

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

I. General Definition of Spiritual Gifts

A. Definitions offered by writers on this subject

1. Thomas R. Edgar, in his book *Miraculous Gifts: Are They For Today?* (Neptune, New Jersey Loizeaux Brothers, 1983) pp 13-14, writes:

It is clear that individuals themselves, such as apostles and prophets, are a gift given by Christ to the Church. However, we normally think of gifts as something given to the individual. From this point of view an apostle may be considered as one who has been given the gifts or abilities necessary for him to function as an apostle. Therefore, we will define a spiritual gift from the perspective of something given to an individual Christian. This "something" is an ability to minister to others. The following is the definition of a spiritual gift given to an individual. A spiritual gift is an ability supernaturally given to an individual by the Holy Spirit so that the recipient may utilize that ability to minister beyond his normal human capacity. Notice that this is an ability. It is given for service and it is supernatural.

2. J. Oswald Sanders, in *The Holy Spirit and His Gifts* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), pp. 108-110, states:

The first concern of the ascended Lord appears to have been the equipment of His infant church for its inevitable conflict with the powers of darkness. "When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men." These gifts He bestowed through His spirit, and it is through His working that they function. Only supernatural gifts would suffice for warfare against a supernatural foe. Without such gifts, the Church would be little more than any other social institution. . . .

A clear distinction is to be observed between the Gift of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit. The former was bestowed on the Church in answer to the prayer of Christ and in fulfillment of the promise of the Father. The latter are bestowed on individual believers as and when the Spirit in His sovereignty pleases. . . .

A similar discrimination should be made between the gifts and the fruit of the Spirit. Nine gifts are enumerated, while the fruit is depicted in nine qualities of character. Between the two there are several clear contrasts. . . .

Two words are used of these gifts which, taken together afford helpful insight into their true nature. They are pneumatika and charismata. In 1 Cor. 12:1 "gifts", is in italics, and the word signifies simply "something of or from the Spirit". The Corinthian church was plagued with carnalities and needed to return to the spiritualities, that which has its source in the Spirit.

In 1 Cor. 12:4 "charismata" signifies "gifts of grace". They are bestowed altogether apart from human merit or deserts. The two words taken together indicate that these gifts are extraordinary powers and enduements bestowed by the Spirit upon individual believers as equipment for Christian service and the