

ST. SIMEON ANGLICAN CHURCH, OFF FUTA ROAD, AKURE

BIBLE STUDY, 15/07/2009

STUDY 1

UNDERSTANDING THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS

I Corinthians 12:1 ó 11; Romans 12:6 ó 8; Ephesians 4:7 ó 13

The apostle Paul treats spiritual gifts which abounded in the church of Corinth, but were greatly abused. What these gifts were we are told in the body of the I Corinthians 12 namely, extraordinary offices and powers, bestowed on ministers and Christians for conviction of unbelievers, and propagation of the gospel. Gifts and graces, *charismata* and *charis*, greatly differ. Both indeed were freely given of God. But where grace is given it is for the salvation of those who have it. Gifts are bestowed for the advantage and salvation of others.

The word *charisma*, with a single exception (I Peter 4:10), occurs in the New Testament only in the Pauline epistles, and in the plural form is employed in a technical sense to denote extraordinary gifts of the Spirit bestowed upon Christians to equip them for the service of the church. Various lists of the *charismata* are given (Romans 12:6-8; I Corinthians 12:4ó11, 28ó30; Ephesians 4:7ó12), none of which, it is evident, are exhaustive. Some of the gifts enumerated cannot be said to belong in any peculiar sense to the distinctive category. "Faith" (I Corinthians 12:9), for example, is the essential condition of all Christian life; though there were, no doubt, those who were endowed with faith beyond their fellows. "Giving" and "mercy" (Romans 12:8) are among the ordinary graces of the Christian character; though some would possess them more than others. "Ministry" (Romans 12:7), again, that is, service, was the function to which every Christian was called and the purpose to which every one of the special gifts was to be devoted (Ephesians 4:12). The term is applied to any spiritual benefit, as the confirmation of Christians in the faith by Paul (Romans 1:11). And as the general function of ministry appears from the first in two great forms as a ministry of word and deed (Acts 6:1ó4; I Corinthians 1:17), so the peculiar charismatic gifts which Paul mentions fall into two great classes ó those which qualify their possessors for a ministry of the word, and those which prepare them to render services of a practical nature.

God has graciously, undeservedly equipped each of us with the ability to minister to others within the body of Christ. A spiritual gift, then, more than being a possession, is a channel through which the Holy Spirit ministers to His church. This is the means He has chosen to edify the Church.

Questions for discussion

1. What are the distinctions between gifts of the Spirit and gift of the Spirit; gifts of the Spirit and fruit of the Spirit; and gifts and talents? Acts 2:38; John 7:38ó39; Galatians 5: 22ó23
2. Discuss each of these words used to describe spiritual gifts: spirituals (I Corinthians 12:1); gifts (I Corinthians 12:4; Romans 12:6; I Peter 4:10); administrations (I Corinthians 12:5); operations (I Corinthians 12:6; I Peter 4:11); manifestations (I Corinthians 12:7; 13:5)
3. What are spiritual gifts?
4. What is the fundamental condition and test of these gifts? or how can we discern the true spiritual gifts that are from the Spirit of God? I Corinthians 12:3
5. Identify the source of the spiritual gifts in I Corinthians 12:4ó6.
6. Do I Corinthians 12:4ó6 intend to mark off three distinct classes of spiritual gifts? or do they describe the same objects under different aspects? or is the first the generic class under which the other two are subsumed as species?
7. Is there a correspondence between the gifts enumerated in I Corinthians 12:8ó10 and the church offices enumerated in I Corinthians 12:28?
8. Discuss the measure and the proportion in which the spiritual gifts are given I Corinthians 12:11

Conclusion

Spiritual gifts are special gifts bestowed by the Holy Spirit upon Christians for the purpose of building up the church. The list of spiritual gifts in I Corinthians 12:8ó10 includes wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, speaking in tongues, and interpretation of tongues. Similar lists

appear in Ephesians 4:7⁶13 and Romans 12:3⁶8. The apostle Paul indicated that these gifts are equally valid but not equally valuable. Their value is determined by their worth to the church. In dealing with this matter, he used the analogy of the human body. All members of the body have functions, Paul declared, but some are more important than others. The service of each Christian should be in proportion to the gifts which he possesses (I Corinthians 12⁶14). Since these gifts are gifts of grace, according to Paul, their use must be controlled by the principle of love⁶the greatest of all spiritual gifts (I Corinthians 13).