

application of truth which was essential to the growth and development of the primitive Church in its precanonical era. This latter suggestion, which seems more in keeping with the larger context, sees Paul's reference here to gifted people in the early churches who spoke out on the basis of their special, spiritual grasp of the "mind of God". In other words this gift would be akin to prophecy and might well be associated with it, though evidently distinguishable from it.

Perhaps we shall be wise to recognize both possibilities. Obviously in the apostolic churches these twin gifts might well be the media through which the divine will was communicated to believers. However, the Church in every age is in need of gifted, wise believers who have a clear understanding of scriptural truths in actual, given situations. In both cases the wisdom must be shared or "uttered" to be of help and blessing. If a caveat is needed it would be that we must guard against the dangerous suggestion that any "utterance" wisdom or knowledge should be regarded as comparable to Scripture or that it is as valid as are the scriptures. Nothing compares with the inspired Word, "the faith. . . once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3 RV).

VIII. Purpose of Spiritual Gifts

J. Oswald Sanders (pp. 110-111) writes:

They are not bestowed for the self-aggrandizement of the recipient, or as an evidence of a special endowment of the Spirit, but for the profit and edification of the Body of Christ. The possessor is only the instrument and not the receiver of the glory. "Each of us is just a pen in the hand of God," said Richard Baxter, and what honour is there in a pen?" The gift is for ministry to others, "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ".

The nature of the gifts indicates that they are for the most part gifts of service. Not one of them directly concerns character. They are God's equipment and enabling for effective service.

In the early days of the Church they served another purpose. They were necessary as the divine credentials of the apostles in their testimony to the resurrection of Christ. Who would believe the word of these "ignorant and unlearned men" with their fantastic story of a man who rose from the dead? They were not left unaccredited, however, for "God bore them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit."

This co-witness of God afforded clear evidence to the unbelieving Jews that the promised Holy Spirit had indeed been