

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

The Gifts
of the
Holy Spirit

Dr. Steven Waterhouse

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The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

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Preface

This booklet is an excerpt from **Not By Bread Alone; An Outlined Guide to Bible Doctrine** (available for free download from www.webtheology.com or in hardback from Amazon.com).

Once one trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, the Holy Spirit indwells and spiritually baptizes the believer into union with Christ. The Holy Spirit also bestows every believer with one or more spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:7; Ephesians 4:7; 1 Peter 4:10). This Bible research was written to remove confusion about these gifts and enable a Christian to know how to discover his or her spiritual gifts.

To have a full relationship with God the Father we must place our faith in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ paid for our sins on the cross and rose again. He would never lie, and made this promise; “For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day” (John 6:40).

If you have never placed your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior, you can best do this in a prayer that expresses faith in Him and His death on the cross as a payment for your sins. “Whoever calls upon the Name of the Lord will be saved” (Romans 10:13). Please contact Dr. Waterhouse for counsel on this important decision.

Dr. Steven Waterhouse.

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I. Introduction

The Holy Spirit's ministry as the gift-giver deserves its own comprehensive study as there is a deep rift among conservative Christians as to His present work. The origin and growth of the charismatic movement necessitates a detailed study on the issue of the cessation of sign gifts before there can be a study about gifts in general.

While many charismatics are indeed believers in the Person of Christ and His work on the cross, this does not diminish great differences between the typical charismatic and typical non-charismatic schools of thought. The two camps are usually civil and sensible enough to acknowledge brotherhood where a genuine faith in Christ exists. However, deep differences in theology and ecclesiastical philosophy usually require some limitations in intimate and continuous joint ministries, especially teaching and counseling. Few issues in Pneumatology could be considered fundamentals of the faith where the matter is one of deep apostasy that necessarily separates Christians from infidels. Yet, beliefs that divide typical charismatics from non-charismatics can be among the most important of the "secondary" doctrines. Actually, the cessation of sign gifts is a minor difference compared to the more important doctrines, such as whether the Holy Spirit's indwelling is for all believers or some, whether Spirit baptism is a position or crisis experience, whether one should strive or plead for more of the Spirit, whether there are prophets and apostles who obtain revelation for the Church, whether new Scriptures could be written. Charismatics are typically confused on them, and this raises some question as to whether their judgment can be trusted in their exegesis of more specialized topics (not to mention their interpretation of experiences). At the very least, charismatic theology ought not to be considered immune from scrutiny from the Bible. If it has made errors in major areas of Pneumatology, one cannot just accept every pronouncement charismatics make without Scriptural validation. Christians have every right to question experiences, for experiences may be of human origin or even Satanic origin. Indeed, Christians have a responsibility to test and evaluate every claim to truth by the standard for truth, the Scriptures.

To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn [Isaiah 8:20].

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Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so [Acts 17:11].

But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good [1 Thessalonians 5:21].

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world [1 John 4:1].

Since many areas of conflict between charismatics and non-charismatics have already been studied, concentration will only be focused on the area of gifts.

II. Cessation of Sign Gifts:

A. Cessation of Sign Gifts as Scripturally Probable

It would be unfair to assert that the argument for the cessation of sign gifts is as ironclad as that for Biblical inspiration or the deity of Christ. However, it is fair to conclude that Biblical evidence would lead one to anticipate a cessation of sign gifts at the close of the apostolic age. If sign gifts did not cease with the apostles, then the Bible's portrayal of this age would be confusing and misleading. While the Bible does not explicitly teach "sign gifts will cease with the apostles," the idea of cessation of sign gifts is a logical deduction that can reasonably be made from what the Bible does teach. Biblical evidence suggests that the sign gifts would probably cease with the end of the apostolic age. Non-charismatics should not be faulted for probing this inference. The historical fact that certain gifts did cease supports that it is a correct line of reasoning.

1. Precedent for Cessation of a Gift

It is difficult to challenge the point that the gift of apostleship has ceased. One of the qualifications for apostleship was that one had to be an eyewitness of the resurrected Lord. Acts 1:21, 22 is giving qualifications for one to become an apostle and a replacement for Judas Iscariot.

“It is therefore necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us - beginning with the baptism of John, until the day that He was

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taken up from us - one of these should become a **witness with us of His resurrection**.ö And they put forward two men, Joseph called Barsabbas (who was also called Justus), and Matthias. And they prayed, and said, ðThou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show which one of these two Thou hast chosen to occupy this ministry and **apostleship** from which Judas turned a-side to go to his own placeö [Acts 1:21-25].

í Am I not an **apostle**? Have I not **seen Jesus** our Lord?í [1 Corinthians 9:1].

Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:1-10 is listing the resurrection appearances of Christ. In v. 8 he says that he was the **last of all** to have a resurrection appearance and that the timing of his seeing the resurrected Christ was unusual, unusually late. Paul saw the Lord last of all at an unusually late time. In v. 9 he immediately ties this witnessing of the resurrected Lord into the subject of apostleship.

[A]nd **last of all**, as it were to one untimely born, [unusually late] He appeared to me also. For I am the least **of the apostles**, who am not fit to be called an **apostle**, because I persecuted the church of God [1 Corinthians 15:8-9].

Since no one in the present time lived during the post-resurrection period and no one has witnessed the resurrected Lord, there can be no such thing as an apostle today. This is a very important point as it eliminates the possibility of anyone having the authority to compose additional Scripture. To be a part of the New Testament, a writing had to be apostolic (either written by an apostle or under the supervision of an apostle). The absence of apostles necessitates the close of the canon of Scripture.

Ephesians 2:20 should end all debate as to whether the gift of apostleship has ceased. It clearly places apostles within the founding period of the church.

[H]aving been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone í [Ephesians 2:20].

The idea of a gift ceasing is not unscriptural. Apostleship ceased. Interpreters should not lightly dismiss the idea that other gifts (especially those associated with the apostles) have also ceased.

2. Sign Gifts as Associated with the Apostles

Scripture associates sign gifts (such as tongues, healings, miracles, etc.) with the apostles. The fact that non-apostles such as Stephen (Acts 6:8), or Philip (Acts 8:6), or even the Corinthian believers performed signs does little to break the strong association that the Bible makes between sign gifts and apostles. The exercise of powers by non-apostles could still be a factor in the confirmation of God's approval of the apostles. If, for example, those led to the Lord by Peter and/or those who ministered under Peter's supervision had wonderful gifts, this reflected back upon Peter as a sign that God had indeed made Peter an apostle (one sent by God with a special commission). Furthermore, it is even possible to assume that the ability for non-apostles to perform sign gifts had to be bestowed by an apostle (Romans 1:11; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6). If this was so, then performance of sign gifts by non-apostles was still the same as a confirmation of an apostle.

Regardless of the details, it is possible to maintain both truths. Non-apostles did perform sign gifts. Yet, it is still true that the Scriptures link sign gifts to the apostles. Paul refers to the signs of an apostle in 2 Corinthians 12:12.

The **signs** of a true **apostle** were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles [2 Corinthians 12:12].

If sign gifts are the sign of an apostle, then one would not expect them to endure past the apostolic times. Otherwise, they would be serving to confirm people who were not apostles and who had no personal relationship with the apostles (either possessing gifts bestowed by an apostle, or having been converted through an apostle, or ministering under the personal authority of an apostle). Though this is an inference, it is valid logic. The Bible leads one to expect that the sign gifts would cease when the apostleship ceased because the purpose of such gifts was to confirm apostles (either directly or indirectly).

Paul is not the only New Testament author to associate sign gifts with apostleship. Sign gifts and the apostles are tied together throughout the book of Acts.

And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and **signs** were taking place through the **apostles** [Acts 2:43].

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And at the hands of the **apostles** many **signs** and wonders were taking place among the people [Acts 5:12].

Therefore they spent a long time there speaking boldly with reliance upon the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting that **signs** and wonders be done by their hands. But the multitude of the city was divided; and some sided with the Jews, and some with the **apostles** [Acts 14:3-4].

Paul, stressing his apostleship, used his abilities in the area of sign gifts to bolster his authority over the Roman church (see context Romans 15:15-16 and also Romans 1:1-5, 11:13).

For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished **through me**, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed, in **the power of signs and wonders**, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ [Romans 15:18-19].

Finally, the author of Hebrews places God's confirmation by sign gifts in the past.

[H]ow shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by **those who heard**, God also bearing witness **with them**, both **by signs** and wonders and **by various miracles** and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will [Hebrews 2:3-4].

In Greek the time of a participle is contingent upon the time of the sentence's leading verb. In this Hebrews 2 passage, this means that "God...bearing witness" took place at the same time as the action "was confirmed." Thus, both God's work of confirmation and bearing witness are **past**. He in the past, the author of Hebrews says, confirmed those who were eyewitnesses of Christ's earthly teaching ministry. God, in the past, confirmed and bore witness to them by signs.

Note also that the purpose for these signs was to confirm those who knew the Lord personally. While the context alone would not limit this group to only the apostles, surely the author of Hebrews knew his readers would think of the apostles as the primary men who learned under the Lord's personal teaching and the primary group to whom the Holy Spirit gave confirmation by signs. At the very least the apostles ought to be given the prominence in this past confirmation ministry. All

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of the above verses that associate signs with apostles might even cause the interpreter to think Hebrews is also referring exclusively to the apostles as the ones who heard the Lord.

Either way the confirmation by signs is **past**, and no one today fits in the category of either apostle or eyewitness of the Lord's teaching work. Thus, one would not expect sign gifts to continue as God's normal way of working during the present time.

There is little excuse for failing to associate the sign gifts with the apostles. Furthermore, since the purpose of sign gifts, including tongues (cf. 1 Corinthians 14:22 where tongues are called a sign), was to confirm apostles, it is reasonable to conclude that the sign gifts would cease when the gift of apostleship ceased.

3. The Sign of Languages and Israel

In 1 Corinthians 14:21-22 Paul teaches that the sign gift of tongues (foreign languages) ought to have a special interest for Jewish people.

In the law it is written, **By men of strange tongues** and by the lips of strangers **I will speak to this people**, and even so they will not listen to Me, says the Lord. So then tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe, but to unbelievers; but prophecy is for a sign, not to unbelievers, but to those who believe [1 Corinthians 14:21-22].

Verse 21 is a quote from Isaiah 28:11. Isaiah's point is that because Israel would not listen to God in her own language (tongue) that God would get the nation's attention by forcing them to hear the voice of a foreign language, the Assyrians, who would conquer the ten northern tribes of Israel. In Isaiah's day foreign languages were a sign of judgment for Israel.

Paul quotes Isaiah not so much as a prophecy that found fulfillment but as an illustration. Just as foreign languages had been a sign of God's disappointment with Israel in the past, so too this pattern was repeating itself in the early church. The ability to speak foreign languages that one had not learned was one sign gift that confirmed the apostles.¹ Yet,

¹ The Greek word for tongue is *glossa*. It means either the physical organ or language. There is no basis for concluding that the Greek word "tongues" ever meant ecstatic speech, gibberish or babbling. Luke could hardly have made the point that tongues are languages any clearer. He uses the word *dialectos* twice (from which we derive "dialect"). Also, he lists 16 ethnic groups who had traveled to Jerusalem for the

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in the very process of confirming the apostles, God was showing His displeasure with and judgment upon Israel. The two purposes for sign gifts are complementary. By beginning to work through the apostles and the church, God was removing His work through the priesthood and Judaism. The signs of confirmation of the apostles as the foundation of the church were also signs of judgment upon the temple/priesthood and Levitical system that would now be removed as the means by which God works in the world.

1 Corinthians 14:21-22 teaches that tongues (languages) are a sign for unbelievers. This should not be limited to Jews exclusively. Christ taught that there would be no special signs for Israel (see Matthew 16:4; Mark 8:12, etc.) and clearly the sign gifts confirmed the apostles in areas far from Israel (Romans 15:19-20). However, Jewish people are a primary subset in the category "unbelievers." Paul taught that tongues were a sign for unbelievers, and one major application is that it was a sign for those Jews who refused to believe (not a sign for Jews by way of exclusion but by way of emphasis). Sign gifts and languages in particular should have caused unbelieving Jews to think in terms of judgment just as did foreign languages in Isaiah's day. These signs to confirm the apostles were at the same time signs of rejection and judgment for unbelieving Judaism. God approved the apostles' work in founding the church. God was also angry with Israel.

The reader may be wondering how this fits under the category of the cessation of sign gifts. Given that one of the purposes for the sign gift of languages was to show God's rejection of Judaism, there is no longer any purpose for such a sign. In A.D. 70, the Romans under General Titus totally destroyed the temple. Since then, there has been no priesthood as the genealogy rolls were destroyed. There have been no altar and no animal sacrifices. Judaism after the pattern of the Old Testament and Judaism as it was known during the period of the gospels and early church is defunct and has been since A.D. 70. There is no longer any need for a sign that had as one of its purposes the lesson that God was no longer working through the temple, priesthood, altar, and sacrifices. There simply is no need for a sign with such a purpose when the temple, priesthood, and sacrifices do not exist. God was obviously done with that system when the system went out of

Pentecost holiday. All of them understood the gospel definition of "tongue" as "language."

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existence. Since a partial purpose for tongues (languages) was to show that God was displeased with Israel and would no longer work through the temple system, one would anticipate that tongues would no longer be operative when the temple system was no longer operative. To state the point negatively, one would expect tongues to cease when the temple did. This is a reasonable inference from what the Bible teaches. It may only be a secondary point in the overall discussion about sign gift cessation, but still its validity is strengthened by the historical facts supporting the gradual cessation of sign gifts in the time after the destruction of the Levitical system.

4. Biblical Patterns in the Frequency of Miracles

The Bible presents a pattern of time periods during which the miraculous is commonplace alternated by time periods in which the miraculous is more rare. There were increased miracles during the times of Moses, Elijah and Elisha, and Christ and the apostles.

At such times many miracles occurred. Yet, in between these times, the miraculous was possible but infrequent. In the majority of Biblical time periods miracles have been infrequent. Even during the most intense period of miracles, miracles were not performed in a wide geographical area and did not occur for everybody. Millions of sick people suffered during Christ's earthly ministry in places such as China, India, Arabia, etc. Christ Himself did not wish to heal all people in all places at all times while He was on earth.

ōBut I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, when a great famine came over all the land; and yet Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrianö [Luke 4:25-27].

Many who claim the ability to perform signs and wonders today actually claim to surpass Christ in terms of frequency and extent of miracles. The pattern of Biblical miracles does not suggest that God wants to do miracles for all times in all places. In fact, we would expect that the present is just as the majority of Biblical history, a time when miracles may be possible but are infrequent.

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B. Cessation of Sign Gifts as Historically Certain

The Bible gives an impression that sign gifts would cease with the close of the apostolic age. The historical fact that they did cease proves that the deduction of cessation at the close of the apostolic age is a valid one. The Bible indicates sign gifts would cease with the apostles. Because they did in fact cease, we can have confidence that we have interpreted the Scripture correctly on this issue. For too long the burden of proof has been placed upon non-charismatics to prove that the sign gifts have ceased. The historical fact is that they did cease. Therefore, the burden of proof should be upon charismatics to prove that the sign gifts would begin again in the 20th Century.² What Bible texts teach that there will be a second Pentecost during the church dispensation?

It is undeniable that sign gifts as the common normative way God works have ceased for the bulk of church history. If that had not been the case, there would be no debate today. Although the cessation of sign gifts is only a logical inference from the Scriptures and not a direct teaching, the fact that they did cease shows that the inference is based upon sound reasoning. The Bible seems to teach the sign gifts will cease with the apostles. Because the cessation did in fact happen, non-charismatics are not misreading the Bible.

It is easy to show from church history that sign gifts did cease.³ It is impossible to show from the Bible that they would start again until the

² Historians often trace the claim of a revival of sign gifts to Topeka, Kansas in 1901 and the Azusa Street revival in California in 1906 [see Grant Wacker, "The Pentecostal Movement" in *Eerdmans Handbook of Christianity in America*, edited by Mark P. Noll, Nathan O. Hatch, George M. Marsden, David F. Wells, John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1983), p. 336-339]. Bible texts that refer to great outpouring of the Holy Spirit have contextual references to end time events (e.g., Ezekiel 36-39 and Joel 2-3). For discussion about these verses pertaining to future spiritual blessings see *Not by Bread Alone*, Chapter 12, Section XIII, F5e, "Great Outpouring of the Spirit", pp. 523-24.

³ By cessation of a gift the author does not rule out occasional examples of the miraculous. To say the sign gifts have ceased means God does not give a person the ability to perform signs as a continuous and normal part of life. It is one thing, for example, to believe He has granted people to be faith healers by giving them a gift. It is another to believe God can heal directly in response to prayer. After the apostolic age there may indeed have been occurrences of the miraculous, but these definitely did not occur with routine frequency as in the life of Jesus and the apostles.

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Second Coming and millennial Kingdom. Chrysostom, Patriarch of Constantinople (345-407), considered sign gifts a thing of the past. In writing on 1 Corinthians 12, he remarks that the people of his day no longer understood the passage well because of the cessation of sign gifts.

*“This whole place is very obscure; but the obscurity is produced by our ignorance of the facts referred to and by their cessation, being such as then used to occur but now no longer take place. And why do they not happen now? Why look now, the cause too of the obscurity hath produced us again another question: namely, why did they then happen, and now do so no more?”*⁴

Augustine lived from A.D. 354-430 and was the Bishop of Hippo in North Africa. Apparently, the sign gifts had ceased not only in Constantinople but also Africa.

*“In the earliest times the Holy Ghost fell upon them that believed: and they spoke with tongues, which they had not learned, as the Spirit gave them utterance. These were signs adapted to the time. For there behooved to be that betokening of the Holy Spirit in all tongues, to show that the gospel of God was to run through all tongues over the whole earth. That thing was done for a betokening and it passed away...If then the witness of the presence of the Holy Ghost be not now given through these miracles, by what is it given, by what does one get to know that he has received the Holy Ghost?”*⁵

Scripture seems to portray the sign gifts as associated with the apostles. One would expect, therefore, sign gifts to pass away when they were no longer needed to confirm the apostles. The fact that the sign gifts did pass away shows the soundness of such reasoning. Biblical inference coupled with historical fact leads to a negative evaluation of charismatic claims that miraculous gifts are a normal means for God's work today.

⁴ Chrysostom, *Homilies in First Corinthians*, Homily XXIX, in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, reprinted ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979) Vol. 12, p. 168.

⁵ Augustine, *The Epistle of St. John*, VI, 10, in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, reprint ed., (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979) Vol. 7, pp. 497-498.

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A second major area in evaluation of charismatic claims lies in the nature of the sign gifts. Not only must we study the evidence for thinking sign gifts have ceased, we must also determine whether the phenomena claimed by charismatics do or do not match the genuine gifts as defined by Scripture. Here the study must divide between tongues and healings. What was the nature of the Biblical gift of tongues? Do modern tongues equal Biblical tongues?

III. The Nature of Tongues

The Biblical gift of tongues was the miraculous ability to speak a foreign language that one had never learned. The Biblical gift of interpreting tongues was the ability to translate a language that one had never learned.

A. Tongues as Languages

1. Secular Greek

A detailed study of non-Christian Greek literature is beyond the scope of this study. However, it is important to give the conclusion of such research. The Greek word for tongue is *glossa* (from which we derive glossary). It means either the physical organ or language. There is no basis for concluding that the Greek word tongues ever meant ecstatic speech, gibberish, or babbling.

*“It is apparent, as far as the evidence we have, that the ancient Greeks did not use glossa to mean unintelligible, ecstatic speech. This is not due to a lack of references to such utterance, since there are numerous references in Greek literature”.*⁶

Because secular Greek did not use tongues to refer to gibberish, there should be a prejudice against adopting such a definition when the word is used in the Bible. Unless there is strong evidence to the contrary, the New Testament word tongues should be understood as language. Actually, this does not present any problem whatsoever. The New Testament itself clearly proves that tongues means *language*.

2. Tongues in New Testament Greek

a. Tongues in the Book of Acts

⁶ Thomas R. Edgar, *Miraculous Gifts*, (Neptune, New Jersey, Loizeaux Brothers, 1983), p. 114.

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Luke could hardly have made the point that tongues are languages any clearer. He uses the Greek word *dialectos* twice (from which we derive dialect). Also, he lists 16 ethnic groups who had traveled to Jerusalem for the Pentecost holiday. All of them understood the gospel in their own language!

Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were bewildered, because they were each one hearing them speak in his own **language**. And they were amazed and marveled, saying, "Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we each hear them in our own **language** to which we were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and Libyan residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs - we hear them in our **own tongues** speaking of the mighty deeds of God" [Acts 2:5-11].

Visitors from around the world understood God's message in their own languages by these "tongues" on Pentecost. They were amazed that Galileans had the miraculous ability to speak in their **languages**.

b. Tongues in the Book of Revelation

The word "tongue" can hardly mean anything other than languages in Revelation. It is often grouped in lists that classify people.

And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy art Thou to take the book, and to break its seals; for Thou wast slain, and didst purchase for God with Thy blood men from every tribe and tongue [language] and people and nation" [Revelation 5:9].

After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, [languages] standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands [Revelation 7:9].

And they said to me, "You must prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues [languages] and kings" [Revelation 10:11].

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And those from the peoples and tribes and tongues [languages] and nations will look at their dead bodies for three and a half days, and will not permit their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb [Revelation 11:9].

And it was given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them; and authority over every tribe and people and tongue [language] and nation was given to him [Revelation 13:7].

And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue [language] and people [Revelation 14:6].

And he said to me, "The waters which you saw where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues [languages]" [Revelation 17:15].

Tongue means language in Acts. Tongue means language in The Book of The Revelation. Furthermore, there are indications that tongue means language in 1 Corinthians.

c. Tongues in 1 Corinthians

1 Corinthians 14:21 is a quote from Isaiah 28:11. Paul teaches that the tongues of Isaiah's day illustrate a truth about the gift of tongues in New Testament times. The tongues to which Isaiah refers are the foreign languages of those who conquered Israel. Thus, if tongues means languages in 1 Corinthians 14:21, why should it be given a different meaning in 1 Corinthians 14:22? Furthermore, if tongues means languages in 1 Corinthians 14:22, it should be understood as languages throughout the entire context.

Another point that shows that the tongues in 1 Corinthians are languages concerns use of the Greek word *idiotes* in 1 Corinthians 14:16 and 23. English derives the word "idiot" from the original. A good translation is "unlearned" (see KJV). The only reason one might not be able to understand tongues was that he or she was "unlearned" in the study of that tongue. This supports the concept that the gift of

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tongues was the miraculous ability to speak a foreign language that one had not learned.⁷

When the King James Bible was translated in the 1600s the word *ōtongueō* meant language. This is clear from the way it translated Revelation 9:11, *ōAnd they had a king over them, who is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name ἄπολλυον ὄ. ὄHebrew tongueō and ὄGreek tongueō equal ὄHebrew languageō and ὄGreek language.ō* Clarity would be served if modern translators would actually use the word *ōlanguageō* and drop the archaic use of *ōtongueō* (meaning language).

It is ironic that liberals were the first to interpret tongues as gibberish. Denying the supernatural, they could not accept the view that the gift of tongues involved real languages. Charismatics, most of whom are conservative in their attitude toward Scripture, usually adopt this unbiblical definition for tongue as opposed to viewing the gift as languages. The Biblical gift of tongues was ability in languages. The claims of charismatics do not match the gift of tongues as Biblically defined.

B. Modern Claims to Tongues

The ability to speak gibberish in a state of frenzy ought not to be regarded as the genuine miraculous gift of tongues. The experience which charismatics wish to have accepted as a gift from the Holy Spirit parallels more closely false religions than genuine Biblical tongues (languages).

1. Studies on Modern *ōTonguesō*

When the charismatic movement was making great gains in the mid-twentieth century, several studies were done by linguists to determine the nature of modern tongues-speaking. The conclusions were that modern tongues speakers do not speak in languages (see also *Christianity Today*, Sept. 13 and Nov. 8, 1963).

ōA scientific study of glossolalia concludes that utterances of people tested did not have the characteristics regarded as

⁷ A missionary such as Paul would be greatly blessed by the ability to work in foreign languages without years of study (1 Corinthians 14:18).

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essential to human language, and in a tape experiment, tongues speakers were found to disagree on the meaning of what the others said.⁷ The study showed that the tendency of tongues speakers is to be more submissive, suggestible, and dependent in the presence of authority figures. It is generally not the speaking in tongues that brings the great feelings, of euphoria (buoyancy) that these people experience; rather, it is the submission to the authority of the leader.⁸ The research project was initiated at the Lutheran Medical Center in Brooklyn, New York. The findings were based largely upon tests and interviews conducted with twenty-six people who spoke in tongues and thirteen who did not. Linguist William Samarin stated that where certain prominent tongues-speakers had visited, whole groups of glossolalists would speak in his style of speech.⁹ The report listed features that linguistic experts say characterize human language and argued that recordings of people speaking in tongues did not display enough of these features to warrant the conclusion that the utterances were any kind of human language, known or unknown, living or dead.¹⁰ Christianity Today, June 4, 1971.

Although some of the theologians of the Pentecostal groups have recognized that the Biblical gift of tongues is the miraculous ability to speak in foreign languages, none have validated such experiences, and the overwhelming majority does not even claim to speak human languages.⁸

2. Parallels with Heathenism

Babbling in an ecstatic state would have served little to confirm the apostles. The ancient world was full of religious groups who gibbered in trance-like states. In fact, it still is! It is amazing that Christians would claim a phenomenon is from the Holy Spirit when unbelievers can do the same thing. Did the ancient pagan Greeks or more modern Mormons obtain their abilities to gibber by the power of the Holy

⁸ Edgar, *Miraculous Gifts* p. 283. Again, even if one could document occasions of supernatural ability to work in an unknown language, it ought to be clear this ability is not being bestowed as a gift (i.e., a normal pattern of a gifted person's life). If such ability is given as a gift, then charismatic speakers should never need translators when ministering to those of a different language.

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Spirit? Here are some quotes concerning ecstatic speech among non-Christians:

öShe attained her ecstatic state and speech in a haunted cave where drafts and winds made weird sounds and music. When she became united in spirit with the god Apollo, she began to speak in tongues, sometimes understood, sometimes incoherent.ö (Virgil, 1st century B.C. commenting of the priestess on the Isle of Delos.)⁹

öIn a trance, perhaps induced by narcotic herbs, she sat on a tripod and raved. Priests enriched themselves by translating her incoherent cries into rhymed prophecies.ö (National Geographic on the priestess at Delphi.)¹⁰

Speaking of this same priestess at Delphi, Chrysostom, a 4th Century Christian, wrote: öí This same Pythoness then is said to be female, to sit at times upon the tripod of Apollos astride, and thus the evil spirit ascending from beneath and entering the lower part of her body, fills the woman with madness, and she with disheveled hair begins to play the bacchanal and to foam at the mouth, and thus being in frenzy to utter the words of her madness.ö¹¹

Incoherent speech is not limited to ancient religions. The early Mormons spoke in tongues. Joseph Smith commanded: öArise upon your feet, speak or make some sound, continue to make sounds of some kind, and the Lord will make a language or tongue of it.ö¹²

Brigham Young also spoke in ötonguesö (if by tongues we mean non-languages): öShouting, jerks, and dancing were common in their services, and Brigham Young not only spoke in unknown tongues but interpreted his messages to his hearers.ö¹³

⁹ Cited by John Miles, *The Subject of Tongues, an Introduction to Christian Doctrine: An Outline Course*, (Grand Rapids; Grand Rapids School of the Bible and Music, 1974), p. 2.

¹⁰ *Greece and Rome: Builders of Our World*, National Geographic Society, 1968), p. 171.

¹¹ Miles, *Introduction to Christian Doctrine*, p. 2.

¹² Joseph Dillow, *Speaking in Tongues* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), p. 173.

¹³ Edgar, *Miraculous Gifts*, p. 255

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Many books document the presence of *ōtonguesō* (i.e. trance-like babbling) among non-Christians. Included are examples of pagan priests, shamans, and medicine men. Ecstatic babbling takes place in a broad range of false religions. There are documented reports of occurrences among ancient Phoenicians, Greeks, Moslems, Mormons, American Indian cults, Eskimo religions, Tibetan and Chinese religions, North Borneo cults, etc.¹⁴ America produces examples of people who speak in *ōtonguesō* (i.e. gibberish) before they are believers in Christ.

ōNow before you sit down and write me a letter telling me how real your experience with tongues is, let me tell you about mine. Iōve spoken in tongues on several occasions. Iōve walked down aisles, Iōve prayed through at the altar, Iōve followed the instructions of the spiritual leaders who were telling me how to speak in tongues, and I spoke in tongues. It was very real. It happened. There was nothing unreal about it. But it was not of the Holy Spirit! How do I know? I wasnōt even saved at the time. Thatōs how I know. I became convinced by the preaching I heard that I must speak in tongues to be right with God. I was determined to do it, and I did it.ō¹⁵

The authorōs wife knows personal friends who spoke in *ōtonguesō* at charismatic services before they trusted in Christ. All of these examples show that speaking in gibberish need not be a sign of gifts from the Holy Spirit. Whereas the Biblical gift of tongues was the ability to speak a language that had never been learned, modern practices of charismatics are more akin to false religions than Biblical Christianity relative to the nature of tongues. This statement does not mean charismatic Christians are unsaved. Assuming faith in Christ, they are very definitely brethren. However, non-charismatics should not be faulted for being unimpressed and unconvinced by charismatic gibberish. Such is not the Biblical gift of tongues as correctly defined. If gibberish is a gift of the Holy Spirit, then must we also assume that many heathen have the Holy Spirit also?

¹⁴ See Dillow, *Speaking in Tongues*, p. 171ff.; Edgar, *Miraculous Gifts*, p. 252ff.; and Donald W. Burdick, *Tongues: To Speak or Not to Speak*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), p. 65ff.

¹⁵ Miles, *Introduction to Christian Doctrine*, p. 3.

3. The Bible on Heathen Gibberish

There seems to be at least one reference to heathen gibberish in the Bible. It is not viewed favorably. As we shall see, Paul would not even permit the use of untranslated **languages** in the church and probably not even in prayer. Certainly, he would not have allowed gibberish.

ōAnd when you pray, **do not keep on babbling** like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many wordsí ö [Matthew 6:7 (NIV)].

What is the outcome then? I shall pray with the spirit and I shall pray **with the mind** also; I shall sing with the spirit and I shall sing **with the mind** also [1 Corinthians 14:15].

4. Conclusion

There are Biblical grounds for thinking that sign-gifts have ceased. Yet, beyond this conclusion there must also be an evaluation as to whether the experiences of modern charismatics represent *bona fide* New Testament gifts. Relative to tongues they do not. The Biblical gift of tongues was an ability to speak a foreign language that had not been studied. Modern charismatics do not have the genuine gift of tongues. This fact is made obvious by their need to preach through interpreters when conducting services in foreign lands.

IV. Biblical Regulations Concerning the Practice of Tongues

There is a Biblical foundation for believing that the sign gifts, including tongues, have ceased. Furthermore, incoherent speech is not the genuine New Testament gift of tongues. Even if we assume that the sign gifts are for today and that modern charismatics possess the genuine gift of tongues, we still would have to evaluate whether their practice conforms to Biblical regulations for such gifts. In all fairness it should be realized that some more Biblically-oriented charismatics do try to follow these standards. However, many do not; and none adhere consistently to all of them.

A. Tongues Should Have a Low Priority in the Assembly

In the listings of gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:28 and 30, tongues, or the interpretation of tongues, is placed last. Such an order is more than mere literary style. Paul, especially in 1 Corinthians 12:28, is listing gifts in order of their importance. Therefore, even if tongues were being given as gifts today; they should not be given greatest prominence in

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the assembly. Often charismatic zeal causes such a focus on experiences that the more weighty matters of the faith must be relegated to a lesser and unscriptural priority.

And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues. All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they? All do not have the gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they? [1 Corinthians 12:28-30].

B. Edification by Teaching Should Have Highest Priority in the Assembly

One cannot read 1 Corinthians Chapters 12-14 without being impressed by the priority of teaching in the assembly. This should not be too surprising, as the need for instruction is taught elsewhere (Ephesians 4:11ff.; 1 Timothy 4:13; 2 Timothy 2:2, 3:16-17, 4:2). Although there are no prophets today, the church may still stress prophecy by teaching the prophetic writings of Scripture. Untranslated languages were not allowed in the early church (and surely not gibberish) because its stress was on edification. Many charismatic churches are negligent in the area of Bible teaching. They exalt experiences and diminish the value of serious Bible study.

Even if their gift of tongues were valid, this would not be an excuse to develop a church philosophy that stresses sign gifts and minimizes Bible study and exposition.

But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and consolation. One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church. So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church. However, in the church **I desire to speak five words with my mind, that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue** [1 Corinthians 14:3-4, 12, 19].

C. Not All Will Have the Gift of Tongues

Many charismatics claim that tongues-speaking is the necessary or inevitable sign that a person has been baptized or indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Also, many charismatics encourage others to seek the gift of

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tongues and view those without such experiences as second-class Christians. However, the Bible is clear on the point that all believers have been baptized and indwelt by the Holy Spirit¹⁶ It is also clear on the point that God never intended all Christians to have the gift of tongues. Paul's rhetorical questions to the Corinthians demand a negative answer.

All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they? [1 Corinthians 12:30].

D. The Idea That Christians Should Seek Other Gifts, Including the Gift of Tongues, is Weak.

One of the main points of 1 Corinthians 12 is that God bestows gifts sovereignly as He deems best (1 Corinthians 12:7,11,18,24,28). This means it is not His will for all to have the same gift, including tongues. Another main point is that believers should be content with the gift they have. There should be no self-pity about the absence of a gift nor jealousy toward others who have a different gift (1 Corinthians 12:15ff.). It is difficult to reconcile the idea of coveting another gift with these two emphases. God distributes gifts as it pleases Him. We are to be content with what He does.

Verses that seem to suggest the propriety of seeking other gifts can be interpreted differently. 1 Corinthians 12:31 says, "But earnestly desire the greater gifts." The Greek word for "earnestly desire" is *zeleō*, and it could be better translated "zeal." "Be zealous for the greater gifts." Also, the verb form is plural. Thus, Paul is telling the church **as a whole** to be zealous of greater gifts. The church should be emphasizing the greater gifts, such as prophecy and teaching, in its corporate ministry and worship. 1 Corinthians 12:31 need not be understood as giving warrant for individuals to be discontent with the gift that God has bestowed and seek or covet another. Given the context, which stresses God's sovereign bestowal of gifts and our responsibility to be content with our position in the body of Christ, it is far better to take the command of 1 Corinthians 12:31 as a corporate command for the

¹⁶ See Steven Waterhouse, *Not By Bread Alone, An Outlined Guide to Bible Doctrine*, 4th ed (Amarillo TX: Westcliff Press, 2010) pp 241-248.

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whole church, not just for the individual. Thus, the case for one to seek another gift is weak.¹⁷

If one should persist in the notion of seeking individual gifts, let him take note that such an interpretation of 1 Corinthians 12:31 would still not be an endorsement to seek inferior gifts like tongues. The best modern application that could be made from taking 1 Corinthians 12:31 as an individual command would be to seek the gift of teaching.

E. The Case For a Devotional Use of Tongues is Weak

Many charismatics advocate *õtonguesö* as a prayer language or feel their *ögiftö* is for private use. Yet, it would be hard to establish such claims as valid from the Bible. It has already been pointed out that Matthew 6:7 forbids gibberish in prayer. Also, 1 Corinthians 14:15 discourages the practice of praying in words that are not understood by the mind. Since this holds true for legitimate foreign languages that are not understood, can there be any doubt that Paul would have forbidden incoherent speech in prayer?

Although personal benefit may be one of the results of a gift, the purpose for all gifts is to benefit others (1 Corinthians 12:7). It is unlikely that any gift was ever given to be used for private benefit. Also, the gifts are to be exercised in love (1 Corinthians 13). This also indicates that gifts are for the benefit of others, not private use. In 1 Corinthians 14:22 tongues are specifically said to be for unbelievers. It would be hard for this gift to benefit unbelievers if it were given for private/devotional use. All of these factors militate against the idea of God giving anyone tongues for private use.

Finally, verses which charismatics use to support private *öprayer languagesö* are better interpreted in another way. 1 Corinthians 14:1 teaches that tongues are inferior to prophecy. Verse 2 begins with *öforö*,

¹⁷ Some take 1 Corinthians 12:31 as a statement, not a command. This is possible grammatically and also eliminates the idea of individuals seeking gifts. However, the Corinthians were in fact **not** seeking the greater gifts such as prophecy and teaching. Also, the parallel phrase in 1 Corinthians 14:1 almost has to be taken as a command. Since 1 Corinthians 13 is parenthetical, this means 1 Corinthians 12:31 and 14:1 are parallel texts. Therefore, since 14:1 is a command, 12:31 should also be understood as a command (imperative, not indicative). The key is seeing Paul's command as addressed to the whole church (plural), not to individuals.

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meaning because. Thus, v. 2 is not endorsing the private use of tongues. It is making a negative statement in support of the thesis in verse 1 that tongues are inferior. We might summarize the teachings of 1 Corinthians 14:1-2 this way: "Tongues are inferior to prophecy because only God can understand the one who speaks in an untranslated language." 1 Corinthians 14:2 does not support the private use of tongues. It is giving a criticism of the use of untranslated tongues. Only God knows what such languages mean.

Likewise, Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 14:4 is not an endorsement of the private use of tongues. It is a criticism of using untranslated languages. The first part of the verse says, "The one who speaks in a tongue edifies himself." Self-edification or self-enhancement in this context is not commendable. It is worthy of criticism. The next line teaches that prophecy is superior because it edifies the whole church. (See Greek in 1 Corinthians 8:10 for a negative aspect to the word edify). There is in reality no endorsement for devotional tongues in 1 Corinthians 14:4.

1 Corinthians 14:28 can also be made compatible with the view that tongues were never given for personal use. It commands a tongues-speaker to be silent in the church if there is no interpreter. The last part of the verse says, "and let him speak to himself and to God." Perhaps this simply means that the tongues-speaker should not speak in tongues publicly without an interpreter but should spend the service time in quiet meditation and prayer in his own native language. The verse need not be taken as any endorsement for the use of tongues in prayer.

In summary, the Bible does not clearly endorse the devotional use of tongues. All believers are priests and have equal access to God without any need for special prayer gifts (Ephesians 2:18; 1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:6, 5:10). If a language was not understood, it was not recommended for prayer (1 Corinthians 14:15). Incoherent speech that was not at all part of a genuine language (i.e., not genuine tongues) is not permitted in prayer (Matthew 6:7).

F. Tongues are Supposed to Be a Sign for Unbelievers

1 Corinthians 14:22 teaches that tongues are a sign for unbelievers. In the modern charismatic movement tongues are used almost exclusively in the church and are used very little in outreach to the lost.

G. Tongues Speakers Should Be in Full Control of Their Facilities

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1 Corinthians 14:32 teaches, "and the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets." This means that the exercise of the New Testament gift of prophecy did not involve any trance-like ecstatic state where the person was out of control. By application one would assume that the same conditions held true while the gift of tongues was being exercised. Yet, many charismatics endorse the idea of a trance-like hypnotic state as being spiritual.

H. Only Intelligible Speech May Be Allowed in the Church

This standard is violated by many charismatic groups. Untranslated languages were simply not allowed in the early church (1 Corinthians 14:7-12, 28). It was reasonable for outsiders to consider the use of untranslated foreign languages to be deranged (1 Corinthians 14:23). Emphasis upon use of languages not understood displays an immature childish understanding (1 Corinthians 14:20).

Even during the period when the legitimate gift of tongues was being given, languages that were not understood were excluded from the church. It ought not be difficult to reason that babbling, which does not belong to any real language group, would likewise be barred from church.

I. There Could Be no More Than Two or Three Tongues Speakers in a Service, and They Could Only Speak One at a Time (1 Corinthians 14:27).

These guidelines ought to be easy enough to follow. However, some charismatic services fail to do so.

J. Services Must Be Orderly and Without Confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33, 40).

Some charismatic groups do not follow this basic principle for the operation of a church.

K. Summary of Biblical Regulations of Tongues

The charismatic movement spans a wide diversity of people from those with radical practices to those who are very mild in charismatic practices. However, even when we assume sign gifts have not ceased and we assume charismatics have genuine gifts, many are still deficient in compliance with Biblical standards concerning the regulation of tongues.

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All types fail to follow the principle that languages that are not understood may not be used in church (1 Corinthians 14:28). If this were true for legitimate foreign languages, it would certainly have been true for ecstatic gibberish. Incoherent speech, babbling, or gibberish would not have been allowed in the early church.

The charismatic movement in its violation of some or many of the regulations for tongues is indicative of an overall attitude that diminishes the Bible's authority and exalts experience and flashy leaders in its place. If one cannot trust charismatic judgment on basic teachings such as baptism in the Spirit, indwelling by the Spirit, or regulation of tongues speaking, why should there be any confidence that they understand the Bible on detailed doctrines such as the cessation of sign gifts? If the written Word is so little understood or regarded, how can there be any credibility in charismatic interpretations of experiences?

There are Biblical reasons for believing that the sign gift of tongues ceased with the apostles. Furthermore, the gibberish of contemporary charismatics is not the same as the legitimate gift of tongues. Finally, even if it were the *bona-fide* gift of tongues, charismatics often do not obey Biblical regulations of the gift. The charismatic movement should be evaluated negatively from all three of these angles. It also fails in the area of its beliefs and practices on healing.

V. The Bible on Miraculous Healing

Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him [James 5:14-15].

A. Healings vs. Healers

James 5:14-15 teaches that prayer is a means of bringing health to the sick. Given the Biblical examples of godly people who were sick, it is best to understand James to be giving a general principle and not an inevitable promise. In other words, prayer often, customarily, and usually, is an asset in regaining health. It is not unusual for God to grant requests about health, but He is not obligated to cause complete health for all believers at all times. Furthermore, the passage does not specify whether the healing will be instantaneous or gradual. How and

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when healing occurs is up to God. Virtually all Bible-believing churches believe that prayer is a factor in healing. There is, however, a difference between believing that prayer can heal and believing that there is such a thing as faith healers.

It is interesting that James does not tell believers in the early church to seek out a faith healer when they are ill. They are told rather to call for the elders of the church to pray. This fact in itself is an indication of the rarity of those with gifts of healing. Also, it probably shows that the sign gifts were more for use with those outside the church. The typical response of every believer to sickness was to ask others to pray. Non-charismatic churches adhere to this practice. While they do believe God can and does heal, they do not agree with the theology that God still has faith healers in the world today.

B. Sign Gifts and Healings

The whole argument for believing that sign gifts ceased with the end of the apostles need not be repeated here (see pp. 8-17). All that need be done is to show that healing is a sign gift. This is not difficult to establish. Many texts in Acts that refer to signs have miracles of healing in the context.

[W]hile Thou dost extend Thy hand to **heal**, and **signs** and wonders take place through the name of Thy holy servant Jesus [Acts 4:30].

And at the hands of the apostles many **signs** and wonders were taking place among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's portico .to such an extent that they even carried the **sick** out into the streets, and laid them on cots and pallets, so that when Peter came by, at least his shadow might fall on any one of them. And also the people from the cities in the vicinity of Jerusalem were coming together, bringing people who were sick or afflicted with unclean spirits; and they were all being **healed** [Acts 5:12, 15-16].

Healing is certainly a *ōsignō* gift. Since signs were to confirm the apostles, one would expect that the gift of healing would cease with the apostles. This need not exclude God from healing by prayer, and it need not exclude the occurrence of miracles. However, it does mean that there are no faith healers or miracle workers. We should make a

distinction between healings and healers, between miracles and miracle workers. One is possible. The other is not.

C. Charismatic Claims vs. Healing and Biblical Teachings on Health

1. Frequency of Miracles

It should be noted that it is common for charismatics to claim a greater frequency of miracles than even occurred in Biblical history including the earthly ministry of Christ and the apostles.¹⁸ There have been three periods of intensive miracle workings on earth: the times of Moses and Joshua, the times of Elijah and Elisha, and the times of Christ and the apostles. At other times, even within Bible days, miracles were very rare.

The Lord did not heal everyone, and His ministry was not wide in geographical extent. In the New Testament times there still were very many sick people around the world who were never miraculously healed. Miracles have always been limited in time periods and geographical extent.

ōBut I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, when a great famine came over all the land; and yet Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrianō. And all in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things [Luke 4:25-28].

These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them, saying, ōDo not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israelō [Matthew 10:5-6].

Modern faith healers make claims that extend even beyond Biblical examples of miracles in terms of frequency of miracles, duration of miracles, and location of miracles. The normal pattern during the years

¹⁸ John 14:12 may not mean the apostles would do greater miracles than Jesus in terms of physical healings. It may mean they would experience greater results in terms of conversions than did the Lord Jesus in His earthly ministry.

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of Bible history was that miracles were infrequent and occasional. They have never been common, long lasting in duration, or wide in locality.

2. Biblical Patterns of Sickness

Often faith healers claim that it is God's will for every believer to be well all of the time. For them physical infirmity is an indication of spiritual problems as well. This idea cannot be supported from Biblical examples. The Apostle Paul was sick even though he was very dedicated to God's will in his life.

And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given to me **a thorn in the flesh**, a messenger of Satan to buffet me ó to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness" [2 Corinthians 12:7-9a].

Other devout Christians in the early church faced physical ailments. It simply is not true that faithful Christians are always healthy.

No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your **frequent ailments** [1 Timothy 5:23].

But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need; because he was longing for you all and was distressed because you had heard that he was **sick**. For indeed he was **sick to the point of death** [Phil. 2:25-27].

Erastus remained at Corinth, but Trophimus I left **sick** at Miletus [2 Timothy 4:20].

It ought to be evident that many spiritual believers have become sick and have died. Both Luther and Calvin, especially Calvin, were sickly. It is both theological and experiential nonsense to assert that God's will always involves health. Such false teaching ends up damaging Christianity's reputation. Those who become infirm but believe that God always desires perfect health can react in several negative ways. They might view themselves with self-hatred and self-recrimination despite the fact that the illness may not be a judgment from God for

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spiritual failure. This leads to feelings of false guilt, pressure, and worthlessness. There also might be doubts of God's love.

Sickness for one who believes in "health theology" might affect views of self. However, it might also warp one's view of God. God might appear to be cruel and morally vindictive for causing affliction when there has been no special wrongdoing in a person's life. On the other hand, God might appear to be weak if He is supposed to guarantee health but cannot seem to do so. Even worse would be the response that there is no God at all.

The false theology that God wants all believers healthy all of the time is appealing to many, but it is neither Biblical nor beneficial in the advancement of the faith. God can use sickness, and He does not eliminate it entirely from a believer's experience. The Bible gives many good reasons that God might allow suffering even in the life of a spiritual believer.

3. God's Plan for Permitting Suffering

The idea that God wants believers to be immune from suffering, including sickness, is false. Although personal sin can be a cause for sickness (see John 5:14; 1 Corinthians 11:30), God permits suffering for a variety of reasons. In fact, Scripture teaches that Christians are predestined to undergo sufferings (Philippians 1:29; 1 Thessalonians 3:3; 2 Timothy 2:12, 3:12; 1 Peter 4:12-13). Trials, whether from sickness or from other types of problems, are part of God's program for Christian growth. Those who tend to view all suffering as due to the devil or due to personal sin have an unbiblical theology of suffering. God does allow righteous people to suffer (Psalm 34:19).

Trials may make one more sympathetic to others and better able to minister to others with a similar problem (2 Corinthians 1:3-4). Suffering helps build strength and endurance for the future rigors of life (James 1: 2-3). It also can produce examples of faithfulness for other Christians (Job's example, see Job 13:15) or a witness for unbelievers (see John 11:4; 12:10-11). Hardships force us to become or remain dependent upon God whereas ease might cause us to forget God (2 Corinthians 12:6-9; Deuteronomy 6:10-12; 8:3). They also teach us to pray. There are many Biblical examples in which pressures created intense prayer (1 Samuel 23:1ff.; Isaiah 37:1; Matthew 26:36-45; Acts 4:29; 12:5). The Scripture commonly refers to Christ's experience as

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one of suffering followed by glory (Luke 24:26; Philippians 2:8-10; 1 Peter 1:11).

Here is an intended pattern in the Christian's life. God wants believers to endure some suffering so that they can become more like Christ. Eventually, He will bring believers into glory (1 Peter 2:21; 4:13; 5:1,10). God's plan for believers involves suffering that He deems beneficial. A theological system that teaches it is never within God's will to permit suffering or that all suffering is a direct attack from the devil or that suffering indicates spiritual failure conflicts with Scriptural teachings on the purpose of trials.

4. Biblical Patterns for Healings

The practices and teachings of modern faith healers need to be compared with Biblical incidents of healings. This exercise shows that modern faith healers do not come close to having the genuine gift of healing as practiced by Bible characters.

a. Healing Those Without Faith

Biblical healings did not ultimately depend upon the faith of the sick person. It is very true that the Lord and the apostles often responded to the presence of faith or declined to heal those lacking faith. Yet, they, as genuine healers, possessed the ability to bless even in the absence of faith. Certainly, the demon-possessed did not have faith before their healing (Matthew 8:28,29; Mark 1:23-26). In several incidents Jesus healed people who did not even know Him. The paralyzed man at the pool of Bethesda did not know who had caused him to walk (John 5:13). The man born blind did not believe in Christ until after his sight was restored (John 9:25, 35-36). Neither of these men had any faith before they were healed. Nine of ten lepers never returned to offer thanks to Christ for His blessing (Luke 17:11-19). Surely, their faith was either weak or non-existent. The lame man at the temple gate neither asked for healing nor expected healing. He asked for money, and Peter gave him health (Acts 3:2-8).

Those with the genuine gift of healing **ought to be able to heal those without any faith**. This contrasts with modern faith healers who assert any failures in healing are due to a lack of faith on the part of the infirm. The inability to heal regardless of the sick person's faith shows that such do not really possess the genuine gift of healing.

b. Success Rate of Biblical Healings

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It is true that sometimes Christ and the apostles declined to heal certain parties. However, whenever they decide to heal they were always successful.¹⁹ Deuteronomy 18:21-22 instructed Israel to evaluate a prophet as a fraud if he failed in just one prediction. It is reasonable to make a similar standard for those who claim to have the genuine gift of healing. There should never be a case where they attempt to heal but fail, including the healing of those without faith.

c. Distance as no Hindrance to Healing On Several Occasions

On several occasions Christ healed people who were not physically present (Matthew 8:5-13; John 4:49-53). Those with the genuine ability to heal should be able to stand in their church buildings and heal the sick in a distant hospital. There should not be any need to have special meetings at which the sick are brought to the healer. He should be able to just speak a healing word with resulting health coming upon even those not actually present. It ought to be apparent that modern claims to having the gift of healing cannot be fairly placed in the same category as genuine Biblical healing.

d. Spontaneous, Unexpected, and Public Healings

Healings in the New Testament were not restricted to private and specially called meetings. There were no "healing services" to which only the believers and expectant were invited. Biblical healings occurred at unexpected times and were spontaneous and public. Christ raised the dead both from a funeral procession (Luke 7:11ff., see also Matthew 9:23-25) and from a cemetery (John 11:43-44). Paul raised Eutychus after a totally unexpected accident (Acts 20:7ff.). Furthermore, Biblical healings were so impressive that even the enemies of Christ could not deny their validity (John 11:47-48; Acts 2:22; 4:16; 5:13). When have modern faith healers emptied emergency rooms by unexpectedly healing all patients? Have they ever gone to a funeral or a cemetery to "heal" one who is acknowledged as dead by

¹⁹ This statement holds true for the Lord Jesus at all times and for the apostles after the Holy Spirit had come upon them to give them the gift of healing. Prior to Pentecost, before the apostles enjoyed either the indwelling of the Spirit or His bestowal of gifts, the apostles did fail to heal on one occasion (Matthew 17:16; Mark 9:17; Luke 9:40). However, this is not an example of one gifted with healing experiencing a failure to heal. It is rather an example of ineffective prayer on the part of those who still lacked the gift of healing. Later after Pentecost the apostles would be gifted to heal.

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unbelievers? Are their healings so unexpected as to be convincing even to Christ's enemies? Modern healers pale in comparison to genuine Biblical examples of the gift of healing. In fact, they are exposed as lacking the genuine gift.

5. Complete Health as a Future Promise

The main purpose of the cross was to bring about spiritual healing. Peter quotes Isaiah 53 to show this (1 Peter 2:24-25). Yet, there should be no problem in seeing that physical healing was also one aspect of the atonement. Penalties for sin involve both spiritual and physical suffering. It is only reasonable that Christ paid for sin in such a way as to release humanity from all of its curses, including sickness. The Hebrew words in Isaiah 53:4 can include the idea of Christ dying for our sicknesses. The verse could be translated, "Surely, He has borne our sicknesses and carried our pains."

Charismatics and non-charismatics can agree that Christ's death on the cross has important implications for physical health. However, the issue is one of time. The cross is the solution to sickness, but when will complete healing occur?

There were partial foretastes of the health that will exist in the Millennium given during Christ's earthly ministry (Matthew 8:17, perhaps also Hebrews 6:5). The King was present on earth, and there were samples of healing that He could bring during the Kingdom. However, the King was rejected, and His Kingdom postponed. Thus, these foreshadowings of healing do not teach anything about health conditions once the Kingdom has been postponed.

Although Christ's death has indeed laid the foundation for the eventual elimination of sickness, many Scriptures teach that the present time will not be one of universal health. Romans 8:22-23 and 2 Corinthians 5:2ff. have already been quoted to establish that at the present the people of God can expect a certain amount of bodily "groaning." Healing is in the atonement, but its full application awaits the future. The fact that the Bible promises a future wiping of tears and a future eradication of sickness and death in Revelation 21:4 is confirmation that sickness and death will not be eliminated until then. Just as the doom of Satan was guaranteed by the Cross but has not been executed, so too the basis for destroying sickness has been accomplished by the Cross but has not yet been put into effect. The issue is not whether the Cross has provided victory over sickness but when such victory

happens. The promise for the complete removal of sin is future. Although spiritual healing occurs for those who trust in Christ, it ought to be apparent that many of the physical curses of sin are still in force (see Genesis 3:14ff.). Snakes still crawl. Thorns still grow. Man still must work to survive. Childbirth is still painful. People still die. The curse will be reduced (Isaiah 11:6-9; 65:25) but not fully eliminated during the Millennium (Isaiah 65:20). Even death will still occur. The complete cessation of all sickness awaits the Eternal State, i.e., heaven, (Revelation 21:4). Until then, sickness is going to be a common human problem despite the claims of faith healers.

6. Summary on Healing

Virtually all Bible teachers maintain that God heals in response to prayers, but healing by God and healing by faith healers are two different matters. Healing was a primary sign gift. Sign gifts to confirm the apostles would likely cease with the apostles. It is an historical fact that they did.

Charismatic theology fails to synthesize all of the Bible's teachings about sickness and suffering. Godly people do become sick, and God has good reasons for allowing hardships in the lives of His children. Furthermore, the claims and experiences of modern faith healers simply do not parallel the genuine New Testament gift of healing. While God may chose to heal in response to prayer, He is not raising up healers in our time. The complete removal of sickness will not transpire until the Eternal State, heaven.

VI. Conclusions on the Charismatic Movement

Christianity by definition believes in the supernatural. God still can and does perform miracles. However, this is not the same as maintaining that God's work normally involves miracles. While there are isolated and rare occurrences of genuine miracles, they are not God's usual means of operation. This study leads to the conclusion that while periodic miracles may still occur, God no longer gives miraculous gifts (occurrences of miracles, yes; gifts of miracles, no).

Such a negative evaluation of the charismatic movement raises a number of questions. If the movement is not from the Holy Spirit, what is its origin? Why is charismatic Christianity so popular? How should non-charismatic Christians relate to their charismatic brethren?

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The charismatic movement is large and an attraction to many, but size and popularity does not establish truth. **The Bible alone determines truth.** Much of the appeal in charismatic theology is emotion. It feels good to many. They just simply enjoy the excitement. Others are attracted by the promise of instant spiritual or material success. They are not content with the more gradual sanctification process that the Bible teaches. In addition, the claim to instant spiritual maturity and to spiritual power feels good to those who want authority over others or who want excuses to defy legitimate authority. The charismatic system also attracts the insecure and those who have difficulty coping with the pressures of life. Rather than trusting in God for grace to endure hardships, they create a god after their own liking who is obligated to perform miracles to make life easier. A system that promises miraculous relief from trials is appealing.

Another factor that explains involvement of individuals in the charismatic movement is shallowness of faith or what might also be called misdirection of faith. One's faith or satisfaction in God should not need to be bolstered by continuous experiences or miraculous signs that prove the supernatural to the skeptical. Christian faith should be directed to the Person of Christ and the Bible (John 4:48; Luke 16:31; Romans 10:17; 2 Corinthians 5:7). Faith should not depend upon signs and wonders to remain strong. Many charismatics seem to have a wrong object of faith. They believe because of their experiences, not because of the credibility of the Scriptures and of Christ.

Satan is probably another factor that explains the popularity of some types of charismatic groups. A close relationship exists between radical charismatics and some occult practices. The practice of diminishing Biblical authority and focusing attention upon listening to the spirit is similar enough that it ought to be frightening to believers.

There is a broad spectrum of beliefs and practices under the charismatic umbrella. It would not be consistent with Christian charity and brotherhood to insist that all types of fellowship with all types of charismatics would be improper. Differences between charismatics and non-charismatics are great enough that permanent association in joint ministries would be difficult (for example, adding charismatic missionaries to a non-charismatic church's mission program or trying to mix both systems on a church staff). However, this does not mean charismatic believers need be completely shunned or treated as

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unbelievers. Personal friendship and mutual recognition of the brotherhood in Christ should be extended to all who genuinely believe.

VII. Legitimate Spiritual Gifts

After a critique of charismatic excesses, it is important to study the topic of spiritual gifts from a more positive angle. How does the Holy Spirit function today relative to spiritual gifts?

A. Recipients of Spiritual Gifts

The Bible is very clear that every believer has a spiritual gift(s).

But to **each one** is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good [1 Corinthians 12:7].

But to **each one** of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift [Ephesians 4:7].

As **each one** has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God [1 Peter 4:10].

B. The Time of Obtaining a Spiritual Gift

If every believer has a spiritual gift, it stands to reason that all believers must obtain some sort of gift at the time of salvation. If all believers have gifts, then one who has been saved only a few seconds has already been given a gift. This does not rule out the idea that a gift may be originally bestowed in a germ form with a need to be gradually developed to its potential. Also, even though some form of gift must be granted at the time of salvation, it is probably true that additional gifts may be given at a later time. Paul seems to have bestowed gifts upon Timothy (see Romans 1:11; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6).

C. Relationship Between Spiritual Gifts and Natural Ability

It is clear that unbelievers do not have either the Holy Spirit or gifts from the Holy Spirit. Since unbelievers do have natural abilities in teaching, or administration, or music, a distinction must be made between strictly natural abilities and spiritual gifts. The natural abilities of the unsaved are not spiritual gifts. This much is certain. However, it is likely that sometimes the Holy Spirit transforms a purely natural ability by channeling it into God's work after conversion to Christ. In other cases, the Holy Spirit probably bestows brand new aptitudes, interests, and abilities.

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D. The Purpose for Spiritual Gifts

God does not give spiritual gifts to believers for personal enjoyment, or competition, or spectacular display. They are not for rivalry or self-elevation. God, the Holy Spirit, gives gifts so that they may be used to bless and edify other believers.

Let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor [1 Corinthians 10:24].

But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit **for the common good** [1 Corinthians 12:7].

Gifts are supposed to be used in love (1 Corinthians 13) with a view to edification (1 Corinthians 14:4; 12, 17; 1 Peter 4:10). The goal in using a gift should be the glory of God and the benefit of other believers. The distinction between purpose and result needs to be remembered. Self-enrichment is not the purpose for spiritual gifts, but it can be a result. One of the mysteries of the Christian life is that those who lose self benefit self. If one uses a spiritual gift with the goal of self-enrichment, he will harm himself. If one uses that same gift with the goal of glorifying God and benefiting others, self will benefit as a result.

E. Identification of Ones Gift

Romans 12 seems to be the only place in Scripture that gives directions relative to finding ones spiritual gift.

I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who

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teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness [Romans 12:1-8].

In this passage Paul first discusses Christian living in general (vv. 1-2a). Then he refers to knowing God's will. Finally, in vv. 3-8 he covers spiritual gifts. A step-by-step process of identifying one's gift(s) might be as follows:

1. Become Dedicated and Undergo Mind Renewal (Romans 12:1-2a)

With contemporary emphasis upon spiritual gifts it is easy to confuse priorities and approach spiritual gifts with a cart-before-the-horse attitude. It is not true that the Christian who is unsure of his or her spiritual gift(s) should remain inactive in the Lord's work. It is not the case that until a believer can pinpoint his spiritual gifts he should not serve. While the doctrine of spiritual gifts is important, the doctrine of servanthood is even more basic. One who does not know his or her spiritual gift should still present himself as a living sacrifice and allow himself to be transformed by the Holy Spirit's teaching in the Word of God. He should obey the commands, given to all believers generally, and should submit to the transforming Word of God. The true order is not first find a gift and then serve, but rather first serve in order to know God's good and acceptable and perfect will (v. 2b), including the specific knowledge of spiritual gifts (v. 3ff.). Knowledge of specific interests arises out of a living context of servanthood. Specific direction in the Lord's work arises from general involvement in that work. First things should be placed first in Christian living. The best advice that could be given to those who are uncertain as to their gift(s) is to get busy serving and growing in the areas that are known to be God's will for all Christians in general, i.e., obey Romans 12:1-2a first. Knowledge of God's will concerning spiritual gifts will follow.

2. Think Soberly and Objectively With a View to Determining the Measure of Faith (confidence) Concerning Various Gifts

The first step in determining one's gift is to become dedicated as a living sacrifice and to become committed to undergo mind renewal by the Holy Spirit through the Scriptures. Next Paul tells us to think soberly about self, i.e., assess self objectively. The type of self-appraisal being commanded in Romans 12:3 is one in which there is humility without any self-delusion whatsoever. The last part of Romans 12:3 links the act of objective self-assessment with a view to

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determining the measure of faith (confidence) that God has given. Verses 4-8 directly connect to v. 3 as a subordinate section and show that the ðmeasure of confidenceö in v. 3 concerns spiritual gifts. Each believer who meets the condition of being dedicated and undergoing transformation should make an objective self-assessment with a view to determining his measure of confidence about various spiritual gifts. As a practical suggestion, one should begin this assessment by considering the spiritual gifts listed in the Scriptures (making certain, of course, that these gifts are properly defined and with the sign gifts omitted from consideration). The fact that every Biblical listing of spiritual gifts is different adds weight to the argument that the Bible does not intend to give an exhaustive list of all the spiritual gifts that the Holy Spirit might bestow. Therefore, an assessment of one's confidence for involvement in spiritual gifts should begin with the Biblical lists for gifts but should also expand to all the various aspects of Christian service. If a person follows the counsel of Romans 12:1ff., he will eventually know God's perfect will, including the possession of a measure of confidence relative to spiritual gifts. When a person tries to follow Paul's advice in Romans 12, but still is unable to identify his/her gift(s), then the best course is to remain patient and faithful to the concepts of being a living sacrifice and undergoing mind renewal through Bible study. First, serve in the areas that are known to be God's will for all believers. Then knowledge of His specific will concerning gifts will come at some future self-assessment in God's good timing.²⁰

F. Miscellaneous Teachings About Gifts

1. Gifts Should Be Developed

Since all saved people have spiritual gifts, then a six-year-old Christian has a spiritual gift. Yet, it is obvious that a child's gift needs to be nurtured and developed. This truth does not just rest on observation of people but has Scriptural support in 2 Timothy 1:6.

²⁰ Sometimes one might have a large measure of confidence (faith) that God wants him or her to exercise a certain gift. With other gifts there might be great confidence that one should **not** participate in certain aspects of ministry (some should not sing or teach). There may be many areas of ministry in which there is no measure of confidence either way. While there is no special burden for involvement, there seems to be no prohibition either. These areas may not be a person's primary area of ministry in life, but being adaptable and humble as a good servant one should consider temporary involvement in them as the church needs help. Then when another with the gift arises, one should be willing to step aside.

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And for this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands [2 Timothy 1:6].

Apparently, ðgiftednessö does not cancel out the need for hard work and discipline in developing and applying ministry skills.

2. Gifts Can Be Neglected

1 Timothy 4:14 implies that a spiritual gift can be neglected.

Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed upon you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery [1 Timothy 4:14].

A gift can be neglected by deliberate failure to obey God's commands to serve Him. It might be possible to inadvertently neglect a gift by failing to have vision in considering the full options for Christian ministry. Christians should avoid the mistake of thinking that Christian service occurs only within the walls of a church building and only on Sunday. We should not neglect gifts for service by confining service for the Lord only to a special place at special times. 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 teaches that the Holy Spirit gives a variety of gifts. The same gift can be used in a variety of ministries. Teaching, for example, can be used in ministries to children, teens, elderly people, seminary, missionary work, and so forth. The same type of ministry has different effects, e.g., one church might be traditional and especially appeal to professional people, but another might be more contemporary and appeal to a different group. The same gift can be used in many various ways. Christians should be cautious about neglecting gifts due to a nearsighted view of what constitutes Christian service, as well as, through sin and laziness.

3. A Gift Can Be Abused

1 Corinthians 1:7 shows that the most unspiritual person can have great gifts (i.e., the carnal Corinthians). Christians abuse their gifts when they use them for selfish and sinful pursuits and not for God's glory or the edification of others in the body of Christ.

4. Gifts are Irrevocable

Romans 11:29 says, ðThe gifts and calling of God are irrevocable.ö In its context this line specifically teaches that God's promises to Israel will not be withdrawn. Yet, as a general principle it lends some support

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to the idea that God intends for a spiritual gift to be given and used for a lifetime. This does not exclude the truth that a man may disqualify himself from church leadership by failing to meet the standards of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. There is a difference between God arbitrarily withdrawing a gift and a person disqualifying himself by sin.

G. Definitions for the Gifts

An effort to find precise definitions of spiritual gifts is not just academic trivia. If Christians are to identify their own spiritual gifts, they must have accurate definitions for the gifts listed in Scripture. Furthermore, the gifts must be defined so that those that are sign gifts can be eliminated from consideration as options for gifts today. It is sad that the current emphasis upon gifts has not been accompanied by a carefulness to correctly define them.

There are four lists of spiritual gifts given in the New Testament: Romans 12:6-8; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Peter 4:10-11; and 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 28-30.

1. Romans 12:6-8

“And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.”

a. Prophecy

Many teach that the gift of prophecy refers to the “forthtelling” of God’s message. This makes prophecy similar to any preaching or teaching. While prophets did speak God’s message, this contemporary definition makes an error by failing to include all that was involved in prophecy.

A prophet in the Old Testament obtained a message by divine revelation and could predict the future. This is evident from many Old Testament passages, especially the book of Deuteronomy. In Deuteronomy 18:18 a prophet is defined as one in whom God placed “My words.” Deuteronomy 18:22 shows that there was a predictive element to prophecy.

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ōI will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put **My words in his mouth**, and he shall speak to them all that I commanded himō [Deuteronomy 18:18].

ōWhen a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, **if the thing does not come about or come true**, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of himō [Deuteronomy 18:22].

All of the authors of the New Testament except Luke were Jews whose thinking would naturally be heavily influenced by the Old Testament. We, therefore, must insist upon very strong evidence before modifying the Old Testament concept of a prophet. In fact, there is no evidence at all for thinking the New Testament authors had a different definition of prophecy than did the Old Testament writers. In Mark 14:65 members of the Sanhedrin slapped Christ and challenged Him to prophesy the identity of those who struck Him while He was blindfolded. Clearly, they are asking Christ to convey supernatural revelation as to the identity of the culprit. Zacharias gives a prophecy in Luke 1:67 about his son, John the Baptist. From the context it is obvious he gave a divinely revealed prediction about the future. The Book of Acts also shows how the early church viewed prophecy. David was deemed a prophet because he foretold of Messiah's resurrection (Acts 2:30-31). Agabus, a New Testament prophet, foretold a famine (Acts 11:27-28) and that Paul would suffer in Jerusalem (Acts 21:10-11).

It ought to be plain from Old Testament references to prophecy that it involved more than giving a message as when a minister delivers a sermon. Prophets obtained direct divine revelation from God and often predicted the future. Ephesians 3:5 shows that prophets obtained revelation. 1 Corinthians 14:29-30 gives instructions for using the gift of prophecy in the early church. It says that when the next **prophet** received a **revelation**, it was time for the previous speaker, to sit down and remain quiet.

And let two or three **prophets** speak, and let the others pass judgment. But if a **revelation** is made to another who is seated, let the first keep silent [1 Corinthians 14:29-30]

[W]hich in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been **revealed** to His holy apostles and **prophets** in the Spirit [Ephesians 3:5]

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It is true enough that a prophet was a spokesman for God, but there is distinction between a prophet and a minister in the pulpit. A prophet obtained his message by direct divine revelation, not from the Scriptures. In fact, prophets wrote the Scriptures! When the written revelation was complete, there was no longer any need for the gift of prophecy. We study prophecy whenever we read the Bible; and thus, it is still possible to be zealous for prophecy as 1 Corinthians 14 commands. However, Ephesians 2:20 links the gift of prophecy with the apostles and the founding period of the church. God does not bestow the gift of prophecy today.

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built upon the **foundation of the apostles and prophets**, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone [Ephesians 2:19-20].

b. Service (KJV, ministry)

The original word here is one from which *ōdeaconō* is derived. This is a broad term and refers to many aspects of service. A medical missionary, a church treasurer, a nursery worker, might all be considered to have gifts of service. All Christians should serve. God intends for some to specialize and emphasize works that can be classified as general services.

c. Teaching

Teaching is different from prophesying. Teachers do not obtain direct divine revelation. They instead explain truths that have already been placed into the Scriptures. There are many phases of God's work where the gift of teaching may be applied (children, women, youth, pulpit ministry, etc.) The gift of teaching should probably not be limited to just pastors. Although a pastor/elder has more responsibilities than teaching alone, he must be able to teach (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:9). All elders must be able to teach, but some specialize in it (1 Timothy 5:17). Since the gifts of apostle and prophet are no longer being given today, the gift of teaching remains the most important of gifts (1 Corinthians 12:28).

d. Exhortation (NIV, encouraging)

All believers should be an encouragement to each other and should bolster each other in life's pressures (Hebrews 10:25). Some are

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especially gifted to sustain and to support others. They enjoy and are adept at giving motivation and inspiration to other believers. Exhortation might take place in a formal speech but exhortation can take place just as easily in informal conversations. It is logical to view musicians as having the ability to exhort by their music ministry.

e. Giving (NIV, contributing)

All Christians should give. The gift of giving means that some will be especially sacrificial and will be devoted to meeting the needs of other Christians. One need not be rich in money to display a sacrifice of love and concern. Above all else a giver is unselfish in his thought of and interest for other Christians. In the following context (Romans 12:13) Paul mentions hospitality. Those with the gift of giving do not just throw money around. They use their resources to show hospitality and love to other believers.

f. Leading (KJV, ruling)

The gift of leading will be studied in conjunction with the gift of administration (1 Corinthians 12:28, see p. 53).

g. Mercy

All believers should display mercy. Again some will have special interests for involvement with the poor, the infirm, the weak, etc. They will want to devote major energies to helping those in pitiable conditions.

2. Ephesians 4:11-12

ōAnd He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.ö

a. Apostleship

The gift of apostleship has already been covered in the material on the cessation of sign gifts (pp. 8-17). Apostles were witnesses to the post resurrection ministry of Christ (Acts 1:21-22; 1 Corinthians 9:1). The word ðapostleö means that these have been sent by Christ with a special commission. Paul was the last one to become an apostle (1 Corinthians 15:8,9). Apostleship was for the founding period of the church (Ephesians 2:20). If someone believes that he is an apostle, he has not assessed himself with sufficient humility as Romans 12:3 commands.

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b. Prophet

The gift of prophecy was studied above (pp. 45-47) under the Romans 12 list of spiritual gifts.

c. Evangelist

The Greek word *euangelis* is composed of *eu* meaning good (as in euthanasia, õgoodõ death) and the word from which õangelõ is derived meaning õmessageõ. The evangelist gives õthe good messageõ of the gospel. All Christians should be involved in evangelism, even those whose main gift lies in another area (2 Timothy 4:5). However, some will be especially interested in majoring in the work of proclaiming the gospel. An evangelist need not be one who constantly travels to conduct õrevivals.õ Missionaries are evangelists. Furthermore, one who does personal work without any public speaking can still be an evangelist.

d. Pastor/teacher

It is difficult to tell from the original language whether Paul intends two gifts, pastors and teachers, or just one gift, pastor/teacher. Many conclude that the Granville Sharp rule of Greek grammar mandates that there be one gift. Yet, this rule of Greek grammar does not apply to plurals.²¹ Therefore, it is difficult to know whether Paul intends one gift or two.

Regardless of what this particular verse intends, the overall teaching of Scripture suggests that one can be a teacher without being a pastor. Nevertheless, to be a pastor one must be able to teach (1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:9). There seems to be two kinds of pastor/elders, those who rule and have some ability to teach and those who rule and specialize in teaching (see p. 47 and 1 Timothy 5:17). Often these are classified as õruling eldersõ and õteaching elders.õ²²

3. 1 Peter 4:10-11

“As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Whoever speaks let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God; whoever serves, let him

²¹ Granville Sharp, *Remarks On the Uses of the Definitive Article in the Greek Text of the New Testament*, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: B. B. Hopkins and Co., 1807), pp. 3-7.

²² For a deeper study on elders see *Not By Bread Alone*, pp. 332-337.

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do so as by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

This passage from 1 Peter 4 does little in the way of listing specific gifts. However, it does give two general categories of gifts. There are **speaking** gifts, and there are **servicing** gifts. If the gifts were to be classified topically, the outline **sign gifts, speaking gifts, service gifts** would be a good way to group them.

4. 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 28-30

"For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues....And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues. All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they? All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?"

a. Word of Wisdom

Any time a concept is used sparsely it becomes more difficult to define. The gift of wisdom as a spiritual gift is mentioned just once. In this case the definition that is selected affects whether wisdom should be considered a gift for today or belongs to those sign gifts that have ceased.

Many charismatics define the word of wisdom as a special, direct, and immediate revelation from God. They might claim a revelation that detects one in the audience has a certain sickness as being a *word of wisdom*. If this is the definition of word of wisdom, then it should be viewed as a sub-category of direct divine revelation and be viewed as something germane to the days of the apostles and prophets.

A better case can be made that the gift of wisdom simply involves the ability to find wisdom from the Scripture and to convey good counsel to others. In 1 Corinthians 2:6-7 and in other places in 1 Corinthians, Paul uses *wisdom* as a reference to the possession of prudent and

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sound judgment. There is no reason to change his definition for wisdom when it appears in a list of gifts in 1 Corinthians 12. Also, the ability to obtain revelation is contained within the gift of prophecy. Word of wisdom would seem to be something else. Likely, a good Christian counselor possesses the gift of wisdom as may many older saints in any church. If this second definition for wisdom were adopted, then there would be no reason to think the gift of wisdom has ceased.

b. Word of Knowledge

Many of the above statements about the gift of wisdom also apply to the gift of knowledge. If one thinks it refers to some aspect of divine revelation, e.g., the direct voice of God, then the gift should be limited to the days of the apostles and prophets. However, knowledge in 1 Corinthians 8:1ff. seems to refer to just brute intellect, and the gift of prophecy already includes the ability to obtain revelation. Perhaps word of knowledge refers to a special ability to understand complex Biblical truths and to help others do the same. If Bible scholars or theologians be viewed as having the gift of knowledge in a less mystical sense, then there would be no reason to limit the gift of knowledge to the days of direct divine revelation to the apostles and prophets.

c. Faith

All Christians by definition possess faith. Those with the gift of faith possess a deep trust in God in the midst of difficult surroundings. Missionaries in dangerous areas must have a special gift of faith to impel them to leave material comforts and face hardship for Christ's sake.

d. Healings/miracles

The gift of miracles is more extensive than the gift of healings, but both can be studied together. Earlier sections of this study gave support for believing that sign gifts ceased with the apostles. There is no difficulty in proving that gifts of healing and miracles must be classified as sign gifts (see Acts 5:12-15). Thus, there are no gifts of healing and miracles today. There may be periodic occurrences of healings and miracles that God performs independently of any humans with such gifts. There may be occurrences of healings and miracles, but there are no healers and

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miracle workers. These gifts are signs. Sign gifts ceased with the close of apostolic times (see above, pp. 8-17 and 30-38).

e. Distinguishing of Spirits (KJV, discerning)

Here is another gift that presents difficulty as to its precise definition. If it were understood as the ability to detect the invisible presence of demons, then there would be some question to whether it is a sign gift or a service gift.

The distinguishing of spirits may just refer to a special ability of detecting moral or doctrinal error. 1 John 4:1 encourages all Christians to discern the spirits, but in the context this refers to the false teaching of the false prophets who are in reality the agents of the öspirits.ö Perhaps the gift of ödiscerning spiritsö simply means the ability to recognize falsehood (See also, Acts 17:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:21).

Hebrews 5:14 teaches that those Christians who are skilled in the öWord of righteousnessö (Hebrews 5:13) develop abilities to discern good from evil. The church needs those who can ferret out error and evil. Perhaps those who are especially sensitive and quick to detect doctrinal/moral error have the gift of discerning spirits.

f. Languages/Interpretations of Languages

In apostolic times God gave the ability to speak foreign languages that one had never learned. He also gave the ability to interpret languages that one had never learned. The genuine gift of tongues involved real languages, not incoherent gibberish (see Acts 2:6, 8 and pp. 17-24). Tongues are among the sign gifts according to 1 Corinthians 14:22. Signs were to confirm the apostles (2 Corinthians 12:12). The apostles have ceased and so have tongues. There is no longer any gift of languages or gift of interpretation of languages.

g. Helps (1 Corinthians 12:28)

The Greek for öhelpsö is different from the Greek words for öserviceö in the Romans 12 list. A distinction is probably intended. Maybe those who öserveö do so to minister to others. öHelpsö may be more specific. Those who öhelpö free others to exercise their gifts more effectively. A church secretary does not so much do service to meet the needs of church leaders as she does help them to perform their gifts more effectively. Every wife should help her husband's ministry for Christ.

h. Administration (KJV, government)

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The Greek word for administration in 1 Corinthians 12:28 is different from the Greek word for leading (ruling) in Romans 12:8. Again this may indicate a distinction. One might be able to be an administrator without ruling. There is a difference between helping with organization and being one who has authority in decision-making. Those with the gift of ruling have final authority for church policy and programs, but they may delegate implementation of the actual work to one gifted with administration. The elders may lead, but, for example, they will want to find someone with the gift of administration to direct a given project.

VIII. Conclusion to Pneumatology:

It is unfortunate that there is so much confusion relative to the Holy Spirit. There is irony that so many self-centered and fleshly pursuits are attributed to the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit is a precious companion and wants to effect growth for and bestow blessings upon believers. This can occur if there is a hunger for and submission to what the Holy Spirit teaches in His own Word, the Bible.