

## SPECIAL (MIRACULOUS) GIFTS IN THE EARLY CHURCH

### I. INTRODUCTION.

A. In The Infant Church, Before The New Testament Was Completed, And While The Apostles Were Still Alive, There Were Christians In The Various Congregations Who Possessed Special (Miraculous) Gifts From The Holy Spirit.

1. These special (or spiritual) gifts (*1 Cor. 12:1*) were necessary to sustain the growth and work of the church until the New Testament could be written as a guide.
2. Although there are not a number of references to these spiritual gifts, sufficient testimony is given so that we can know:
  - a. The gifts existed during the life of the apostles.
  - b. The purpose of the gifts.
  - c. How the gifts were conferred.

B. With A Renewed Interest In The Mysterious Religions (i.e. Eastern Religions, The Occults, Etc.) Today, There Is A Great Deal Of Misunderstanding Regarding Special Gifts Of The Holy Spirit As Revealed In The New Testament.

1. Some believe and teach that they have these special gifts today.
2. Some believe and teach that they receive these gifts by the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
3. Some believe and teach that only the most spiritual individuals have these gifts (primarily the gift of tongues) and that the gift confirms their spiritual standing with God.

### II. AIM.

A. To Learn Who Possessed Special Gifts In The Early Church.

- B. To Learn How These Special Gifts Were Received In The Early Church.
- C. To Learn What The Special Gifts In The Early Church Were.
- D. To Learn Something Of The Spiritual Standing Of The Individual Who Possessed One Or More Of The Special Gifts.

### III. OUTLINE.

- A. ONE CANNOT READ THE NEW TESTAMENT WITHOUT BEING AWARE THAT SPECIAL GIFTS WERE AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE EARLY CHURCH. AT FIRST ONLY THE APOSTLES POSSESSED THESE SPECIAL GIFTS, AS A RESULT OF THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT WHICH HAPPENED ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST. LATER OTHERS RECEIVED SPECIAL GIFTS FROM THE HOLY SPIRIT AS A RESULT OF THE LAYING ON OF THE APOSTLES' HANDS.
  1. The coming of the Holy Spirit was accompanied with the "sound of the rushing of a might wind," and the appearance of "tongues like fire" which rested upon the apostles.
  2. The apostles, filled with the Holy Spirit, began to speak "the mighty work of God" in the native tongue (language) of all nations present on that occasion. (*Acts 2:1-11*)
  3. Many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. (*Acts 2:43*)
  4. A man, lame from birth, was healed by two apostles, Peter and John. (*Acts 3:1-10*)
  5. In chapter five, still only the apostles were the ones through whom these special powers were operating, e.g. "And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people: ..." (*Acts 5:12, 15-16*)
  6. As the church moved out of Jerusalem into Judea, Samaria, and on to the uttermost parts of the world, we read of members of the church other than the apostles, being able to perform certain miracles.
- B. FOLLOWING THE APPOINTMENT OF THE SEVEN TO MINISTER TO THE NEEDS OF THE GRECIAN WIDOWS IN THE JERUSALEM CHURCH, WE READ OF OTHERS WHO POSSESSED SPECIAL GIFTS AS A RESULT OF THE LAYING ON OF THE APOSTLES' HANDS. (*Acts 6:6*)

1. Stephen, one of the seven upon whom the apostles had laid their hands, "...wrought great wonders and signs among the people." (*Acts 6:8*)
2. The opposers of Christianity were not able "...to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit by which he (i.e. Stephen) spake." (*Acts 6:10*)
3. Philip, another one of the seven upon whom the apostles had laid their hands, went to a city of Samaria and there preached Christ.
  - a. As a result of hearing the gospel, the people gave heed to what was spoken and "...when they heard and saw the signs which he did" (*Acts 8:5-6*), they "...believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." (*Acts 8:12*)
  - b. As a result of these men and women believing and being baptized, they were saved (*Mark 16:16*), thus added to the church (*Acts 2:47*), so another congregation of the Lord's church was established.
    - 1) This new congregation of obedient believers had no guide with which to be instructed after Philip left to preach elsewhere.
    - 2) Philip was guided by the Spirit and could perform signs, but could not give this power to others.
    - 3) The apostles at Jerusalem, hearing of the congregation having been established in Samaria, sent Peter and John (*apostles*) for the purpose of praying for, and laying their hands on them so that they might receive the Holy Spirit.
      - a) Peter and John (*apostles*) came that the believers of Samaria might receive the Holy Spirit. (*Acts 8:14-17*)
      - b) The Holy Spirit (miraculous power) was given by the laying on of the apostles hands. (*Acts 8:17-18*)
      - c) It should be noted that even though the apostles had earlier laid their hands on Philip and he was able to perform signs,

he could not impart this power to others - *only an apostle could do that.*

C. AS CONGREGATIONS WERE ESTABLISHED AND DEVELOPED, THERE WERE CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS WITHIN EACH CONGREGATION WHO, BY THE SPIRIT, HAD CERTAIN SPECIAL GIFTS.

1. The Corinthian church is the most notable congregation revealed to us where these gifts are discussed.

2. Nine of the special gifts given to the Corinthian congregation are mentioned in *1 Cor. 12*.

a. Wisdom.

b. Knowledge.

c. Faith.

d. Gifts of healing.

e. Workings of miracles.

f. Prophecy.

g. Discerning of spirits.

h. Tongues.

i. Interpretation of tongues.

3. Although this may not be an exhaustive list, it does serve to tell us something of the function of these special gifts.

a. Evangelists and missionaries were aided in carrying the gospel to new fields. Prior to the completion of the New Testament as a guide, gifts of prophecy and knowledge, for example, were necessary to know God's will. The gift of discernings of spirits was necessary to make certain that one was not "pawning off" an untrue doctrine in the name of the Holy Spirit.

b. New converts to Christ from former pagan religions were given assurance of the truthfulness of the gospel by such signs as tongues (the ability to speak in the native language without formerly knowing it) (*cf. Acts 2:7-8*),

working of miracles, gifts of healing, etc.

- c. The entire church was edified and given the revealed truth, which has since been permanently preserved in the New Testament.
- D. THESE SPECIAL GIFTS WERE NOT SIGNS OF BEING EXTRA SPIRITUAL OR STANDING IN A FAVORED RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD, AS SOME CLAIM TODAY.
1. After setting forth the different gifts, Paul immediately checked any valid reason for pride on the part of any individual who possessed a particular gift, by showing that all the gifts came from a common source. All gifts were operated by a common will, and were bestowed according to the pleasure of the Spirit, and not because of any inferiority or superiority on the part of the recipients of the gifts. (*1 Cor. 12: 7-11*)
  2. Of all the churches to which Paul wrote, the Corinthian congregation was probably the most carnal (*1 Cor. 3:1-3*), yet had all the spiritual gifts. (*1 Cor. 12 - 14*)
  3. Spiritual gifts, therefore were not a sign of superior spirituality, but rather they were given to make a complete, balanced church as the spiritual Body of Christ, just as the various members of our physical body make up a complete, united, balanced physical body. (*1 Cor. 12:12-27*)

#### IV. CONCLUSION.

- A. In The Beginning, Only The Apostles Possessed Special (Miraculous) Gifts, Which Were Given To Them In Fulfillment Of The Promised Power Which Was To Accompany The Baptism Of The Holy Spirit. (*Acts 1:8*)
- B. Following The Baptism Of The Holy Spirit, The Apostles Could Pray And Lay Their Hands On Individuals For The Purpose Of Receiving The Holy Spirit (*Acts 8:17*) From Whom They Received Special Gifts. (*1 Cor. 12:4*)
- C. In This Lesson We Have Learned Something Of What The Special Gifts Were.
- D. The Special Gifts Of The Early Church Were Not Bestowed Because Of Being Especially Spiritual Or Having Special Favor With God (God Is No Respector Of Persons), But

Rather They Were Given Temporarily For The Purpose  
Of Building Up The Body Of Christ Until The Comple-  
tion Of Our Inspired Guide, The New Testament.

- E. Now That Everything Which Pertains To Godliness Has  
Been Given To Us (2 Pet. 1:3), There Is No Further  
Need For These Special Gifts.