

**“The Revelatory and Normative Gifts Compared”, Session # 18 on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Commandment, An Adult Sunday School Class conducted by Pastor Paul Rendall on December 29<sup>th</sup>, 2013.**

What kind of revelatory gifts and public offices existed in the early Church of that day is found defined for us primarily in 1st Corinthians 12: 1-11; because although this church at Corinth had all of the gifts, they also needed to see the importance of the grace of love in using them. There were persons who had the greatest of these gifts who seemed to think that the other gifts were not really necessary. But they who had been given the greatest gifts needed the greatest instruction and regulation of their gifts. And so Paul here shows them that there are these different manifestations of the Spirit and diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all, and the manifestation of the Spirit in relation to these revelatory gifts was given to each one for the profit of all. In verse 7 he says that there are varieties of ministries; “offices in the Church at large, which are Apostles, prophets, and teachers, and deacons who were employed in planting and forming of churches, ordaining elders, preaching the word, administering ordinances, and taking care of the poor; for which different gifts were bestowed on the, they not all having the same office.”(Gill) In verse 8 then, Paul begins to list these revelatory gifts. He lists 9 revelatory gifts. They are: the word of wisdom through the Spirit, the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, faith by the same Spirit, gifts of healings by the same Spirit, working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, different kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. One and the same Spirit works all these things distributing to each one individually as He wills. Now, I want you to see that although the words “wisdom” and “knowledge” are used here, they do not refer simply to the normative gifts of wisdom and knowledge that we have today. They were the extraordinary gifts given to the Apostles and prophets of that day to impart the wisdom of the gospel and what would eventually become the written word of God. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13: 2 – “And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.” And if you look back at 1 Corinthians 2, verse 6 you will see another example of this: “However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing.” “But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory.”

The same goes for the gift of faith. Every Christian has the grace (the *χαρις*) of faith, but not every Christian has the gift (the *χαρισματα*) of faith. “If I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains”... This is a revelatory gift. There is the revelatory gift of faith, and there is the indwelling spiritual principle of faith which all believers have. Turn with me over to Mark 11: 22. We are to exercise the faith that we have. “So Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Have faith in God.’ “For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea, and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says.’ “Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them and you will have them.” These verses incorporate both the principle of faith, which is in every believer, and the gift of faith which is specific to only certain believers, the more dramatic examples of this gift taking place in the lives and ministry of the Apostles. I think of Peter’s walking on the water with Jesus. But in **Mark 16: 17** some of the revelatory gifts were given generally, to those who believed, in that day. “And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents, and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover. As we continue on down the list we

can see that the same is true of the gift of discerning of spirits. Every Christian should strive for true discernment of what another person is saying, whether it is doctrinally true or not; or whether the person that they were speaking to was telling the truth. But in that day there was a gift that permitted the Apostles and prophets to do this very thing. The best examples are Ananias and Saphira, and also Simon the sorcerer, both of them dealt with by the Apostle Peter; their lies and hypocrisy were discerned and they were dealt with directly according to God's desire in relation to them. (Acts 5: 1-11 and Acts 8: 18-24) Gifts of healings and the working of miracles also fall into this same category. They were ministered as revelatory gifts in the time of the Early Church, and then ceased afterwards. This does not mean that God does not heal people nowadays. But it means that the gift being exercised by a person; and apostle or prophet or even a deacon in that day, does not exist today, contrary to the many examples of people who try to make it appear that they do have this gift. Again prayer for the sick, and even laying hands on them and anointing them with oil; these things may be very desirable and they can be engaged in, but the healing if it comes, it comes from God directly to them, not through a believer's supposed extraordinary gift. I believe that this has been true in all the generations since the Early Church, and it will be even to the end of the world. Jonathan Edward's writing on this subject is particularly good. In his treatise "Charity and its Fruits, P. 362, he says: "When the Christian church first began after Christ's ascension, that was the infancy of the church, and then it needed miracles and prophecies to establish it. But being once established, and the canon of Scripture completed, they ceased." "Which by the Apostle's arguing shows the imperfection of them, and how much inferior they are to the influence of the spirit of God in divine love." "Why therefore should we expect that they should be restored again when the church is come, as it were, to the stature of a man?" "See what the Apostle says in the eleventh verse, 'When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.'" "The Apostle seems to call these gifts of prophecy and working miracles childish things in comparison with that nobler fruit of the Spirit, divine love." (End of quote)

Now, one of the reasons that I believe that the revelatory gifts have ceased is because you do not find these same gifts listed in the list of gifts which are mentioned in the book of Romans, chapter 12. We have seen that there were spiritual gifts which were revelatory, fully listed in 1st Corinthians alone, and then there were gifts mentioned by the Apostle Paul here, which were meant to be understood as being used both before and after the Scriptures were canonized. I am referring to these gifts as the "normative" gifts; the spiritual gifts which have been given to the Church which existed during the time of the revelatory gifts, but which alone would continue to exist after the revelatory gifts had ceased. You can see them listed for us if you will turn over with me to Romans 12, verses 3-16. "For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. 4 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. 6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; 7 or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; 8 he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. 9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. 10 Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; 11 not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; 12 rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; 13 distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. 16 Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble.”

The whole emphasis of these gifts, as they are listed, is to show the church at Rome, and ourselves in our generation, the great importance of love and thoughtfulness of each individual believer in the body of Christ, in each local church. There is no need of regulation of these gifts, as before took place, in relation to the church at Corinth. In fact, the only indication here of a revelatory gift is the mention of the gift of prophecy, and Paul does so with the words, “Let us prophesy according to the proportion of our faith”. I believe that in this context this does not so much seem to indicate a revelatory gift being used, but what would come to be the true use of the teaching and preaching gift given by the Holy Spirit throughout the rest of the Church age; that is, a man’s ministering the word of God in the public assembly, according to the proportion of his faith. Rather than his speaking of direct revelation from God or fore-telling of what would happen in future, it seems to be referring to the preaching and teaching of the Old Testament Scriptures and whatever New Testament Scriptures existed at that time, according to what those persons had learned by the Spirit of God’s regular illumination to their minds. Whatever New Testament books of the Bible which were in existence and distributed at Scriptures at that time would also apply. The revelatory gifts evidently were not as much needed at Rome as at Corinth, according to the Holy Spirit’s distribution of them. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians was written by Paul somewhere from about 56-60 A.D., and Romans in 61 A.D. It seems apparent that a good portion of the knowledge which had been written down, or would be written down, was by this time known and being communicated to the churches which the Apostles Paul and Peter and John had established. Almost all that was related to gender roles and responsibilities and the use of the revelatory gifts was communicated to the church of Corinth in writing by the Apostle Paul. 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians has nothing on the subject of gifts, and it was written a year or so after the first letter.

In thinking about the normative gifts that are listed here, we can see what gifts both men and women may be given by the Holy Spirit, and use, in the context of the local church. Each Christian will have at least one of these gifts. There are 7 of them. **Prophecy** - An authoritative word of God in relation to the Scriptures, which in this context, seems directly to be given by the Holy Spirit to those who are, or who are in the process of becoming, the pastors and elders of the local church. This gift has particular application to the formal public teaching and preaching of the word of God in the worship services of the church); **Ministry** (that is, those who have a gift to exercise in the formal and informal counseling ministries of the church; which also involves the coordinating of ministries of serving in the body of Christ by ruling elders and deacons); **Teaching** - Which would be imparting of the knowledge of doctrinal and practical instructions on the promises of God which are to be believed, and precepts and principles of the word of God to be received by all disciples; which I believe, is being distinguished from the formal preaching and teaching in worship, and would include teaching on all levels; adults and young people and children. Both men and women would be given this gift by the Holy Spirit, and it would be used appropriately by women to women and children, but not over men. **Exhortation** (this would go hand in hand with the former gift and involve not only the didactic imparting of the knowledge of the doctrines of the Scriptures, but also giving an authoritative practical applications of truth as to what should be done by the disciple or learner of the truth of the Scriptures in relation to the commandments of God), **Giving** - This refers to people who have been given a gift to give of themselves and their resources; and by the leading of the Holy Spirit are always on the look-out to see how they might help in this wonderful way, context of the local church, and also outside of the local church to other churches and people in

need. **Leading** – Those men (and women appropriately using their gift in submission to their husband and the male leadership of the church) who are given a gift to take the initiative spiritually-speaking and practically speaking to do good things and to lead others into doing good things and thereby fulfilling what is commanded in the word of God. This gift would be used, not in a selfish or insensitive or unloving way, but out of love to Christ and with a great desire for the highest welfare and usefulness of each member in the body of Christ. **Mercy** - A gift spiritually given, and bestowed by the Holy Spirit upon certain particular people, that they would have the ability to tenderly and sensitively minister to people in physical or spiritual need.

Now, I hope that you can see that there is here a whole different tenor to the nature of these normative gifts which is set forth for us here in the book of Romans, than what we see in Chapter 12 of 1 Corinthians. The emphasis is not so much upon the revelation of knowledge as it is upon helping others to understand and do according to what had already been revealed. Even prophecy, although it leads the list here, is not mentioned in its full revelatory glory, but the person having that speaking gift would use it in proportion to their faith; in proportion to their ability to understand what had already been revealed in Scripture, and what would be needed to bring out the truth of the doctrine already given to the church by the Apostle Paul, in both spoken and written form. The gifts of ministry, of teaching, of exhortation, of giving, of leading, of mercy, are all mentioned here; notice that they were never mentioned in the book of 1st Corinthians. These are the gifts which exist today; prophecy in the sense of speaking to men from what already has been revealed and inscripturated; speaking edification, exhortation, and comfort from the doctrines and truths already given by the apostles and prophets. No mention of tongues here in the book of Romans at all. No mention of the gifts of miracles; everything related to helpfulness and love in the body of Christ. This was to become the norm for the rest of the Church Age until Christ appears.