

Spiritual Gifts - Temporary Gifts - a study for the Gulf Coast Baptist Church Bible Institute for the Winter session 2020-21 by Steve Thomas

Introduction

In the early days of the Church, steps were taken by the Godhead to accelerate its early formation. Roman roads made travel possible in relative safety, so the gospel for initial salvation was able to travel great distances in a short amount of time. God had chosen the perfect time to send His Son to redeem mankind and the Word was beginning to spread. In His upper room discourse Jesus told the disciples that changes were on the way.

There were severe limitations to this spread as well. God did not reveal all the new truth to one person at one time. Grace revelation was given to several different New Testament authors - Paul, Peter, James, and the Apostle John. The inspired letters of these men spanned several decades and went to churches stretched out over thousands of square miles. How was the word of the Resurrection and Grace teaching going to get to the thousands of potential believers in the decades after Christ's earthly ministry? The answer to this question is the Temporary Gifts. Christ gave Revelatory Gifts, Teaching Gifts, and Validation Gifts. These gifts were a method of revelation that was a "part by part" method. Giving some truth here, and some there, some at this time, and some at another. The new revelation was not all at one time and place for the infant Church. These gifts facilitated the growing of the Church at a transitional time.

Revelatory Gifts

These gifts are listed in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12. They made new revelation possible. God was changing the way that believers should communicate with Him, how they should approach Him, how they should think about themselves with the finished work of Christ. He needed to tell the believers these things. These gifts are Prophecy and the Word of Knowledge.

The gift of **Prophecy** had two facets, to foretell the future and to forth-tell the truth. The foretelling of future events was a temporary gift. This gift was in place through the Old Testament and was used by the prophets. In Acts 11 Luke tells of a prophet named Agabus who gave revelation to the church at Antioch. In chapter 13 he describes the fact that both prophets and teachers were at the church at Antioch. God was using these individuals to give information not found in the Old Testament Scriptures.

The **Word of Knowledge** would be information that was given to individuals that was essential to the formation of the church. Perhaps offices for the church, and qualifications for those offices; any information given to the Church by way of Inspiration could have also been given to the Apostles towards believers at this formative time. With no

scripture to tell them how to operate the assemblies, there would be much confusion. The believers at this time were used to visiting the temple and performing ceremonies from the Mosaic Law. With the splitting of the Veil down the middle, Christ fulfilled the law.

Teaching Gifts

The gift of **Apostle** is listed in 1 Corinthians 12. In Luke 11:49 Christ prophesied that there would be ones sent out that would not receive a kind welcome. The greek word *apostolos* meaning "one sent" was a term used of Christ's disciples. It is a term that extends beyond the 12. The apostolic gift was central to the development of the early church. They laid the foundation of the church, were used to spread the good news of the gospel of grace (Acts 14:14). They set the direction of the early church (Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 16:4). They conferred the Holy Ghost upon new believers (Acts 8:14). They were the early church leaders used to choose the first deacons and to distribute to the physical needs of the believers (Acts 4:35-37; 5:2; 6:6).

There were qualifications to be an Apostle. Apostles needed to have seen the risen Lord (1 Cor 9:1). And Apostles needed to have performed miracles in the three different categories of miracles (2 Cor 12:12). The three categories of miracles are **signs** (healing and tongues), **wonders** (word of Knowledge and Wisdom), and **mighty works** (one or more of the service gifts).

Validation Gifts

There were many individuals who claimed to be from God. In order for the Church to be able to discern who was genuine and who was not, validation gifts were given.

The gift of **healing** was present in Christ's earthly ministry. It continued beyond this time into the early formation of the Church. This gift is recounted throughout the gospels (Matt 10:1) and book of Acts (Acts 3:11, 4:19, 5:16). It can also be seen, on a much smaller scale, in some of the letters to the Church (James 5:16).

The gift of **miracles** can be explained simply by a manifestation of God's power. Philip traveled great distances in an instant (Acts 8:39-40) These gifts were present and performed for the churches in Galatia (Gal 3:5).

The gift of **Discerner of Spirits** (1 Cor 12:10) can be defined as one who is capable of thoroughly discerning a matter or individual. The supernatural ability to judge whether a person or teaching was from God, man, or an evil spirit. This power would keep Churches from following the wrong individual and moving down a wrong path as a church.

The gift of **tongues** was functional as well as a sign. Tongues were known languages (Acts 2:6-8, 13:1) that were a sign to the Jews (1 Cor 14:22), and they were prophesied to come and then to cease (1 cor 13:8). This was the supernatural ability to speak or understand a specific language spoken by people from different nations. The interpretation of tongues was functional when different languages were being spoken in an assembly that had travelers from many different countries. A word of revelation could be given in one service by someone with this gift without having to learn the language. The listeners could hear in the language and a discerner of tongues could understand in a totally different language and could, in a church setting, pass that word of revelation on to those in that assembly. This was an incredible time saving measure that allowed the truth of the early church to spread exponentially without the delays of translating the truth into multiple languages.

Cessation of the temporary gifts

Paul in 1 Corinthians, gives quite a bit of revelation concerning the use of spiritual gifts. It seems like the church at Corinth was very active in religious works, but short on Fruit the Spirit. They were full of religious activity but not accompanied by Agape Love. In many "Christian" circles the fact that these gifts are actually temporary, and the scope and time of their operation is debated hotly. By looking closely at these chapters (12-14) a believer can see clearly that the gifts mentioned above were not meant to be permanent. They served a clear and limited purpose in the early church. They were crucial in the establishment of the early church, but were replaced by a complete canon of Scripture and the Holy Spirit to illuminate this Scripture. The three gifts were prophesied to have run their course were prophecies, tongues, and a word of knowledge (1 Cor 13:8).

The three terms used of the three gifts mentioned above are "fail", "cease", and "vanish away". These terms can be defined as such: Fail - making something unable to function, to render inoperable. Cease - to cause something to come to an end, to stop, to come to a halt, to die off. Vanish away - this is actually the future tense of fail, to render inoperable. These gifts were not meant to function timelessly. There came a time when they ceased to be necessary. Consider this quote from Cleon Rogers in the Bibliotheca Sacra of Dallas Theological Seminary:

While there is clear evidence from Scripture that the gift of tongues was in operation during the time of the Apostles, it is significant that the gift is nowhere alluded to, hinted at, or found in the Apostolic Fathers. It might be objected that this is simply an argument from silence and has as much support for the continuance of the gift as for the cessation of the gift. However, the importance of this silence takes on added weight when viewed in the light of certain facts.

The gifts of knowledge and prophecy were divided among the apostles to aid the early church. The "in part" mentioned in 1 Cor 13:9 means "a division or share". In verse 10 the timetable of cessation was identified by the Apostle Paul. "When" (*Hotan*) and adverb of time, comes that which is perfect - that which is complete or mature. "That" - in the neuter gender - speaking of a thing, not a person. "Shall be done away" - to render useless or unproductive. When the canon of scripture was completed, the part by part method of revelation was rendered useless and was no longer necessary.

The comparison of temporary gifts with child development prove their cessation (1 Cor 13:11). Speaking and understanding can be directly linked to several of the temporary gifts. While the gifts were functional for the church, the purpose of the gifts were also to validate or authenticate the messenger (Heb 2:3-4). The qualifications and authority of the apostles prove the cessation for this gift. Being able to view the risen Christ is no longer possible. The laying on of hands to give the Holy Ghost is no longer necessary. Those saved are immediately baptized into the Body of Christ. The Spirit now provides wisdom and discernment for all believers (1 John 4:1-3). The word of wisdom and knowledge is only used twice in scripture while the discernment of spirits is used once.

The inability to heal or do miracles as the church matured is further proof of the cessation of the temporary gifts. Paul was unable to heal himself (2 Cor 12:7-9), Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25), Timothy's stomach ailment (1 Tim 5:23), and Trophimus (2 Tim 4:20) near the end of his ministry. Earlier in Paul's ministry he raised Eutychus from the dead, healed himself of a deadly snake bite, and performed other sign gifts recounted in the book of Acts. Paul was unable to use the sign gifts later in his ministry because he was being validated in other ways, and the canon of scripture was being completed.

Many of the temporary gifts that are "in use" in various churches today are not being used with the instructions that Paul provided the church at Corinth. These rules were meant to keep confusion out of the church and keep the gifts functional while they were providing a sign (1 Cor 12-14).