**Introduction to Temporary Spiritual Gifts - BD27-01**

This morning we are going to look at the introduction to temporary spiritual gifts. We have found that every Christian has been given certain permanent spiritual abilities as a means to performing Christian service. Many Christians use them and many do not use their spiritual gifts. We have that there are three guidelines to using your spiritual gifts. One was that you had a desire to perform a specific spiritual service. Secondly, there was a recognition on the part of others that you do have this gift. The third guideline is the evidence of fruitfulness and the blessing from the exercise of that gift. You should not look for a spectacular desire. You should not look for spectacular recognition. And you should not look for spectacular evidence. Or you will be led astray and discouraged, and come to the point where you think you have no spiritual gift. You have at least one, and you may have more. But God will propel you in the right direction with a heart that’s open to receive that direction, and he will give confirmation within your own heart, within the results, and within what others receive through the use of your gift.

Now obviously this is the core of Christian service, and this is what it’s all about, then anytime we talk about this subject, I know that it’s going to have an edge of discouragement to certain people, and I’ve already received that reaction from some of you, because you throw your hands up and you say, “Man, I can’t see myself anywhere in any of those things. I’m the one exception—no gift. I’m the giftless Christian.” Well, there are no giftless Christians, really. You have to eventually understand that, or you will be discouraged.

So, this being the core of what is the vehicle of Christian service, naturally you may expect that Satan is going to discourage, and Satan is going to work on spiritual gifts. This is why the average church is a non-functioning operation, because they have a professional that they’ve hired to be the preacher and the administrator, and the rest of the people sit there as spectators as in a football stadium, cheering him on to perform certain spiritual functions, and to reach certain spiritual goals. But God’s program is for the body to be prepared so that the body can minister to itself. You don’t need the pastor. The time comes when you don’t even need to go to the pastor for anything. The time will come when you will be so versed in Biblical doctrinal principals that the answers will well up in your own being, and you will become an indigenous Christian, functioning on your own, and a useful believer to those around you.

Please remember that the permanent gifts are not designed for self-edification. They are not designed to edify yourself, but they are designed to build up the other believers. So naturally Satan is going to hit spiritual gifts. This is the one thing he is going to keep people ignorant on. He’s going to do two things. He’s going to keep you in ignorance concerning spiritual gifts, which is the opening statement of the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 12, “Brother, I would not have you ignorant concerning the spiritual gifts.” And Satan is going to keep you diluted concerning gifts that no longer exist. Satan will discourage you from using your spiritual gifts, which do exist, on the one hand, and he will encourage you to try to use, to seek, to attain temporary gifts which are no longer functioning. And we have a vast realm of Christians who are running up a blind alley seeking temporary gifts which were phased out in the early period of the New Testament church, and they are completely oblivious to the permanent gifts which they do have and through which God could accomplish great things.

So I’m trying to alert you this morning that Satan is after you relative to your functioning as a believer. And the only way you can serve the Lord is through these spiritual gifts. If you try to serve the Lord through your natural abilities, you’re wasting your time.

We found that there are certain things that neutralize the use of the spiritual gift. This is part of Satan’s plan of attack. In our previous study, we suggested several hazards that can neutralize your spiritual gifts, and there may be certainly others. One hazard was using your gift in the wrong geographic location—being in the wrong place. Somebody last week at the evening service handed me an address and said, “We’re moving.” They had just moved here not so long ago—just a matter of weeks. They said, “The company is moving us back. What can we do?” Well, the person is kind of new, but I wanted to say, “Well, when the company tells you where you can go, you can tell the company where they can go too, with your job.” She said, “We hate it. We want to stay here. This is where we want to be. Keep in touch with us.”

Another hazard was using your gift on a temporary basis. You come to a time when you decide you should retire from using your gift. There is no such thing in the Word of God. If you have a gift, you are to use it as long as there is blood flowing in your veins and breath in your body. It will be commensurate with your age, that’s true, but the gift will continue to function.

Or you may put it in the wrong situation. You may be using a splendid gift, but you may be using it in the wrong type of ministry. Then there was using your gift for personal glory. Or using you gift independently of spiritual leaders. An attitude like, “If I’m going to do it, I’m going to be in charge.” Or using natural abilities and calling them spiritual gifts. Now God does use our natural abilities, I think. He sanctifies these abilities, and I think they come under that gift of ministering.

However, Satan deception through temporary gifts is the thing we are going to direct our attention to now, because Satan loves to play this kind of game. If we, as believers, are to function fruitfully in the plan of God, with our spiritual gifts, then we have to understand our spiritual heritage in the church age. This is what is often lost to us—our spiritual heritage in the church age. It takes time and effort for a Christian to become informed so that he has doctrinal good judgment. This is what a pastor-teacher is concerned about, that his flock has doctrinal good judgment. It is distressing when you find God’s sheep with bad doctrinal judgment, because then they are patsies for every Satanic wind and drift and emotional pitch that comes along. Some people attend church for a long time and they never make it to the point where they have doctrinal good judgment.

Satan is extremely clever in keep the sheep in spiritual ignorance and operating on emotion binges of purported Christian service. So this is a concern. You will have noticed Bible writers are always concerned that God’s people are in ignorance because then they are exposed to the hazard of emotion manipulation by Satan.

So Satan invents many ways to drain you who are sincere and even you who are informed believers of your spiritual zeal so as to remove you from the Lord’s service. I can tell you again that without doctrine in your mind, you become open to satanic manipulation through your emotions, and then you are guided by your emotions in your actions. Christianity will then for you be converted into a series of happiness kicks. You will be looking for things to make you happy, so that you can get up and glow and ooze and exude all the warmth and the happiness of your Christianity, and you are off on an emotional kick. You will move with people who gather in services for express purposes of pitching a happiness kick.

Now this condition plays right into the hands of Satan because it will neutralize your permanent gifts. It sends believers after temporary gifts that they can never achieve, and thus neutralizes what they could do with the permanent gifts. Christian service becomes a series of things to charge your emotions.

I have noticed that in Pentecostal groups which do pursue a charge of emotion, and which every service is geared to this, that there is a sense of spirituality. I had it pointed up to me again this week. There is a sense of spirituality that is structured on separation. And you can walk in your Pentecostal church (generally it has been my experience, but I wouldn’t say it always has been the case), and there is a certain very rigid devoted separation from things that they consider unspiritual. It will be noted, for example, in the fact that the ladies don’t dress very stylishly. It will also be noticed that there’s an absence of makeup, and you get the feeling that you’re with a bunch of “plain Janes.” This connotes a spiritual quality, or spirituality.

But there has been an incongruity that I have never been able to relate. That is that I also notice that in the Pentecostal circles, the music seems what would be considered most unspiritual. It’s of the Las Vegas nightclub, belting it out, heavy beat, bordering on the rock type of music. You hear it on radio and TV, but it is something else to sit in a church service where there is this rigid spirituality in evidence, and you just feel it by the way people act, and the words they use, and the expressions they use, and the “praises of the Lord,” the “hallelujahs,” and the “amens” that are shouted—which is OK if you want to do that, but don’t think that makes you spiritual.

But I mean a ladies’ trio will get up and they will literally belt it out. It will be jumping and the pianist is there jumping along and jiving the thing up, and the music is belting it out, and it’s loud, and it’s raucous, and they’re happy, and they’re smiling. Of course they use the microphone to give it a professional touch. There’s a lot of movement and all of the people on the platform are tapping their feet, and pretty soon the place is jumping. And it’s the same kind of music that you find nightclub singers singing, belting it out in the same way.

Finally it hit me. That kind of music lends itself to giving your emotions a happiness kick. The gal on the Las Vegas strip is singing to those drunks and non-drunks to make them happy, for the money they’ve spent. She’s singing to kick their emotions into a moment of joy. And that’s exactly what happens in a church service that is geared to the emotions, minus doctrine to guide the mind.

So Satan comes along and knows how to manipulate this area in order to frustrate any useful Christian service. It is interesting that the people who pursue temporary gifts, such as tongues and healing and so on that are non-existent today, are the people who have a rigid spirituality and music that is incongruous with what people would consider spiritual music.

Now I’m not against happiness music. I’m known as one of the last of the big time blues boys myself with the beat. Anytime that I take over the choir, there’s a noticeable difference in the style of the music. It gets moving and beating out there a little bit. But this is something distinctively different. The fact that we enjoy music that has a melody and a joyous note to it does not mean that we are trying to serve the Lord by feeding the emotions, and that’s what the services are designed to do in Pentecostal groups.

**Dealing with Controversy**

However, you can go to the other end of the spectrum where you have the most respected of religious leaders. I read the quotation of a prominent college religious leader this week, concerning the temporary gift of tongues. He was asked by a college student who was concerned about this business of tongues, and this is a big problem on college campuses today. The college leader said, “We don’t discuss the tongues movement with the pastors. I personally do not speak in tongues, but I don’t criticize those who do. The Bible tells me that they are my brothers in Christ, and I am to love them, and I do.”

The very phrase that he used, “I do not criticize,” is to be explained if you understand doctrine. The reason he doesn’t criticize such a monstrous fraud as speaking in tongues is because he is weak on doctrine. Criticism of false doctrine and of Christian love are not mutually exclusive if you understand what the word means. Love is a mental attitude free of ill will. I can listen to some Christian who is just as off in left field on some point as he can be, and I can say, “Buddy, you are wrong. That is false doctrine. That is not sound doctrine.” And I don’t have any ill will toward him whatsoever because I tell him he is wrong.

Now this is a subtle inane suggestion that if you criticize something that is frightfully doctrinally wrong, that you’re not loving the person that you’re calling down upon on it. The same leader’s wife, in a magazine this last week, said, in describing the nature of the work of her and her husband among college students, “We are not against anything. We are simply for a lot of things.”

Now that is a sad remark. I have heard Christians say this. I have something that must have been akin to the feeling of Samuel when he saw Saul going negative, and Samuel spent the night weeping. When Christians have said this to me, I have had something akin to that feeling of sadness because this is the biggest fattest piece of human viewpoint, strictly from Satan, and usually picked up from other disoriented Christians. “I am not against anything. I am just for a lot of things.”

Now how can you be for anything unless you are definitively against the opposite of that thing? That’s politician talk, to say “I’m not against anything. I’m just for a lot of things.” Just listen to the political debates on TV. Some reporter puts a pointed question to a political candidate. He’s just as evasive and squirmy and squiggly as he can be. You get the distinct impression that this candidate is not against the things he’s opposed to, and he’s not in favor of the things he’s for. He’s just middle-of-the-road. Now what could be nicer than that?

Now this is not divine viewpoint. Anytime a Christian, “I’m through being against things. I’m just going to be for things,” start weeping inside, because somebody has led him down the blind alley of the primrose path. It’s just going to be disastrous in his own spiritual life and expression. This is Satan’s way of countering your effectiveness.

If you apply this concept to the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, in His attitude toward the religious leaders of His day, you’re going to have some trouble. The Lord Jesus Christ spoke out so strongly against false doctrine and false practices, even among the leaders of His day, that they killed Him for it. In my opinion, that is exactly the reason people make this remark, “We’re not against anything. We’re just for a lot of things,” it’s because they are members of an organization that has now developed to a level of national prestige and prominence that they don’t want to be “killed” by dealing with controversial issues and being definitive in doctrine. In fact, they want to avoid being “killed” so badly, as an organization that they will compromise with false doctrine.

That’s the real meaning behind this remark. The organization leadership feels that it must retain financial support and it must retain participation in its program. An organization can start of in a small way and be extremely significant in the Lord’s work, with great fruitfulness. Then it expands to a national scale and comes to a point of prominence. Then it is naturally sustained by great financial backing and the participation of vast numbers of people. In order to keep the money flowing and in order to keep the participation going, they begin to become less definitive on doctrine. I have seen this again and again and again with organizations that were serving a great purpose, and then when they became big-time, they began to hedge on doctrine in order to maintain their big-time status, and that is wrong.

If the organization is doing God’s work, if God has called it, if God has made it big-time and He chooses to make it small-time again, then so be it. But you don’t play loose with false doctrine. And once you decide that you need to maintain the level of patronage necessary to maintain the level of expansion, you will find it expedient not to be definitive on doctrine, so you will avoid controversy.

It is interesting that a college student came to this same leader with a question about tongues. He said, “I can’t answer that question. It’s such a controversial issue that we, in our organization, do not discuss it.” Now can you see the Lord doing that to a positive inquirer who came and asked Him? Never. Anybody who was positive to the truth and came and asked the Lord a question, he was positive that he got the truth in answer.

A college girl recently wrote me and asked me about this issue because it is such a raging controversy on college campuses. I sat down and wrote her over a three-page single-spaced type-written letter and answer, in a brief summary on this problem. And I don’t write three-paged single-spaced letters to my sons. But I did to this girl because I knew a little bit about our situation, and she moves in college circles. This has become a major problem with her because she thinks she’s had experiences that she’s not really had, and she ought to be informed that her life can be destroy and her life can be destroyed.

I have no problem whatsoever in sitting down and discussing this controversial issue. And I don’t care how big your organization is, you do not play with false doctrine, and you do not condone it. This college leader is not doing the right thing by avoiding confrontation and discussion of the issue of tongues, which has permeated this organization and has caused some problems within it as well, although this leader does not speak in tongues, though he is opposed to it, though he does not permit it within his organization. If you think he is doing the right thing by avoiding taking a stand relative to the tongues movement and the temporary nature of this gift, then you’re going to have problems with the Paul. It was the apostle Paul who said, “Beware of Alexander the coppersmith. He opposed the Word of God. He did me dirt, and he’ll hurt you” (2 Timothy 4:14-15).

You’ll have problems with this same apostle Paul who said, “Demas has gone carnal.” Demas got he wanted—prestige, this whole world system and all that it had to offer, and the lusts of his old sin nature went forward. Demas said, “I’m through being against for things. I’m going to be for things.” In 2 Timothy 4:10, the apostle Paul says, “Demas has left me,” and you can hear the ring of sadness of another person that Paul has clearly identified as going down the line being for things and not against things.

The worst of all that you have with the apostle Paul is in Galatians 2:11-14 where he describes a situation with the apostle Peter. Paul gets up in a church service and he confronts the apostle Peter face-to-face before all the believers because Peter was promoting legalism. Peter wouldn’t sit down and eat with a Gentile. He wouldn’t have anything to do with Gentiles because the other Jewish Christians were criticizing his interrelationship with Gentiles. Here the apostle Paul and gets up and confronts “the first pope, Peter.” Paul gets up and says, “You were wrong and I rebuke you for your legalism.” Now, Peter wasn’t really “the first pope.” I said that in a meeting one time and I had fifteen people come to me afterward and say, “I didn’t know he was the first pope.” So I want to clear that up now. But he certainly was the number one man on the totem pole, of the 12. And here Paul says to this leader, “You’re wrong, Peter,” because legalism is as vicious a thing as these temporary gifts functioning today. It was satanic.

So you’re going to have a problem if you don’t like taking a stand on controversial issues, relative to sound doctrine. I like what Galatians 2:5 says, with the apostle Paul summarizing what we have been saying. Paul’s expression is dealing with people who opposed him. Paul says, “And that because of false brethren, unawares brought in, who came in secretly to spy out our liberty that we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage, to whom we gave place by subjection, no not for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.”

Now that doesn’t sound to me like a religious leader who’s not against anything, but only for things. It doesn’t sound to me like a religious leader who says, “Well I’m not going to get into controversial discussions with other Christian leaders. I’m just going to be sweetness and light.” Paul say, “I didn’t give ground to these who were delivering false doctrine—not for an hour.” You will find no other attitude in the Word of God. But when your organization gets big, and you decide that you’re going to have to keep the money flowing, and the participation going, you are through right there. Once money and participation in your organization becomes important, Satan has you. You will do anything to accommodate yourself to false doctrine.

So we look now at temporary gifts, which Satan uses to send emotionally dominated Christians down blind alleys of religious activities for happiness kicks, but which do not produce any diving good. We’re moving toward the most dramatic and controversial temporary gifts—miracle working, healings, and tongues. That’s on the docket for the next couple of Sundays. This morning we begin with temporary gifts.

**The Gift of Apostles**

Number one is apostles. In Ephesians 4:11, this gift is listed. The Greek word is “apostolos.” The first part of this word “apo” means “from.” The second part of the word comes from the verb “stolo” which means to send. So this word literally means “one who is sent forth,” that is, a messenger. In the New Testament, the word “apostle” has three different uses. It is important that you distinguish these three uses of the word “apostle.” It will help you to avoid the error that some make today who claim that we do have apostles today.

First, the word “apostle” is used of the twelve. 1 Corinthians 15:5 speaks of the twelve as being apostles. There are certain requirements to qualify for what is known as being of the twelve—that particular group of apostles. The qualifications are two-fold and they are listed in Acts 1. The first one, beginning at verse 21, “Wherefore of these men who have accompanied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went out among us, beginning with the baptism of John unto that same day when He was taken up from us. That was requirement number one. To be an apostle, to qualify for the group of the twelve, you had to accompany the Lord Jesus on His earthly ministry from the baptism of John until the ascension.

Secondly, to qualify for the twelve, in the last part of verse 22, one “must be ordained to be a witness with Him of His resurrection.” Secondly, to be qualified an apostle qualified to be of the twelve, you had to be an eye witness of the resurrected of the Lord Jesus Christ. For this reason, the apostle could not qualify to be one of the twelve. For while he saw the Lord Jesus in resurrection on the Damascus road, he did not accompany the Lord during His earthly ministry from the baptism of John to the ascension. These two requirements qualify for one type of apostleship. This is the apostleship of the twelve. Nobody can qualify for this gift, obviously today, for we have nobody today who can meet these two prerequisites.

Secondly, the word “apostle” refers to a special apostleship such as Paul and James possessed (Galatians 1:19, 1 Corinthians 1:1). These men had seen the Lord Jesus Christ in resurrection glory. James, who was a half-brother of the Lord Jesus Christ, was an unbeliever until after his resurrection. He was not accompanying the Lord in His earthly ministry. But they did qualify on the account of having seen Jesus Christ in resurrection. They could testify to the reality of the resurrection. Obviously, again, nobody qualifies for this type of apostleship today. We do not have anybody in this room who can stand up and say, “I have the gift of apostle, and I qualify by the fact that I have seen Jesus Christ in resurrection.”

The third type of apostleship refers to messengers of the church in general. 2 Corinthians 8:23 speaks of this type of apostleship. It speaks about the messengers of the churches. It uses exactly the same Greek word “apostolos,” but it uses it in a non-technical sense. In the case of the twelve, and in the case of the special apostleship of Paul and James, it had a technical meaning. It does not have a technical meaning when it speaks of them here as messengers of the churches. You are to distinguish between these two: being a messenger of Christ, an apostle of Christ, and to be an apostle of the churches is two different things.

We have men such as Barnabas in Acts 14:14 who were apostles in the sense that they were messengers of the churches. Barnabas is not said to have seen the Lord in resurrection. He does not have the technical of the apostleship. Epaphroditus, in Philippians 2:25 is another one who is called a messenger, an apostle, of the churches. The word simply means “a sent one,” sent on a mission by a local church, but this is not a spiritual gift.

Now what is an apostle to do? Well, the twelve laid the foundation of the church, and they led the early expressions of the church (Ephesians 2:20, Acts 62-4). Qualifications for the apostolic gift make it impossible for anybody to possess it today. There is no such thing as apostolic succession. Some churches say that they pass on the apostleship—the twelve passed on their apostleship by laying hands on twelve other men, and they passed it on, etc., and that we have today therefore apostles who have been given this gift through the laying on of hands of other apostles. But this is a spiritual gift, and we have learned that a spiritual gift is only given by God the Holy Spirit. I can’t give you a spiritual gift, and you can’t give one to me. Nobody qualifies—there is no such thing as apostolic succession.

So an apostle had this kind of authority in the church—supreme authority over all the local churches. As apostle could walk into any local church and his authority was supreme in that church. This is not true today. Within one local church, there is the executive head of the pastor-teacher authority, and his authority extends only over that congregation, and not beyond it to some other congregation.

The apostles were the instruments of divine revelation. They were used to produce the New Testament Scriptures. So today the canon is closed, and this gift is ceased.

There were two periods of apostolic ministry. 1) Before Pentecost, they announced the messianic kingdom, they presented Jesus Christ as the King of the Jews, and they preached them to Jews only, and they are to sit in the millennial kingdom as judges over the twelve tribes relative to this relationship that they had with Israel. 2) But after Pentecost they had a different service as apostles. They laid the foundation truths relative to the church age. They preached the gospel of grace, and then they taught to Jews and Gentiles alike.

The apostles were a primary source of divine revelation that prepared and wrote for us the New Testament Scriptures.

**The Gift of Prophecy**

A second temporary gift was that of prophet. In Ephesians 4:11, you have the word “prophetes,” and this means one who speaks for, or speaks openly. The Greeks used to use this word to describe a man who delivered the oracles of their gods. They called him a “prophetes.” He spoke and delivered the messages from their gods. It connotes, therefore, proclaiming some kind of divine message. It’s a communications gift. In Romans 12:6 and 1 Corinthians 12: 10, we have the word “prophetia.” The first part “pro” means for. The second part comes from a verb meaning “to speak.” So this means one who is speaking for.

These were men who proclaimed a message from God, such as the apostles did. John, the apostle, had the gift of apostle, and he had the gift of prophet. What these men said was something that could not be known by natural means. It could only be known by supernatural information given to them (Amos 3:7-8, 1 Peter 1:21). These were holy men that God Himself moved with information He gave them.

What was the ministry of the prophet? Well, before the New Testament Scriptures were written, they communicated the mind of God to the people (Act 11:27-28, Acts 21:10-11, Acts 21:9). The prophet received doctrine, and he received predictions about the future—direct revelations from God, which he delivered to the believers in the assembly.

Why did they have a prophet? Well, obviously, there was no complete Bible. There were no New Testament Scriptures written. The only way that God could inform them was by somebody having the gift of prophet. He stood up and he declared to that group the mind of God. He made predictions concerning the future which he could not know—the distance future, which he could never know except that God gave him this information. There were no Bibles to open when they sat in church. They had to have information from God through a communicator, and that was the prophet.

Now, obviously, these communications are all recorded for us now in the New Testament Scriptures. So they are completed, and the gift of prophecy has ceased. The gift was to build up the believer spiritually (1 Corinthians 14:4).

Now these revelations from God to the prophets were of two kinds. We call one foretelling, which is predicting the future (Micah 5:2, Revelation 22:7, 10). A true prophet who exercised his gift of prediction was always right. As a matter of fact, if somebody in this group this morning stood up and said, “I believe I have the gift of prophecy,” how would we check him out? The Bible says one way. You say, “Make the prediction—a distant prediction of something you could not know or something that you can’t just reason that may likely happen.” Then if we see that your prediction is fulfilled, we find that you indeed have confirmed to us that you are a prophet to be listened to. That’s the way they listened to a prophet, when he proved himself with a prediction. So nobody can have the gift of prophecy today because nobody can prove himself by predicting.

Foretelling was the important basic segment of the prophet’s ministry. Nobody is able to do this today because the gift has ceased. However, the prophet also did some “forthtelling.” He was declaring God’s viewpoint relative to some current situation or some current issue in the church. This gift was again exercised before the Scriptures were produced, and nobody is able to deliver messages from God today.

If you were in Pentecostal meetings, this is part of what you would hear. You would hear a person getting up, and of course tongues are used as a vehicle for delivering revelations from God. You would have people standing up and saying, “I am a prophet,” and they would deliver messages from God, and you would be obliged to believe that this is a revelation from God. Well, Revelation 22:18-19 speaks about the book of Revelation itself, but it lays out a principal that I think is applicable to all of Scriptures. It warns anybody who takes away or adds to the book of Revelation. It’s a completed canon of Scripture. I think the principal applies to the whole New Testament.

In the New Testament, the gift of prophecy operated. But when the New Testament Scriptures were completed, the gift ceased. 1 Corinthians 13:8-9 tells us that very thing was going to happen.

So the role of the prophet in forthtelling has been discontinued. Who has taken it over? We still need to know what God thinks about a certain situation. Has God now left us in the local church without somebody to stand up and say, “Now here’s what God thinks” upon this subject, to give us a direction? No, He has not left us. Since we have a completed Scripture, what He has now given us are pastor-teachers who take over this gift, and even teachers who take over this gift on the basis of teaching the Scriptures. They give us doctrine which gives us guidance as to what God thinks in a situation.

In Ephesians 2:20, the prophet is placed after the apostle in order to clarify that they are New Testament spiritual gifts. We’re not talking about Old Testament prophets. It says we are given apostles, and some are prophets, etc., because these are New Testament prophets. 2 Peter 2:1 declares to us that the gift of forthtelling has been taken over by the permanent gift of teaching.

The message of the prophet is a direct revelation of the mind of God about the present as well as the future, while the message of the teacher is derived from the completed canon of Scripture. That’s the difference. The prophet got his message directly from God, and the teacher gets his from the Word of God.

**The Gift of Wisdom**

Another temporary gift is the gift of wisdom. We don’t have too much information about this one. We have it in 1 Corinthians 12:8. The Greek word is “sophia.” The word denotes a quality, not an activity. It connotes an unusual insight and an unusual ability to understand, and it’s listed among the temporary gift when it is listed, so it’s probably a temporary gift. Apparently it had to do with the spiritual ability of viewing some situation in life from divine viewpoint. Again, it was necessary to have this gift of wisdom to see things the way God sees them before we had the frame of reference of Scripture. This included being able to see the failures in a situation, and to be able to give spiritual counsel so that the failures are corrected, just as we use doctrine to give spiritual counsel now to correct the failures. This was the ability to see things the way God sees them. We now provide this to the New Testament Scriptures. That apparently was the gift of wisdom.

**The Gift of Knowledge**

The gift of knowledge is another temporary gift, and we have very little information about this one. This seems to refer to an investigation, or a seeking to know something. It denotes an activity with definite results. It’s associated in the list of temporary gifts, so we view it as a temporary gift. It seems to have been a spiritual ability to take a revelation and to give it a proper doctrinal classification. You have to apply doctrine according to the categories in which that doctrine fits. If you don’t understand doctrinal categories, you won’t understand a particular doctrine and its uses. Before the New Testament canon was formed, so that they had a frame of reference, they had to have people in the church who had this gift of knowledge who had to know how to inform and interpret, to bring this revelation together—bringing the pieces together so that they had the complete picture of what God was saying.

Now the propositions of spiritual truth are scattered all through the New Testament, and they have to be brought together for a full picture of the implications of any particular doctrine.

**The Gift of Discernment**

There is one final temporary gift we’re going to look at today, and that’s the discerning of spirits. The Greek word is “diakrisis.” This means being able to determine true differences. It connotes reaching a decision on the basis of evidence, as to whether a thing is good or evil. Spirits probably refers to human spirits. It’s being able to discern concerning the person who is standing up and teaching you, whether this human spirit who is delivering the mind of God or whether he is delivering the mind of Satan. Again, this gift was very necessary before we had the New Testament Scriptures to show us doctrine. How would we know when somebody stands up and starts giving us instruction in the assembly, giving us a viewpoint, whether this person is a true prophet or a false prophet—whether he is delivering to us divine viewpoint, or whether he is cranking out some human viewpoint that seems very appealing and very plausible? There is no way we could know. When we listen to somebody who makes a statement, we need a way to determine whether what he’s saying is true or false. That’s what I was trying to show you in the introduction today. People with great prestige and great prominence will make statements. How do you know that they are speaking divine viewpoint or human viewpoint? The only way you could concern which is of the Spirit of God and which is by the spirit of Satan is by the Word of God.

Now before we had doctrine in the New Testament, God had to supply us with something else, and that was the provision of the person who had the gift of discerning spirits. He could get up and say, “Don’t listen to him. God has at this moment indicated to me that that’s false doctrine. That’s human viewpoint that he has delivered to us.”

So this gift has ceased today. We don’t have anybody who can spot true and false on the basis of a direct statement of God. We have people, such as yourselves, who are informed in doctrine, who can spot true and false on the basis of Scripture. The Holy Spirit indwells every Christian to teach all divine truths of doctrine, through the instrumentality of a pastor-teacher, who illuminates the Scriptures and then shows, by the Scriptures, what is error and what is truth (1 John 2:27). And Christians are to test with Scripture every instruction that they receive from the pastor-teacher or anybody else. They are to verify that instruction as divine viewpoint (1 John 4:1). You can do that today because you have the New Testament Scriptures. However, people in the early church did not have a Bible to carry to church with them. They had no frame of reference. They needed somebody who had the gift of discerning true and false human spirits, as to what they were instructing and what they were delivering to the people of God.

Here are five temporary gifts. You may think through these now, at your leisure:

The gift of apostle was a foundational gift upon which the church has been built. It was a gift of supreme authority in the New Testament church; a gift used to write the New Testament Scriptures; and, a gift which required associations with the Lord Jesus Christ—an eye witness of his resurrection. This gift has ceased.

The person with the gift of prophecy was not only able to apply revelation to a current situation—revelation received directly from God, but who also could predict the future, and he was always right. He was never wrong.

The word of wisdom was being able to give counsel and direction to show where the failure lies.

The word of knowledge was the ability to take Scripture and to put it in its right classification so that you know what this particular point of doctrine is telling us relative to its implications. Here’s what Christians often miss from the Word—the implications of the Word. The implications are what constitute our involvement with the Word.

Finally, the gift of discerning of Spirits was the ability to sense when a person is bringing viewpoint and when he is bringing false human viewpoint.

All of these gifts have now ceased. You can see that their purpose and function was absolutely necessary when we did not have the New Testament Bible. Once we had the New Testament Scriptures, these gifts were phased out.

Next time, we begin with an extensive examination of the gift of miracles.

John E. Danish, 1971