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SPIRITUAL GIFTS

There are many different ideas about the subject of "spiritual gifts". In the Church of God we have not really focused on this to any great extent. However, we should strive to have a correct understanding of this subject. Towards that goal this article will examine some of the things the Bible reveals about this.

THE FOUNDATION

The foundation of a Christian life is repentance towards God and faith in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

> Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: REPENT YE, AND BELIEVE THE GOSPEL. (Mark 1:14-15)

On that foundation of repentance and faith, we are to make a commitment to God. This is pictured by being baptized.

> Then Peter said unto them, REPENT, AND BE BAPTIZED every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. (Acts 2:38)

If we have met these conditions from God --- repentance, faith and being baptized --- then God gives us the free gift of His Holy Spirit. Receiving God's Spirit is also conditional on CONTINUING, as a way of life, TO OBEY GOD'S LAWS.

> And we are his witnesses of these things; and [so is] also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given TO THEM THAT OBEY HIM. (Acts 5:32)

THE PURPOSE FOR GOD'S SPIRIT IN OUR LIVES

Clearly there is a reason WHY God gives His Spirit to repentant believers. It is not to make us feel good or superior. Rather, God's Spirit is a source of power that God gives us access to, so that we may conduct our lives in harmony and submission to God's great overall plan and purpose for us human beings.

God wants all people to live in harmony with His law of love, expressed in the two great principles:

> Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt LOVE THE LORD THY GOD with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second [is] like unto it, Thou shalt LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR as thyself.(Matthew 22:37-39)

These two principles are expanded in the Old Testament into the TEN commandments, the first four

showing us HOW to love God and the last six showing us HOW to love our neighbour.

But the natural human mind is hostile towards God and His laws without even being aware of this hostility.

> Because THE CARNAL MIND [is] enmity against God: for it is NOT SUBJECT TO THE LAW OF GOD, neither indeed can be. (Romans 8:7)

And so, we need access to the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome and to remove this hostility at least in the mind. The way this is achieved is by having our minds renewed by God's Spirit.

> And be not conformed to this world: but BE YE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND, that ye may prove what [is] that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. (Romans 12:2)

THIS IS VITAL TO UNDERSTAND!

It is THE MIND that is influenced by God's Spirit. It was the mind that was hostile to God prior to repentance and conversion.

However, the influence of the Holy Spirit in our lives does have its limitations. While it influences our minds (i.e. the way we think), our actions and our behaviour are still very much under our own control. God's Spirit leads us, but it does not compel us to act in specific ways.

That is why a Spirit-filled Christian will experience mental conflicts --- conflicts of conscience --- in many situations. On the one hand God's Spirit will indicate one course of action to us; on the other hand the natural physical pulls and desires of the flesh attempt to entice us with a different and more appealing course of action. Those pulls can be very compelling, yet God requires us to resist them, consistently, as a way of life. Paul explained this conflict.

> For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. (Romans 7:22-23)

This is where we need the help of God's Spirit. Paul explained to Timothy the attributes of God's Spirit.

> For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of POWER, and of LOVE, and of A SOUND MIND. (2 Timothy 1:7)

It is a Spirit of power which will strengthen us mentally and emotionally. Paul did not mean that God's Spirit would give us physical muscular strength to strengthen the body. He meant that it would strengthen the mind! It will also prompt us with the right motivation; the motivation of love, or outgoing concern for other people. And it will enable us to think soundly and clearly about life and its issues, a spirit of a sound mind. This is how our minds become "renewed".

But in addition to helping us to live in harmony with, and in submission to, God's laws, the Holy Spirit is also given to us for the purpose of helping us to PRODUCE FRUITS. Jesus Christ explained this as follows:

> Herein is my Father glorified, that ye BEAR MUCH FRUIT; so shall ye be my disciples. (John 15:8)

This production of "fruits" is very closely watched over and controlled by God Himself! As Christ explained:

> Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every [branch] that beareth fruit, HE PURGETH IT, that it may bring forth MORE FRUIT. (John 15:2)

In his epistles Paul refers to 9 different "FRUITS of the Holy Spirit" in Galatians chapter 5, and to 9 different "MANIFESTATIONS of the Spirit" (commonly referred to as "the GIFTS of the Spirit") in 1 Corinthians chapter 12. Both of these groups are for the purpose of producing the results that God desires to see.

Let's now take a closer look at "the fruits of the Spirit".

THE FRUITS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

They are found in Galatians 5:22-23. Notice the context:

Paul is concerned with giving guidance for conducting our normal daily lives. In Galatians 5:16 he wrote:

> [This] I say then, WALK in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. (Galatians 5:16)

"Walk" refers to living, how to conduct our lives. In the next two verses Paul explains the mental conflicts we referred to above, that someone with God's Spirit will experience. After this Paul contrasts the two life-styles and the actions and activities each produces.

First he lists "the WORKS of the flesh". These are the things that are produced by the carnal human mind, the things that people's lives will typically be filled with. They are found in Galatians 5:19-21. We don't need to focus on them here.

In Galatians 5:22-23 Paul then lists "the FRUITS of the Spirit". These are the things that are produced by a mind that is guided by God's Spirit, the things that will fill a Christian life. They are:

> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. (Galatians 5:22-23)

"A fruit" is the end-result of a chain of events. It starts with a seed which, given the right conditions, will produce a tree which, also given the right conditions, will produce the fruit. This fruit in turn contains the seeds for producing new plants and more fruit. Given the right conditions, the cycle perpetuates itself.

God provides "the seed" in the form of the Holy Spirit we receive after repentance and baptism and the laying on of hands. We ourselves are then responsible for providing "the right conditions" for that seed to sprout, grow and bear fruits, such as love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness (in character), faith, meekness and temperance.

THESE ARE THE FRUITS GOD IS LOOKING FOR IN OUR LIVES!

They all affect our interactions with other people. They are about living our daily lives. If we utilize God's Spirit to produce these fruits in our daily lives, then those fruits will contain in themselves the seeds for producing further fruits, and the cycle also perpetuates itself, just like on the physical level. In plain language: to receive more of God's Spirit we have to put the Spirit we have to good use and produce love, joy and peace, etc., not just in our own lives, but also in the lives of other people.

These fruits are not in any way miraculous powers or abilities. They are the automatic results when we put to use the Holy Spirit God made available to us upon repentance, to live in harmony with the obvious intent of God's spiritual law!

The one fruit that may require some explanation is "faith". Faith most assuredly is a fruit of the Spirit of God! Faith is produced when we put God's Spirit to use in our lives. Some Scriptures may help to clarify this:

> So then faith [cometh] by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:17)

The more we study God's Word, the more faith we are going to have, because through the Bible God speaks to us! People who do not study the Bible OBVIOUSLY will not have any real godly faith. So having real faith depends to some degree on what we do.

Jesus Christ made the same point to His disciples:

> And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by PRAYER AND FASTING. (Matthew 17:20-21)

The kind of faith that the disciples lacked in this account is only given (God GIVES the ability to produce the fruit) to those who FAST AND PRAY! Again this involves utilizing the Spirit God has already given us to produce more fruits (in this case: faith).

At another time the disciples specifically asked:

> And the apostles said unto the Lord, INCREASE OUR FAITH. (Luke 17:5)

Read Christ's answer in Luke 17:6-10. Verse 10 sums it up.

> So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do. (Luke 17:10)

In plain language Christ's answer to the request for an increase in faith was: you must consistently DO MORE in every area of your Christian life than the minimum God requires. If you want the fruit of faith produced in your life, give MORE than just the ten-point-nought-nought-nought percent of your increase, etc.. On the other hand, if you see how close you can get to doing your own thing on the Sabbath, while still trying to keep the Sabbath in the letter of the law, don't expect to increase in faith!

As James explained in James 2:18, "... and I will show you my faith BY MY WORKS." Putting God's Spirit to use in our lives by going above and beyond the letter of the law and striving to "... do those things that are pleasing in his sight" (1 John 3:22), will produce the fruit of faith.

God is responsible for the fruit that is produced. But without our input no fruit is ABLE to be produced. We MUST do our part. Paul explained this to the Corinthians.

> I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. (1 Corinthians 3:6)

Just because you plant an apple-seed, that does not mean YOU produced the tree or the subsequent fruits on that tree. It is God who gives the increase. But God does not act whimsically, impulsively or irrationally; He does not cause peaches to grow on an apple-tree. God has already committed Himself to an apple-tree bearing apples. God's part in the process is assured.

Likewise, God's part in the process of producing the fruits of the Spirit in our lives is assured. BUT WE MUST DO OUR PART!

To summarize these 9 fruits of the Spirit: they all affect our ATTITUDE to life ... faith and confidence in God, how we treat other people, how we respond to life's situations, and how we conduct ourselves. They do NOT necessarily require great knowledge, special understanding, miraculous abilities or special discernment. And this is how these "fruits of the Holy Spirit" differ from "the manifestation of the Spirit".

SOME GREEK WORDS

Before we get into the question of "spiritual gifts" in detail, we need to consider some Greek words in the New Testament. The two main ones we need to understand are the word for "spiritual" and the word for "gifts".

The expression "SPIRITUAL GIFTS" is used ONLY ONCE in the whole Bible ... and that is NOT in 1 Corinthians chapter 12! It is in fact in Romans 1:11.

Other Scriptures where the ENGLISH text reads "spiritual gifts" don't actually have the word "gifts" in the original Greek. The translators simply decided to add the word "gifts" on their own authority.

"SPIRITUAL"

The Greek word for "spiritual" is PNEUMATIKOS. This is an adjective and it is used 26 times in 21 different verses in the New Testament. Twenty of these verses are in Paul's writings; the only other verse where it is used is 1 Peter 2:5 (twice in that verse). Of the 24 times that Paul uses this word, he does so 15 times in 1 Corinthians.

The word is derived from the noun "PNEUMA". This noun has a variety of meanings in the New Testament. Its original meaning is "air" and "wind". Then it also means "breath" (which is, after all, only air). (This word is the root of our English word "pneumatic" tyres, i.e. tyres filled with air.) The word is also used to refer to the "spirit in man" and to God's "Holy Spirit". All of these meanings refer to something that is invisible to human eyes.

Let's now look at the places where the word "PNEUMATIKOS" is used:

1 Corinthians 10:3 = SPIRITUAL meat;

1 Corinthians 10:4 = SPIRITUAL drink ... SPIRITUAL Rock;

Ephesians 5:19 = SPIRITUAL songs;

Colossians 3:16 = SPIRITUAL songs;

Ephesians 1:3 = SPIRITUAL blessings;

Ephesians 6:12 = SPIRITUAL wickedness;

Colossians 1:9 = SPIRITUAL understanding;

1 Peter 2:5 = SPIRITUAL house ... SPIRITUAL sacrifices;

Romans 7:14 = the law is SPIRITUAL;

Galatians 6:1 = you the SPIRITUAL ones;

1 Corinthians 15:44 = SPIRITUAL body ... SPIRITUAL body;

1 Corinthians 15:46 = which is SPIRITUAL ... which is SPIRITUAL;

1 Corinthians 14:37 = if any man think himself to be SPIRITUAL;

1 Corinthians 2:15 = he that is SPIRITUAL judges (discerns);

1 Corinthians 3:1 = not able to speak as unto SPIRITUAL ones;

1 Corinthians 9:11 = we have sown to you SPIRITUAL things;

Romans 15:27 literally reads: "... for in the SPIRITUAL of them shared the nations ...".

1 Corinthians 12:1 reads: "Now concerning the SPIRITUAL (matters), brethren ...". Note that this verse does NOT contain the word "GIFTS"!

1 Corinthians 14:1 reads: "... and desire the SPIRITUAL (things) ...". Note that this verse also does NOT contain the word "GIFTS"!

1 Corinthians 2:13 reads: "... comparing SPIRITUAL (things) with SPIRITUAL". The word "things" is not in the Greek text.

That leaves one other verse where the word "SPIRITUAL" is used and that is in Romans 1:11. That is the only place where it is used together with the word for "GIFTS". So let's look at this verse now:

> For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some SPIRITUAL GIFT, to the end ye may be established; (Romans 1:11)

In the transliterated Greek this reads:

> "epipotho gar idein humas hina ti metado charisma humin pneumatikon eis to sterichthenai

humas" (Romans 1:11)

The expression "hina ti metado charisma humin pneumatikon" means: "that I may impart some gift to you spiritual". WHAT did Paul have in mind with this "spiritual gift" that he wanted to impart to them? The last part of this sentence answers this. Paul said it was SO THAT they could be established or strengthened. This is important for understanding this expression.

Clearly the Church in Rome had up to that point in time not yet had the benefit of being personally taught by an apostle. Paul, the apostle to the non-Jews, had not yet been there himself. But it was in his area of jurisdiction. Therefore he expressed a desire to visit the members there, in order to do what he did everywhere else ... TEACH GOD'S TRUTH!

Here in Romans 1:11, the only place in the whole New Testament where the two words "spiritual gift" are used together, Paul very clearly equated this with teaching the Christians in Rome God's truth. Here Paul was not referring to the Christians there receiving FROM HIM (!) some miraculous gifts! That is simply not the context!

It is easy to understand Romans 1:11 in its own context. Here Paul meant nothing more than to instruct them in God's ways. And since this expression is not used anywhere else in the Bible, we should not assume that it has some other meaning.

This covers every use of the word "spiritual". So let's move on to the next word.

"GIFTS"

For a start, there are a number of different Greek words that are translated into English as "gifts". They are not necessarily interchangeable with "charisma"; and this needs to be taken into account with any Scripture where the words "gift" or "gifts" appear. The word that we are really interested in is "CHARISMA". But let's have a brief look at the other words first.

A) "DORON"

This word is akin to the verb "didomi" which means "to give". It is used 19 times in the New Testament, and translated in the KJV 18 times as "gift" and once as "offering". It refers to a present, though sometimes suggestive of recompense.

B) "DOREA"

This word is derived from "doron". It also means a gift, but one that is also a gratuity, i.e. one given without any obligation. The word is used 11 times, and always translated as "gift". An example is Ephesians 4:7.

> But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the GIFT of Christ. (Ephesians 4:7)

"The gift of Christ" here is the "DOREA of Christ". This word is also used in Hebrews 6:4.

> For [it is] impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly GIFT, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, (Hebrews 6:4)

C) "DOMA"

This word is used 4 times and always translated as "gift". This word is used in Ephesians 4:8.

> Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave GIFTS unto men.

Above we saw that in the previous verse (Ephesians 4:7) the word "dorea" is used. Paul also used this word "doma" in Philippians 4:17.

> Not because I desire A GIFT: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. (Philippians 4:17)

D) "DOSIS" and "DOREMA"

Two other words are used twice each. Since both of these words are used together in one verse, we can look at them together. "Dorema" is twice translated as "gift" in Romans 5:16 and in James 1:17. "Dosis" is once translated as "giving" in Philippians 4:15 and once as "gift" in James 1:17. So here is James 1:17.

> Every good GIFT ("DOSIS") and every perfect GIFT ("DOREMA") is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. (James 1:17)

We have now looked at 5 different Greek words, which are all at times translated as "gift". They all have to do with giving. That is their primary meaning. These words are used in the Bible to refer to the following things:

- the gift of Christ;

- the heavenly gift;

- God giving gifts unto men;

- the perfect gift from above; etc..

But none of these words are really involved in what is generally referred to as "spiritual gifts". When people talk about "spiritual GIFTS", they really have the Greek noun "CHARISMA" in mind. So let's now look at this word also.

"CHARISMA"

This word is used 17 times in the New Testament; 15 times it is translated as "gift" and twice as "free gift". (The difference between "gift" and "free gift" can be led back to the difference between the words "doron" and "dorea", which we looked at above, which have nothing to do with "charisma" though.)

The word "charisma" is derived from the verb "charizomai" which means "to do something pleasant"; and this verb can be led back to the noun "charis", which means: grace, favour, undeserved pardon. The meaning of "charisma" overlaps with that of "charis".

In 1 Corinthians 12 the word "charisma" is used 5 times, though never together with the adjective "pneumatikos". The only time it is used with "pneumatikos" is in Romans 1:11; and we have already examined that Scripture. Let's now look at the other places where "charisma" is used.

One thing to keep in mind, as we examine these passages is that "charisma" is NOT the main Greek word for "gift". It is not derived from the word "give". Even for "gifts from God" the other Greek words are frequently used. This word "charisma" is used only in connection with God, referring to something that God gives. In that sense "gift" is a correct translation. But "charisma" is specifically "a gift of grace (i.e. "charis") on the part of God as the Giver".

We'll see that the word is used to refer to specific things. That is not to imply that its meaning should be limited to those things. For example, we'll see "the charisma of healings" used several times; but the word "charisma" certainly is not intended to be limited to "healings", not at all.

Let's look at the verses where "charisma" is used.

Romans 6:23

> For the wages of sin [is] death; but THE GIFT (charisma) of God [is] eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

Here Paul uses "charisma" to refer to the free gift of eternal life from God. It is something we will receive from God at a time yet future.

Romans 5:15 - 16

> But not as the offence, so also [is] THE FREE GIFT. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more THE GRACE OF GOD, and THE GIFT BY GRACE, [which is] by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. (Romans 5:15)

And the next verse:

> And not as [it was] by one that sinned, [so is] THE GIFT: for the judgment [was] by one to condemnation, but THE FREE GIFT [is] of many offences unto justification. (Romans 5:16)

In Romans 5:15: "the free gift" is in Greek "to charisma", and "the grace of God" is "he charis tou theou", and "the gift by grace" is "he dorea en chariti".

In Romans 5:16: "the gift" is "to dorema", and "the free gift" is "to charisma".

Notice that in verse 15 the expression "he dorea en chariti" is used. "He dorea" is the nominative case and means "the free gift" (just as we saw in Ephesians 4:7). "Chariti" is the dative case of "charis". The preposition "en" means "in" or "into" and it always requires the dative case.

And so this expression "he dorea en chariti" actually means "the gift IN grace" rather than "the gift BY grace". There is a difference between "the gift IN grace" and "the gift BY grace". The first expression says that grace itself is the gift, where the second expression implies there is SOMETHING ELSE which is given freely. This switch in meanings is achieved by a simple switch in prepositions.

The Greek preposition "en" is used 2782 times in the New Testament. In the KJV it is translated:

- 1874 times as "IN"

- 117 times as "AMONG"

- 37 times as "THROUGH"

- 141 times as "BY"

- 112 times as "AT"

- 134 times as "WITH"

- 46 times as "ON"

- 321 times = misc.

Yes, this preposition "en" can be translated as "by", but it overwhelmingly is translated as "in", because that is its primary meaning. (See also Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament for more information on this preposition.)

The translators' lack of understanding is easy to understand. They start out with the ASSUMPTION that "charisma" has to be different from "charis". Yet when we read THE CONTEXT of Romans 5:15-16 (i.e. we read the whole chapter), it's clear that Paul was not talking about some additional "spiritual gifts" here. Twice he used the word "charis" and once the word "charisma". Also, in this verse and in the next verse he used the normal Greek word for "gift" (i.e. "dorea"), the gift that is given without obligation to give it.

At this point in his discourse to the Romans (i.e. here in chapter 5) Paul is still giving a general rundown of God's plan of salvation; after discussing the evils extant in the world he expounded on repentance and faith. In the next chapter, chapter 6, he expounds on baptism and then follows with a contrast between a carnal mind and a converted mind. He concludes his discourse in chapter 11, showing how eventually "all Israel shall be saved" (Romans 11:26).

The next time Paul used this word "charisma" in this epistle is in Romans 6:23, where, as we saw above, he said "the charisma of God is eternal life". Here in chapter 5 he had exactly the same meaning in mind, i.e. he used the word in a very general sense. Later in this letter he becomes a bit more specific, as we'll see.

Thus Paul here meant that the grace God has bestowed on us at this time is the charisma, the free gift, access to eternal life through repentance and then receiving God's Holy Spirit.

ROMANS 11:29

Three verses earlier Paul had completed painting the picture of God's plan of salvation. Now, having presented the whole picture, he makes a more general statement, one that sums it all up:

> For the gifts and calling of God [are] without repentance. (Romans 11:29)

The Greek word for "repentance" comes from root words that literally mean "to change one's mind or

purpose afterwards". After explaining the whole plan of salvation, Paul in this verse now tells us that God will not change His mind or purpose at some point in the future! Both, the gifts ("ta charismata") and the calling (he klesis") that are a part of God's plan, are certain!

"The calling" is vital to God's plan ... God Himself deciding which people He will "call" at which time. And "the calling" in turn is intimately tied to "the gifts" ("charisma") that God makes available to repentant believers. The first of those gifts is obviously, in a general way, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, which influences the mind with ..."power, love and a sound mind". This gift also enables us to have contact with God, and it opens up access to eternal life. But there are more gifts, more "charismas", though Paul has not listed any of them thus far in this discourse to the Romans. And that is what he proceeds to do in the next chapter ...

Romans 12:6-8

After mentioning that all those in God's Church are "one body", Paul now expands on the "gifts" he referred to in the previous chapter. He uses the word "charisma" once in verse 6.

> Having then GIFTS differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether PROPHECY, [let us prophesy] according to the proportion of faith; Or MINISTRY, [let us wait] on [our] ministering: or he that TEACHETH, on teaching; Or he that EXHORTETH, on exhortation: he that GIVETH, [let him do it] with simplicity; he that RULETH, with diligence; he that SHEWETH MERCY, with cheerfulness. (Romans 12:6-8)

These verses should help us to understand more about what God inspired Paul to have in mind when he used this word "charisma" in his letters. Notice the "charisma" that Paul lists here:

- inspired preaching (i.e. "prophecy");

- dedicated serving (i.e. "ministry");

- teaching;

- ability to encourage (i.e. "exhortation);

- cheerfully giving;

- wisely ruling;

- freely showing mercy.

And that's it!

Of this list of seven things, most of them will readily tie in with the "fruits" of the Spirit mentioned in Galatians chapter 5. Specifically, "showing mercy", "gladly giving", "diligently serving" and "encouraging other people" are all part of the fruits of a Christian life.

On the other hand, "inspired preaching", "teaching" and "ruling wisely" require ADDITIONAL help from God, and these are not things that God expects every member of His Church to be able to do. Some will never preach or teach, and some will never (in this life) be in a position to rule. This is where God gives "gifts" to those who perform these responsibilities.

However, notice something!

After prefacing this list with the word "charisma", Paul makes no distinction between things that are the expression of a converted character (i.e. "fruits of the Spirit") and those that require additional mental ability (i.e. preaching/teaching/ruling wisely). He simply lumps them all together and calls them "charisma".

This should tell us that in the Bible God did not intend for the Greek word "charisma" to refer only to special miraculous abilities. It includes those, but it is a much broader term. This is important to understand when we look at the other places where this word is used. Always take note of the specific context the word is used in.

Let's move on.

1 Timothy 4:14 and 2 Timothy 1:6

> Neglect not THE GIFT ("CHARISMA") that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. (1 Timothy 4:14)

Here the Apostle Paul is instructing a younger minister under him. Paul made a similar statement in his second letter to Timothy.

> Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up THE GIFT ("CHARISMA") of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. (2 Timothy 1:6)

The "charisma" Paul seemed to have in mind in both these passages was a gift for inspired preaching, probably coupled with diligent service (see Philippians 2:19-22), and an ability to encourage others. This ties in fully with what we saw in Romans chapter 12.

1 Peter 4:10

> As every man hath received [the] GIFT ("CHARISMA"), [even so] minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. (1 Peter 4:10)

Viewed on its own, this verse isn't too clear regarding what Peter meant. But the context of this verse helps in this regard.

> And above all things HAVE FERVENT CHARITY among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. (1 Peter 4:8)

This exhortation by Peter is for the first of the "fruits" of the Holy Spirit in Galatians chapter 5. In the next verse Peter writes:

> USE HOSPITALITY one to another without grudging. (1 Peter 4:9)

This also ties in with the fruits of the Spirit. It certainly does not require any special mental abilities, just an attitude of genuine service.

Then we have verse 10, as we just saw above:

> As every man hath received [the] GIFT, [even so] MINISTER THE SAME ONE TO ANOTHER, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. (1 Peter 4:10)

In this verse the word "charisma" does NOT have the definite article. The original Greek reads "a charisma" and not "the charisma". Peter is not using the word with one specific "gift" in mind, but rather in a very general sense.

What was on Peter's mind as he wrote these words? Exactly what did Peter expect them to do to or for each other? The verb "minister" means "serve".

Peter meant for them to conduct themselves in an attitude of SERVICE one to another, and they were to utilize the gift of the Holy Spirit to have this right attitude. It is this attitude of service that Peter had addressed in the previous two verses. And he continues to expand on it in the following verse:

> IF ANY MAN SPEAK, [let him speak] as the oracles of God; IF ANY MAN MINISTER, [let him do it] as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. (1 Peter 4:11)

Peter is here giving the first two of the "charismas" that Paul listed in Romans 12:6-8. So it seems clear that Peter meant exactly the same things that Paul meant in Romans chapter 12. Like Paul, Peter also does not seems to make any distinction between the "fruits" of the Holy Spirit (expressing love and using hospitality) and those that require additional mental abilities from God ("speaking as the oracles of God").

Notice also that in his own mind Peter was speaking about something that EVERY SINGLE TRUE CHRISTIAN has received! And it was Peter who, on the day the New Testament Church was started, explained exactly what it is that every Christian receives:

> Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. (Acts 2:38)

"The gift" Peter promised here is in Greek "ten dorean", the word that implies a totally "free" gift, as opposed to one deserved or in some way earned.

So on the day the Church was started Peter explained that upon repentance we receive "the DOREA of the Holy Spirit"; and 30 years later in his letter to the Church Peter wrote about the "CHARISMA every repentant person receives". What every repentant believer receives is the Holy Spirit, and that is what Peter meant in his letter.

Let's now look at another use of "charisma".

<u>2 Corinthians 1:11</u>

Notice the context of 2 Corinthians chapter 1. In verse 8 Paul wrote:

> For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we DESPAIRED EVEN OF LIFE: (2 Corinthians 1:8)

Paul had endured some very difficult troubles and persecution. In verse 9 he wrote:

> But we had THE SENTENCE OF DEATH in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: (2 Corinthians 1:9)

In these trials Paul had looked to God for help and deliverance, as he mentioned in the next verse:

> WHO DELIVERED US from so great a death, and doth deliver: IN WHOM WE TRUST that he will yet deliver [us]; (2 Corinthians 1:10)

Then comes verse 11:

> Ye also helping together BY PRAYER FOR US, that for THE GIFT [bestowed] upon us BY THE MEANS OF MANY PERSONS thanks may be given by many on our behalf. (2 Corinthians 1:11)

Here the Greek for "the gift" is "to charisma". While grammatically the Greek of this verse is rather involved, Paul's meaning, in view of his preceding statements, is fairly clear. Paul had been in great dangers. Then the members of the Church had prayed for him and God had delivered Paul out of all these troubles. For this Paul was very thankful. He also wanted those who had prayed for him to NOW thank God for His intervention.

Thus, "the charisma" that Paul made reference to here simply meant God's help and intervention in Paul's troubles. "The gift" Paul received here was the "deliverance" (2 Corinthians 1:10) from troubles, which deliverance God had given him. Paul didn't imply any special miraculous abilities in this case.

Again, we see that the word "charisma" has a much broader usage than just referring to special miraculous abilities bestowed on believers. This is in line with the other usages of this word that we have thus far examined.

The remaining seven occurrences of "charisma" are all found in 1 Corinthians. Keep in mind that 1 Corinthians is a very corrective letter. The Corinthians were doing many things wrong, and Paul addresses one problem area after another. As we look at Paul's statements, it is helpful to keep in mind "where he was coming from".

<u>1 Corinthians 1:7</u>

In the opening verses, before mentioning any of the numerous problems, Paul wrote ...

> I thank my God always on your behalf, for THE GRACE OF GOD WHICH IS GIVEN YOU by Jesus Christ; (1 Corinthians 1:4)

They had received grace ("charis") from God; i.e. they had received the Holy Spirit. In the next verse Paul talks about the effect of that grace.

That in every thing YE ARE ENRICHED BY HIM, in all utterance, and [in] all knowledge; (1 Corinthians 1:5)

The Holy Spirit had enriched their lives by opening up new knowledge and understanding to them. And because they had receptive minds, the message Christ had brought was confirmed in them, as Paul mentions in the next verse.

> Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: (1 Corinthians 1:6)

In the next verse Paul now draws a conclusion, based on these preceding statements. He says:

> SO THAT ye come behind in no GIFT; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: (1 Corinthians 1:7)

In other words, AS A RESULT of their minds having been opened to God's truth by the Holy Spirit, they now did not lack any "charisma".

Here is the transliterated Greek text of this verse.

> hoste humas me hustereisthai en medeni charismati apekdechomenous ten apokalupsin tou kuriou hemon Iesou Christou (1 Corinthians 1:7)

The expression "hoste humas me hustereisthai en medeni charismati" employs a double negative and literally reads: "so as you not lack in no charisma". Grammatically adjusted this reads: "so that you don't lack in any charisma".

So we see that at the start of this letter Paul again uses the word "charisma" in a very general sense. Paul said that they didn't "lack" in any way. The English expression "coming behind" implies a comparison with other congregations, which does not seem to be what Paul here had in mind.

After this Paul starts to address the problems in the Corinthian Church. In chapter 7 he addresses questions of a sexual nature and of marriage. And there he again uses the word "charisma".

<u>1 Corinthians 7:7</u>

> For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper GIFT of God, one after this manner, and another after that. (1 Corinthians 7:7)

Paul strongly implies that he was unmarried and, because it was a time of very serious distress (1 Corinthians 7:26), he felt it would be good for other men to also stay single. But he realized that many men would simply WANT to marry. And so he says that every man has his proper "charisma" from God. In making this statement, Paul seems to imply that the ability to be prepared to forgo having a family in order to live a Christian life is a "charisma" from God.

However, the last of the 9 "fruits" of the Spirit Paul mentioned in Galatians 5:23 is "temperance". The Greek word there is "egkrateia", which comes from the root "kratos", meaning "strength". A preferable translation of this word is "self-control". In Thayer's Lexicon this word is explained as follows:

> "the virtue of one who masters his desires and passions, especially his sensual appetites".

And that is precisely what Paul means in 1 Corinthians 7:7. Thus we can see that he refers to self-control as a "fruit of the Spirit" in Galatians 5:23 and as a "charisma" in 1 Cor. 7:7. This does not preclude the possibility of other "charismas" going beyond the scope of "fruits of the Spirit".

In plain language we might say that all the "fruits of the spirit" are "charismas", but not all "charismas" are necessarily "fruits of the Spirit". Some "charismas" go way beyond being "fruits" that God is expecting us to bear.

But let's move on.

1 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 12

With all this as background information, we are ready to examine the remaining five occurrences of "charisma", which are all found in one chapter, 1 Corinthians chapter 12. Apart from Romans chapter 5, this is the only chapter in which the word is used more than once.

It is interesting to note that Paul does not use any of the other 4 words for "gifts" that we looked at earlier (i.e. "doron", "dorea", "doma" and "dosis") in this whole epistle, though he certainly does use those four words in his other letters.

Of the five times "charisma" is used in this chapter, it is used 3 times in the expression "the charismas of healings". In the other 2 occurrences it is not linked to any other noun that might be termed "a gift".

Let's look at the whole chapter to see what Paul is telling us.

1 Corinthians 12:1

> Now concerning spiritual [gifts], brethren, I would not have you ignorant. (1 Corinthians 12:1)

The word "gifts" is not in the text. What this verse is basically saying is: Now concerning spiritual MATTERS I want you to understand something, brethren (i.e. I don't want you to be ignorant about this).

Remember that the Corinthians had wrong ideas about MANY things, which Paul addresses in this letter. This is one more area where they had it all wrong. He is correcting their wrong ideas.

1 Corinthians 12:2

> Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led. (1 Corinthians 12:2)

First of all: remember your past! You knew NOTHING about the Holy Spirit back then. Beware of a carry-over of your wrong previous customs and ideas.

1 Corinthians 12:3

> Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and [that] no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. (1 Corinthians

12:3)

In other words, realize that a correct understanding of God's truth can only come through the Holy Spirit, as already explained in 1 Corinthians 2:6-11. So you Corinthians should be able to discern who has God's Spirit and who doesn't, by whether they really understand God's truth or not.

Now Paul is ready to explain the different ways that the Holy Spirit can have an influence in our lives, all things that the Corinthians needed to learn to discern correctly.

1 Corinthians 12:4-6

> Now there are DIVERSITIES of GIFTS, but the same Spirit. And there are DIFFERENCES of ADMINISTRATIONS, but the same Lord. And there are DIVERSITIES of OPERATIONS, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. (1 Corinthians 12:4-6)

The Greek noun "DIAIRESIS" is used only three times in the New Testament, all three occasions being in these three verses. Twice it is translated as "diversities" and once as "differences". These translations aren't really totally correct.

"Diairesis" comes from the verb "diareo", which means "to take apart, to divide into parts, to distribute". Thus "diairesis" really means "division into parts".

These three verses talk about three different divisions into parts:

- divisions of GIFTS ("charisma");

- divisions of ADMINISTRATIONS ("diakonia");

- divisions of OPERATIONS ("energema").

To correctly understand the first one (i.e. charisma), we must also understand the other two. As far as Paul was concerned, "charisma" and "diakonia" and "energema" all go together! That's how he presented them to the Corinthians. And for all three of these there are divisions into parts.

"Diakonia" means "TO EXECUTE THE COMMANDS OF OTHERS" ... and that is what "deacons" are supposed to do, right? Of the 34 times this word is used in the N.T., it is in the KJV translated 16 times as "ministry:, 6 times as "ministration" and 3 times as "ministering". The meaning also includes "teaching".

"Energema" means "WORKING". It is used only twice and translated as "working" in the other passage. It comes from the verb "energeo", which means "to work (physically)".

Next, notice that all 3 of these divisions have a focus. As Paul points out:

- All the divisions of the "gifts" are the effects of the one and same Holy Spirit working in people's lives.

- All the "executing the commands of others" (i.e. diligently and zealously and faithfully doing the work of God and teaching believers) can be led back to Jesus Christ controlling the work of His Church by working through many different people.

- All the divisions of the different degrees of diligent hard work on behalf of God's Work can be led back

to God the Father who takes responsibility for calling people into His Church (John 6:44).

These three categories do not function separately. Rather, they are intimately intertwined. The "charisma" we receive through the Holy Spirit (whether we mean the "fruits" God's Spirit will produce in our lives, or whether we mean "gifts" that go way beyond being "fruits") are inevitably affected by the zeal and diligence and dedication and commitment of the person receiving these "charisma". As Paul himself said a little later in this letter:

> But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which [was bestowed] upon me was not in vain; but I LABOURED MORE ABUNDANTLY THAN THEY ALL: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. (1 Corinthians 15:10)

Paul's own attitude had the result that he had more "energema" than the other apostles. It was by God's "charis" (grace) that this "charisma" was bestowed on Paul! He also had a great deal of "diakonia", the ability to teach God's truth to people. Paul worked hard and constantly pushed himself, even as Mr. Herbert Armstrong also used to do in this age!

To illustrate further how these three categories are closely linked together: CHARISMA gives access to different ABILITIES, DIAKONIA entails different levels of THE CAPACITY TO PUT TO USE those abilities, and ENERGEMA involves THE MOTIVATION to want to do God's work, again to different degrees. These three things ... ABILITY, CAPACITY AND MOTIVATION ... lay the foundation for what Paul is now going to explain. "Ability" alone is not enough; without "capacity" and "motivation" nothing will be achieved.

Paul is telling us that God the Father controls the whole process, but He has delegated all authority to the Executive Spokesman, Jesus Christ (see Matthew 28:18) who does the work by using the power of the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:7

> But the MANIFESTATION of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. (1 Corinthians 12:7)

Notice that this is NOT "the charisma of the Spirit", but "the manifestation of the Spirit". The Greek word for "manifestation" here is "phanerosis", and it is used only twice in the N.T.; here and in 2 Corinthians 4:2, where it says "manifestation of the truth". This word means: to make clear, to make known, to make evident.

So Paul tells us in this verse that "the making known and evident of the Holy Spirit is given to every believer for the purpose of benefitting the individual". And if it benefits the person, then it helps towards the goal of developing holy, righteous, godly character.

Paul now proceeds to list nine "manifestations" of the Spirit. They differ from the nine "fruits" of the Spirit he lists in Galatians 5:22-23.

<u>1 Corinthians 12:8-10</u>

> For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the GIFTS (CHARISMA) of healing by the same Spirit; To another the WORKING (ENERGEMA) of miracles (Greek means POWERS);

> to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another [divers] kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: (1 Corinthians 12:8-10)

Let's compare the two lists:

GALATIANS 5: FRUITS 1 CORINTHIANS 12: MANIFESTATIONS

- LOVE - WORD OF WISDOM

- JOY - WORD OF KNOWLEDGE

- PEACE - FAITH

- LONGSUFFERING - CHARISMA OF HEALINGS

- GENTLENESS - ENERGEMA OF MIRACLES

- GOODNESS - PROPHECY

- FAITH - DISCERNING OF SPIRITS

- MEEKNESS - KINDS OF LANGUAGES

- SELF-CONTROL - INTERPRETATION OF LANGUAGES

Notice that "faith" is mentioned in both lists. Apart from that the two lists are totally different. (Later we can examine why "faith" is mentioned in both lists.)

We have seen that when we repent and are baptized, then God gives us His Holy Spirit. That is for the express purpose of enabling us to live a life of harmony with God's laws, and to produce "the fruits" of Galatians chapter 5. These "fruits" are the expression of a truly Christian character, the way Jesus Christ Himself is. They are the automatic results of putting God's instructions for how to live into practice.

On the other hand, no amount of living by God's laws, and utilizing God's Spirit to do so, will ever produce the "manifestations" of the Spirit of 1 Corinthians chapter 12. Of those nine "manifestations" one is called a "charisma" (i.e. healing), and one is called an "energema" (i.e. miracles).

These "manifestations" are not needed to lead a Christian life. They are powers and abilities that are given by God (verse 7) for the express purpose of accomplishing the Work of God on Earth. That scope goes far beyond developing godly character in certain people.

1 Corinthians 12:11

> But all these WORKETH that one and the selfsame Spirit, DIVIDING to every man severally as he will. (1 Corinthians 12:11)

With this statement Paul sums up these nine "manifestations". The two verbs used here are of interest. The word "works" is the Greek verb "energeo", from which comes the word "energema". The Greek word for "dividing" is "diaireo", referring back to the three "divisions" mentioned in verses 4-6.

God controls these "manifestations"; He gives these to different people in His Church as He wills. Every

member of the Church is like an individual building-block. By selectively giving these "manifestations" of the Spirit to different people, God controls precisely where each building-block will fit in the overall body.

This is the theme of what Paul explains in the next 15 or so verses. He explains that the Church is ONE BODY composed of many different individual members. By selectively giving these "manifestations" to people, God decides that one member becomes an eye, another an ear, another a hand, etc.. Paul then concludes the analogy in verse 27:

1 Corinthians 12:27

> Now YE ARE THE BODY OF CHRIST, and members in particular. (1 Corinthians 12:27)

This whole long analogy has been to show how the Church is made up. And these "manifestations" of the Spirit are for achieving unity within that one body, the Church. They make it possible for the body to carry out different functions, to see, to hear, to speak, to work, etc.. They make for harmony and order in the body.

In verses 4-6 we had reference to divisions of "charisma", "diakonia" and "energema". Now, in the next four verses, Paul uses the word "charisma" three times. These last four verses of 1 Corinthians chapter12 hold the key to correctly understanding this whole question of "spiritual gifts".

1 Corinthians 12:28

> And God hath set some in the church, FIRST apostles, SECONDARILY prophets, THIRDLY teachers, AFTER THAT miracles, THEN gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. (1 Corinthians 12:28)

The expression "kai hous men etheto ho theos" ("God has set some") employs the middle voice, which means God has done this for His own use and purpose (like in 1 Corinthians 12:18 "as it has pleased Him").

The use of "proton ... deuteron ... triton ... epeita ... eita" (i.e. first ... second ... third ... after that ... then) indicates A HIERARCHY TO START WITH, WHICH THEN LEVELS OUT BELOW THE THIRD LEVEL. In the Church "apostles" (i.e. 'sent forth' by God) are first, second are "prophets" (i.e. 'to speak for' God) and third are teachers (those who instruct in God's ways). After this it levels out without any particular hierarchy being implied. These others: miracles, charismas of healings, helps, governments and kinds of languages ("gene glosson) are all on a par.

This gives us a list of eight different functions (here Paul did not separate speaking in languages from interpreting of languages, though he does so again two verses later).

IT IS FOR THE PURPOSE OF FULFILLING THESE FUNCTIONS THAT GOD GIVES DIVISIONS OF "CHARISMA" AND "DIAKONIA" AND "ENERGEMA"!

Those who are not going to fulfil any of these functions (i.e. the majority of churchmembers), also don't need any of these "gifts". God selects, "as it has pleased Him", people to do these various things and for that explicit purpose He bestows on them these added gifts.

The reason Paul is explaining this here is because the Corinthians had it all wrong. They all wanted these "gifts" that would be impressive to use. They would make them "important". But this misses the

whole point for these "gifts", which is to fulfil certain functions for which God selects specific people.

So in the next few verses Paul shows that there is something more important than any of these "manifestations" of the Spirit that the Corinthians were so eager for. And that something is this:

> USE GOD'S SPIRIT TO PRODUCE THE FRUITS OF GOD'S SPIRIT IN YOUR LIFE!

Paul just focuses on the first of those fruits, love, because that is tied up with all the other fruits. And to do this you don't need any special "charismas". All you need to do is USE the Holy Spirit God gave you when you repented, were baptized and became a part of God's Church. It is not nearly as glamorous as being used to heal people, or as performing miracles, or as speaking in foreign languages ... but it is far more important for your character development.

"CHARISMAS" DO NOT HELP US TO DEVELOP CHARACTER!

This is what Paul now proceeds to explain.

<u>1 Corinthians 12:29-30</u>

> [Are] all apostles? [are] all prophets? [are] all teachers? [are] all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? (1 Corinthians 12:29-30)

In the English text this is presented in the form of questions. The original text contained no punctuation; that was only added much later. These two verses use the Greek phrase "me pantes" seven times. It reads:

> "Me pantes apostoloi ... prophetai ... diskaloi ... dunameis ... charismata iamaton ... glssais ... diermneuousin".

"Me pantes" means "NOT ALL". Thus, seven times Paul says "not all are ...". If this construction is presented in a question, it expects a negative answer. So actually Paul doesn't ask: "ARE all apostles? ... etc." Rather, he says quite emphatically: "NOT ALL ARE apostles, right? ... etc."

In 1 Corinthians 12:30 he again mentions "the charismas (plural) of healings (plural)", the third time in this chapter that he uses this expression.

The point Paul is making in these two verses is this:

> Since ALL churchmembers very evidently are NOT in these seven categories, and, in fact, the vast majority of members are not in ANY of these seven categories, THEREFORE for what purpose should God bestow additional "manifestations" (charisma, diakonia and energema) on them? What would it achieve in God's plan?

Instead of looking to having special abilities given to them, Paul now focuses on what the Corinthians should have concentrated on all along!

UNDERSTAND THIS!

What Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:31 and in the next chapter is not some unique instruction for the Corinthians! What Paul explains in these verses is what EVERY CHRISTIAN in every age should make a priority over any desire for impressive-looking "spiritual gifts"!

1 Corinthians 12:31

> But covet earnestly the best GIFTS (CHARISMATA): and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way. (1 Corinthians 12:31)

There is a difference in the Greek texts for this verse. Where the Majority Text reads "ta charismata ta kreittona", the Alexandrian Nestle 26 Text has "ta charismata ta meizona". "Kreittona" means "BETTER" and "meizona" means "BEST".

So in the Majority Text Paul is quoted as saying "but earnestly desire THE BETTER charismas", and the Alexandrian Text has changed this to read "but earnestly desire THE BEST charismas".

Since the word "charisma" is used in the plural (charismata) in both texts, it should be clear that the Majority Text is correct, because the superlative "best" would expect a singular "gift", whereas the comparative "better" readily accommodates the plural "gifts". So the Alexandrian Text is once again the corrupted one.

So the first part of this verse reads:

"But earnestly desire THE BETTER CHARISMAS ..."

The second part of this verse is ..."kai eti kath huperbolen hodon humin deiknumi", and this does NOT contain the comparative case "MORE excellent". It really reads:

> "... and furthermore (or yet) I show you a way according to excellence".

So putting the whole verse together , it correctly should read:

> "But earnestly desire the better GIFTS; and furthermore I show you a way according to excellence." (1 Corinthians 12:31)

Earlier we examined every other use of the word "charisma". We saw that in many places it is used without necessarily implying any miraculous powers or abilities apart from the indwelling presence of God's Spirit. It is also freely used to refer to the "fruits" that are produced by the Holy Spirit. Scriptures where this use of the word "charisma" is demonstrated include Romans 1:11; Romans 6:23; Romans 12:6-8; 1 Peter 4:10; 2 Corinthians 1:11; 1 Corinthians 7:7; etc..

So let's summarize what we've seen in this chapter:

Paul is correcting the Corinthians who really wanted "spiritual gifts" that are impressive. Paul then points out that there are different "manifestations" which are indeed impressive ... BUT these are ONLY given by God to those whom God has selected to fill specific functions in the body for the overall well-being of the body, and for doing the Work of God. That is God's doing. But these impressive "manifestations" of the Spirit don't have any influence on the development of godly character. Also, the vast majority of members in the Church are not selected by God to be apostles or prophets or teachers or workers of

miracles, or to be used in healing people, or in speaking in foreign languages, or in interpreting those languages.

Instead of focusing on those specific "manifestations" of the Spirit, Paul tells them that there is A GROUP OF BETTER CHARISMAS (not "manifestations"!) that they should focus their desires on!

Now think!

What group of charismas could there possibly be BESIDES all the things Paul has already talked about in this chapter? Elsewhere he freely uses the word "charisma" as a synonym for "fruits of the Spirit". Isn't it obvious what he has in mind?

THE "BETTER CHARISMAS" PAUL MENTIONS ARE "THE FRUITS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT"!!

That's right! They are "better" than "speaking in tongues" or "performing miracles" or "performing healings". The fruits of a Christian life are BETTER CHARISMAS than these "manifestations of the Spirit". And these charismas are available to EVERY SINGLE CHRISTIAN, not just to those God has selected for specific preaching and teaching functions. The fruits of a Christian life are the greatest charismas of all!

And so with the next verse (1 Corinthians 13:1) Paul starts to explain the very first of these "better charismas" ... real, genuine, godly love. This is a better charisma than anything Paul mentioned in the previous chapter. And by freely giving us His Holy Spirit after baptism, God gives every single Christian access to this charisma.

The other "fruits of the Spirit" are not far behind. This is "THE WAY ACCORDING TO EXCELLENCE" that Paul wanted to show them.

FAITH

Just some brief comments on the topic of faith.

Earlier we saw that "faith" is the only item mentioned in both, Galatians chapter 5 and also in 1 Corinthians chapter 12. We also examined why it is "a fruit of the Spirit".

When faith is mentioned as a "manifestation of the Spirit" in Corinthians, it is talking about a different degree of faith, faith on a higher level than just a fruit of the Spirit. It is the level of faith that is required by the items on the list that follow it, healings, miracles, speaking foreign languages, etc..

God does not require every Christian to have the degree of faith that he can be used to heal scores of people. The faith to be able to perform miraculous works (and healings are also miracles) is a gift from God. As an example, the caretaker of the Billy Sunday tabernacle with whom Mr. Armstrong came into contact in the late 1920's seemed to have a gift for healing people, but that gift was withdrawn from him when he knowingly rejected new understanding Mr. Armstrong had presented to him.

But on a different level God certainly expects all of us to have the fruit of faith in our lives, because ... without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6).

IN CONCLUSION

1) The Bible uses the term "spiritual gifts" only one single time, in Romans 1:11; and there it is not

implying any miraculous abilities. Nowhere else is the term "spiritual gifts" used!

2) The Bible speaks about "gifts", and several different Greek words are used in this regard. The word "charisma" comes from the word for "grace" and "charisma" always refers to something from God.

3) The Bible also speaks about "fruits of the Spirit" and about "manifestations of the Spirit". A careful examination of how the word "charisma" is used in the N.T. shows that the word "charisma" includes both, the fruits and the manifestations. They can all be led back to "the grace of God".

4) In 1 Corinthians 12 Paul was correcting the people in Corinth. Paul explained the purpose for the special "manifestations", and then he did his best to show the Church that developing the fruits of the Holy Spirit in our lives gives us far BETTER "charismas" than desiring one of the special "manifestations".

5) Specifically, the way according to excellence to having the better "charismas" is to develop a godly love in our dealings with all people.

6) This is Paul's way of saying: don't get your mind on the special "manifestations". Concentrate on producing the fruits God is looking for!

7) What people think of as "spiritual gifts" are called "manifestations" because they WILL become clear and evident. Nobody needs to wonder: do I perhaps have one of those manifestations of 1 Corinthians chapter 12? God gives those for specific purposes, and they will become self-evident as the person uses them.

8) The "gift" God gives to every repentant believer was mentioned by Peter the day the New Testament Church started, in Acts 2:38. It is the forgiveness of our past sins and in addition the free gift of the Holy Spirit. These are the things that are referred to in the other passages that talk about "gifts".

9) The Holy Spirit has a number of attributes (2 Timothy 1:7), and it will produce a variety of fruits in a believer's life.

10) The greatest of these "charismas" is godly love!

The advice Paul had for the people in Corinth is equally applicable to us. We too should focus our energies on producing the fruits of God's Spirit in our lives, rather than being concerned about "special spiritual gifts".

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