

# DOCTRINE CLASS

# SPIRITUAL GIFTS PART TWO

## GENERAL OBSERVATIONS AND DEFINING CERTAIN GIFTS

### PART ONE: GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

1. Gifts do not indicate maturity.
2. Gifts can be misused; this does not make them non-spiritual gifts.
3. Amazing variety (1 Peter 4:10); No comprehensive list of gifts.
  - a. Varied grace = having many facets or aspects; having rich diversity
4. Gifts vary in strength.
  - a. According to faith (Rom. 12:6)
  - b. According to faithfulness or neglect (1 Tim. 4:14)
  - c. According to zeal (2 Tim. 1:16)
  - d. According to desire (1 Cor. 14:1)
  - e. According to the sovereignty of God (1 Cor. 12:11)
5. Avoid Absolutes – Avoid thinking in terms of “I don’t have that gift” or “others don’t have that gift.” For example, we are all called to evangelism. No one has every gift! No one gift is had by everyone!
  - a. Almost all gifts are operable in small measure in every Christian.
  - b. For example, Tongues.
    - i. (1 Cor. 14: 2-14) Speaking in words/syllables unknown to the speaker
    - ii. (Rom. 8:26-27) Not tongues, but prayer expanded in sighs and groans or weeping.

iii. Sometimes it helps to demystify the gifts

6. Are gifts permanent?
  - a. (Rom. 11:29) We know people according to their gifts: Interpretation of tongues, prophesy, healing, evangelism.
  - b. But some are unique for an event, or God can withdraw in judgment or any reason.
7. Not all gifts are miraculous (definition = less common activity of God to arouse awe)
  - a. Some are more so (miracles, healing, prophesy)
  - b. Some are less so (serving, giving, etc.)
8. How do I know where I am gifted?
  - a. Fruit – what is God blessing?
  - b. Experience (experimentation)
  - c. Counsel/Spiritual Leaders
  - d. What you have faith for?
  - e. Begin by obeying scripture
  - f. Prophesy (1 Tim. 4:14)
  - g. Ask for Wisdom (Jas. 1:5-6)
9. Ask God for gifts.
  - a. (1 Cor. 14) – prophesy; to interpret tongues
10. Examine motivation.
  - a. Acts 8 – Simon
  - b. Acts 5 - Ananias and Sapphira

## PART TWO: DEFINING SPECIFIC GIFTS

**PROPHET:** Although several definitions have been given for the gift of prophecy, a fresh examination of the New Testament teaching on this gift will show that it should be defined not as “predicting the future,” nor as “proclaiming a word from the Lord,” nor as “powerful preaching—but rather as “*telling something that God has spontaneously brought to mind.*” The first four points in the following material support this conclusion; the remaining points deal with other considerations regarding this gift.<sup>1</sup>

### 1. The New Testament Counterparts to Old Testament Prophets Are New Testament Apostles.

### 2. The Meaning of the Word *Prophet* in the Time of the New Testament.

Of course, the words *prophet* and *prophecy* were *sometimes used of the apostles* in contexts that emphasized the external spiritual influence (from the Holy Spirit) under which they spoke (so Rev. 1:3; 22:7; and Eph. 2:20; 3:5),<sup>4</sup> but this was not the ordinary terminology used for the

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<sup>1</sup>Grudem, W. A. (1994). *Systematic theology : An introduction to biblical doctrine* (1049). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House.

4. I have a long discussion of Eph. 2:20 in *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today* pp. 45–63, in which I argue that Paul says that the church is “built up on the foundation of the apostle-prophets” (or “apostles who are also prophets”). This is a grammatically acceptable translation of the phrase τῶν ἑποστόλων καὶ προφητῶν. As such, the passage refers to the apostles, to whom the mystery of Gentile inclusion in the church was revealed (see Eph. 3:5, which specifies that this mystery “has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets [or “apostle-prophets” or, “apostles who are also prophets”] by the Spirit”).

I do not think that Eph. 2:20 has much relevance to the entire discussion of the nature of the gift of prophecy. Whether we see one group here as I do (apostle-prophets) or two groups, as Richard Gaffin and several others do (apostles and prophets), we all agree that *these* prophets are ones who provided the foundation of the church, and therefore these are prophets who spoke infallible words of God. Where we disagree is on the question of whether this verse describes the character of *all who had the gift of prophecy* in the New Testament churches. I see no convincing evidence that it describes all who prophesied in the early church. Rather, the context clearly

apostles, nor did the terms *prophet* and *prophecy* in themselves imply divine authority for their speech or writing. Much more commonly, the words *prophet* and *prophecy* were used of ordinary Christians who spoke not with absolute divine authority, but simply to report something that God had laid on their hearts or brought to their minds. There are many indications in the New Testament that this ordinary gift of prophecy had authority less than that of the Bible, and even less than that of recognized Bible teaching in the early church, as is evident from the following section.<sup>2</sup>

**3. Indications That “Prophets” Did Not Speak With Authority Equal to the Words of Scripture.**

- a. Acts 21:4
- b. Acts 21:10-11
- c. 1 Thes. 5:19-21
- d. 1 Cor. 14:29ff

**4. How Should We Speak About the Authority of Prophecy Today?** Prophecies in the church today should be considered merely human words, not God’s words, and not equal to God’s words in authority. But does this conclusion conflict with current charismatic teaching or practice? I think it conflicts with much charismatic practice, but not with most charismatic teaching.<sup>3</sup>

**5. A Spontaneous “Revelation” Made Prophecy Different From Other Gifts.** If prophecy does not contain God’s very words, then what is it? In what sense is it from God?

Paul indicates that God could bring something spontaneously to mind so that the person prophesying would report it in his or her own words. Paul calls this a “revelation”: “If a revelation is made to another sitting by, let the first be silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged” (1 Cor. 14:30–31). Here he uses the word *revelation* in a broader sense than the technical way theologians have used it to speak of the words of Scripture—but the New Testament elsewhere uses the terms *reveal* and *revelation* in this broader sense of communication from God that

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indicates a very limited group of prophets who were (a) part of the very foundation of the church, (b) closely connected with the apostles, and (c) recipients of the revelation from God that the Gentiles were equal members with Jews in the church (Eph. 3:5). Whether we say this group was only the apostles, or was a small group of prophets closely associated with the apostles who spoke Scripture-quality words, we are still left with a picture of a very small and unique group of people who provide this foundation for the church universal.

<sup>2</sup>Grudem, W. A. (1994). *Systematic theology : An introduction to biblical doctrine* (1051). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House.

<sup>3</sup>Grudem, W. A. (1994). *Systematic theology : An introduction to biblical doctrine* (1055). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House.

does not result in written Scripture or words equal to written Scripture in authority (see Phil. 3:15; Rom. 1:18; Eph. 1:17; Matt. 11:27).

Paul is simply referring to something that God may suddenly bring to mind, or something that God may impress on someone's consciousness in such a way that the person has a sense that it is from God. It may be that the thought brought to mind is surprisingly distinct from the person's own train of thought, or that it is accompanied by a sense of vividness or urgency or persistence, or in some other way gives the person a rather clear sense that it is from the Lord.<sup>4</sup>

**TEACHING:** The gift of teaching in the New Testament is the ability to explain Scripture and apply it to people's lives.<sup>5</sup>

**MIRACLES:** We should realize that the English word *miracles* may not give a very close approximation to what Paul intended, since the Greek word is simply the plural form of the word δύναμις (G1539) "power."<sup>24</sup> This means that the term may refer to any kind of activity where God's mighty power is evident. It may include answers to prayer for deliverance from physical danger (as in the deliverance of the apostles from prison in Acts 5:19–20 or 12:6–11), or powerful works of judgment on the enemies of the gospel or those who require discipline within the church (see Acts 5:1–11; 13:9–12), or miraculous deliverance from injury (as with Paul and the viper in Acts 28:3–6). But such acts of spiritual power may also include power to triumph over demonic opposition (as in Acts 16:18; cf. Luke 10:17).

Since Paul does not define "works of miracles" any more specifically than this, we can say that the gift of miracles may include the working of divine power in deliverance from danger, in intervention to meet special needs in

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<sup>4</sup>Grudem, W. A. (1994). *Systematic theology : An introduction to biblical doctrine* (1056). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House.

<sup>5</sup>Grudem, W. A. (1994). *Systematic theology : An introduction to biblical doctrine* (1061). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House.

<sup>24</sup> 24. The NIV translates this word "miraculous powers" at 1 Cor. 12:10, and the NASB mg. translates "works of power" in both places.

the physical world (as in the case of Elijah in 1 Kings 17:1–16), in judgment on those who irrationally and violently oppose the gospel message, in vanquishing the demonic forces that wage war against the church, and in any other way in which God’s power is manifested in an evident way to further God’s purposes in a situation.<sup>6</sup>

**HEALING:** As with other spiritual gifts, healing has several purposes. Certainly it functions as a “sign” to authenticate the gospel message, and show that the kingdom of God has come. Then also healing brings comfort and health to those who are ill, and thereby demonstrates God’s attribute of mercy toward those in distress. Third, healing equips people for service, as physical impediments to ministry are removed. Fourth, healing provides opportunity for God to be glorified as people see physical evidence of his goodness, love, power, wisdom, and presence.<sup>7</sup>

**TONGUES:** We may define this gift as follows: *Speaking in tongues is prayer or praise spoken in syllables not understood by the speaker.*<sup>8</sup>

- a. **Words of Prayer or Praise Spoken to God:** This definition indicates that speaking in tongues is primarily speech directed toward God (that is, prayer or praise).<sup>9</sup>
- b. **Not Understood by the Speaker:** Paul says that “one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; *for no one understands him* but he utters mysteries in the Spirit” (1 Cor. 14:2).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Grudem, W. A. (1994). *Systematic theology : An introduction to biblical doctrine* (1062). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House.

<sup>7</sup>Grudem, W. A. (1994). *Systematic theology : An introduction to biblical doctrine* (1064). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House.

<sup>8</sup>Grudem, W. A. (1994). *Systematic theology : An introduction to biblical doctrine* (1070). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House.

<sup>9</sup>Grudem, W. A. (1994). *Systematic theology : An introduction to biblical doctrine* (1071). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House.

<sup>10</sup>Grudem, W. A. (1994). *Systematic theology : An introduction to biblical doctrine* (1071). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House.

- c. **Prayer With the Spirit, Not With the Mind:** Paul is not here talking about the Holy Spirit praying through us. The contrast between “my spirit” and “my mind” in verse 14 indicates that it is Paul’s own human spirit that he is talking about, the nonmaterial aspect of his being. As he uses this gift, his spirit speaks directly to God, even though his mind does not have to formulate words and sentences and decide what to pray for.<sup>46</sup> Paul sees this kind of prayer as an activity that occurs in the spiritual realm, whereby our spirits speak directly to God but our mind is somehow bypassed and does not understand what we are praying.

We may wonder why God would give the church a gift that operates in the unseen, spiritual realm and that is not understood by our minds. One reason may be to keep us humble, and to help prevent intellectual pride. Another reason may be to remind us that God is greater than our understanding and that he works in ways that transcend our understanding. Finally, it is characteristic of much that God does in the new covenant age that it is done in the unseen, spiritual realm: regeneration, genuine prayer, worship “in spirit and in truth,” the spiritual blessings that come through the Lord’s Supper, spiritual warfare, laying up treasures in heaven, setting our minds on things above, where Christ is—all these and many more elements of the Christian life involve activities that occur in the unseen, spiritual realm, activities that we do not see or fully understand. In that light, speaking in tongues is simply another activity that occurs in the unseen spiritual realm, an activity we believe is effective because Scripture tells us it is, not because we can comprehend it with our minds (cf. 1 Cor. 14:5).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> The phrase “pray in the Holy Spirit” in Jude 20 is not the same expression, since it is specifically the “Holy Spirit” who is designated. Jude is simply saying that Christians should pray in conformity to the character and leading of the Holy Spirit, and that may certainly include prayer in tongues, but it would include any other kind of prayer in an understandable language as well. Similarly, “Pray at all times *in the Spirit* with all prayer and supplication” (Eph. 6:18) is specifically a statement that claims to cover all prayer that is made at all times. It refers to prayer in conformity to the character of the Holy Spirit and sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit, but it should not be restricted to speaking in tongues. Once again, it may include speaking in tongues, but should include all other types of prayer as well. (See the discussion of activities done “in the Holy Spirit” in chapter 30, pp. 651–52.)

<sup>11</sup> Grudem, W. A. (1994). *Systematic theology : An introduction to biblical doctrine* (1073). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House.

**INTERPRETATION OF TONGUES:** We may define the gift of interpretation as *reporting to the church the general meaning of something spoken in tongues*.<sup>12</sup>

**WORD OF WISDOM AND WORD OF KNOWLEDGE:**

Therefore it would seem preferable to understand these in a “nonmiraculous” way, simply as the ability to speak with wisdom or with knowledge in various situations. What many people today call “word of wisdom” and “word of knowledge” in charismatic circles, it would seem better simply to refer to as “prophecy.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Grudem, W. A. (1994). *Systematic theology : An introduction to biblical doctrine* (1076). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House.

<sup>13</sup>Grudem, W. A. (1994). *Systematic theology : An introduction to biblical doctrine* (1082). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House.