

## Christ and the Gifts

This chapter addresses both Cessationism and Pentecostalism. Both have positive contributions to make and both have some problems. Miracles are a part of gospel proclamation, but they are not a mark of personal achievement. This chapter looks at:

- Christ in us.
- Miracles and the gospel.
- Cessationism.
- Success gospel.
- Fasting.
- Charismata.
- Casting out spirits.
- Tongues and prayer.

Jesus came with grace to destroy the works of the devil upon all those under the law. "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." (John 1:17). *Charisma* from the Greek refers to grace, our deliverance from the law. Satan robbed, killed and destroyed by way of the curse. (John 10:10).

Satan did not initiate the curse, nor does he rule over man. Man is in bondage to his nature and to the law of sin and death. Jesus said he who sins is the servant (slave under bondage) to sin (John 8:34). The cross and resurrection of Christ redeemed us from law into His grace (Gal 4:4-5).

How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power: who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil. (Acts 10:38).

The oppression was due to the curse God spoke in Genesis 3. All who sin under the law are under a curse (Gal 3:10). Jesus comes to heal and to set free from the curse, by His grace. *Christ* means *anointed one*. Christ came to preach the *Year of Jubilee*, or the gospel era, the day of salvation. He came as our sin bearer, with power to set men free from the curse through grace. He ministers the same through the church today.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord... This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. (Luke 4:18-21).

### Christ in the Flesh

When we speak of Cessationists, it is not really accurate to paint them all with one brush. Here we are generalizing, but in fact there are very few full Cessationists. Nevertheless, here we speak in general terms about some of their views.

Cessationists claim that *the healing ministry* was fulfilled as a unique work when Jesus ministered in the flesh and healing has therefore passed away. They say that since Jesus fulfilled it then we should no longer expect it. They claim that Jesus was announcing His coming. Once the miracles proved that Jesus was the promised Messiah, Cessationists claim they were no longer required.

The message of the New Testament, however, is that Jesus "is still come". He came and is still here. What He began in His flesh, He continues to do by His Spirit in His church. Cessationist claims amount to saying that Jesus has not come in the flesh, that He is not in the flesh of His people today. This is the doctrine of antichrist (1 John 4:2, Gal 2:20).

The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus *began* both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up...(Acts 1:1).

### Christ in Our Flesh

Luke wrote his Gospel to Theophilus explaining what Jesus did and taught in the flesh. Next Luke wrote Acts to show the continuation of the works of Jesus through His church. Luke explains that Jesus “began to do and teach”. Jesus has not finished *doing and teaching*! He continued it in Acts. It does not say at the end of the book of Acts that He finished doing and teaching.

Cessationists might be willing to admit this much, that at least the first apostles continued in the miraculous life of Christ. They may then claim that after the task of the first apostles was completed in the founding of the church, Jesus ceased doing these works. But is this what the Bible teaches?

In John 14 to 17 Jesus carefully explained that the purpose of His going away (the cross, burial, resurrection and ascension) was so that He could dwell in His disciples and continue His work in them. In this context Jesus said, “He that believes on Me, the works that I shall do he shall do also and greater works than these shall he do, because I go to the Father.” (John 14:12).

His *going to the Father* resulted in the sending of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. He is also called the *Spirit of Christ* because He receives from Christ and communicates the grace of Christ in us and through us. He moves in complete oneness with Christ. It is plain that Jesus meant that the first disciples would continue in His works by doing the same works that He did.

### Greater Works

Cessationists say that *greater works* means that we would minister *new birth* through the gospel. No one was born again while Jesus was here in the flesh, so after Pentecost the disciples did greater works, as many they preached to were born again. No doubt the new birth is a greater work than physical healing, but Jesus said they would do the works He did, as well as the greater works.

It is clear that Jesus’ plain meaning was that when the Spirit came at Pentecost the disciples would continue the ministry that Jesus began. Jesus said He would live in them and continue His work. “I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you.” (John 14:18). While the New Covenant continues, Christ continues in us and working through us. Acts is about Christ continuing His work through the Holy Spirit.

### All The Church

Other Cessationists claim that the promise of *greater works* was only to the disciples that Jesus spoke to and does not relate to us today. However, Jesus said in this *Olivet discourse* in John 14:16 that His continuing work within us was not meant for the first disciples alone, but for all who heard the gospel through them and came into the church. Jesus prayed;

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word. That they all may be one; as you Father are in Me...(John 17:20-21).

His last sayings and prayer were for us too. The Olivet discourse was meant for the whole church. We are all one with the Father because Christ is in us. Everything Jesus said about the Father being in the disciples at Pentecost refers to the whole church. The discourse applies to all that are born of the Spirit.

Some say that this prayer has not yet been fulfilled because church dominations are not fully ecumenical. This prayer was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost. The Father answered Jesus by sending His Spirit. All who are baptized in the Spirit are one with Christ and with each other through Christ.

## All The World

In the *Great Commission* the disciples were told to go into the entire world and to teach everybody to observe *all things* He had commanded them. This includes everything Jesus taught them in John 14-17. The words of Jesus apply to us today. We pass on the same words to those who follow us. We “continue in the apostle’s doctrine” without changing any part of it (Acts 2:42).

And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also must I bring and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one fold and one Shepherd. (John 10:16).

These *other sheep* are from the Gentiles. Jesus was speaking to the first disciples (Jews) explaining that the gospel would go to the entire world. He said we would *hear His voice*. This means Jesus is speaking personally from heaven today into the heart of everyone who is regenerated. This is new birth. This is a miracle. Miracles must happen while Jesus continues to speak from heaven through the gospel.

These *other sheep* are brought into the fold of Christ until the end of this world, the same way the first sheep were brought in, as recorded in the book of Acts: through demonstration of the power of the gospel, as the Holy Spirit bears witness to the resurrection of Christ.

## A Living Christ

Cessationists claim that once the resurrection of Christ was proved in history, miracles were no longer needed. But how does this help people who live today? In every generation there is a witness by the Holy Spirit that the claims of Christ are true. He must appear to each generation risen from the dead, “by many infallible proofs” (Acts 1:3). This is the gospel, that Christ is risen and lives in us:

And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. (Acts 4:33).

And we are His witnesses of these things; and so also is the Holy Spirit...(Acts 5:32).

Our message is a message of life. On the cross Jesus took away our sin, but today He lives (Rom 10:9, 1 Pet 1:3, 23). Salvation is receiving the free gift of righteousness by the resurrected Christ speaking within (Rom 5:17). Cessationists dwell on His death that justified us, which is good, but not on the living Christ within our flesh. Unless Christ comes within there is no justification (Gal 2:20).

## Preach, Teach and Heal

And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing all manner of disease among the people. (Matt 4:23).

Jesus preached, taught and healed. This is the task of the church. “Let the dead bury the dead”, our task is to preach, teach and heal (Luke 9:60). Preaching, teaching and healing are all essential in proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom. The same three factors must continue in a full proclamation of the gospel. It is *doing* and teaching, not just teaching (Acts 1:1). The *doing* proves the teaching.

When Jesus saw the lame man He said, “Man, your sins are forgiven.”. When the Pharisees objected to this Jesus answered, “But *that you may know* that the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins, (He said to the sick of the palsy) I say to you, Arise and take up your couch and go into your house.” (Luke 5:20, 24).

Jesus healed so that the people would know He had power to forgive sins and that the gospel is true. Cessationists say because Jesus did this in history we all know now and do not need Him to do it

today. But if the gospel is being preached for the first time to people, those people also need to know. The gospel of the kingdom must be demonstrated.

### Reasons Jesus Healed

Jesus healed for different reasons. John said he healed so that we might know that He is the Son of God and have eternal life. Jesus also healed out of compassion. Even if He has demonstrated His divinity in history, He still has compassion for the sick today. Healing is not only to demonstrate the gospel to those who have not heard, it is also “the children’s bread” (Mark 7:27).

The Pharisees claimed that Jesus drove out demons by Beelzebub. Jesus replied, “If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come to you.” (Matt 12:29). Where the authority of God is there will be evidence. As Christ is in us, the kingdom of God is present in us. Jesus said He cast out demons by “the finger of God” (Luke 11:20), meaning the authority of God, showing that the kingdom was present. This is a *sign* of His presence.

### God’s Approval

Jesus said, “Believe Me because of the works.” (John 5:36). So God did not just confirm His message, but also His person. God confirms those He calls by evidence that He is with them. Jesus’ doctrine was scriptural, but He appealed to the works of the Father as proof of His apostleship and calling. Anyone who claims miracles but does not hold to the gospel is not of God. But authority is confirmed by “the finger of God”.

The disciples of John the Baptist came to Jesus and asked, “Are you He that was to come or do we look for another?”. Jesus answered them, “Go and show John again those things which you do hear and see: The blind receive their sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them.” (Matt 11:3-5).

Jesus appealed to the works that the prophets said Messiah would do when He came. He quotes directly from Isaiah about the coming kingdom (Is 35:5). These works were a necessary accompaniment of gospel proclamation. The works not only authenticated the messenger, but also the gospel message. They showed then and they show now that Jesus has forgiven our sin.

### All Afar Off

We see this in the Great Commission:

Go into the entire world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized shall be saved...And these signs shall follow those who believe; In My name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover.

So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven and sat at the right hand of God. And they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word with signs following. Amen. (Mark 16:15-20).

This was not meant for the first disciples only. The “world” here is from the Greek *kosmos* which in its biblical usage refers to the whole world, of mankind in all generations. The early disciples did not complete this, so the Commission and the divine confirmations of the gospel must continue while we go to the whole *kosmos*. Even if the gospel is preached to the world in one generation, it needs also to be done again in the next generation.

It is also clear that the promise of the Spirit and the attendant signs witnessed at the day of Pentecost are to all generations. Peter said, "For the promise is to you and to your children and to *all that are afar off*, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." (Acts 2:39). Peter was speaking about the gift of the Spirit and he did not say that the signs of this gift would be withdrawn. He said this would be to all that the Lord shall call.

In Acts 10 they knew Cornelius and his household received the Spirit in new birth because they spoke with tongues. Tongues are not the *initial evidence* of every person who receives Christ, but it is one of the signs. The Bible does not claim that these signs were only for the first Gentiles who received the gospel and would then be fulfilled or taken away.

### Authority

Not every person has every sign. Mark 16:15-20 mentions some of the signs that will appear when groups of people receive the gospel. The passage does not mean that every person will exhibit all of the signs. "In My name" does not mean that saying the name of *Jesus* will cause these signs to happen. It means that Christ does it. He is the one who gives the signs.

Christ did not give believers the power of attorney to use as they will. "In His name" means *in* Him and Him working through us. It is His authority. The proclamation of the gospel in the early church was just as it was in Jesus' life. It was still the same Jesus doing the works. The works were not done by the apostle's own faith or holiness. When the lame man at the temple gate was healed Peter said:

Why look at us as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk... *the faith which is by Him* has given him perfect soundness...(Acts 3:12, 16).

This is seen also in the prayer of the disciples in Acts 4. They prayed that God would heal and that this would give them boldness in preaching, that signs and wonders would be done, not as a play thing for believers wanting their fancy tickled, but by God's response to severe persecutions against the church.

And now Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant to your servants that with all boldness they may speak your word, by stretching forth your hand to heal and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of the holy child Jesus. (Acts 4:30).

We see this also with Paul. He saw that a man had faith to be healed. Paul did not have the faith on this occasion. Jesus gave faith to the man while Paul preached. Jesus showed Paul by the Spirit that the man had the faith. Paul saw what God was doing, so Paul spoke out:

The same heard Paul speak: who steadfastly beholding him and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, said with a loud voice, stand upright on your feet. And he leaped and walked. (Acts 14:9-10).

Again, Paul "filled with Holy Spirit" spoke to Elymas the sorcerer and the hand of the Lord struck him with blindness (Acts 13:8-11). This term *filled with (by, through) the Spirit* does not mean Paul received a fresh infilling. It means that by means of the Spirit, as the Spirit filled Paul with power and a word of knowledge and faith for what the Spirit was doing, Paul spoke as he heard from the Lord. This is *charisma*.

Again, we see that the Lord gives testimony to the gospel by granting Himself that signs and wonders are done. Because it is *charisma*, it is done as a gift by Him, by His will:

Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony to the word of His grace and granted signs and wonders be done by their hands. (Acts 14:3).

Healings were by the hand of God, not the disciple's own faith. God gives faith and heals. We operate by faith as God gives us faith. But when we think that we do it by our faith, then we go into conditions and works. Jesus confirms the message with miracles.

And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. (Acts 4:33).

It was God through grace that did the miracles, to confirm the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Grace is *unmerited, unearned, unpaid for favour*.

### The 12 and 70

Jesus gave power to 12 and sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. He then sent out 70 to do the same (Luke 9, 10). They shared in the ministry of Jesus. They were anointed with the Holy Spirit. At this point they were still ministering in an Old Covenant sense. It was not by the law. They ministered grace. Many prophets in the Old Covenant ministered grace.

Even one man who *walked not with them* had power to cast out demons, in the name of Jesus (Mark 9:38). Faith moved in his heart by the Holy Spirit, though he would have had a limited understating of it. But all this was still prefiguring the New Covenant, which was at hand, but had not yet burst upon them at Pentecost.

The Holy Spirit was not permanently in the disciples until the Day of Pentecost. He would come upon them and anoint them, but they were not yet born again. The New Covenant had not yet begun. This ministry was preparatory for what was coming. It was an announcement that the kingdom was at hand. But Jesus had to rise first (John 7:39).

Jesus gave power to the 70. This was to fulfil the type of Moses, from whom God took the Spirit and shared it with the 70 who ministered with him. But in the case of Jesus it was a ministry of grace. But it was only partial grace. There was healing, but not regeneration. The full grace came at Pentecost.

The power that Jesus gave was still overseen by the Holy Spirit. It was not the disciple's personal possession to do with as they will. They also had the power only temporarily. They could not cast out a devil when Jesus was on the mount of transfiguration. Jesus promised that they would receive power again at Pentecost. This time the power would accompany regeneration and would abide (remain).

### Fully Preached

Paul claimed that miracles were associated with gospel proclamation and were a verification of genuine apostolic ministry.

For I will not dare to speak of any thing which Christ has not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum, I have *fully preached* the gospel of Christ. (Rom 15:18-19).

Paul said that the miracles were wrought by Christ. He said the work of the Spirit was in *word and deed*. The gospel is not word only. The gospel is not fully preached without signs and wonders.

Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds. (2 Cor 12:12).

The signs of an apostle exhibited both the miraculous power of the gospel of Christ and also dependency on God rather than on self, therefore *with much patience*. Paul was not strong in himself,

but in the Lord. This means that Paul could not always do miracles. They were done according to God's will. This is what he means by patience.

### God's Power

No matter how well we preach or how right our doctrine is, it is powerless unless God acts. If the Spirit does not transform hearts, minds and bodies then our message is dead philosophy. No preacher can change a person. Only Jesus Christ can save and heal.

And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. (1 Cor 2:4-5).

Power is not fervour or shouting. It is not human charisma or atmosphere. Demonstration of the Spirit is not tongues and words of utterance. It is not visions or fighting demons. It is not people falling over in meetings or laughing. It is not emotion. It is miracles that are genuine. It is new birth, not by emotive or rational human persuasion, but genuine change of heart and life. Only God can do this.

O foolish Galatians...before whose eyes Jesus Christ has been evidently set forth, crucified among you. (Gal 3:1).

Paul meant by this that the Galatians had seen the proof of the redemption of Christ in the power of the gospel. The power of the living Christ had been set forth among them in signs and wonders. The proof of the gospel's life and power had been abundantly shown them. This ministry is not only for the Galatians.

### False Signs

There are many false signs. There are false anointings, false visions and false prophecies, chiefly for personal notoriety and money. There is a miraculous pretence, while people are brought into bondage to false teachings.

For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.

For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. (2 Pet 2:18-20).

People compromise their lifestyle because of greed, deceiving others while thinking they are saved because they "believe" the gospel. Despite their sin they prosper and others follow their ways. Though they lived a right life for a while they were never saved, as Jesus said in Mark 4. The gospel bears no lasting fruit in their lives.

Others wonder why God allows people who sin to prosper. Even churches with false prophets will prosper. God allows it to gather those who do not have a love for the truth and those who put success ahead of truth:

Even him whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

And for this cause *God shall send them* strong delusion, that they should believe a lie. That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. (2 Thes 2:9-12).

God sends and empowers false prophets. This is why *we do not follow signs, but signs follow us*. Take great care in how you lead and in what you follow. Follow the truth. Do not follow signs. God allows, even gives power to false prophets, so that they may show the hearts of people. The power is not Satan's. Power is not a sign that God is pleased. God is pleased when we walk in truth (3 John 4, 11).

He that says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk, even as He walked. (1 John 2:6).

Our message must be the gospel. Our message must not be ourselves, nor of miracles, but a Christ-centred, *finished work* gospel message. Cessationists are partly correct. Many Cessationists do not deny that God heals, but deny false ministries who claim that God heals when He does not. We agree whole heartedly with Cessationists in this.

Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name? And in your name have cast out devils? And in your name have done many wonderful works? And then I will say to them, I never knew you. Depart from Me you workers of iniquity. (Matt 7:22-23).

### Apostles

Some Cessationists believe that apostles consist of only the first 12 and Paul. They believe that after that the ministry of the apostles and the signs and wonders finished or ceased. Paul spoke of several other apostles in his time (Rom 16:7). The first apostles have a distinct place. Any true apostle afterwards is known because he follows the doctrine handed down by the first apostles.

Paul spoke of apostles in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12 to 14 and in Ephesians 2 and 4. In these passages Paul did not say that this ministry was limited to an early period and would then be phased out. In Eph 2:20 Paul said that the church was built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. No doubt this refers to the first apostles who gave us the first witness and New Testament scripture.

But Paul did not say that Eph 2:20 does not refer to apostles in all generations. The church constantly has a supply of the life of Christ through its ministers. If God does not do this, the church becomes a dead organisation. But each generation of ministers must follow the original apostolic witness.

Paul spoke of apostolic ministry in Eph 4:8-15. He said that Christ called them and gave them as gifts to minister to the church, until we are built up into the full image of Christ. Paul is describing how each local body of believers is edified through the ministry that God supplies, as we are equipped to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

This passage does not say that the apostolic ministry has ceased. The pastoral or eldership ministry is more common. God raises up apostles with more authority from time to time, unless we see apostolic ministry in the more general sense as any minister *sent* by God. *Apostle* means *sent*, in this case by God.

"How can they preach except they be sent?" (Rom 10:15). This means to be sent by God. We have often taken this in our humanist age to *be sent by man*. This is not the biblical meaning. Ministry is not appointed by man, though man in the church by the Holy Spirit acknowledges it, as Paul did, sometimes by the laying on of hands (1 Tim 4:14, Gal 1:1, 11-12, Heb 5:4).

You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain...(John 15:16).

### Cessationism

Cessationists use sections of scripture such as 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13 to support their claims.

But when that which is *perfect* is come, then that which is part shall be *done away*. (1 Cor 13:10).

It is often claimed that the “perfect” here is the New Testament canon of scripture. The New Testament canon was complete in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, although it was not formally recognized by a church council till Nicaea in 325AD. Some Cessationists claim that when the New Testament was complete, spiritual gifts and apostolic ministries were no longer required and so passed away.

However, it appears that the “perfect” Paul is speaking of in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13 is the resurrection of the saints. *Perfect* means different things in scripture, according to the context. We are perfected by the blood of Christ. We are perfected (*equipped*) by the knowledge of Jesus Christ through the ministry gifts in the church. We also put off immortality at the resurrection of the body on the last day.

For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. (1 Cor 13:12).

Some may teach that this verse refers to our spiritual growth and maturity, meaning that spiritual gifts are for the immature. In this passage Paul shows that tongues and gifts of knowledge are required until perfection comes. If Paul means by this *until we come to spiritual growth*, then miracles would only be required for the immature churches.

But there is no direct teaching of Paul in his epistles that gifts have this purpose for immature Christians only. It appears therefore that by *perfection*, Paul is speaking about the resurrection. So long as we are this side of the resurrection we always only *know in part*, while “we have this treasure in earthen vessels.” (2 Cor 4:7).

The point of Paul in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13 is to direct the Corinthian believers to the purpose of the gifts. The gifts are not an end in themselves. God’s purpose is that we grow in faith, hope and love. The gifts are to be motivated by faith, hope and love. Therefore, gifts without faith, hope and love are useless clanging cymbals.

It appears that the perfection Paul refers to in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13 is not a reference to the New Testament canon, or to our growth in maturity, but to the resurrection. John refers to this also:

Beloved, now are we the sons of God and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. (1 John 3:2).

This is not referring to inward transformation, for that has already happened through the gospel. This verse is referring to the resurrection of the saints. Paul referred to this in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15. Some asked how our resurrected state will appear. He answered “as we have borne the image of the earthy, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly...we shall be changed.” (1 Cor 15:48, 51).

Paul also spoke of this in Ephesians 1. He said we have the first fruit of the Holy Spirit within us now, as a seal, until our body is redeemed. This *redeemed* does not mean that Christ has not yet made the payment for our body. He has paid for us in full on Calvary. It means the time is coming when God shall take back our body from death, as incorruptible.

Which (Holy Spirit) is the earnest (surety) of our inheritance (resurrection) until the redemption (taking back) of the purchased possession (our body), unto the praise of His glory. (Eph 1:14).

None of these passages directly teach that the gifts of the Spirit will pass away at any time during church history. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13 shows that those *spiritual people* at Corinth who made gifts the object were missing the point. Paul's point is that we should not make gifts the object, but Christ. This is still a valid point to all of us today.

### Calling

We agree that the first apostles and prophets were part of the original foundation, with Christ the chief cornerstone (Eph 2:20). We agree also that inspired scripture is now complete and closed, so that there are no apostolic or prophetic ministries today adding to scripture. None today speak by *inspiration*, infallibly (2 Tim 3:16). However, the church is built by Christ in every generation through His apostolic ministry.

We cannot claim a ministry and choose it for our self. There are no series of training steps one can take to be a leader in God's church. Every person is set in the church by Christ as it has pleased Him (1 Cor 12:18). God calls leadership by Himself according to His purpose. We do not choose how we serve God.

Men have worked out leadership programmes using discipleship strategies, sometimes garnered from the principle of Moses' father-in-law Jethro. This is fine for business of civil duties, but not for ministry. When Jethro advised Moses to make leaders over 10 and 50, etc, they had leaders without the Spirit (Ex 18:24-27). They teamed up with Aaron to make a golden calf idol to return to Egypt (Ex 32).

Later God called 70 elders with Moses and put His Spirit upon them (Num 11:16-17). Elijah and Elisha had the *School of the Prophets*, but God did not call any leading prophet from this school. We can see in the life of Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Paul that ministry is called by God and not by man. It is not possible to manufacture leaders in God's church.

Why then have Bible Colleges? Paul was led by the Spirit to teach in Ephesus in one school for two years and the word of God filled all Asia. Today, God calls some before they go to college and some from other places. It is God who makes the leaders, not man. Paul told Timothy, that which he received to pass onto faithful men who shall teach others (2 Tim 2:2). We preach, teach and heal. God calls.

Before I formed you in the belly, I knew you; and before you came forth out of the womb I sanctified you and I ordained you a prophet to the nations. (Jer 1:5).

Paul an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead...But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me by His own grace...(Gal 1:1, 15).

Church growth principles try to apply methodology to grow God's church. Leadership selection and training is just one of the techniques. Many other methods are advocated. The *Church Growth* movement takes what is God's and does it by human method. Jesus said, "I will build my church." (Matt 16:18). Method makes club members. God makes sons.

...He led captivity captive and gave gifts to men. (Eph 4:8).

This is referring to ministry gifts. These are people. Paul was led captive. He was chosen by God, conscripted. He was not a volunteer. Paul was led captive by Christ and given to the body of Christ.

We do train people. We do impart what we have, in terms of character and knowledge, to others. This is important. Paul/Timothy type relationships are vital. But their hearts must be prepared by the call of God and only God does this. Eph 4:12 speaks of the call of the five-fold ministry giftings to the church.

And He gave some apostles...for the perfecting (equipping) of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. (Eph 4:11-12).

Eph 4:12 does not say the five-fold ministry equips all the members for the work of the ministry. It says that God called the five-fold ministry to do what Paul expressed in three ways: to equip the body; to do the work of the ministry; to edify the body. The Greek word for *equip* means organise and put in order with regard to our faith. It is not aimed at equipping people directly for ministry.

Notwithstanding, when the whole body is built up in the faith, each member is used by God to supply care, exhortation, nourishment and charismatic service to one another to continue the edification of the body. There is continual ministry going one within the whole body through each member.

From whom (Christ) the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which *every joint supplies*, according to the effectual working in the measure (grace) of every part, makes increase of the body to the edifying (building up) of itself in love. (Eph 4:16)

So there is the *charisma* of ministry calling and the *charisma* of every member. Each has its measure according to Christ's purpose and is fitted into the body as He directs. There is no democracy of human election in ministry. Ministry is not the product of a training programme. Neither can we resist those whom He calls.

### Grace

Grace for service in the body of Christ is given to *every member*. Grace means supernatural endowment of the power of the Spirit. Some are pastors, some teachers, some apostles. Those not called to ministry may be used in any of the gifts of the Spirit at any time the Spirit wills. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12 and Romans 12 list some of these gifts.

But to every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. (Eph 4:6).

Grace is given to *each one* of us, which means each member of Christ's body. Here it is not just speaking of grace for salvation, but the enabling power of Christ in service. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12 says the same - the manifestation of the Spirit is given to *each one* for the profit of all. This is each member, male or female.

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to *every man* to profit all (in the body). (1 Cor 12:7).

Paul shows the church as a body, meaning many members with diverse functions as one family in Christ. There are also measures of gifting and measures of faith in those giftings. They operate with different measures in different people, according to the gift of Christ. But the one with the greater measure is to be humbled and not exalted, as the least popular member is just as needed.

Regarding pastoral ministry, Paul told Timothy to stir up the gift that was in him by the laying on of his hands (2 Tim 1:6). This is not a transfer of anointing. Timothy did not receive Paul's anointing. The anointing is not transferred. It is given by God. Gifts, calling and services are given as God chooses each member to have and to use as He fits us into His body (1 Cor 12:18). And to each of us it is different.

To *stir up the gift* meant that Timothy was not to be intimidated by the circumstances and opposition but to go on using the gift, for God had not given him the spirit of fear. *Stir up* here does not mean recharge or refill. It means to function in, to use, not to be put off.

In 1 Tim 4:14 Paul again said that Timothy was not to neglect the gift that was in him by prophecy and by the laying on of hands of the presbytery. Again, it was not the prophecy that conferred the gift. The gift was given to Timothy by God. Prophecy and the laying on of hands were both occasions in which the Spirit of God confirmed what Timothy was given.

So we are anointed to be sons of God and anointed for service. They are the same anointing, but in service there are various measures and manifestations. These are gifts, not purchased by religious exercises. Christ gives them according to His purpose. We can do nothing to get them. We are what He makes us to be. Our task is to operate and flow in that:

As every man has received the gift, even so minister *the same* one to another, as good stewards of the *manifold (diverse giftings)* grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister let him do it *with the ability God gives* (not with scams, not with fleshly manipulations or religious enthusiasms or asceticism)...(1 Pet 4:10-11).

There are a few points which come through all these passages:

1. Grace is given to each one.
2. We are accountable to God to use what we are given, for the common good of the body and not to exalt ourselves.
3. We are to operate according to the measure of the gift, recognizing the Lordship and sovereignty of Christ, not going out beyond the faith He gives.

### Healing

We looked a little at healing when referring to healing in the atonement. Here we look at healing in relation to *charisma*. It is the Lord who heals. He is in us and He does the healing. This takes all methodology out of healing. Healing *charisma* is not a matter of obtaining a higher level of anointing. There are no conditions to be met for healing. Jesus met all conditions on the cross.

We should not take law from the Gospels and apply it today. Saying that someone must have faith is another law. It is no different than telling Job he was sick because of sin. The cause of Job's sickness had nothing to do with Job. It was not because of his fear. Thinking something will come upon us because we fear means we fear fear.

The point of Job was that he was in God's hands, as God proved His works to Satan. God was good to Job. The book of Job showed the love God gave him even in the midst of trial. "Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him" shows the heart Job had (Job 13:15).

We have faith in God, not faith in healing. Faith in God means not faith in *a thing*, but an unshakeable conviction that God is good no matter what our condition is. Blaming a person for his sickness because of lack of faith, or un-forgiveness, or an ancestral curse, makes us no better than Job's counsellors.

If some are not healed and we do not know why then we love and care for them, rather than find fault or speculate. God gave us medical care and we should use good and honest doctors. We hate sickness and disease and should fight it with everything we have. We do not understand everything about this, but know the love of God for us.

Lack of healing is not evidence of weak faith in a person. We do not judge a person's faith by his prosperity. In the Old Testament they said that if people did not have children it was because they had sinned against God. Smith Wigglesworth healed many, but he passed kidney stones for many years without divine healing. His daughter was deaf and was not healed. He had no answers. God Himself is our answer.

### Health and Wealth

A *health and wealth gospel* says that we must look young and beautiful and never go to the doctor or people will say we are not spiritual and do not have faith. We have known pastors to go to the doctor at midnight so that no one will know. People have died, thinking that since their pastor is so spiritual it is wrong for them to receive medical help.

A *health and wealth gospel* says that unless we have this car or that bank balance then God is not with us. This is not *success* in God's eyes. Success in God's eyes is faith within us. When Satan had Puritans burnt alive for their faith he had no victory at all. They died in total victory and conquest over the enemy. Their faith in God was aflame and fully intact.

Success is not measured materially. Success is the love of God that dwells within. "Whoever is born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith." (1 John 5:4). This means every child of God will succeed in God. This success is faith. "Christ always causes us to triumph." (2 Cor 2:14). The faith of God's children will not and cannot fail, because He makes intercession for us.

The promise of wealth is a marketing ploy that portrays holidays, cars, houses, clothes and beauty, saying we should have it all now and will not be happy without it. Jesus said the opposite - that happiness does not consist of the abundance of what we possess. Relations in marriage and family fail when they are built on the fleeting values of fashion. If we live for this we teach our children that this is success.

People take out loans from banks to keep up with all that the world can offer. Pyramid marketing schemes, gambling, motivational talks, *giving to God to get more in return*, all promote a lifestyle where we get something for nothing. God gives us all things through Christ. Our faith does not have to be on *things*, as it is with the Gentiles (Matt 6:31-33, Rom 8:32, 2 Pet 1:3).

### Success

In Hebrews 11 some brought down kingdoms by faith, others were sawn asunder by faith. Both of these were achievements of faith. Faith is doing God's will and not being turned to the left or right. It is not achieving a worldly standard. The *health wealth gospel* corrupts people. It causes us to forsake loyalty and serving God and go to where we will get the best deal for our self.

Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:

And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yes, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts and in mountains and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith...(Heb 11:11-39).

A materialistic view of faith is a false gospel. What some call prosperity is gained by stealing, lying on application forms, or compromising to get positions or deals. If we get something by falsehood it is not the blessing of God. God said He would bless the labour of our hands (Ps 128:2, Pr 21:25, Ecc 2:11, 1 Cor 4:12, Eph 4:28).

For Moses, success was doing God's will:

Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of reward...(Heb 11:25-26).

Hebrews shows it is wrong to measure faith by material success. Christ is inestimably richer than this world. The world and things cannot be compared to Christ.

### Faith

God promised that His faith in us will not fail. Peter spoke of the trial of our faith, which is proved.

Who are kept by the power of God through faith to salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein we greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through many temptations. That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, might be found to praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. (1 Pet 1:5-7).

God did not guarantee any other outcome, than that our faith would not fail. People speak about claiming things from God's promises. This is not what His promises are for. If it was, why would Peter write this? He would say, "You do not have to go through a trial, you can claim the victory now."

There is much compromise today in the name of faith. We are quiet when we should speak out. If we were true to God more often there would be a lot more persecution and we would have to depend on God a lot more. A lot of the prosperity we gain is because we are at peace with the world.

Every believer in heaven is a trophy of grace. One came by being caught up like Enoch. One came by being sawn asunder like Isaiah. The Bible says both came by faith. Both did what they did by faith. In both cases the faith of God within them did not fail. They both obeyed God. Both testimonies give glory to God. Satan lost everything in both cases.

One shows God's faith in healing. One shows God's faith in suffering. People will come with different testimonies and in each case the glory will be God's - that His faith brought them all home safely in total triumph. The testimony is that no matter the condition, His faith prevailed to the glory of God. They did not compromise. Some had faith that stayed true in wealth. Other's faith stayed true in adversity.

The faith that took Jesus through His temptation and life is in us and will prevail in us. Paul knew that no condition could defeat that faith, because of the love of God in Christ:

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it written, For your sake we are killed all the day long, we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us...(Rom 8:35-39).

If faith is proven by our long life, by claiming the promise in the Psalms that says God will give us 70 years on earth, then all the apostles of Jesus Christ failed, not to mention Jesus Himself. Our

testimony is not that “I have this”, or “I have that”, but “His faith is triumphant!”. If we subdue kingdoms, glory to God! If we are persecuted for Christ, still, glory to God!

The world looks on the persecuted as forsaken. But Jesus said, “Happy are you, rejoice.” (Matt 5:10-12). When you go out on a limb for Christ, Christians will turn away from you. We behave like Peter, “I do not know Him.”. Do not get bitter. That is life. Rejoice, forgive, love and speak the truth. Do not be intimidated or lose faith. Be strong in the Lord. Keep moving.

### Reputation

As it was with Jesus and Paul, the reputation of true ministers will be brought into question. This happens not because of wrong that we do, but because of the people who are against God and the message of the gospel. True ministers of the gospel may not always appear to have faith.

Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed: But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; by pureness, by knowledge, by long suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left.

By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers and yet true; As unknown and yet well known; as dying and, behold, we live; as chastened and not killed; As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing and yet possessing all things. O Corinthians, our mouth is open to you, our heart is enlarged. You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your own bowels. (2 Cor 6:4-12).

Paul meant the Corinthians were not being restricted by Paul's correction. They were not losing out in life because he was teaching them the truth. They were losing out because they were living by the wrong values which put them in a snare. It was their own wrong desires (*bowels*) that brought them into bondage. When we speak the truth some think we are trying to stop their blessing rather than help them.

Those who stand for righteousness will lose reputation with the world and with worldly valued Christians. This is what happened with Paul in the Corinthian church. He had to win them back. They had been taken in by worldly values. This is why Paul said, “If any man be in Christ he is a new creation; old things are passed away...” (2 Cor 5:17). He was speaking about their values.

The world and worldly Christians do not esteem the things that God esteems. When the world makes something popular, remember it was the same world that cried, “Crucify Him.”. What the world calls foolish is highly esteemed by God.

The false shepherd reigns as king and boasts. The true shepherd serves so others may reign:

We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body...

so then death works in us, but life (through the ministry of Paul) works in you...knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus...for all things are for your sake...for which cause we faint not...(2 Cor 4:8-16).

Paul compares the false and true apostle:

Now you are full, now you are rich, you have reigned as kings without us: and I would to God that you did reign (in truth), that we also might reign with you. For I think that God has set forth us apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle to the world and to angels and to men.

We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise (esteemed by the world); we are weak, but you are strong (make a good show in the flesh); you are honoured, but we are despised. Even to this very hour we both hunger and thirst and are naked and are buffeted and have no certain dwelling place and labour working with our own hands.

Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat. We are made as the filth of the world and are the offscouring of all things to this day. I write this not to shame you, but as beloved sons I warn you. (1 Cor 4:8-14).

So we do not judge by the outward standards of this world, but by the truth. We stay loyal to Christ and to one another in His body in love.

### Fasting

In this section we will have a look at fasting in the scripture. Fasting is often associated with spiritual gifts, healing and miracles. Some pastors command members in the church to fast so that they can receive healing. Other pastors command 40 day fasts, or longer.

We know of many people who have been sick through fasting and know of children who have died. There is a lot of wrong theology behind such practice. It is believed that we must be "spiritual enough" to receive "gifts". It is held that fasting is one way of building up spirituality and combating spiritual powers to enable the gifts to be manifest.

This view of Christianity is not the gospel. Gifts are based on the merits of Christ and not on our spirituality or works. No demon can resist His power. Basing gifts upon what we do is "another gospel". His gifts and power are by faith, which is by grace.

### Old Testament

None of the early patriarchs fasted: not Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac or Jacob. None of the early prophets fasted, except Elijah once, though that was not a fast. He went in the strength of angelic food once while travelling. Jeremiah, Isaiah and no other prophet of their era is said to have fasted.

The Law of Moses commands the *afflicting of the soul* only once, for one day per year on *The Day of Atonement* (Lev 23:26-32). The purpose of this was to remember their sin. It was Old Covenant. Later *afflicting the soul* was associated by some with fasting, but this was a cultural addition (like foot washing or the holy kiss), (Ps 35:13).

If fasting was required for righteousness it ought to be part of the law. The law commanded seven feasts a year, but no fasts. God said that the New Covenant would turn the cultural fasts into feasts. "Thus says the Lord, 'The fast of the fourth...fifth...seventh and tenth month shall be to the house of Judah (Son of David) joy and gladness and cheerful feasts..." (Zech 8:19). This refers to Christ's work.

David and others occasionally fasted when in sorrow or during a crisis (1 Sam 7:6; 2 Sam 1:12; 12:22, 2 Chron 20:3, Ezra 8:21, Neh 1:4, 9:1-2). Ritualistic fasting to obtain God's favour was condemned in

Isaiah 58. God said that the fast that He had chosen was right lifestyle, meaning to repent from oppression and greed. "Fast" in this sense meant true religion (James 1:27).

The prophets often spoke about what constituted true religion and it was never fasting or sacrifice. Isaiah 58 is not an allegory about breaking spiritual oppression with fasting. Isaiah is plainly saying that God requires truth, integrity and justice and that these are true religion, or the "fast" (service) He has chosen. To interpret this text allegorically is contrary to Isaiah's plain intent.

Fasting is mentioned in Joel, but that was for unregenerate sinners under the law (Joel 2:15). We must consider who the scripture was written to and why. They were living in all manner of sin, such as the people Jonah addressed in Nineveh who fasted, as a cultural sign of repentance along with the rending of garments (Jon 3:5).

Rend your hearts and not your garments. (Joel 2:13).

In the New covenant we have new birth as God's solution to sin. Old Covenant forms did not work. So Jesus brought new wine for new wine skins. In Christ He has given us a change of nature, not a halting repentance that lasts for a season.

### Jewish Captivity

Fasting became more popular after the captivity of Judah by Babylon. Both Esther and Daniel practiced it in a limited manner, but neither was commanded to do so by God. During the Intertestamental period a tradition of fasting grew strong in Israel due to the Greek pagan influence. By the time Jesus came, fasting was a superstitious practice among the Essenes and the Pharisees.

### Jesus

Jesus fasted 40 days before His ministry began. The reason for the fast is not stated in scripture, except to say that it was so He could be in the wilderness to be tempted by the devil (Matt 4:1-3). He had to stand as the second Adam and pass through this temptation that the first Adam failed in. The scripture does not say that this fast empowered Him or prepared Him for ministry. He did not need that.

He also fasted to fulfil the typology of Moses. Moses fasted in a supernatural state in the presence of God before instituting the Old Covenant. Moses fast was not ritualistic (religious) but simply because he was busy in God's presence. His body was supernaturally kept.

Jesus would bring in the New Covenant and therefore must fulfil the typology of Moses. Jesus was the prophet like Moses (Deut 18:15). He fulfilled this type in many other ways, as John's Gospel in particular shows. Jesus gave us the living water from the Rock and He is the true manna (John 6:32, 1 Cor 10:1-6). Jesus' fast was not a pattern for believers to follow.

Moses' fast had nothing to do with gaining favour or power from God for ministry. Moses had already delivered Israel from Egypt without even fasting his breakfast! Moses performed some of the greatest miracles of the Bible without one fast. It was after his "fast" that his main troubles with Israel started!

After the temptation Jesus did not fast again. The disciples of John asked why His disciples did not fast (Matt 9:14, Mark 2:18, Luke 5:33). The Pharisees also were angry that Jesus did not keep their two days a week religious fast (Luke 7:33-34). They called Jesus a wine bibber and a glutton. The witness in the Gospels is explicit: that Jesus did not fast, nor did His disciples.

### Jesus' Disciples

When John the Baptist's disciples asked Jesus why His disciples did not fast He answered them with two points. First, He said that while the bridegroom is with them they cannot fast, but when He is

taken away they shall fast. This is mentioned in three of the Gospels. Jesus associated fasting here with “mourning”. He meant fasting, not to gain merit with God or because God commanded it, but out of sorrow.

Can the children of the bridechamber *mourn* as long as the bridegroom is with them?  
But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them and then they shall fast. (Matt 9:15).

It is clear that the fasting Jesus mentioned here was associated with mourning and not religious duty. It is also clear that we are not without the bridegroom now, as Jesus lives in us. “I will not leave you comfortless, but I will come to you”, speaking of Pentecost (John 14:18). Mourning is associated with sin under the Old Covenant. In Christ our sin is put away.

There is no reason for a Spirit filled man, in whom sin is put away, to mourn as a religious duty. Jesus’ statement about “they will fast when He is taken away” refers to their mourning when He was crucified, until His resurrection. There is no doubt that Jesus was referring here to *His Passion*.

The second part of the Jesus’ answer was, “No man puts new wine into old wineskins.” (Matt 9:17). Jesus was referring to the two Covenants. The New Covenant is the new wine. The Old Covenant is the old wineskin. The New Covenant is received by grace and not by works. He did not come to do religious patch up jobs on Old Covenant lives, but to give a new nature. He came to put sin away.

#### New Testament

Jesus never once advocated fasting, nor did He or His disciples practice it. He mentioned “when you fast” in the *Sermon on the Mount* but that was in relation to hypocrisy and not directly a recommendation to fast (Matt 6:16). Fasting is not once mentioned in relation to any healing or miracle that occurred in the whole of the New Testament.

In the book of Acts fasting is mentioned only twice, once when Barnabas and Paul were sent out (Acts 13:2) and once when elders were appointed (Acts 14:23). In both cases we are told nothing about the nature of the fast, how long it was or exactly what was fasted. It is likely that they were in prayer for a period and simply were not eating at that time.

A doctrine cannot be claimed that fasting must accompany the sending out of ministers or the appointment of elders, because at other times that these occurred in Acts fasting did not accompany the events.

In the epistles Paul mentioned fasting in two contexts only. One was in a discussion on marriage in 1 Cor 7. He permitted couples to fast, but put restrictions on it. He said it must be by mutual agreement and it must be only for a short period. Here Paul did not instruct fasting, but restricted its use. It was the practice of believers in Corinth with Gnostic tendencies to fast.

Paul also mentioned fasting in 2 Cor 6:5 and 11:27 (Greek, *nesteia*) in relation to his sufferings for the gospel. The Greek word means “foodlessness” due to the involuntary adversities forced upon him by circumstances he passed through. These references have nothing to do with religious fasting. Paul was explaining his harsh circumstances, including beatings, being stoned and being shipwrecked.

Not one of the epistles of Paul, John, Peter, Jude or Hebrews contains an instruction or admonition for believers to fast. Many other matters however are admonished. If the founding apostles did not instruct fasting on the churches, then what authority would pastors today have for instructing it upon others?

## Prayer and Fasting

When the disciples found that they could not cast out a demon they asked Jesus why. He answered because of unbelief. In some Gospels He added, "This kind comes out not but by prayer and fasting." (Mark 9:29).

Some say that this verse was not in the original Greek Gospels. The NIV Bible version does not include the verse for this reason. The *Illustrated Bible Dictionary* 1:503 claims, "The weight of textual evidence is against the inclusion of (these) references to fasting" and includes with this Matt. 17:21, Mark. 9:29, Acts 10:30 and 1 Cor. 7:5.

Tyndale however did include these verses and he had as much knowledge of all the early manuscripts as any people do today. We are not convinced by the argument against inclusion. It opens up a *Pandora's Box* of textual criticism in several other passages.

If we accept that this verse is not in the original, there is still a problem. The NIV version of the Gospel still claims that "this kind comes out by prayer". (Matt 17:21, Mark 9:29). Although fasting is removed, the issue of "prayer" still poses a problem for interpretation.

Not one of the healings or exorcisms Jesus did in the Gospels was done by prayer. Jesus did not pray for any one of the people He healed or delivered. He "spoke His word only". This shocked the Pharisees, because it was against their own tradition.

The Pharisees and Essenes had a tradition for casting out spirits (Matt 12:27, Luke 11:19). It involved a lot of prayer and fasting, calling on special names of demons and various methods. These techniques were all adopted during the Intertestamental period, as seen in the Apocrypha. The practice of some Christians today mirrors these techniques. A brief survey of Intertestamental Jewish life will show this.

The only sick or bound person Jesus prayed for was Lazarus, but Jesus said that this prayer was not for Lazarus, but for the benefit of those who stood by (John 11:42). When Jesus sent out the 12 and the 70 He did not instruct them to fast or to pray for the sick. They cast out demons of the kind mentioned in Mark 9:29 without any prayer and fasting. They healed the sick the same way in Acts.

Then why did Mark 9:29 say, "This kind comes out not out but by prayer and fasting."? Why did Jesus say this when neither He nor His disciples fasted at any time during His ministry? The answer to this must not ignore all that the Bible teaches about fasting.

Mark 9:29 is a response to the Pharisees' practices in deliverance. Jesus was answering according to the way they operated under the Old Covenant. When Jesus came down from the Mount of Transfiguration He met the disciples being questioned by the scribes and no doubt they were debating this very issue of why they could not cast out a spirit from a boy (Mark 9:14).

The disciples apparently did not have the authority in this case to heal the boy, as they did when Jesus had early sent them out by 12 and by 70. They received this power again at Pentecost, as Jesus said they would (Acts 1:8). But at this point they were discussing with the scribes how they could cast the spirit out according to their religious ways.

Sometimes Jesus answered questions by referring to the mindset of the people in the context. When a man earlier asked Him what he could do to receive eternal life Jesus answered that he should keep the commandments. The man could not do this, but Jesus went no further to explain the New Covenant (Matt 19:16). He only answered the man according to his own mindset, to reveal his need.

The man who asked about eternal life asked according to what *he could do* and not according what God could do. Jesus said it is impossible with man for the rich to enter the kingdom, but not with God (Mark 10:23-27). The disciples asked the same in relation to the demon possessed man.

They asked about what man could do in the law, not about what God could do through grace and His gifts in Christ. Jesus answered them the same way, according to the Old Covenant system of the Jews and not according to the New Covenant which began at Pentecost, which the disciples did not at all understand at that point.

### Conclusion

If we desire to fast for a period to concentrate on prayer and hearing from the Lord in times when we feel it necessary then that is good. It is a personal matter. It is certainly not a law in scripture. The point is not the fasting, but the calling on Him in prayer. He answers sincere prayer. It is the ritualistic and legalistic use of fasting that the scripture is opposed to.

### Casting Out Spirits

Casting out demons is a gift of the Spirit. This means that there is no method or formula to do it. It is not a matter of fasting a certain time, or praying a certain way, or saying certain words. This technical approach to “deliverance” follows the style of man.

Most people who are said to have demons do not have demons. Vomiting up demons is usually false. People screaming in church and rolling on the floor like a snake often do not have a demon. These are often fleshly manifestations, where people look for attention. We know a true demonic manifestation because the power of God deals with it. There is no warfare against demons. When they interfere God deals with them.

A lady with a spirit of divination followed Paul for three days. On the third day Paul spoke one word and the demon came out. Why did not Paul do this on the first day or second day? It was the Spirit of God who did it through Paul (Acts 16:16). Paul had no technique, or he would have done something before. When the Spirit spoke through Paul it was done. This is the power of God.

Paul never taught a technique to function in deliverance, or prophecy, or any of the gifts. They are all as the Spirit wills. Paul never said that a believer’s wrong behaviour was due to demons, or that believers needed deliverance. It is not in one of his epistles.

But all these work by the one Spirit, dividing to every man as He wills. (1 Cor 12:11).

Telling people to fast or struggle to cast out demons is wrong. A demon will come out when God speaks. Most people just require repentance and faith to get their lives right. But when people are taught wrong they go into bondage, thinking they are tempted or have a bad dream because they are possessed by a demon. Then others take advantage of them.

A born again person cannot be possessed by a demon. He is the temple of the Holy Spirit and He does not share His house. Believing a lie will bring fear and fear will bring torment. Fear is self-fulfilling. The best solution to demons is to be born again under the New Covenant.

### Charismata

The word “charismata” is derived from the Greek meaning grace or gift. It is often used to refer to spiritual manifestations or gifts. Some theology has problems in regard to these gifts, even to the point of preaching another gospel, at least by the standards of Paul in the epistle to the Galatians. These are some of the issues:

1. Receiving the Spirit is unconditional. The Spirit and gifts are given by grace, not by fulfilling conditions. This is the meaning of *charisma*.
2. The Spirit or the gifts are not something received after or apart from receiving Christ. They are contained in Christ and are manifestations of His life within the born again believer.
3. The Spirit cannot be separated from Christ, to be received in greater anointings progressively as one becomes more "spiritual".
4. Gifts are not the property of the person, but the manifestation of the life of Christ in you, on the behalf of others, e.g. healing is a gift for the sick.
5. Gifts are not earned by works.

It has been taught that the person receiving the Spirit must prepare himself by emptying himself, tarrying, dying to self, taking off jewellery, confessing sin, or fasting, etc. This means that when one has fulfilled the conditions the gift is given.

The terms *gift* and *conditions* do not go together. A gift is by grace, or undeserved favour, by the merits of the giver and not the merits of the receiver. The Spirit is given as a gift without works. He is given on the merits of Christ and not on our merits. This is the gospel. Anything contrary to this is contrary to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We have seen people who because they do not *have* one gift or the other, such as tongues, feel they must not have met the conditions. This wrongly divides Christians into two classes: the so-called spiritual and the non-spiritual. According to scripture one who has Christ is spiritual. Biblically "spiritual" means one in whom Christ dwells:

But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of Christ dwell in you. (Rom 8:9).

See how the Spirit and Christ are united! See also that the Spirit is in us because of God and not because of us. If Christ is in us we cannot be divided up into two classes, those who are spiritual and those who are not, depending on what religious efforts we show, or what gifts we display. This was the Corinthian error. This error actually made them carnal, when they thought it was spiritual.

### The Merits of Christ

The central message of the scripture is that Christ's blood fulfils all (not some) of the conditions for the Spirit to be given. This means that the Spirit is now given entirely (not partly) on the basis of grace. This is the meaning of *charisma*. *Charisma* means:

1. Manifestations of the Spirit are entirely gifts.
2. The Spirit is united entirely with Christ and cannot be separated from Christ.

*Charisma* means grace and grace always refers to Christ and His finished work. We cannot say *charisma* without referring to Christ. *Charisma* is about Christ, not about receiving a second blessing through receiving another spirit after Christ.

*Charisma* means the work of Christ in us through His Spirit on the basis of His gift of righteousness through faith. *Charisma* is the manifestation of the life of Christ within us by the will of the Spirit and by undeserved gift.

The misnomer of a “special anointing” is an unscriptural doctrine. All sorts of works are recommended to obtain such an anointing. Anointing and *christ* come from the same Greek word. In the Old Testament the word *messiah* is used for the anointed one. Jesus Christ is the anointed one. If Christ is in us, we are anointed. The ‘anointing’ is not something you receive after receiving Christ.

The Bible does not teach that we receive an additional anointing by works. This is exactly the problem the Corinthians were in. They tried to seek miracles and blessings through observing religious traditions which they believed increased their anointing.

### Spirituality

Paul’s letter to the Corinthians shows the problem. Many at Corinth were under Gnostic influences. Gnosticism is a form of Greek philosophy that claims that the flesh is evil. This may lead to either asceticism (denying the flesh) or to licence (indulging the flesh), because the spirit is seen as the only significant part of man.

The ascetic Gnostics in Paul’s day believed that through works, which subjected the flesh and made them spiritual, special revelations and ‘gifts’ were released. For this reason some women denied “fleshly” sexual relations with their husbands and Paul corrected this in 1 Cor 7:1-5.

In 2 Cor 10:2 these same people accused Paul of *walking in the flesh* because he did not follow the works, traditions and legalism of the Gnostics who claimed to be on a higher level of spirituality than Paul. These were the “super apostles”, who claimed to be more spiritual than Paul because of their false legalistic doctrines.

They added their supposed spirituality to the merits of Christ. This can happen today. When we do not follow their traditions they say that we are not spiritual. For the same reason the Pharisees said Jesus was not of God. Paul called their teachings doctrines of demons (1 Tim 4:1-2).

This was like the Montanists in the early church era. Montanus lived in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century and founded a pseudo Christian cult. It was based on Gnostic false spiritual gifts. Recent books have been somewhat kinder to this historical movement, in our view partly because some sectors of Pentecostalism now follow in its steps.

### 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians

Paul addressed this false spirituality in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians. In each chapter of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians Paul addressed an issue going on in the Corinthian church, often starting a chapter quoting a letter he received from the church. From chapter 7 onwards Paul addressed issues the Corinthians had asked him about. In chapter 12 he turned to the matter of spirituality in regard to the manifestations of the Spirit. The Corinthians needed to know what constituted true spirituality.

Paul began 1 Cor 12:1 saying, “Now concerning spiritual gifts.” (KJV). In the Greek one word is used in this verse for “spiritual gifts”. In English it should read “Now concerning *spirituals*” (*spiritual things* or *spiritual people*). Paul used this word in other places, but here he is expressing the Corinthian mind in their use of the word. Paul is referring here to the Gnostic view of spiritual persons being distinct from normal Christians.

In several chapters of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians Paul started by quoting the Corinthian view, from their earlier letter to him. In chapter 7 he quoted their position on marriage, “It is good for a man not to touch a woman”, meaning the husband and wife should not have sex in order to be more spiritual. Paul then refuted this idea. So he started with their view and then moved on in the chapter to correct it.

The Corinthian position is further revealed in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12. They believed that by being spiritual they would promote the manifestations of the Spirit. Paul moved quickly again to refute this idea and correct their view on these manifestations.

The Corinthians had two problems regarding these manifestations. First, they saw them as reward for their spiritual fanaticism. Secondly, they believed that grace was not sufficient, but that they must move beyond Christ to an extra power. It is important to see this. This is one of the biggest issues in Christian life for many.

### Against the Flesh

Paul's introduction in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12 showed their problem. Paul said in their former "spiritual" experiences in paganism the Corinthians were "carried away" (lit. *swept away fanatically*). They carried this fanaticism into their Christian life in their denial of the flesh.

Paul shows this in the next verse, "No person speaking by the Spirit calls Jesus accursed." (vs. 3). This is a reference to the humanity of Christ which the Gnostics denied. Some called Him accursed because He was incarnate in the flesh and therefore not spiritual (1 John 4:1-3).

Biblical spirituality works in and through the flesh. Christ worked in His incarnation and He comes in our flesh in new birth. False spirituality denies the flesh, claiming that those who do not observe religious practices are not spiritual. This is why the Pharisees attacked Jesus for eating, drinking and not washing His hands. False spirituality denies the flesh, but is really exalting self.

Paul showed that all genuine spiritual manifestations are done through the gospel, "Christ in us" and not by a spirituality of our own. Opposite to paganism, Christian spirituality is Christ in our flesh. It is not us or any rituals or devotions that we observe, but simple grace.

After the introduction in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12, Paul did not use the word *spirituals* again in this context. The Corinthians used this word to promote a wrong idea. Paul corrected the Corinthians by using the word *charisma* (grace). Grace means of Christ, through His merits.

Paul's theology relating to the manifestations of the Spirit was opposite to the theology of the Corinthians. The Corinthians believed that manifestations were a badge of their personal spirituality. Paul showed that false apostles expressed "gifts" in this way.

### Adding to Christ

The gifts of the Spirit are tied entirely to the person of Christ. To Paul *Lord and the Spirit are one*, "Now the Lord is that Spirit" (2 Cor 3:17-18), "If any man has not the Spirit of Christ *he is not a Christian*." (Rom 8:9, paraphrased). Paul saw all spiritual manifestations as the work of Christ in the believer and not as a result of a second baptism or power received.

A basis for false spirituality is separating the Spirit from Christ. When we do this we detract from Christ, we claim that Christ is not sufficient and that we must add to Him by our own efforts. In modern times this started with John Wesley, who for pastoral concerns separated sanctification from Christ, though he acknowledged that it was theologically wrong.

But it was Wesley's successor, John Fletcher, who really founded Pentecostal theology. He called the second work of sanctification the *baptism in the Spirit*, leading to the belief that the Spirit was received in fullness after receiving Christ, according to some spiritual preparation or fulfillment of conditions. This in essence is modern Pentecostal theology.

Fletcher also introduced a form of dispensationalism. He said that the Old Testament was the dispensation of the Father, the ministry of Jesus on earth the dispensation of the Son and the church era the dispensation of the Spirit.

Here again the Spirit is separated from the Father and Son. This is the mindset of false spirituality. *Second blessing* and Dispensationalist theology set the stage for separating the Spirit from Christ and a form of Gnostic, Montanist and Roman Catholic spirituality. This is exactly what the Reformation had earlier sought to repair.

### Trinitarianism

There is a form of trinity that takes a separation of the persons of the Godhead too scientifically. The Holy Spirit in a believer is the Spirit of Christ. It is wrong to treat the Holy Spirit in any way, even as a fuller second experience, as separate from receiving Christ.

We do not believe in *oneness theology* that denies the trinity. But the concept of the separability of the persons is also dangerous to theology. Deut 6:4 claims "The Lord our God is unity.". The Hebrews knew of the trinity, but they expressed it as a unity.

Hellenistic Christian theology has departed from this. This is another example of the early Hellenisation of the church that we have not yet recovered from. The Hebrew were Trinitarian, but not in the Greek sense. The Hebrew knew of the Son, the Seed of woman. The Pharisees rejected the Son, but witness to Him is throughout the Old Testament. They knew of the Spirit.

Isaiah 9 claims among the titles of Christ *mighty God* and *everlasting Father*. Yet Jesus clearly related to the Father as a distinct person. All we can say is that it is a mystery. The relationship is too dynamic to be separated. The truth is somewhere between Western scientific separation and *oneness theology*. We have not looked into Tertullian's Trinitarian theology, but here we might find roots of Pentecostal thought.

Jesus said, "I send you *another* comforter.". In Greek the word means *another the same*. The unity is more than one mind, purpose and substance. The Hebrew did not have to explain it scientifically, rationally or philosophically. They just accepted the biblical revelation. Hebrew thought is holistic. The Three are One! It is the same with the nature of Christ. He is human and God. But He is one inseparable nature.

It is not possible to have Christ without having the fullness of the Spirit. In Christ the fullness of the Godhead dwells (Col 2:9). "Of His fullness have we all received." (John 1:16). "You are complete in Him." (Col 2:10). This does not mean that all the manifestations will happen at once when we are born again. But we cannot receive Christ without receiving the Father and the Spirit in His fullness.

### Manifestations

The manifestations of the Spirit are an overflow of the life of Christ within. Christ has the gifts, not us. We do not possess gifts, but we have Christ in us who expresses Himself by the Spirit according to His will. Paul was called an apostle, but he said that he lives but not him, but Christ in him (Gal 2:20).

It was the ministry of Christ expressing itself through the vessel of Paul as a co-labourer. It is God who worked in him, both to will and to do. It was the power of Christ. This means that Paul did not possess the gifts himself, but was a vessel through whom the life of Christ was manifested.

We do not possess gifts to use at will. We stir up the gift and are stewards of the gift, but it is Christ within us who gives life and power to it. *Charisma* is the manifestation of the life of Christ in us. We do not possess the gifts, Christ possesses or owns us.

Prophecy and visions are not techniques that we learn and operate hoping for a good average of correctness. If the Holy Spirit speaks it is not hit or miss. When Paul said *to one is given the manifestation of gifts of healing*, he meant the life of Christ moving through the person to heal others. It is Christ who heals.

When ministry becomes technique it goes wrong. When it is Christ, Christ working through the gospel, then it is true ministry and not fanatical counterfeit. The manifestation of the Spirit is according to the Spirit's will, not our will (1 Cor 12:11). There is also a great variety of manifestations. Paul did not give an exhaustive list in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians.

We should expect spiritual gifts, desire them earnestly to help others, but then Christ supplies the faith. Faith is simple obedience. This is why *charisma* is always controversial. It is always different as it is Christ operating not according to the plans or techniques of men and movements.

*Helps* is the motivation of every other manifestation, just as Jesus came not to be served but to serve. Anything not manifested in love to the brethren is not of God. Helps is the gift of God, His love shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit, the life of Christ within (Rom 5:5).

### True Spirituality

When a person has a gift by works, he becomes a *spiritual* and people look to him rather than to Jesus Christ. This was the problem Paul had with the Corinthians. Some in the church said they were of Paul and some were of Apollos (1 Cor 1:12). Paul answered that all things were of Christ.

We need to look closely at the interactions between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians, to pick up the reality of what Paul was saying overall. In 2 Cor 11:4 Paul mentions the false gospel and the false Jesus they preached.

For if he that comes preaches another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if you receive another spirit, which we have not received, or another gospel, which we have not accepted...(2 Cor 11:4).

In 2 Cor 11:13 Paul mentioned the "superlative apostles", which means the ultimate, the best, the most spiritual and the powerful. This is what they called themselves. Paul called them false (*pseudo*) apostles, a masquerade.

For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming (masquerading) themselves into the apostles of Christ. (2 Cor 11:13).

The whole section from chapters 10 to 13 show that these *spirituals* called Paul weak and fleshly. In doing so they tried to win the Corinthians to themselves and steal the flock from Paul, just as false spiritual apostles do today.

They said that after receiving grace through Christ we must go on to receive power. Those who failed to show works in this way were called weak and un-spiritual. Paul claimed he was not lacking in power, but that their spirituality was deception.

Paul contrasted his own life dramatically with these false apostles. He said power is made perfect in the weakness of his flesh, not in being spiritual. (2 Cor 12:9). He said that we do not move beyond grace received in Christ to a greater power, but rather grace itself is "*sufficient*". (2 Cor 12:9).

This is what distinguished Paul from the false spirituality. While they gloried in their spirituality, Paul gloried in his weakness. (2 Cor 12:5). By not boasting in self he enjoyed the power of Christ by faith through grace. "For though he was crucified in weakness, yet He lives by the power of God. For we are also weak in Him, but we shall live with Him by the power of God towards you." (2 Cor 13:4).

"Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith." (2 Cor 13:5). That is, do we live by works, are we going about to establish our own spirituality, or do we live by the grace of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ? This is the same message Paul gave to the Galatians.

In *A Theology of the Holy Spirit* Frederick Bruner shows that when we look for power in power we are in danger of self-deification. "Only power in real weakness is divine power and rescued from boasting in spiritual accomplishment. Radical, present weakness is the sphere of Christ's real power." It is Christ in you, not you. This is the essential thing to understand in the meaning of true spirituality.

"Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." (Eph 6:10). "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." (2 Tim 2:1). "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us." (2 Cor 4:7).

We realise that because these are God's gifts success or failure is not our problem. We do not get the credit for miracles, nor get the blame where there are no miracles, because it is not us. Our call is to be faithful, not to perform (1 Cor 4:2).

This takes the load of performance and condemnation off people. People blame themselves when miracles do not occur, or blame the pastor. If someone is not "delivered" it is not the pastor or church's fault.

Jesus did not put Judas into "deliverance ministry", counselling or discipleship classes. Jesus "failed" with many people, with multitudes and allowed them to go away. He said that He could do nothing unless He saw the Father doing it (John 5:19). We are set free if and when God sets us free. "Whom the Son sets free is free indeed." (John 8:36).

*Charisma* means we receive the power of God through grace by the gospel alone and that Jesus receives the glory and not ourselves and our focus is to help others to love and serve the Lord.