

Chapter 2

SPIRITUAL GIFTS IN THE NORMAL LOCAL CHURCH

In I Peter 4:7-12, Ephesians 4:7-16 and Romans 12:1-8, the subject of spiritual gifts is presented in such a manner that it appears to have been a familiar and normal reality in the Christian community of the first century. In each instance, the discussion is couched within a wider context of ecclesiastical relationships. And in each, every Christian believer is assumed to be gifted, for that fact is simply stated without argument or proof. This chapter is divided into three sections, each examining spiritual gifts within the contexts of the above three New Testament passages.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS IN I PETER 4:7-11

Peter's first Epistle deals with Christian salvation and its widest ramifications. It covers the nature of salvation (chapters 1-2), the implications for Christian relationships (2-3), the applications to suffering and service (3-4), and the principles of Christian discipline (5). It is among other important instructions for the New Testament church life and service that Peter presents his discussion of spiritual gifts.

The Context

Christian salvation, in Peter's view, is not only an eternal decree (1:1-2), a past fact (3) and a future hope (3-4), but it is as well a present process (8) which ought to affect all of one's

relationships. Many of those who first read Peter's letter were beginning to suffer for their faith, and Peter has certain instructions for them. Harrison remarks that:

It is apparent that the major theme is suffering (i.e., suffering as Christians) and how to bear it triumphantly. No suggestion is found to the effect that suffering is meritorious. Nor is it inevitable (1:6). Rather, it is regulated by the will of God (4:19). At the same time it is not to be viewed as abnormal when it comes (4:12). Nor is it a mark of divine displeasure, for Christ himself suffered and died (3:18; 4:1). To share his sufferings is a privilege and a source of joy (4:13-14).¹

But all Christian suffering is only for a time. "The goal of all these things has come near," declares Peter in 4:7.

The personal life (7b). Verse 7 contains the only real command

The Text

The paragraph of I Peter 4:7-11 has three main thrusts: (1) the fact of an imminent end,² (2) the implication for the believer's behavior,³ and (3) the ultimate purpose for both.⁴ Both the Christian's personal life and his life with other Christians is affected.

The Imminency of the End (7a)

The end in view is more accurately the goal⁵ of the things which Peter has been talking about, namely Christian suffering.⁶ The purpose

¹Harrison, 373. ⁸Davidson, 1140.

²The perfect tense of ēggiken, "has come near" (cf. A & G, 212), implies that the end has, so to speak, come into view and may arrive at any moment. It is the next event in biblical eschatology. Cf. Rylie, Bib. Theol., 286.

³Inferential oun. ⁴Purposive hina.

⁵Telos. Cf. Gremer, 541; Lenski, en loc., 192.

⁶The anarthrous pantōn needs to be understood in its context of Christian suffering, especially in view of its emphatic position in the sentence. Contrast ta panta, "the existing things."

of all these things should be seen in view of the imminent coming of the Lord Jesus Christ with salvation. This is no promise to the end of our troubles but "a challenge to watchfulness and irreproachable behaviour."⁷

The Implication for Believers (7b-11)

In view of the imminent coming of the Lord, then, certain things ought to characterize believers who have this hope. "Peter gives four lines of conduct to be observed."⁸ One is for the personal life, and the other three are in connection with fellow believers.

The personal life (7b). Verse 7 contains the only real command in the whole paragraph.⁹ Christians ought to remain free from emotional imbalance¹⁰ in spite of their sufferings, and to be well balanced and self-controlled.¹¹ This is to enable them to properly continue in full fellowship with God.¹² With this kind of a life of personal piety, one may then give his attention to the community interests described in verses 8, 9 and 10.¹³

The communal life (8-11). Three principal activities ought to characterize the lives of Christians who have a keen anticipation of

⁷Kelly, 117. ⁸Davidson, 1140.

⁹The imperative mood occurs only in verse 7. Verses 8, 9 and 10 contain participles subordinate to these imperatives.

¹⁰On soyaneuo see A & G, 438. ¹¹Ibid., 540 on nepho.

¹²The plural "prayers" often refers to "the whole Christian worship" (Lanski, *op. loc.*, 193).

¹³See note 9. These verses contain circumstantial participles, indicating the behavior consistent with the commands of verse 7.

their Lord's return. These are tolerant love, patient hospitality and ministries of their spiritual gifts. And the greatest of these is love.

Tolerant love (8). The superiority of love is prominent in this passage as underscored by the phrase "above all,"¹⁴ the characteristic Christian emphasis.¹⁵ The activities of hospitality and gift ministries presuppose the cultivation of love on the part of believers, especially for their fellow Christians. Spiritual gifts will not be properly exercised for the good of someone towards whom we harbor any ill-will. Love, then, is the principal manifestation of a life in fellowship with God.

Patient hospitality (9). Hospitality is to be friendly to strangers. Here it is a reciprocal action of Christians towards Christians. The strangers among Christians are those who travel from place to place for the Word of God.

In early Christian times, the virtue of hospitality was highly prized, partly as a concrete expression of the love which looked upon all the brethren as members of one great family; and partly as the necessary means of providing for the ministry of apostles, prophets, evangelists and teachers as they went from place to place on their mission to the churches¹⁶

Grumbling should be avoided, even though some might, seemingly, overstay their welcome.

Spiritual gifts (10-11). A gifts ministry is the responsibility of every believer, for none is ungifted.¹⁷ The exercise of gifts must

¹⁴A.T.R., 622. ¹⁵Bear, 158. ¹⁶Ibid., 159.

¹⁷The aorist verb tense seems to imply that all received gifts at some point in the past, presumably when they received the grace of God. See the discussion on Ephesians 4:7. The singular *charisma* could mean "a (single) gift," but the anarthrous construction tells us little more than that gifts are by nature charismatic.

be towards other Christians; they are not for one's personal use or for outsiders.¹⁸ Furthermore, it is within the area of his own particular charisma that one's ministry should be exercised.¹⁹ No Christian is left with no necessity of fellowship with others of like faith, and "there is none so poor as to be unable to serve his neighbor with some gift."²⁰

The connection of gifts with grace is two-fold in verse 10. First, the very word charisma implies that it comes from grace, charis.²¹ Second, the person who has received a charisma is a steward of God's manifold charis. That there is great variation in gifts is evident from the word "manifold." That is to say, "the grace of God manifests itself in different ways."²² Now regardless of the nature of a person's particular spiritual gift, he is nonetheless responsible to God to use that gift. "It is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy" (I Corinthians 4:2).

Two discernable kinds of gifts ministries seem to have been present in the Apostle Peter's mind.²³ In the case of his intended

¹⁸The phrase "ministering (the) same towards yourselves" seems to place this restriction on the use of gifts, in this context.

¹⁹The pronoun auto is strongly demonstrative, pointing back to the neuter charisma.

²⁰Lange, *en loc.*, 78.

²¹The -ma termination on charisma indicates some kind of a cause-and-effect relation with charis. See A.T.R., 151, 153. This is the sole occurrence of charisma in Peter's writings. It is probably safe to assume at this point that Peter is building upon Paul's theology, for which he had great respect (cf. II Peter 3:14-16).

²²A & C, 690, on poikilos.

²³The first class conditions imply that there are both those who speak and those who serve. Although these are not grammatically two absolute, exclusive categories, none others are here mentioned, and these do accord with those in Romans 12:6-7.

reading audience, spiritual gifts could be thought of as either (1) those used in speaking and (2) those used in serving. Both kinds are for serving each other (verse 10), but in verse 11 the serving gifts are those which are not principally connected with speaking.²⁴ Each kind of gifts ministry is regulated. If any one speaks, he must be careful to speak only the Word of God.²⁵ If any one serves, his charisma operates only wherein God supplies the necessary strength. Gifts ministries are thus never matters of human wisdom or knowledge nor of human abilities.²⁶

The Implication for God's Glory (12)

Although the return of Jesus Christ shall bring glory to God,²⁷ believers may bring glory to God even now by their life of fellowship with Him and of practical love, including gift ministries. The noblest of all aims, the glory of God, is the regulating principle for the use of our spiritual gifts.

Summary

In view of the imminent return of their Lord with salvation from all present ills, Christian believers are enjoined to maintain a

²⁴The same verb, diakoneo, is used in both verses, in a more restricted sense in verse 11 where it is contrasted to speaking.

²⁵Just as logia were the very "oracular responses of heathen deities" (Vincent, 622-3), so the logia theou must be the historical manifestations of the logos tou theou (cf. Gremer, 397).

²⁶Natural talents seem to be excluded from the class of charismata in this passage.

²⁷Christ is the agent (dia + gen.) for glorifying God. The glory already belongs to Christ, for the verb estin precludes taking its clause as a doxology; it is rather a statement of fact.

stable life of fellowship with God. This life should be conducted towards fellow Christians in three respects, in love, the most important, in hospitality, and in ministering their spiritual gifts towards one another. Gifts are from the grace of God for which all are responsible. These gifts may be viewed as involving either speaking the Word of God or serving by His strength. Through all of these things, God may be glorified.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS IN EPHESIANS 4:1-16

Ephesians chapter four is the point at which this great epistle about the church swings from the doctrinal teachings to the practical applications. But Paul's applications here, as usual, contain much additional teachings. The matter of our spiritual gifts is couched within a concern for practical Christian unity.

The Context

The Epistle to the Ephesians presents the nature and life of the Christian church in two great thrusts. The first is the doctrinal section (chapters 1-3), dealing with benefits of our position in Christ and the ministry of the church in the world; the second is the practical section (chapters 4-6), clarifying the principles of unity in diversity, of separation, and of subjection.²⁸ In chapter four, the fact of the unity which all believers have²⁹ is used to show how Christians should keep working together, even though they have such differing abilities and gifts.

²⁸Cf. Gutheris, II:136-9. ²⁹Cf. Hendricksen, 161.

Some important words and phrases are used in chapter 3 which occur in the text of chapter 4:1-16. At 3:2, the Apostle spoke of "the stewardship of the grace of God which was given to me for you." This sets the theme of "grace given" in connection with personal stewardship and responsibility (cp. I Peter 4:11). In 3:7 this grace given is viewed as a gift (dorea) which constitutes one a "minister," forms of words found again in chapter 4. Thus, it appears, by using his own ministry as an example of gift, the Apostle has prepared his readers to consider themselves in the same terms.

The Text

An exhortation to practical Christian unity in verses 1-6 is followed up immediately with an explanation of how it works in 7-16. The spiritual gifts which all have received provide the many ministries needed in order to meet the needs of all Christians.

The Exhortation to Fractical Unity (4-6)

All Christians are urged³⁰ to live in a manner which is worthy of that to which God has called them. This includes both the appropriate kinds of behavior (verse 2) and a definite goal to keep (3). Christian unity then is tied in with each person coming to an understanding of his calling. His calling is to realize his oneness with other Christians in a practical way. Peaceful, harmonious relationships should bind Christians in such a manner so as to be a living expression of the Spiritual unity which is theirs.³¹ Believers hold so many things in common already that their unity should be obvious (4-6).

³⁰ Parakaleo.

³¹ En + loc.

The Explanation of Practical Unity (7-16)

Just how each individual believer contributes to the practical unity of all is not really the same for everyone. There are always differences of ability and interest as well as of background. Part of the explanation of the diversity among believers is the different way in which all have been gifted by Jesus Christ. Thus the unity of Christians must involve a proper understanding of their God-given diversity.

Gifts of grace (7-10). Grace has been given³² to all Christians without exception.³³ So no believer need feel inferior in this regard. And that grace was not given indiscriminately; Christ knew exactly what He wanted each to have. A very careful standard³⁴ was employed for measuring out the grace. This standard was Christ's gift to each believer.³⁵ That is to say, the spiritual gift (dōrea) which Jesus Christ gave³⁶ to each believer is what determined the grace which he received. Grace and gifts go together.³⁷

³²The tense implies that this is a past fact for all believers, "when each took his place in the body" (Westcott, 60).

³³"Each one" ekastos occurs in all four of the principal passages on spiritual gifts.

³⁴The primary meaning of metron is "that which is used for measuring" (Abbott-Smith, 289).

³⁵The appositional genitive as in Romans 12:3. Cf. Foulkes, 114. These words suggest the Lord's portioning out, in His wisdom, different kinds of gifts to different members. Both the words measure and grace are used with the meaning they have in Romans xii. 3-8"

³⁶The subjective genitive "of Christ" is confirmed by the quotation of Psalms 68:18 as a giving of gifts by the Lord.

³⁷Compare the connection of dōrea and charis in Romans 5:15b. Grace always contains a gift (dōrea); this is parallel to the free gift (charisma) in 15a.

An Old Testament illustration³⁸ is taken from Psalms 68:18.

The giving of gifts is in connection with ascension and descension. Christ too has descended and ascended, i.e., He has spread His influence throughout the entire creation and above it. All this was for the purpose of gaining the control over all things. Jesus Christ, the giver of gifts, remains the sovereign Lord of all gifted men, of all Christian believers.

Gifted men (11-16). In order to maintain the control over Christians with their varying gifts as they work together in unity, Jesus Christ has made another provision as well. Besides the gifts He gave to men, He also⁴⁰ gave gifted men who have specialized tasks in respect to the whole body of believers. These men⁴¹ have certain specialized tasks with the aim⁴² of equipping the saints (each of whom is gifted) with the further purpose⁴³ of the saints being able to minister (with their gifts), all with the goal of building up the body in its full unity.

³⁸"Therefore" dio is an inductive inferential conjunction. The connection between verses 7 and 8 is not necessarily one of literal eschatological fulfillment, but of an illustration of the truths of ascension and giving of gifts. Cf. Salmon, 323.

³⁹The gifts here are domata. But the several nouns based on the root do- appear to be virtually synonymous in the New Testament.

⁴⁰The kai indicates a thought parallel to and in addition to that of verse 7. Furthermore, the autos is emphatic here. Cf. Lenski, on loc., 523.

⁴¹The terms in New Testament Scripture seem to require definite qualifications for membership in each class. They are not simply offices which can be filled by someones of any gifts.

⁴²Pros + acc., here the more immediate aim.

⁴³Eis + acc. of purpose.

These men are the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers.⁴⁴

Summary

All believers share a spiritual unity which is evidenced by their common faith. They are exhorted to conform their practical relations with one another to that spiritual unity. But with that essential unity, there are definite distinctions between believers; the gifts given to them by Jesus Christ results in great diversity. In order to maintain unity within this diversity, Christ also gave gifted men who train the believers to use their gifts in ministries which benefit everyone.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS IN ROMANS 12:1-8

The great Epistle of Paul to the Romans is not without its instructions regarding spiritual gifts. The apostle's treatise on the righteousness of God is concerned with all of the most important aspects of the spiritual life. The spiritual gifts are discussed among many of the Christians general duties.

The Context

The Epistle to the Romans seems to have four main sections. These are doctrinal teachings on sin and justification (chapters 1-4), the applications to the practical spiritual life (5-9), the historical

⁴⁴The generic definite article occurs with the plural nouns, specifying these as distinct classes of men. The pastors and teachers, however, are governed by the same article, which gives these two a greater affinity, either as the same men or as different men with closely related ministries (cp. Acts 15:1 and 4).

problem of Israel (9-11), and the consequent exhortations (12-16).

The section on practical exhortations concerns the three areas of general duties (chapter 12), civic duties (13), and the problem of Christian liberty (14-15).

Spiritual gifts, then, are considered as part of the believer's ordinary obligations. But they can be properly understood and put to practice only by those who have made Romans 12:1-2 part of their lives. Only the Christian who has fully dedicated himself to God and who is being renewed in his mind can use his spiritual gift properly.

The Text

The explanation of what 12:1-2 means to a Christian's understanding of himself is found in verses 3-8.⁴⁵ Right thinking about God leads to right thinking about ourselves and about other Christians. It is the one who is being "transformed by the renewing of his mind" who is now told to "think so as to have sound judgment."

The Exhortation to Right Thinking (1-2)

It is in view of the great mercies of God as displayed in chapters 1-11⁴⁶ that the Apostle calls upon believers to dedicate their bodies to God and to be renewed in their thinking to do the will of God. This general exhortation in verses 1-2 is further discussed in 3-8 by way of explanation.

⁴⁵The gar here in verse three appears to be explanatory.

⁴⁶The inferential oun apparently comprehends the entirety of the preceding chapters 1-11.

The Explanation of Right Thinking (3-8)

The call for renewal of one's mind involves coming to a sound estimation of one's self. This truth is brought out in verse 3 and is then illustrated in verses 4-8. We are to evaluate ourselves as to how we fit in with other believers in making up the body of Christ.

The principle of humility (3). Paul speaks by virtue of his apostolic authority⁴⁷ which was the particular grace (charis) given to him (Romans 1:5). This grace gave him the official authority⁴⁸ to enunciate divine truths to the church as a whole.

It is not merely a question of the spiritual progress of the individual, for when St. Paul is speaking of that he uses exhortation (ver. 1), both of the discipline and order of the community; this is a subject⁴⁹ which demands the exercise of authority as well as of admonition.

There are two wrong extremes which Christians are to avoid. One is to think too highly of himself. The other is to refrain from forming an high enough estimation. Both of these extremes should be avoided, for every believer is required⁵⁰ to think rightly about himself. One must rather keep his mind set⁵¹ on the purpose of eventually coming⁵² to an "humble and sober assessment"⁵³ of himself.

⁴⁷ A valid rendering of dia + gen. Blass-DeBruaner, 119.

⁴⁸ Godet, 429. ⁴⁹ Sanday & Headlam, 355. msc. A & G, 505.

⁵⁰ Dei + inf. = "binding obligation."

⁵¹ The infinitive is in the present tense. msc. BHS, VIII:350.

⁵² Eis here with the acc. is the common construction for the expression of purpose. Thus one may count it an holy ambition to enter into a venture of discovery with his Lord.

⁵³ Murray, II:117.

Accurate measurements require a reliable and acceptable standard or rule of measure. Each Christian has been assigned⁵⁴ the same one. This is the "measure of faith."⁵⁵ That is to say, faith is the measure, the standard by which to make our self-evaluations.⁵⁶ The measure is not an amount, how much faith one has; it is the rule⁵⁷ by which he understands things. We measure not by sight but by that which we believe from what God has revealed. This involves recognizing what the body of Christ is.

The practice of humility (4-8). The proper place of service to God by the person who is dedicated to God is among fellow believers. Together we are all called the body of Christ. Now just as the human body has diverse functions but remains a functional unity (4), likewise⁵⁸ we the Body (5). Each person must come to recognize how he fits into the body and what his individual functions should be.

The body of man (4). Two observations need to be made from how the human body works. First, the body is a functional unity, that is, the many parts cooperate for the benefit of all. Second, each individual part has a distinctly different function⁵⁹ and there is no function which all have exactly alike. The implications should be clear.

⁵⁴Merizo carries no necessary partitive sense. A & G, 505.

⁵⁵Hos, "as, according as," makes this connection.

⁵⁶The appositional genitive. See Granfield, NTG, VIII:350.

⁵⁷The primary meaning of metron. L & S, 1123.

⁵⁸Correlative houtos. A.T.R., 967.

⁵⁹Praxis, A & G, 704.

The organization of the human body should be an example to the believer to make him perceive the necessity of limiting himself to the function assigned him. Not only, indeed, is there a plurality of members in one body, but these members possess special functions, varied capacities (ver. 4). So in the church which is the organ of Christ's life on the earth (His body), there is not only a multiplicity of members, but also a diversity of functions, every believer having a particular gift whereby he ought to become the auxiliary of all the rest, their member. Hence it follows that every one should remain in his function, on the one hand that he may be able to render to the rest the help which he owes them, on the other that he may not disturb these in the exercise of their gift.⁶⁰

according to the grace (charis) which every Christian receives when he

The body of Christ (5-8). The Christian community is at once a single entity, yet, obviously, many individual personalities,⁶¹ i.e., unity within diversity. The spiritual unity of believers stands as a fact; it needs only to be recognized and made our pattern for life and service. Barnhouse comments:

While it is true that each believer has the Holy Spirit dwelling within him, the primary meaning here is that the Holy Spirit is dwelling in the collective body of believers; that it takes all of us to make up this mystic body; that every member of the body of Christ needs every other member, and that we must recognize and seek to manifest and maintain our oneness.⁶²

Three main truths are brought out in verses 4-8 concerning the body-life of the church.⁶³ The first is the fact of our unity, the

⁶⁰ Godet, 430.

⁶¹ Hoi polloi, "which is very rare in the New Testament, means the well-known many . . . in marked contrast with unity" (Winer, 136-7).

⁶² Barnhouse, 38.

⁶³ The conjunctions de . . . de in verses 5b and 6a tie the three clauses into a parallel construction. The same verb esmen can be understood with all three. The participle echontes is thus paraphrastic as is probably the case with most if not all instances of participles as the sole verbal of a clause in the New Testament (cf. Moulton, III:343), and it is neither an anacoluthon nor an irregularity (Lenski, *in loc.*, 758). Thus it should be punctuated with a stop and not a full stop. Thus verses 4-8 are a single, extended sentence. See the grammatical diagram in the Appendices.

second is how we are members of one another, and the third is how each member of the body has his particular gift.

Different people in the church have been given different gifts, but all are equally necessary to the perfect functioning of the whole church. Therefore one person or group has no right to look down on another part of the church. There should be no cliques in a church.⁶⁴

Each person possesses a different spiritual gift (charisma) according to the grace (charis) which every Christian receives when he believes.⁶⁵ The truly humble, dedicated man understands by faith that all that he is in Christ is by God's grace. His gift therefore becomes his evaluation of himself among fellow Christians.

The list of gifts given in verses 6-8 can be classified rather simply.⁶⁶ There are first mentioned the two kinds of gifts, the prophetic (or speaking) kind and the service (or non-speaking) kind. (Compare here I Peter 4:11). Then five examples of gifts are given in

⁶⁴Hamilton, 203.

⁶⁵The aorist tense of the ptc. "given" implies antecedence, and the meaning of the verb suggests a point in time as does the tense.

⁶⁶ Lenski, en loc., 760, notes, "The four (elite), two with accusatives (impersonal), two with participles (personal), show the first variation and prepare for the following variations." Concerning prophecy and service, note (1) both terms are abstract, (2) both are anarthrous, emphasizing quality sooner than identity, and (3) both are in the accusative case as appositives to charismata, the object of the ptc. "having." The other five terms are (1) active masculine participles, denoting persons by virtue of their activity, (2) articular, emphasizing individual identity, and (3) in the nominative case in apposition to "the many" the subject of the same ptc. Thus those with the specified gifted ministries have charismata whether of a prophetic kind or of a service kind. The participles are further distinguished by two occurring with elite and the following three having greater affinity by means of asyndeton.

The gifts were already said to be different (verse 6). The en phrases each list the gift with which it occurs in a definite sphere. And the anarthrous articles with their demonstrative force refer to the ministries of the particular gifts.

terms of the activities involved.⁶⁷ Two prophetic gifts are teaching and exhorting; three service gifts are giving, leading, and showing mercy.

Certain regulations are given with each gift as befitting it in the body. Prophetic gifts must all be exercised according to an objective standard.⁶⁸ It must be in accordance⁶⁹ with those things which can be surely believed⁷⁰ (which in I Corinthians 14:37-38 includes New Testament Scripture). It is only within "the proportion of the faith" that these gifts are given. If someone speaks he is gifted only within the particular lines of service given.⁷¹

Those with service gifts are further regulated according to the attitudes which each must manifest in his service. The giver must have unmixed motives, the leader much diligence, and the mercy shower obvious cheerfulness. All of these gifts might be charted together something like this:

⁶⁷Some wish to view the list of seven as names of charismata, regarding the grammatical distinctions as "two different (though synonymous) constructions" (Winer, 722-3).

⁶⁸A common use of kata + acc.

⁶⁹This seems to be the idea of analogia whether it be translated proportion or analogy. See A & G, 56; L & S, 108, M & M, 108. For arguments either way, see Murray, II:122-3.

⁷⁰Literally "the faith." The whole construction is articular and definite. The possessive pronoun "his" does not occur. Whether this be taken as the common Christian Faith, perhaps as anaphoric to verse 3, or as the gifted man's own faith (they ought to be identical in content), Paul always assumes objective divine revelation, never some kind of subjective guess work. Prophets could and did, can and do err.

⁷¹The gifts were already said to be different (verse 6). The en phrases each limit the gift with which it occurs to a definite sphere. And the anaphoric articles with their demonstrative force refer to the ministries of the particular gifts.

Two kinds of gifts	PROPHECY According to the proportion of the faith		SERVICE In that (particular) ministry	
The gifted person and his sphere of operation	He who TEACHES	In that teaching ministry	He who GIVES	With singularity
	He who EXHORTS	In that exhortation ministry	He who LEADS	With diligence
			He who SHOWS MERCY	With cheerfulness

Summary

Christians are urged, upon apostolic authority, to gain an accurate evaluation of themselves in relation to God and to other believers. The standard of measurement for all Christians alike is faith, a recognition of one's place within the body of Christ. This involves discerning our essential unity, counting ourselves to be each other's members, and recognizing that each one has been specially gifted in some area of Christian service. Thus each believer is to concentrate within his gifted ministry in fellowship with the other members of the body of Christ.

SUMMARY

These three passages of Scripture in I Peter, in Ephesians and in Romans appear to present the doctrine of spiritual gifts as an expected reality within normal Christian communities. In all three passages "each one," that is every believer, is spiritually gifted and is therefore a functioning member of the local Body. Gifts are seen to be of two sorts, prophetic (speaking) and ministerial (serving). And there are several related concepts, including, grace, gift, stewardship, ministry and vocation.

stewardship, ministry and variation. In Chapter Three, attention is turned to a discussion of gifts in the context of a more abnormal local church, that at Corinth. There the above concepts as well as others will lend to further precision of the doctrine of spiritual gifts.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS IN THE ABNORMAL LOCAL CHURCH

The preceding chapter attempted to analyze something of the place of spiritual gifts in the normal local church. For in the passages therein examined, gifts were viewed as an integral facet of the on-going church life. But in turning now to I Corinthians 12-14, we have before us a somewhat different situation. At Corinth, the nature and purpose of spiritual gifts was largely being ignored, requiring that the Apostle Paul spell out in great detail how gifts can be abused and what are the correctives for the abuse of spiritual gifts. Thus what was a misfortune for the church at Corinth affords to the reader of this Epistle a valuable insight into the whole subject of gifts and the essential life of a local Christian assembly. Findlay relates:

This Epistle discloses the interior life of an apostolic Church; hence its surpassing historical interest. We must not, indeed, apply its data without qualification to contemporary Christian societies, even those of Gentile origin. The Corinthian Church presented material of unusual richness, but intractable to the founder's hand. Its turbulence and party heat are unparalleled in the N.T. records. But while the Church life here portrayed was exceptional in some features, and Paul's policy at Corinth may have differed from that pursued elsewhere, this Epistle is peculiarly full in its teaching on the nature and rights of the Church, and in the light it throws upon the conditions under which the first Gentile-Christian assemblies were moulded. Chaps. xii. and xiii. are the true centre of the Epistle. The very formlessness of this Church, its rudimentary and protoplasmic state, reveals the essence of the Christian society, its substratum and vital tissue, as these can hardly be seen in a more developed and furnished condition. The Apostle Paul is contending for the bare life of the Church of God in Corinth.