

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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A Look at the *Charismata*

by Dan Trygg

“I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵ that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge, ⁶ even as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you, ⁷ so that you are not lacking in any gift (*charismati*), awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ...” 1 Corinthians 1:4-7

“Now there are varieties of gifts (*charismatōn*), but the same Spirit. ⁵ And there are varieties of ministries (*diakonia*), and the same Lord. ⁶ There are varieties of effects (inworkings), but the same God, the One inworking all things in all persons. ⁷ But to each one is being given the manifestation of the Spirit towards the thing being beneficial. ⁸ For to one is being given a word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another a word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healings by the one Spirit, ¹⁰ and to another inworkings of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another discernings of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ All these things the one and the same Spirit is inworking, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.” 1 Corinthians 12:4-11

1 Corinthians 12-14 is the most detailed account dealing with the subject of spiritual gifts in the NT. We have looked at **Romans 12**, where we learned that, in Christ, **we all have received an apportionment of God's grace** that is expressed in a function in the Body of Christ. ***Our spiritual gift is that grace apportionment. There are a variety of grace-giftings that enable us to carry out different functions to support and strengthen the Body of Christ.*** We are like limbs, or component parts of this larger spiritual Body. We are members of that Body, and members one of another. In **Ephesians 4**, again we are told that **we all have received gift-abilities (4:7)**. ***We also discovered that some gifts were given to help equip, heal, adapt or shape us for our service to one another,*** so that we can effectively develop and mature one another, as well as cause the growth of the Body. ***As we interact*** at the initiative of Jesus, expressing truth and reality to one another in love, ***the grace and life of God is communicated and circulated to supply the growth of the Body,*** and it is built up through the working of the parts (vv. 15,16). In **1 Peter 4**, we are again told that **each of us has received a special gift**, and **we are to serve one another as stewards of God's varied grace** (vs. 10). We are to take seriously the gifting and responsibility we have received. If we have a **speaking gift**, we ought to take care to speak words from God; if we have a **serving gift**, we are to operate out from the power and energy that comes from Him.

From these passages, four consistent truths emerge: (1.) In Christ, we all *have received* a spiritual gift; (2.) While the grace-enablement of the gift comes from God, *we are to use it to serve one another* in the Body of Christ; (3.) There are *a wide variety of grace-expressions or giftings* in the Body of Christ; and (4.) The Body of Christ is to be *like an interactive organism*. Grace, truth, support and life are communicated from Jesus *through the members* to one another, and this builds up the Body of Christ. The Body builds up the Body.

While 1 Corinthians 12 seems to agree with these general truths, there are some noticeable differences. Paul introduces the discussion by talking about the danger of being led astray. Before they knew Jesus, they had been led astray to idols. **The first thing Paul gives them is a way to test whether someone is speaking from a false spirit, or the Spirit of God.** The Holy Spirit will never curse Jesus, and no other false spirit will be able to say “Jesus is Lord.” Any spirit that would discount, disregard, or dishonor Jesus is not the Holy Spirit. The true Spirit of God will want to glorify and magnify Jesus, and will declare what is true. We will see why this is important in this context.

Secondly, the other passages we have looked at describe giftings in terms of past completed action. We all *have received* our grace-gifting and apportionment. There is no hint of change, variation, or the addition of other gift-abilities. The message seems to be “discover your gift, and put it to use.” ***The verb tense in 1 Corinthians 12, however, is different. It is written in the present tense, ...implying present ongoing or repeated action.*** It seems that Paul is saying that the Holy Spirit *is distributing* the gifts he describes *as they meet*, ...and they are expressed or made visible for what is advantageous at the time. **The language is very fluid,** “...to each one, ...to one..., to another...”. **It seems to be a very vivid description of the distribution of grace-giftings at a moment in time, when they are meeting, in order to address a present need** that is in the Body at the time.

Also, **the giftings listed in verses 8-10, with the exception of prophecy, are not listed in any of the other spiritual gift passages.** ***On the face of it, these gifts are all very supernatural, i.e., they go beyond what is normal human abilities.*** It is true that *all* of the gifts are empowered by the Spirit, but many may not *seem* as obviously supernatural. For example, someone who has a gift of teaching, or of helps, or of compassion, might not appear to be doing something that is more than what another person could do, even though they *are* uniquely prompted, energized and empowered by the Spirit. But the gifts mentioned in this passage are all unquestionably *supernatural*. ***It is interesting that these spiritual gifts are debated by different groups of believers.*** Some would either try to redefine these gifts in terms that are *more human*, ...*more understandable* to our natural ears. But I believe that **these gifts are more**

directly supernatural because they are meant to manifest the power of God in very clear and dramatic fashion. They are to function as signs, wonders and miracles that strongly testify that God Himself is operating in our midst.

Part of the problem we have in understanding these gifts is that our experience of church is so different from what it was intended to be. As we saw in Ephesians 4, the gifts are given to help us express truth to one another in love. This was not just preaching or teaching, ...this involved the interactive Body life of the gifts “truthing” to one another in love, or expressing the grace and power of God from one part to another. Church meetings were not in large lecture halls. They were smaller home meetings, gatherings where there was teaching, but also where they shared a meal together, and talked about their problems and struggles, ...and where they prayed for one another (Acts 2:42-47). Home meetings, or small informal gatherings, were the norm for the first 300 years of church history, which was also the time of the most rapid, Spirit-empowered growth. The gifts described in verses 8-10 were not at all uncommon. **Where the people were free to open their hearts to the Holy Spirit together for each other, He would give these giftings, these manifestations of the Spirit, for the benefit of those they were praying for.**

Let's take a look at these giftings. Again, as they were praying for one another or were gathered together, God would give “**a word of wisdom**”. Note this is *not* the “gift of wisdom”, as some would present this. This is a momentary revelation, “a word, message, or thought of wisdom”. Wisdom is about knowing what to do in a situation. It is God's revealed counsel as to how to resolve a problem. This is *not* someone else's own wisdom, from living longer or being more experienced. This is a “message of wisdom” from God to that person or that situation. For example, Jesus' telling Peter to put in a fish line, and look in the mouth of the first fish he caught, to find a coin sufficient to pay for the tax for both of them was a word of wisdom (Matt. 17:24-27). The next gifting is “**a word of knowledge**”. Again, the group is gathered and God reveals a glimpse at some unknown bit of information, ...He communicates some knowledge that otherwise would be impossible for that person to know. This revelation will be helpful information to get at some issue, or to clearly reveal that God is in this situation. For example, when Jesus told the Samaritan woman that she had five husbands, she immediately knew that God was with Him. It changed her whole attitude toward Him, and what He was saying (Jn. 4:16-29). The gift of “**faith**” is a supernatural prompting and empowering of God to trust Him to do some particular thing. It defies logic, or any natural expectation, but it ends up being vindicated by the fulfillment of whatever is being trusted for. Someone with this kind of faith can act boldly, or declare things confidently, or believe God for a much larger thing than others can. Often their confidence can inspire others to believe, as well. This would be like when Jesus cursed the fig tree. When the disciples saw that it had withered from the roots up, they knew it was God (Matt. 21:19-21). Next, is “**gifts of healings**”. Notice that there are multiple gift expressions here, as well as different kinds of healings. This is not just “a healer”, there are multiple people who have healing gifts of various kinds, ...and, again, it could be a distribution of healing gifts being made available at that gathering, to deal with a particular situation. Healing sick people was one of the key indicators of the presence and power of the kingdom of God in the ministry of Jesus, his apostles, and the ongoing ministry of the church in those first centuries. Throughout the centuries, this has surfaced again and again as a sign of God at work. The next gift is an “**inworkings of miracles**”. It is interesting that our translations have rendered it as “effecting miracles”, but the focus of the Greek is the “inworking power” of God. The action of the Holy Spirit begins *inside*, but the effect is seen in the *outward results* (Lk. 5:17; Acts 2:22; 8:13; 19:11). Next is “**prophecy**”. Prophecy is speaking forth a message of God for another person. There are two parts to this: receiving a revelation from God, and then communicating it. This is the only gift mentioned in the other lists of spiritual gifts, but Paul also presents this gift as something to be desired and sought after (14:1). So there seems to be a gift of prophecy that some receive as their main spiritual gift, and there seems to be these occasional revelations that come when people are gathered which are given to edify the Body (14:3). The next gift mentioned is “**discernings of spirits**”. Note again there are varieties of discernings. The word is plural. I have heard of a wide array of experiences in this area, regarding how a person can tell when something is amiss. People also report a differentiation between discerning of demonic spirits, and even discerning the “spirit” of a person, i.e., whether they are honest and good, or whether they are deceitful. Again, this is a revelatory work of the Holy Spirit within an individual. “**kinds of tongues**” Paul tells us that there are tongues of men and of angels (13:1). I am confident that this is not to be understood as nonsense. These are utterances prompted and empowered by the Holy Spirit. They can be a sign of God's presence, but they are meant to be interpreted, so that others can benefit from what is being said (14:2-5). “**interpretation of tongues**” This is the Spirit-enabled ability to understand what someone who speaks in a tongue is saying, and explain it. It is not necessarily a word-for-word translation, but an explanation of the content of the message. Tongues that are interpreted are like prophecy (14:5).

“All these things the one and the same Spirit is inworking, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.” Again, notice the present tense, the inner working of the Spirit, and His choice to distribute these gifts as He wills *whenever and wherever* He might desire. **We need to make room in our meetings, and in our hearts, to allow Him to work in our midst as He is desiring to do.**