifts which involve the supernatural ability to speak a message from the Lord.

**The gift of tongues** is the supernatural ability of a believer to speak a word from the Lord in a language that has not been learned by the speaker.<sup>45</sup> Most evangelical scholars do not consider the gift of tongues as listed in 1 Corinthians 12 to be the same manifestation as that of “speaking in tongues” that the 120 disciples experienced on the day of Pentecost. The utterances of the gift of tongues are usually considered to be more ecstatic than the genuine languages spoken on the day of Pentecost.<sup>46</sup>

There are those who would argue that the occurrence on the day of Pentecost was not actually a miracle of speech, but rather a miracle on the part of the hearers. John Wesley’s reaction to this is:

The miracle was not in the ears of the hearers, (as some have unaccountably supposed,) but in the mouth of the speakers. And this family praising God together, with the tongues of all the world, was an earnest that the whole world should in due time praise God in their various tongues. As the Spirit gave them utterance - Moses, the type of the law, was of a slow tongue; but the Gospel speaks with a fiery and flaming one.<sup>47</sup>

There are several differences between the tongues of Pentecost and 1 Corinthians 12, most notably that the gift of tongues requires an interpretation. This has led some to believe that there is a gift of tongues for public manifestation and a private use of tongues or “prayer language”.<sup>48</sup> Additionally, 1 Corinthians 13:1 mentions speaking in the “tongues of angels.” This has caused many to conclude that the manifestation of the gift of tongues is not necessarily that of any known language.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Kenneth Boa, “The Gifts of the Spirit”,

<sup>46</sup> Max Anders and Kenneth O. Gangel, *Holman New Testament Commentary: Acts*, (Nashville, TN: Brodman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 26

<sup>47</sup> “Wesley Commentary”, e-Sword Version 7.8.5, Copyright 2000-2007, Rick Meyers

<sup>48</sup> Kenneth Boa, “The Gifts of the Spirit”

<sup>49</sup> Billy Graham, *The Holy Spirit*, 171

The gift of tongues appears to be a gift that is easily abused. For this reason Paul issued several regulations for the proper administration of this gift in 1 Corinthians 14:26-28.<sup>50</sup> Most notable of these regulations is the limitation of the manifestation to a maximum of three and the requirement of an interpretation.

**Interpretation of tongues** is the interpretation of the utterance of the gift of tongues into the language of the body in which the message was delivered. It is not necessarily to be considered a strict translation, but an interpretation of the essential content of the tongues message.<sup>51</sup> 1 Corinthians 4:13 indicates that it can be a gift given in conjunction with the gift of tongues as the tongue speaker is therein encouraged to seek to interpret.<sup>52</sup>

**Prophecy** is simply the reception and proclamation of a message from the Lord. It can be futuristic, but it appears that the primary sense in which it is present in 1 Corinthians 12 is that of forthtelling and not necessarily foretelling. Prophecy would be a word of edification and encouragement from the Lord for His people.<sup>53</sup> Many would equate prophecy to spirit-empowered preaching of the Scriptures.<sup>54</sup>

### CONTINUITY OF THE GIFTS

There is much debate in evangelical circles concerning the present day application of several of the gifts of the Spirit. The debate tends to pit the charismatics against the non-charismatics. The gifts of the Spirit appear to have to application categories. There are those gifts of the spirit which serve to edify the body and all of these gifts are generally accepted by both camps. However, the gifts that are considered sign gifts (healings, miracles, tongues, interpretation of tongues, and some would include apostle<sup>55</sup>) tend to create controversy as the

<sup>50</sup> Kenneth Boa, "The Gifts of the Spirit"

<sup>51</sup> William W. Menzies and Stanley M. Horton, *Bible Doctrines: A Pentecostal Perspective*, 167

<sup>52</sup> Kenneth Boa, "The Gifts of the Spirit", *Bible.org*

<sup>53</sup> Kenneth Boa, "The Gifts of the Spirit"

<sup>54</sup> Billy Graham, *The Holy Spirit*, 139-141

<sup>55</sup> Elmer Towns, *Theology for Today*, 307-309

non-charismatics argue that they have ceased and do not have present-day application, while the charismatics argue the opposite.

The most vivid argument for the cessation of the sign gifts, in particular tongues, is based off of 1 Corinthians 13 which states that particular gifts of the spirit as listed in 1 Corinthians 13 will cease when “that which is perfect is come” (verse 10). Those who are argue in favor of their cessation claim that the Canon of Scripture is “that which is perfect” and therefore, with the completion of the Scriptures comes the end of these particular sign gifts.<sup>56</sup>

However, the charasmatics would argue that the phrase, “that which is perfect” refers not to the completion of the Canon, but rather to the Second Advent of Christ. Interpreting the phrase “perfect” to mean the Second Advent seems to be more in line with the writing and thinking of the Apostle Paul. He was looking for the return of Christ and not the completion of the Canon. 1 Corinthians 1:7 associates the functionality of the gifts with the Second Coming of Christ and not the Canon.<sup>57</sup>

Another passage which the non-charasmatics use to argue their point is Hebrews 2:3-4 which they indicate makes the point that the various sign gifts would cease with the passing of the apostles.<sup>58</sup> However, a thorough exegesis of the Scriptures does not clearly indicate that any of the gifts of the Spirit have ceased. Blomberg makes the following assertion:

There is no exegetical warrant for claiming that any of the gifts have ceased. They are God’s characteristic endowments for Christian service in the New Testament age, arguably the most fundamental way ministry occurs (Acts 2:17-21; 1 Corinthians 1:7). Against the view that maintains, from the lack of the more supernatural gifts throughout much of church history, that these charisms were limited to the apostolic age, three points must be noted: (1) these gifts did not end at the close of the first century, but continued well into the third; (2) their subsequent diminution can best be attributed to a growing, unscriptural institutionalization of the church and an overreaction to the abuse of the gifts in heretical (most notably Montanist) circles; (3) even then, no era of church history was completely without examples of all the gifts. The twentieth century resurgence of the gifts cannot be attributed to the arrival of the last days, since for the New Testament “the last days” refers to the entire church age.

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<sup>56</sup> IBID, 307-308

<sup>57</sup> Craig L. Blomberg, “Holy Spirit, Gifts of,” *Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*

<sup>58</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 893

They may, however, reflect a recovery of more biblical, spontaneous, and all-inclusive worship and ministry.<sup>59</sup>

### CONCLUSION

The gifts of the Spirit are powerful tools endowed by the Holy Spirit upon the body of believers for the building, edification, and perfection of the church. They are vital in the effective advancement of the kingdom of God. As such, they must be understood by the believers for the more effective operation of the church body.

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<sup>59</sup> Craig L. Blomberg, "Holy Spirit, Gifts of," *Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*



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