



# GLORY of CHRIST FELLOWSHIP

## THOUGHTS ON SPIRITUAL GIFTS PASTOR CHARLIE HANDREN SPRING 2010

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### LEXICAL DEFINITIONS:

Working Definition: A spiritual gift is a supernatural enabling that derives from the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, given to every born-again believer, for the glory of God, the building up of the body of Christ, and the joy of the soul.

πνευματικός (*pneumatikos*): derives from πνευμα (*pneuma*, i.e., spirit)—one who is spiritual; that which is of or from the Spirit (sometimes used as a substantive so that words like “gifts, blessings, or things” are implied).

χαρισμα (*charisma*): derives from χαρις (*charis*, i.e., grace or gift)—a gift or favor which is given freely, generously, and graciously.

## NOTES ON VARIOUS RELEVANT TEXTS:

### Romans 1:11-12

Though they ultimately derive from the Spirit, spiritual gifts can be imparted from one believer to another. The purpose of impartation is mutual encouragement, that is, the building up of the body, and the means of impartation is faith. That is, as one walks in the Spirit by faith, the Spirit gifts that one so that he can share with others and build them up in their faith. I cannot grant the gift of tongues, but if I share a key insight that the Spirit has given me through the Scripture I am “imparting some spiritual gift” to another. I cannot grant the gift of teaching, but if the Spirit has given me the gift of prophecy I may be the means through which the Spirit grants that gift to another (see notes on 1 Tim 4:14).

### 1 Corinthians 1:4-9

1. The manifestation of the gifts among the Corinthians was a cause for thanksgiving in Paul’s life. They needed the instruction that he would give them in 12-14, but he rejoiced in the presence of these gifts nonetheless.
2. Being enriched “in speech and knowledge” (v. 5) precedes and provides the basis for the manifestation of the gifts. The “so that” in verse 7 implies the logical relationship, A caused B, and B is the visible confirmation of A. Without A there is no B, that is, without being enriched in the speech and knowledge of the gospel, there is no manifestation of spiritual gifts.

This is such a blessed insight in light of the modern tension between those who excel in knowledge but suppress the gifts, and those who let loose the gifts but disdain knowledge. We must have both. It is as Jonathan Edwards said, light produces heat. Knowledge acquired by means of the Spirit produces gifts given by the Spirit. And this for the glory of God and the up-building of the church, as we see more clearly elsewhere.

### 1 Corinthians 7:7

In this text, Paul refers to both marriage and singleness as “gifts from God.” Thus, we should not be quick to limit the term “spiritual gifts” to those manifestations we often associate with the term. God gives many different kinds of gifts that derive from our relation to the Spirit and thus are properly called “spiritual gifts.”

### Ephesians 1:3-14

What an amazing statement in verse 3! That God has blessed us—past tense—“with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,” meaning our predestination and election and sanctification, according to the purposes of God and for the glory of God. Indeed, this is the *summa pneumatikos*, the preeminent spiritual gift. All other gifts are simply an overflow, an expression of the inexpressible love of God in Christ for us that is beaming into and through our lives. It is vital, therefore, that we train ourselves not to be so enamored of the lesser gifts that we neglect to see the glory of the greatest gift.

### 1 Timothy 4:14 & 2 Timothy 1:6

1. As the elders of the church laid their hands on Timothy, there was imparted to Timothy a spiritual gift by means of prophecy. In other words, the Spirit used the gift of prophecy in one believer to impart the gift of teaching to another believer (I am assuming from the context that the gift given to Timothy was teaching). I think it is safe to say, then, that spiritual gifts are usually imparted by the Holy Spirit through the church for the up-building of the church. I say “usually” because I don’t think this or any other text warrants an overstatement of this general principle, but I do think that it and others display the principle.

2. From both of these texts we see that the gifts of the Spirit can be neglected, and that this is sin. Thus, Paul commands Timothy, and us by implication, to practice these things, devote yourself to them, keep a close watch on yourself and your teaching, persist in this, fan into flame the gift of God. I infer from these positive commands that the Spirit does not always give gifts that are fully developed, but rather He plants them in our lives and we must care for and nourish and exercise them. If we do not, the gifts wither. But if we do, they flourish for the glory of God and the good of others. He gives us the coals and the logs and the power and the desire to fan them into flame, but we must fan them indeed.

#### Hebrews 2:1-4

One of the main functions of spiritual gifts is that they are a God-given means of testifying to the truthfulness of the gospel. By them, God Himself bears witness that His words are true, and He does this in any way that pleases Him, that is, He distributes the gifts as He wills. (The relationship between the preaching of the gospel and signs, wonders, and gifts as confirming signs is strongly attested in the NT. See Acts 2:22, 2:43: 4:29-30, 8:6, 14:3, 15:12, Romans 5:18-19.)

#### 1 Peter 2:4-12

The progression of this text helps us to understand the ultimate purpose of spiritual gifts. Its logic flows as follows: (1) we are being built up as a spiritual house (2) in order to be a holy & royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession who offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, (3) *so that* we "may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."

Putting this together with other texts we can say this: the Holy Spirit imparts spiritual gifts to believers through the church, for the up-building of the church, so that we may proclaim the excellencies of God. Put another way, the ultimate purpose of spiritual gifts is the glory of God among the nations.

## NOTES ON ROMANS 12:3-8:

1. Humility of heart is the necessary condition for the free-flow and exercise of spiritual gifts. Humility of heart is like fertile soil in which the Holy Spirit can plant and grow spiritual gifts. Pride of heart is like poison that chokes out and kills those gifts. Or to use another metaphor, humility of heart is like a fire-pit ready to receive the coals and logs of spiritual gifting. Adding arrogance is like filling that fire-pit to the brim with water. Indeed, the banner over Romans 12:3-8 is this: humility of heart is necessary for spiritual gifts to flourish.
2. Humility is bred and grown “according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.” Faith is trust in God, and therefore as our vision of the reality of the greatness of God grows, so also our vision of the reality of our humble estate grows. It is only in the light of the glory of God that we perceive ourselves to be grass and flowers and vapor. There once was a hill that thought itself a mountain until it gazed upward and saw that it was sitting in the shadow of a 15,000-foot peak. In glimpsing that peak, it also gained a more proper view of itself. Likewise, as we grow in faith we grow in proper self-assessment, which is humility.
3. Another ground for humility is our unity in Christ. As individual believers, we are not islands unto ourselves, and our gifts are not given primarily for ourselves. When we see that God has gifted us in order to serve and build up the whole body—when we really see this—it gives rise to the humility that lays its life down for others, and it kills the pride that seeks to exalt itself above others. God has indeed granted various gifts to different members, but this divine distribution is for the good of the whole body not for the exaltation of any one member.
4. Given the context of humility, seven specific spiritual gifts are enumerated and coupled with seven other terms in this text. The key to understanding the relationship between each pair of terms is found in verse six: “Having gifts (χαρισματα) that differ according to (κατα) the grace (χαρις) given us...” This sentence yields the following formula: GIFTS => according to => GRACE, which means that grace is the basis for the gifts.

The grace given us is the inward calling of the Holy Spirit on our lives: some are called to have faith, others to serving or teaching or exhorting or generosity or zeal or cheerfulness. The spiritual gift that accords to each grace given is the outward expression of that grace that maximizes the benefit to the whole body of Christ. For example, some are called by the Holy Spirit to have great faith. The spiritual gift that maximizes the benefit of this calling for the whole body is prophecy, because prophecy says what faith sees. Prophecy displays what faith discerns.

Thus, the second term of each pair is the inward call of the Holy Spirit on the life of the believer, and the first term of each pair is the spiritual gift that maximizes the benefit of that calling for the whole church. The reason the relationship between the two terms flows this way and not the other, is that at the end of verse 6 the same linking word is used between prophecy and faith as was used between gifts and grace:

GIFTS=> according to (κατα) => GRACE

PROPHECY => according to (κατα) => FAITH

This implies that the relationship between all the remaining terms is the same.

- (A) Prophecy and Faith: The word for “prophecy” is προφητεία (*propheteia*), and it is classically defined as “telling forth or foretelling the word of the Lord.” To “tell forth” the word of the Lord is to speak with power and clarity into a moment without the benefit of preparation for that

moment. An example of this is Peter's sermon in Acts 2. He observed the confusion and murmuring of the crowd as they heard the disciples speaking in various tongues, and moved by the Holy Spirit, he stood and spoke with great power and clarity into that moment. He didn't have time to prepare, he simply spoke with great effect. Of course, the prophet makes a life of studying and memorizing and meditating on the Word of God, and so in some sense he is always preparing. But the point is that he doesn't have the time to get ready for the moment, he simply speaks as he's led by the Spirit.

To "foretell" the word of God is to speak into the future with precision and conviction. An example of this is in Acts 21 where the prophet Agabus took Paul's belt and bound himself and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit: 'This is how the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the gentiles.'" They knew this word came from the Lord because what Agabus prophesied came to pass. (In another place, Paul says that the spirits of the prophets are subject to prophets, by which I think he means they are held accountable by each other, they are tested and approved, or disapproved, by each other.)

The word for "faith" is πιστεως (*pisteōs*), and it simply means "belief or trust." It is obvious, then, why prophecy accords with faith: prophecy is the revelation of the knowledge and wisdom of God for a particular moment or situation, and faith is the only means by which these things can be seen. And as I noted above, prophecy is the means by which the Holy Spirit displays what faith discovers.

We must be careful to note that when we prophesy in the church, we are not speaking the word of the Lord in the way that the biblical writers did. Jesus has revealed the Father to us ("Whoever has seen me, has seen the Father," John 14:9), and therefore, we have no need of additional inspired texts. But we do need what has been revealed to be applied to present situations in such a way that it glorifies God and transforms lives. Thus, when we prophesy it is more proper to say that we are applying what has already been revealed in a penetrating and powerful way that has been shown to us by the Holy Spirit. This holds true even of utterances that have to do with the future because they are not at all revealing aspects of God that were formerly concealed, rather they are simply granting wisdom and sight, by grace, so that the church can best serve and glorify God.

- (B) Service and Serving: The word behind both of these terms is διακονια (*diaconia*, from which we get the word "deacon") and it simply means "service or serving." It may seem odd that the grace given and the spiritual gift are the same, but with a little logic it makes perfect sense: if the inward grace from the Holy Spirit is a heart of service, then the outward gift that best corresponds to it is the ability to serve. The inward grace is a heart of service, the outward gift is the mental, emotional, and physical power to perform that grace over time.

What does it mean to have a spiritual gift of service? I think it means that one has the proper disposition (i.e., humility), God-given energy over time, and joy in serving. With regard to disposition, I've heard it said that if you think you have a servant's heart, pay attention to how you react when people treat you like one! Those with the spiritual gift of service will tend to react to such circumstances with humility and joy in the Holy Spirit.

- (C) One who Teaches and Teaching: The word here is διδασκαλος (*didaskolos*) which simply means "teaches or teaching." Again, a heart for teaching is the inward grace, and the ability to actually do it is the spiritual gift. The passion and ability to mine great riches from the Word of

God is the grace, the ability to explain those riches so that they build up the church is the spiritual gift.

At first I wondered why Paul didn't couple teaching with wisdom or knowledge, but then after a little thought I saw that the passion for teaching is the passion for wisdom and knowledge. And when the Holy Spirit gives this passion, it is more specifically the passion for the wisdom and knowledge of God. But by grace, the one gifted in this way goes one step further: his passion is to articulate what he sees so that lives are transformed by the awesome power of the Word of God! He loves information and inspiration, but his heart's cry is for transformation.

- (D) One who Exhorts and Exhortation: The word here is *παρακαλεω* (*parakaleō*), and its basic meaning is "to call alongside or summon." But its extended meaning is "to urge, exhort, or encourage, to request, implore, appeal to, or entreat." The quintessential example of this in the Bible is Barnabas. Acts 4:36-37 says this: "Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement [*παρακαλεω*]), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet."

Barnabas's gift was to see how the Lord had gifted others, to come alongside them, and help them draw it out. It might seem trite to say this, but the gift of encouragement is like the gift of coaching. A coach has the unique ability to draw out what he knows is already there, and to help equip where there is lack. Only in this case, the coach is also a player and the heart and skills he has are given by the Holy Spirit. Thus, we can say that the passion to exhort others is the inward grace, and the outward ability to do it is the spiritual gift.

- (E) One who Contributes and Generosity: The word for "one who contributes" is *μεταδιδωμι* (*metadidōmi*) and it means to give, impart, or share something with someone. It can have financial implications, but it is by no means restricted thereto. Rather, it refers to one who is always giving in a variety of ways.

The word for "generosity" is *απλοτητι* (*aploteti*) and it means simplicity, sincerity, uprightness, or purity of motive. Louw and Nida give a more expanded explanation: "the quality of sincerity as an expression of the singleness of purpose or motivation." The NASB translates the word "liberality," but in a footnote says, "Or, simplicity." That is because the only times this word is translated "generosity or liberality" is here and in 2 Corinthians 8:2, 9:11, and 13, where the context is, or is assumed to be, financial. But as Bauer says, "This sense is in dispute..."

Rather than building an understanding of it on a disputed translation, then, I think it better to find the meaning of this coupling in the normal sense of the word. It is not difficult to imagine the Holy Spirit giving someone an inward heart of sincerity and simplicity and purity toward others, and then gifting that person with the means necessary to express their heart. When the heart is in the right place, the giving is always glory to God. When the heart is mixed or wicked, no amount of outward goodness will glorify God, that is, except by grace.

In sum, I think we can view this gift as an unusual, God-given focus and purity of heart that displays itself in consistent and manifold acts of giving. The person with this gift, absolutely loves to give in a variety of ways, and his or her favorite text is, "Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing" (Matthew 6:3).

- (F) One who Leads and Zeal: the word for “one who leads” is προιστημι (*proistemi*) and it means “to be at the head, to rule or direct,” and also, “to be concerned about or care for.” Interesting juxtaposition of meanings. The word for “zeal” is σπουδη (*spoude*) and it means “eagerness, earnestness, diligence, or zeal.”

Thus, the inward grace is an eager, passionate spirit that is not easily discouraged in the face of conflicts, failures, difficulties, criticisms, obstacles, and the like. The outward spiritual gift that makes this inward grace of maximum benefit to the body of Christ is leadership. When a man is humble before God, when he has an indomitable spirit given to him by the Holy Spirit, and when he knows that the point of his leadership is the up-building of the church, his leadership ends up in the glory of God, the good of others, and the joy of his soul.

This calls to mind 1 Peter 5:1-4: “So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.”

- (G) One who Shows Mercy and Cheerfulness: The word for “one who shows mercy” is ελεος (*eleos*) and it means “mercy, compassion, pity, or clemency.” It always refers to an outward action, even if that action is depicted as coming from the heart. Conversely, it never speaks of a motive of heart without also implying outward action. This is why the word is translated “shows mercy.” The word for “cheerfulness” is ιλαροτητι (*ilaroteti*) and it means “cheerfulness, gladness, or graciousness.”

Thus, the inward grace is a sincere cheerfulness of heart that is rooted in the mercy of God and that will endure through the trials and storms of mercy-giving in the world. The outward expression of that cheer is an unusual and sustained ability to display mercy toward others. In Luke 7:47 Jesus said, “Whoever is forgiven little, loves little.” The opposite is also true: whoever is forgiven much, loves much. The one who is gifted in mercy has eyes to see that he has been the recipient of much mercy.

5. One final question: how do all these pairs of terms elucidate the thesis of this section, namely, that humility of heart is the necessary condition for the free-flow and exercise of spiritual gifts? I have three answers: (i) it takes humility of heart to see that our disposition and inward desires are owing to the grace of the Holy Spirit; (ii) it takes humility of heart to see that our outward abilities are also owing to the grace of the Holy Spirit; and (iii) it takes humility of heart to see that the point of our desires and abilities is not the exaltation of the self, but the up-building of the body of Christ for the glory of God.

## NOTES ON EPHESIANS 4:1-16:

Ephesians 4:1 is a turning point in the letter, from the explanation of great and glorious things about Christ and the church, to the application of those things. It may be, then, that the exhortation of 4:1 is built on the whole of Ephesians 1 – 3, and that it stands over the whole of Ephesians 4 – 6: “I, therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called...” Indeed, in the word “therefore” is contained the whole of Ephesians 1 – 3. It is as if Paul is saying, “Now that you have seen something of the greatness of who Christ is and the reality of who you are in Him, live your lives in light of these things. Live your lives according to the greatness of the glory of God and of the gospel, not according to the futility of the gentiles.”

Therefore, here is how I see the outline of the rest of the book:

- 4:1-16—an explanation of the purpose of spiritual gifts, that is, an explanation of how the church comes to walk in such manner
- 4:17-5:21—warnings and encouragements regarding the old-self and the new-self, that is, practical teaching about how to walk in such a manner
- 5:22-6:9—instruction regarding the proper order of various relationships that accord with walking in such a manner
- 6:10-20—a final exhortation to “put on the whole armor of God” which completes the exhortation of 4:1
- 6:21-24—final greetings

It is of extreme importance that we put the discussion of spiritual gifts in the light of these things, rather than seeing them as an issue unto themselves. The presence of spiritual gifts in the church is to serve the greater purposes of God in the church, not to bring attention to themselves or to those who possess them.

Again, the exhortation of 4:1 is this: “I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called...” What does this mean? How shall we walk in such a manner? Initially, Paul lists five traits that characterize this way of life: (1) humility, (2) gentleness, (3) patience, (4) bearing with one another in love, and (5) eagerness to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

As with Romans 12, the necessary prelude in Paul’s mind to a discussion of spiritual gifts is the inward disposition of the heart. If our hearts are right, the outward working of our lives in Christ will be right. If our hearts are humble et al., we will understand that Christ has gifted us for the good of the body as a whole and not for ourselves, and we will greatly rejoice! Thus, as a first order of things, Paul focuses on the condition of our hearts. Or to put it another way, the primary spiritual gift is a transformed heart that no longer seeks to exalt itself above others, but seeks to humble itself for the good of others. It is a transformed heart that highly values the body of Christ (based on an understanding of Ephesians 1 – 3) and therefore cares deeply about maintaining “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

Thus, Eph 4:3 becomes key to understanding this whole passage. The word translated “eager” is *σπουδαζοντες* (*spoudazontes*), which is the participial form of the word “zeal” in the sixth pair of terms in Romans 12. The one whose heart has been transformed has a deep and authentic inner passion for the body of Christ. His is no perfunctory gesture toward the church, but rather a heartfelt enthusiasm that issues from thankfulness for his own salvation to protect the body for which Christ died. Even as Christ laid His life down for the church, the one who has come to inherit all things in Christ eagerly lays his life down for her as well.

The word for “unity” in 4:3 is ενότητα (*enoteta*) and it literally means “a state of oneness.” This word appears again in verse 13 which says that the purpose of spiritual gifts is that “we all attain to the *unity* of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God.” So, if we are eager by the grace of Christ to maintain the unity of the Spirit (4:3), then we will be zealous to build up and protect the structure of the church because its purpose is to nurture the church until it attains “the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God...”

The word for “bond” is συνδεσμος (*sundesmos*) and it means “that which ties something together, to bind together, to unite.” It is used in Colossians 2:19, “...from whom the whole body, nourished and *knit together* through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God,” and 3:14, “And above all these, put on love which *binds* everything together in perfect harmony.” So, we can read Ephesians 4:3 like this: “...eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the *uniting* of peace.” What unity and peace is he talking about here? The answer is in Ephesians 2:11-22:

<sup>11</sup> Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—<sup>12</sup> remember that you were at that time **separated from Christ, alienated** from the commonwealth of Israel and **strangers** to the covenants of promise, having no hope and **without God** in the world. <sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. <sup>14</sup> For he himself is **our peace**, who has made us **both one** and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility <sup>15</sup> by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself **one new man** in place of the two, **so making peace**, <sup>16</sup> and might **reconcile us both to God in one body** through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. <sup>17</sup> And he came and **preached peace** to you who were far off and **peace** to those who were near. <sup>18</sup> For through him we **both have access in one Spirit** to the Father. <sup>19</sup> So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are **fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God**, <sup>20</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, <sup>21</sup> in whom the whole structure, **being joined together**, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup> In him **you also are being built together** into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

In Christ, both Israel and the gentiles have been made “one new man in place of the two,” they have both been reconciled “to God in one body through the cross, and they “both have access in one Spirit to the Father.” Therefore, we are “fellow citizens” and “members of the household of God” who are “being joined and built together.” This is the unity and peace Paul is referring to in 4:3. This is what the man or woman of God is so zealous to maintain. And this is why Paul reiterates in 4:4-6: “There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

If we are saved indeed, our unity in Christ is a fact, rooted in the cross, and we ought, therefore, to live in a way that is congruent with this fact. We ought to recognize that everything we have been given is for the good of the whole body with whom we are united in Christ. We ought to “walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which we have been called.”

Now, this brings us directly to the issue of spiritual gifts in verse 7: “But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift.” Unity does not imply uniformity, and diversity of gifts does not imply disunity. Though we are one in Christ, we do not all have the same gifts or functions, but the purpose of each one’s gifts or functions is the good of the whole. Our unity is grounded in the cross, by which we have “one body and one Spirit...one hope...one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.” Our unity far transcends external things like the particulars of the distribution of spiritual gifts. Jesus knows how to build a body, so he gives to each “according to the

measure of [His] gift,” or as it says elsewhere, “All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills” (1 Cor 12:11).

Verse 11, then, enumerates four specific gifts that were given by Christ to the church. In verse 7, Paul emphasizes that Christ gave gifts “to each one of us,” but in verse 11 he lists four gifts that are not inward spiritual qualities available to all believers but offices or positions of service given to relatively few believers. Why does he emphasize the individuality of spiritual gifts, but then specify only corporate gifts? I think it’s because he’s commenting here on how Christ builds His church. In 1 Corinthians 12 – 14, he deals more directly with the relation of spiritual gifts to individual believers, but here he is concerned with those gifts by which Christ builds up His church. Or to put in another way, here he is concerned with those gifts by which Christ gifts the rest of the church. As we will see in a moment, Christ gave these four gifts or offices for the building up of the church. He gave these gifts as a means by which He would give other gifts.

Let’s look more closely, then, at the four gifts here enumerated:

1. Apostles: the word here is *αποστολος* (*apostolos*), and it means messenger or one who is sent. It usually carries with it the implication, “one who is sent in an official capacity.” One of the major questions about the term “apostles” in our day is this: does the office of apostle still exist, or was this office reserved only for the twelve? (By the twelve, I mean those who were appointed by Jesus and called “apostles,” minus Judas plus Paul. Most scholars I’m aware of agree that the appointment of Matthias in Acts 1 had more to do with the zealous impatience of the apostles than the movement of the Holy Spirit, and that Paul was indeed God’s choice to replace Judas. Even if Matthias is considered one of the twelve, however, and Paul is added as a thirteenth, there is no doubt that the position these men held was unique for all time, as we shall soon see.)

The word “apostle” is used 83 times in the New Testament. In analyzing these usages (I have categorized them all in Appendix One), several things become clear. First, the word is overwhelmingly used to refer to offices that do not continue to exist—70 times to the twelve, and once to Jesus Christ: “...consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession...” (Heb 3:1). There are several key factors that distinguish the office of the twelve from any other who might be called an apostle:

(a) Christ appointed them while He was in the flesh. Paul’s appointment was different, of course, but it was still unique: “Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me” (1 Cor 15:8).

(b) The twelve participated with him in his earthly ministry, as John said, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life...” (1 John 1:1). Though Paul did not participate with him in his earthly ministry, his relationship to Christ is still unique in that he received direct revelation from Christ in a way that others did not, and will not (2 Cor 12:1-10, Gal 1:11-24).

(c) The apostles, or those closely associated to them, wrote the New Testament. Thus, their teaching was authoritative in a way that is forever unique to them.

Second, four texts use the term “apostle” to refer to five people who were not among the twelve: Barnabas, Epaphroditus, probably Silas, and two unnamed brothers (Acts 14:14, Phil 2:25, 1 Thes 2:6, and 2 Cor 8:23). Although Silas is not directly mentioned in these texts, I get his name from 1 Thes 2:6 which says, “Nor did *we* seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though *we* could have made demands as apostles of Christ.” The question is, who is the “we” here? Assuming that Paul is referring to his visit to Thessalonica described in Acts 17:1-9, we can assume that he means himself and

Silas. It is certainly possible that Paul is not referring to Silas here, but since none of the twelve were with him at Thessalonica it is clear that he is referring to someone beyond the twelve.

Be that as it may, the existence of these four passages means that the office of apostle was extended to some who were not among the twelve. Were there only one such passage, I would probably consider that an anomaly. But that there are four leads me to conclude that the term was used in a sense broader than the twelve, even while the twelve were alive. This does not necessarily mean that the office continues to exist to this day, but I think it does lend credibility to the idea. If the term was applied in a broader sense when the twelve were alive, why not after they had died? Why not up to the present time?

Even if we presently use the term, however, it is clear that we should not use it lightly. Drawing from the four passages above we can say that an apostle who is not of the twelve is characterized by at least four traits: (a) he is personally involved in missionary endeavors or bold evangelistic efforts in a leadership capacity; (b) he has been well-tested “and found earnest in many matters” (2 Cor 8:22); (c) he is well-known and respected among a wide-circle of the church (2 Cor 8:18); and (d) he has been appointed by the church to such an office (2 Cor 8:19).

Third, seven passages use the term “apostle” in such a way that it is unclear if they refer exclusively to the twelve or if they include some beyond the twelve (Luke 11:49; 1 Cor 12:28, 29; 2 Cor 11:13; Eph 4:11; Rev 2:2, and 18:20). In both 2 Cor 11:13 and Rev 2:2, certain men are trying to pass themselves off as apostles though they are not, so certainly they are not of the twelve. However, it is possible that they were feigning to be of the twelve in the hope that those receiving them would not know better. If this is true, then these passages cannot be used to show that the term “apostle” extended beyond the twelve.

One way or the other, the presence of these seven passages, combined with the four that clearly refer beyond the twelve, should give pause to dogmatic conclusions that the office of apostle is exclusive to the twelve, or that it is exclusive to the New Testament era. But even if the office of apostle exists today, apostles should be much more concerned with the state of the gospel in the world, and their own humility of heart, than with having a particular title conferred upon them. Their attitude should be this: “Call me what you will—I just want to fight the fight of faith for the glory of God and the building up of the church.”

2. Prophets: the Greek word for “prophet” is a compound word—*προ* (*pro*) which means before, and *φημι* (*phemi*) which means to speak or declare. Thus, a *προφήτης* (*prophet*) is one who “speaks before or in front of” others, he is one who declares to others the word of the Lord. As noted above, the classic definition of a prophet is one who tells forth or foretells the word of the Lord. Zechariah’s prophetic words in Luke 1:67-79 are a perfect illustration of this two-fold nature of prophecy, for in the first half of the passage (vv. 68-75) he interpreted the meaning of John’s birth and in the second half of the passage (vv. 76-79) he foretold the direction and meaning of his life. And he did not do this on his own, rather, he was “filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying...” (v. 67).

As with apostles, one of the key questions of our day is this: does the office of prophet still exist, or did it terminate with the first generation of believers? There are 112 uses of the term “prophet” that refer to offices that no longer exist—79 refer to Old Testament prophets, 21 refer to Jesus, and 12 refer to John the Baptist. However, there are 14 uses of the term that refer to various New Testament prophets, 12 that refer to the actual or predicted presence of false prophets, and 18 general uses of the term that could imply the continued presence of prophets in the life of the church (see Appendix One for a listing of the specific texts). Additionally, Paul exhorts the Corinthian church to desire the gift of prophecy—“Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy” (1 Cor 4:1)—and he

exhorts the Thessalonian church not to despise prophecy—“Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good” (1 Thes 5:20-21; see also 1 Cor 14:29, 32).

Therefore, I think it is clear that the gift of prophets and prophecy is an on-going grace from the Holy Spirit given to build up, encourage, and console the church. “On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies builds up the church. Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built up” (1 Cor 14:3-5). This is why Paul says in verse 39, “So, my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy...”

3. Evangelists: The word here is *εὐαγγελιστᾶς* (*euangelistas*) and it derives from *εὐαγγέλιον* (*euangelion*), which means good news. Therefore, it means “one who preaches or proclaims good news.” The word is only used three times in the New Testament, once of Philip (Acts 21:8), once of Timothy (2 Tim 4:5), and here in Ephesians. The passage in Timothy is especially interesting because Paul does not call Timothy an “evangelist,” but he exhorts him to “do the work of an evangelist.” I draw from this that, while some are called exclusively to the ministry of evangelism, others are called to do the work of evangelism as part of a broader ministry.

This brings to mind Acts 6:2-4: “And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, ‘It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.’” Given the context of the book of Acts, it is clear that the “ministry of the Word” had a very strong evangelistic component. The “twelve” were not exclusively evangelists, but their ministry was in large part evangelistic.

Thus, we should not conclude that the Lord gives evangelists to do all the work of evangelism, but rather that he gives evangelists to equip the church with evangelistic fervor and skills. We should further conclude that elders ought to “do the work of an evangelist,” even if that is not their primary gifting.

4. Pastor-Teachers: There is a grammatical construction in Greek, called the *μὲν-δε* (*men-de*) construction, the purpose of which is to show that terms are connected to one another. Sometimes this construction is translated “on the one hand” and “on the other hand,” or “both” and “and,” but often it is left untranslated. Paul uses this construction in Ephesians 4:11, leaving no doubt that pastors and teachers are one office or function. What follows is a word for word, literal rendering of the Greek text (I have noted the position of “*men*” and “*de*” in parentheses): “And he gave the (*men*) apostles, the (*de*) prophets, the (*de*) evangelists, the (*de*) pastors and teachers...”

I think what Paul means to say is this: the term “pastor” describes what the office is, the term “teacher” describes what the pastor does. The pastor leads by teaching, and he teaches by the Word of God (see 2 Tim 3:16-17 and 4:1-5).

The word for pastor is *ποιμὴν* (*poimen*), which simply means shepherd. It is closely related to two other terms in the New Testament, *ἐπίσκοπος* (*episkopos*), which means overseer, and *πρεσβύτερος* (*presbuteros*) which means elder (we get our words Episcopalian and Presbyterian from these two words). In fact, we see from Acts 20:17 and 28 that the terms are interchangeable, for in verse 17 it says that Paul called “the elders of the church to come to him,” and in verse 28 he referred to them as “overseers” and “shepherds.” So again, the office is that of pastor/overseer/shepherd, the function of that office is teaching, and the teaching is by the Word of God.

Thus, we see in Ephesians 4:11 some of the gifts that Jesus graciously gives to the church, and in 4:12 we see why he gives them: “to equip the saints for the work of ministry.” The purpose of apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers is not to puff themselves up or lord it over the church, but to serve the purposes of Christ by equipping the church to function as they should. These offices are not places of power and honor so much as they are places of responsibility and service. Thus, it is clear why humility and such are the crucial ground work that precedes the giving of spiritual gifts.

It is interesting to note that 4:12 does not say that these gifts are given to build up the church, but that they are given “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ...” As generals and sergeants are to a successful army, so apostles and prophets and evangelists and pastor-teachers are to the church—they are not to do all of the work, they are to ready the troops to engage in battle, and as the troops engage in battle the net effect is that the body of Christ is built up.

And the ultimate vision of all this is that the body of Christ “attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” This is the vision of God for the church, and it is breath-taking indeed. We can picture it like this:

Christ gives gifts => to equip the body => that the body may be built up => that the body may attain to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ

## NOTES ON 1 CORINTHIANS 12 – 14:

Paul begins his letter by praising God for the grace that was given to the Corinthians which was displayed in their use of speech, knowledge, and spiritual gifts. This implies that Paul did not see the spiritual gifts themselves as the problem in the Corinthian church but rather the manner in which they were using them. And he highlights that manner immediately: they were allowing the gifts to cause divisions in the church. Spiritual gifts are given to unite and build up the church but the Corinthians were still so fleshly and petty that they were actually breaking fellowship over the gifts. Paul's solution to this pressing problem, paraphrased from Jer 9:23-24, was this: "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord" (1:30), that is, and not in his or her gifts.

This is why, Paul explains, he came to Corinth not boasting in his gifts but in Christ and him crucified. He came not with earthly power and wisdom but in weakness and the "demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God" (2:5). And that which he shared was granted by the Spirit and discerned by those who likewise had the "Spirit who is from God" (2:12).

But the divisions among the Corinthians showed that they were still fleshly and not spiritual. Those who are walking in the Spirit see that God is about building his people into a temple of the Holy Spirit (3:16-17) and therefore they do not give themselves to petty divisions especially over the very things the Spirit has given to unite.

Given this, the Corinthians should regard Paul and Peter and other notable leaders in the church not as big-shots but as "servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God" (4:1). The world organizes around their favorite teachers and then competes with those who've gathered around others, but this is not to be so in the church. Rather, in the church all boastings in the self is removed because all we have we have received from the Lord (4:6-7).

Paul then moves on to deal with sexual immorality in the church, probably as yet another sign that, though they were rich and had become kings (4:8), things were not right in Corinth. In light of this, he offers his wisdom on marriage, the unmarried, and widows, and then takes up the issue of food sacrificed to idols. The main point of this part of the discussion is to show how "the gift of knowledge" (in this case that idols do not exist and one may therefore eat with a clean conscience) can become a stumbling block for others. Our knowledge should not be flaunted and boasted in as though we're superior to others but should be tempered with wisdom. Our main motive in acting upon our knowledge in Christ ought to be the up-building of the whole church, and especially the weak. "Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble" (8:13). Love for one another in Christ is the highest thing, not exercising the freedom we've gained through the gift of knowledge. "Knowledge puffs up but love builds up" (8:1).

I think Paul's discourse on his right to earn a living and yet his refusal to enact that right (9:1-27) is meant to say this: Paul chose not to reap the benefits he could have reaped in order to protect the integrity of the gospel and increase his fruitfulness among a variety of people. And if the apostle Paul acted in this way so should those who exercise their gifts in the church. We may indeed have rights afforded to us by virtue of our gifts but that doesn't mean we should exercise those rights. The glory of God and the good of the whole church should be our aim, knowing that the Lord will richly reward us on the day of judgment.

With this in mind, Paul then turns to Israel as an example. They were all "under the cloud" and "passed through the sea" and "ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink." That is, they were one much as we who in Christ are one. And yet "they were overthrown in the wilderness" (10:1-5). Reason being, they indulged in immorality, followed their own desires, and did not submit to God. And these things

were written for our sake so that we would take heed and keep from falling. Therefore, we ought to flee from all idolatry and learn these lessons well: “Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor” (10:24) and “whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (10:31). In other words, seek the good of the whole church in everything you do, not your own advantage, and this will be a glory to God.

Given the overall flow of thought in 1 Corinthians, it’s likely that the point of 11:2-16 is that, even though there are not to be divisions in the body, there is to be order and flow of authority. But I’ll have to give this more thought at a later time. Certainly Paul is addressing issues raised by the Corinthians (see 7:1) but he’s doing so in such a way as to maintain his overall theme: “let now one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor” and “whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (10:24, 31).

More sure is the point of Paul’s instructions in 11:17-34: although the Lord’s Supper is designed to display and nurture our unity in Christ, the Corinthian’s manner of life was displaying just the opposite. They were sharing in the body and blood in the regular meetings of the church but they were dividing with one another over a number of things. This is why Paul so strongly encouraged them to examine their hearts to ensure that they were in faith because one who says “unity” but lives “division” must certainly question his or her relationship with Christ.

This leads Paul to where I believe he’s been planning to go from the beginning, namely to the purpose and place of spiritual gifts in the life of the church.

1. There is much debate over the precise meaning of 12:1-3. I think it helps to read τῶν πνευματικῶν (*ton pneumatikon*) as “spiritual things or persons” rather than “spiritual gifts” because it makes better sense of the verses. However, one way or the other it seems very likely to me that he’s addressing a direct question put to him by the Corinthians (7:1).
2. Paul begins to get to the heart of the matter in vv 4-11. The word διαίρεσις simply means divisions or diversity or varieties so that Paul is saying, though there are many different kinds of gifts, they all derive from one and the same Spirit. Likewise, there are varieties of service but under one and the same Lord. Finally, there are varieties of activities but under one and the same God who empowers them all.

This leads Paul to what might well be the thesis of 1 Corinthians, if not of chapters 12-14 for sure: “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (v 7). The word φανέρωσις (*phanerosis*) means “evidence, disclosure, or revelation.” So a spiritual gift is the outward manifestation of one’s inward intimacy with the Spirit and it is evidence that one is a member of the body of Christ. The word συμφέρον (*sumpheron*) literally means “bring together” but when used intransitively it has the implication of “common profit or advantage or good.” Thus, the gifts we have or services we perform or activities we engage in are all evidences of the presence of the Holy Spirit given for the good of the church. They do confirm one’s place in the body, but the main purpose is the common good. The force of this thought compels us to think in communal terms and obliterates any pretensions of individualism in the church.

Paul lists nine particular gifts in verses 8-10:

(1-2) The gifts of the utterance of wisdom and knowledge are similar to what Paul prayed for in Eph 1:17, namely, that the Ephesians would be granted “a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him.” Knowledge is the sight of truth that is abstract and broad in its implications and it corresponds to revelation; wisdom is insight that emerges from knowledge but is concrete and applied to

a particular situation. One with an utterance of knowledge has been shown truth. One with an utterance of wisdom has been shown an application(s) of truth.

(3) The gift of faith is something that all Christians must have as it is essential to our salvation. “By grace you were saved through faith” (Eph 2:8). But Paul is referring here to something other than this and not all have it. He’s referring to an unusual ability to trust in the power and promises and purposes of God in both particular and general ways. And this gift emerges, not from emotions or any other fleshly source, but from a Spirit-granted ability to see what God has purposed in a given situation and believe that he will do it.

The faith Paul has in mind here is like that of Jesus when he prayed for Lazarus: “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. <sup>42</sup> I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me.’ When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come out’” (John 11:41-43). Jesus already knew what his Father was going to do because he had already talked with him about it and the Father revealed his will to him. Thus, he prayed, neither for himself nor Lazarus, but for the sake of others. This is the gift of faith. It’s God-given foresight that gives birth to the sure hope that God will do what he’s purposed to do.

(4) The word ἰαμα (*iama*) means “to cause to be well again or healing” and thus gifts of healing are simply the ability to make others well again. Historically, this has been understood to refer to physical ailments but I don’t see why the word could not have a somewhat broader application to include psychological or emotional healing as well. The idea of this word is that one is returned to a state of wholeness or well-being.

But whatever the word is taken to mean, the point is that some in the body are granted authority to administer well-being to others. James 5:14 says that if someone in the church is sick, the elders should pray over that person and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. But I don’t think this text means that only elders are granted the gift of healing. It may be that as we pray over people the Lord will grant this gift to the most unlikely of us.

(5) The word δυνάμεων (*dunameon*), often translated “miracles,” more literally means “power.” Louw and Nida define it as “any deed manifesting supernatural power.” Thus, it may refer to things we normally consider miracles but it could also refer to the spread of the gospel or overcoming an insurmountable obstacle or whatever. We should conceive this gift as a display of the power of God through one of his own, whatever that display might be.

(6) The gift of prophecy, in this text, is a specific utterance granted by God. It is distinguished from the gift of wisdom in its specificity. That is, the prophet is given particular words to speak whereas the wise person is given specific insight into the application of truth. Of course, there is much overlap here but it’s good to distinguish these gifts because God himself does so in this text.

(7) The words διακρίσεις πνευμάτων (*diakriseis pneumaton*), translated “distinguish between spirits” in the ESV, imply that one has a supernatural ability to see into the spiritual world. He or she can perceive demons and angels even when the former appear in as angels of light (1 Cor 11:14). This is helpful for the church as a whole in that it helps us to “test the spirits” (1 John 4) and for individuals in that it helps them know how to pray. I don’t believe that demons are behind everything bad that occurs in the life of the church, but I do believe they’re actively warring against us and often involved in situations we’re facing. The fact is that we have real spiritual enemies (Eph 6:10-20) and thus we need the gift of discernment of spirits so that we’ll know how to pray.

(8-9) The gift of tongues is the ability to speak in a language or languages that are not our own and that we have not learned. I do believe there are tongues of men and angels (1 Cor 13:1) so that some who speak in tongues are speaking in heavenly rather than earthly languages, but the gift of tongues is always the ability to speak in an intelligible language. Related to this is the gift of interpretation, that is, the ability to hear and understand a language one does not already know.

Verse 11 brings back into focus the point of all of these gifts: yes there are varieties of gifts but “all these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.” Therefore, the focus is not to be the gifts themselves, or the persons employing them, but the Spirit who is executing his perfect will according to his perfect wisdom to accomplish his perfect purposes.

3. This leads us to 1 Cor 12:12-31 where Paul articulates one of the most important metaphors for the life of the church: the church as the body of Christ. Just like a body, each of us is a part but together we are one. The parts can be distinguished and conceived of in themselves but their purpose is not found in themselves but in the body as a whole. A hand grabs, to be sure, but it does so for the body. And the unifying factor, the element that bonds us together as a body, is the Spirit himself.

Building on this, Paul addresses in vv 14-20 those who feel inferior in the body. If the one thinks they are not an important part of the body because they are not like so and so, this does not make them any less a part of the body. For if the whole body were so and so, we’d be unbalanced, lopsided, incomplete, and unable to function. Every part of the body needs the whole body in order to play its part, and God has chosen to arrange every part according to his perfect wisdom (v 18). This last statement is intended, I think, to grant faith, hope, trust, and rest to those who consider themselves inferior.

Then in vv 21-26 Paul addresses the other side of the coin, namely, those who think they’re superior in the body. Paul says, in no uncertain terms, that one cannot exalt itself over another and declare his or her independence from the body. One cannot say, “I’m thus and so and therefore I don’t need you” or “I’m necessary but you are unnecessary.” This kind of arrogance has no place in the body because the parts of the body that seem to be unnecessary are in fact indispensable and those that seem to lack honor have been particularly honored by God. As Jesus said in Math 20:16, “So the last will be first, and the first last.”

God has exalted in his sight that which is diminished in our sight, not to create an equal but opposite division in the body, but to make all things equal and without division. The ground is level at the foot of the cross which means that there are no great men or women of God in the body. There are only men and women who have been used by the great and mighty God to glorify his name and fulfill his purposes. But God’s using them was never intended to exalt them over others.

The heart of God for the life of the church is that there be no division among us, even in the secret places of our hearts, but rather that we have the same care and concern for each other as we have for ourselves. So much so that when others suffer we’re to take it as our own, and when one is honored we’re to rejoice as well. The way to keep from depression in suffering is to rejoice in the victory of others as though it’s your own. The way to keep from pride and arrogance when you’re honored is to mourn in the suffering of others as though it’s your own. We suffer together and we rejoice together because we are one in the Spirit. No one is inferior, no one is superior, rather we are all indispensable and perfectly placed in the body by the wisdom and grace of God.

Finally, in vv 27-31 Paul makes clear that the equality of the body does not abolish the order of the body. He uses ordinals to make clear to us how God has arranged his body: (1) The apostles—I think he

means the twelve, minus Judas and plus Paul. (2) The prophets—I'm not sure who he has in mind here. (3) The teachers—given Eph 4:11, I think he has pastors in mind here. (4) Those who have been granted deeds which display God's power. It's so important to notice that this comes after those who lead, reveal, and teach. (5) Finally, those who have been given gifts of healing et al.

Paul mentions four gifts in these verses which he did not mention in vv 8-10:

(1-2) I've already written at length about apostles and teachers in my comments on Eph 4:1-16 so I won't say more here.

(3) The word ἀντιλήμψει (*antilempsei*) refers to those who have the gift of being a help to others. They're support workers who find much joy in being part of the purposes of God but who have no need for position or recognition.

(4) The word κυβερνήσεις (*kuberneseis*), translated "administrating" in the ESV, literally means "one who has the skill to guide a ship." However, it is often used to refer to one who has the gift of vision, organization and leadership. People with this gift ensure that the church heads in a particular direction for a particular reason and their insight comes from the Holy Spirit not from the world. Of course, people with this gift are constantly learning from a variety of sources and integrating the principles they learn from those sources, but ultimately their wisdom is derived from the Holy Spirit. People with the gift of administration are people of prayer because they know that the Spirit alone knows where, when, and how to guide the church.

One more thought about this list: notice that Paul puts the gift of tongues at the bottom of the list. I think he's done this on purpose to demonstrate to the church that, though many are fascinated with this gift, it is in fact the least of all the gifts because it doesn't edify the church, unless a tongue is interpreted. He will pick this theme up at length in chapter 14.

Finally, as for Paul's string of questions in vv 29-30, it's obvious enough that he implies an answer of "no" to each one of them because he's gone to great lengths to show that each member of the body has its own part to play. But then he turns his train of thought in an unusual direction. I would have expected him to reiterate the point he made in 12:7 and 11, namely, that spiritual gifts are distributed by the Holy Spirit, according to his will, for the common good. But instead of this he encourages the Corinthians to "earnestly desire the greater gifts," which if we're not reading carefully we could take to mean, "Seek to get as high up on this list as you can." I do think Paul is deliberately building this tension but he quickly adds the phrase "and I will show you a still more excellent way" to set up chapter 13 and relieve this tension.

4. It's interesting to me that Paul chooses to address four gifts in vv 1-3 that are outwardly impressive to people: tongues, prophetic power, faith that moves mountains, and self-sacrifice to the point of death. These are the kinds of gifts we highly prize, admire, and honor in the church but without love all of them have a value of zero. The word "nothing" is that strong. The lack of love literally renders all gifts valueless. Without love they have no redeeming quality whatsoever because the gifts of the Spirit derive from the Spirit, who is God, and God is love. The exercise of spiritual gifts devoid of love is certain evidence that those gifts, however spiritual they may seem, did not derive from God.

Since love is the thing that gives all other things value, Paul addresses a question that naturally arises in the mind of a thoughtful reader: what, then, is love? Paul offers fifteen traits that give it shape. (1) Love is patient. Love is not quick to judge. Love is not quick to give up on others. Love does not demand instant results but is willing to wait, it's willing to endure, it's willing to give time and space to the

other. Love knows that, in due time, God will complete the work he began in others and therefore we can wait with hope.

(2) Love is kind. Love is mild as opposed to harsh and it's disposed toward the other even when the other has committed an offense. Therefore, the coming of Jesus into the world is spoken of as the appearance of the "kindness of our God" in Titus 3:4.

(3) Love does not envy. The word here is actually "zeal" which can be translated "jealous," but however one translates it I think the idea is that love is not led by passions but rather rules over passions. Passion is a good thing, in fact Paul uses this same word in 12:31 and 14:1 where he encourages the Corinthians to "earnestly desire the gifts," but passion can render one mindless and love is not mindless. Love is thoughtful. Love is in control of itself. Love does not act on snap judgments.

(4) Love does not boast. It does not "praise itself excessively" (Louw and Nida), or as the NKJV translates it, "Love does not parade itself." Love is not impressed with itself and therefore does not draw attention to itself because it's not focused on itself but God.

(5) Love is not arrogant. This word means "to puff up or inflate and therefore to highly assess oneself." Boasting is the outward quality of drawing attention to oneself while arrogance is the inward conviction that one is better than others. Paul uses this same word in 1 Cor 8:1 where he says, "Knowledge puffs up but love builds up." In other words, one without love acquires knowledge and thinks himself better than others because of that knowledge. He may not say it out loud but he thinks it to be true. Love is not like this. Love acquires knowledge for the common good and thus thinks, "Oh joy, I'm just sure this new insight will help someone else. I may share what I now know or I may just bless another on the basis of what I know, whatever would be most helpful, but one way or the other I can't wait to lift others up." This is how love thinks.

(6) Love is not rude. This is probably not the best translation. The NKJV reads "does not behave rudely" and the NASB reads "does not act unbecomingly." These are better translations because the word means "to act in defiance of social and moral standards" (Louw and Nida) and thus to be rebellious. Love does not buck against the system for the sake of bucking against the system. Love is humble. Love is teachable. Love is submissive. Love is holy. Love longs to do what's right because it knows that that's what's best for all.

(7) Love does not insist on its own way. This again is not the best translation. The Greek literally reads, "it does not seek the things of itself." This seems to me to be the central statement about the nature of love, and oddly enough it does appear at the middle of the list of 15 traits. Love is other focused, first on God and then on its neighbor. Self matters, of course, but only in the context of God and others. Love believes that if it seeks the things of God and others, the things of itself will be provided. "Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these other things shall be added unto you" (Math 6:33). The reason love is patient and kind and all the rest is because it's not seeking the things of itself but the things of God and others.

(8) Love is not irritable. The word here means "easily provoked or upset" and thus irritable is a good translation. This does not mean that a loving person is never rightly provoked. We see this plainly in a text like Acts 17:16. But it does mean that love is not easily "set off" by every little thing that happens. Love is able to endure many things and it's not quick to be offended. Irritability is indicative of a person who is so focused on himself that any little inconvenience, anything that doesn't go his way, causes him to be frustrated, angry, and defensive. Love is not seeking the things of itself and therefore it's not easily bothered by the little irritations of life that inevitably come its way.

(9) Love is not resentful. The Greek here literally reads “it does not reckon the bad” (οὐ λογίζεται τὸ κακόν) which is the essence of resentment. I prefer the more literal translation here because it gives such a graphic picture of what Paul has in mind. Love doesn’t spend time noting everything someone else has done wrong so that it can use those notes against that person. Love is not out to get others, love is out to build up others for the glory of God. Love does not seek division, it longs for unity. Love does not seek after condemnation, it seeks after transformation of which forgiveness is such a vital part. Love desires the absolute best for the other and therefore does not seek out imperfections. As Carnegie once said, “If you want honey, don’t kick over the pot.” So love always gives the benefit of the doubt, love always lets go of an offense whenever it can, love always deals with whatever it must so that things don’t store up. Love is always for the other and therefore it does not “reckon the bad.”

(10) Love does not rejoice in wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. The word for “wrongdoing” here is ἀδικία (*adikia*) and thus the better translation is probably “unrighteousness.” However, “wrongdoing” is a little more palpable for the modern ear and I do think it hits the mark. Love loves the wisdom and will of God and it does not rejoice—even in the light of grace, it does not rejoice—in unrighteousness. Rather it always shares in joy with truth. I’m certain that Paul has obedience in mind when he uses the word “truth” because ἀδικία refers to the breaking of the law. The righteous person is the law-keeper and therefore the unrighteous person is the law-breaker. Love loves truth, and obedience to the truth, because love loves God.

As Moses said near the end of Deuteronomy, <sup>19</sup> “I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, <sup>20</sup> loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them” (Deut 30:19-20).

And as Jesus said in John 14:21, “Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.”

(11) Love bears all things. The word στέγω (*stego*) literally means “to cover” and thus “to conceal” but it can also have the meaning “to keep off or bear up under.” Honestly, I don’t quite understand the lexical situation here but I do see clearly from texts like 1 Cor 9:12 and 1 Thes 3:1 that the meaning “conceal” does not always make sense. Thus, I think the idea here is that love endures whatever it must for the good of the other. It’s not concerned with its dissatisfaction or discomfort because it’s not seeking the things of itself. Love is focused on the other and thus puts up with all kinds of stuff without growing resentful or keeping a record of wrongs. This doesn’t mean that love is a doormat because that would not ultimately benefit the other. In fact, that would breed the exact opposite of love in the other. Rather love does whatever it must do, including bearing up under difficulties and insults, to work for the glory of God and the good of others.

(12) Love believes all things. The word here is πιστεύει (*pisteuei*) which implies more that “love has faith in all things,” which is to say that it has faith in the midst of all things. Love is always looking to God and knowing that he will work all things together for his glory and the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose. Love does not assess circumstances and potential outcomes by fleshly means but rather by the spiritual means of looking to God and trusting in his promises for particular people and situations.

(13) Love hopes all things. Louw and Nida define hope as “look[ing] forward with confidence to that which is good and beneficial.” Thus, in the midst of all things love has undying hope because love has undying faith. Love knows that God is in control and that he will bring all of his purposes to fruition in his time and way.

(14) Love endures all things. The word here is ὑπομένει (*upomenei*) which makes me think that the phrase “bears all things” does refer to offenses while “endures all things” refers to circumstances, especially of discomfort and suffering. Love is willing to go through whatever it must precisely because it is filled with faith, hope, and good will toward others. Love suffers for the joy set before it, and that joy is the glory of God and the good of others.

(15) Love never ends. The word here is πίπτει (*piptei*) which literally means “falls,” but I do think the context calls for the translation “ends or dies” here because of what Paul writes next. Prophecies will come to naught, that is, they will cease. Same for tongues and knowledge, by which Paul means the gift of knowledge rather than knowledge itself. For now we prophesy and know glimpses of things to come according to the grace and purposes of God, but then we will see the fullness of these things which will render tongues, prophecy, and the gift of knowledge useless. The childish will give way to the adult. The blurriness will give way to clarity. The mysteries will give way to sure knowledge. But love is not like these things. Love will give way to love. It will never die. It will never pass away. It will only intensify and grow and come into fullness.

Therefore, these three things remain: faith, hope, and love. Faith because trust in God is eternal. Hope because we will always look forward with confidence to that which is good and beneficial. Love because faith and hope spring forth from love. And thus the greatest of these is love.

God is love. The love of God for God is the fountain from which all other things came into being. God created in love. God conceived the gospel in love. God called us in love. God transforms us in love. God bids us to love him above all things and to love others as ourselves. Therefore, love is the highest gift because it is the fountain and consummation of all things. Love is the highest gift because it is the key that causes all the other gifts to fulfill the purpose of manifesting the Spirit for the common good.

5. Therefore, Paul most persuasively concludes in 14:1, “Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts.”

The word διώκω (*dioko*) is a very strong word. It means “to earnestly strive after something” with the connotations of “haste” and “intensity.” So the picture is of a person who’s going after something with the feeling like they must have it now and they’ll do whatever it takes to get it. The word is used 46 times in the NT, 34 of which are translated “persecute” and 12 of which are translated “pursue or seek” or something like that. Therefore, Paul is exhorting us to pursue love with haste and intensity. He’s exhorting us to relentlessly go after love with everything in us and settle for nothing less than its capture!

The word ζηλόω (*zelōō*) literally means “to bring something to a boil” and thus communicates a deep and earnest and boiling desire for something. It communicates the desire of our hearts when we set our mind on something whereas the word “pursue” communicates an action that we’re to take. Therefore, we can say that Paul is exhorting us in 1 Cor 14:1 to pursue love with all that’s in us and also “to bring our hearts to a boil” for spiritual gifts. Why? Simply this: spiritual gifts are tools that the Holy Spirit grants to every believer so that he or she may visibly demonstrate love in the church.

To use the action word “pursue” for love and the feeling word “zeal” for spiritual gifts, is to make love the main thing and spiritual gifts the servants of love. So we can restate Paul’s exhortation like this: pursue love and earnestly desire whatever will help you advance the cause of love in the church. Go after love with a passion and bring yourself to a boil over whatever will help you catch it. If a particular gift will help you to display love in the church and so glorify God, then you should earnestly desire that gift. If, on the other hand, a particular gift, as good as it might be, will not help you to display love in the church and so glorify God, then you shouldn’t utilize that gift even if it’s available to you.

I have in mind here Paul’s statement in 1 Cor 14:18-19 that he spoke in tongues more than anyone at Corinth and yet he would rather speak five intelligible words in the church because that would be the best way to manifest the Spirit for the common good. And so spiritual gifts themselves, whatever they might be, should not be at the center of our attention rather the love that manifests the Spirit and builds up the church should be at the center of our attention. Love is the main thing that the Spirit uses to reveal himself for the common good and spiritual gifts are simply the servants of love.

6. This is the whole point of Paul’s words concerning the relationship between prophecy and tongues in chapter 14: whereas tongues build up only the speaker, unless there is an interpretation, prophecy builds up the whole church. And the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good most obviously continues to be Paul’s central concern in this chapter (vv 3-5, 12, 17-18, 26, 39-40).

**APPENDIX ONE:**

**SUMMARY CHART OF THE KEY TERMS IN EPH 4:11**

**APOSTLES = 84 USES\* (αποστολος)**

<b>OF JESUS</b>	<b>OF THE TWELVE</b>	<b>OF PETER</b>	<b>OF PAUL</b>	<b>OF FALSE APOSTLES</b>	<b>OTHER USES</b>
Heb 3:1	Mt 10:2 Mt 6:30 Mk 3:14 Lk 6:13 Lk 9:10 Lk 17:5 Lk 22:14 Lk 24:10 Acts 1:2,25,26 Acts 2:37,42,43 Acts 4:33,35,36,37 Acts 5:2,12,18,29,40 Acts 6:6 Acts 8:1,14,18 Acts 9:27 Acts 11:1 Acts 14:4 Acts 15:2,4,6,22,23 Acts 16:4 Rom 1:5 Rom 16:7 1 Cor 4:9 1 Cor 15:7 2 Cor 12:11 Gal 1:17, 19 Eph 2:20 Eph 3:5 2 Pet 3:2 Jude 1:17 Rev 21:14	1 Pet 1:1 2 Pet 1:1 Gal 2:8	Acts 14:14 (w/ Barnabas) Rom 1:1 Rom 11:13 1 Cor 1:1 1 Cor 9:1, 2(2),5 1 Cor 15:9(2) 2 Cor 1:1 2 Cor 11:5 2 Cor 12:12 Gal 1:1 Eph 1:1 Col 1:1 1 Thes 2:6 (w/ others) 1 Tim 1:1 1 Tim 2:7 2 Tim 1:1,11 Tit 1:1	2 Cor 11:13 Rev 2:2	Lk 11:49 Jn 13:16 1 Cor 12:28,29 2 Cor 8:23 (of 2 brothers) Eph 4:11 Phil 2:25 (Epaphroditus) Rev 18:20

\*In some verses these terms appear more than once. I have noted this by placing the number of occurrences in parentheses beside the verse number.

**PROPHETS = 159 USES (προφητης, προφητις, προφητικος, ψευδοπροφητης—144, 2, 2, AND 11, RESPECTIVELY)**

OF OT PROPHETS	OF JESUS	OF JOHN THE BAPTIST	OF NT PROPHETS	OF FALSE PROPHETS	OTHER USES
Mt 1:22 Mt 2:5,15,17,23 Mt 3:3 Mt 4:14 Mt 5:12,17 Mt 7:12 Mt 8:17 Mt 11:13 Mt 12:17,39 Mt 13:35 Mt 16:14 Mt 21:4 Mt 22:40 Mt 23:29,30,31 Mt 24:15 Mt 26:56 Mt 27:9 Mk 1:2 Lk 1:70 Lk 3:4 Lk 4:17,27 Lk 6:23,26 Lk 11:47 Lk 16:16,29,31 Lk 18:31 Lk 24:25,27,44 Jn 1:23,45 Jn 6:45 Jn 8:52,53 Jn 12:38 Acts 2:16,30 Acts 3:18,21,24,25 Acts 7:42,48,52 Acts 8:28,30,34 Acts 10:43 Acts 13:15,20,27,40 Acts 15:15 Acts 24:14 Acts 26:22,27 Acts 28:23,25 Rom 1:2 Rom 3:21 Rom 11:3 Rom 16:26 1 Thes 2:15 Heb 1:1 Heb 11:32 Jms 5:10 1 Pet 1:10 2 Pet 3:2 Rev 10:7	Mt 13:57 Mt 21:11,46 Mk 6:4,15(2) Mk 8:28 Lk 4:24 Lk 7:16,39 Lk 9:19 Lk 13:33 Lk 24:19 Jn 4:19,44 Jn 6:14 Jn 7:40 Jn 9:17 Acts 3:22,23 Acts 7:37 2 Pet 2:9	Mt 11:9(2) Mt 14:5 Mt 21:26 Mk 11:32 Lk 1:76 Lk 7:26(2) Lk 9:8 Lk 20:6 Jn 1:21,25	Acts 11:27 Acts 13:1 Acts 15:32 Acts 21:10 1 Cor 12:28,29 1 Cor 14:29,32(2),37 Eph 2:20 Eph 3:5 Eph 4:11 Rev 11:10	Mt 7:15 Mt 24:11,24 Mk 13:22 Acts 13:6 2 Pet 2:1,16 1 Jn 4:1 Rev 2:20 Rev 16:13 Rev 19:20 Rev 20:10	Mt 10:41(3) Mt 13:17 Mt 23:34,37 Lk 2:36 Lk 10:24 Lk 11:49,50 Lk 13:28,34 Jn 7:52 Tit 1:12 Rev 11:18 Rev 16:6 Rev 18:20,24 Rev 22:6,9

**PROPHECIES, PROPHECYING = 47 USES (προφητεω, προφητεια—28 AND 19, RESPECTIVELY)**

<b>FUTURE PREDICTION</b>	<b>PRESENT INTERPRETATION</b>	<b>EITHER</b>	<b>BOTH</b>
Mt 11:13 Mt 13:14 Mt 15:7 Mk 7:6 Jn 11:51 Acts 2:17,18 1 Tim 1:18 1 Pet 1:10 Jude 1:14 Rev 1:3 Rev 10:11 Rev 22:7,10,18,19	Mt 26:68 Mk 14:65 Lk 22:64	Mt 7:22 Acts 19:6 Acts 21:9 Rom 12:6 1 Cor 11:4,5 1 Cor 12:10 1 Cor 13:2,8,9 1 Cor 14:1,3,4,5(2) 6,22,24,31,39 1 Thes 5:20 1 Tim 4:14 2 Pet 1:20,21 Rev 11:3,6 Rev 19:10	Lk 1:67

**EVANGELISTS = 3 USES (ευαγγελιστας)**

<b>OF PHILIP</b>	<b>OF TIMOTHY</b>	<b>OTHER USE</b>
Acts 21:8	2 Tim 4:5	Eph 4:11

**PASTORS = 30 USES (ποιμεν, ποιμαινω, αρχιποιμην—18, 11, AND 1, RESPECTIVELY)**

OF JESUS	OF SHEPHERDS	OF SPIRITUAL LEADERS	OF NT PASTORS	OTHER USES
Mt 2:6 Mt 26:31 Mk 14:27 Jn 10:2,11(2),14,16 Heb 13:20 1 Pet 2:25 1 Pet 5:4 Rev 2:27 Rev 7:17 Rev 12:25 Rev 19:15	Mt 25:32 Lk 2:8,15,18,20	Mt 9:36 Mk 6:34 Jn 21:16	Acts 20:28 Eph 4:11 1 Pet 5:2 Jd 1:12 (false)	Lk 17:7 Jn 10:12 1 Cor 9:7

**OVERSEER = 11 USES (επισκοπος, επισκοπη, επισκοπεω—5, 4, AND 2, RESPECTIVELY)**

OF JESUS	OF NT PASTORS	OF JUDAS	OTHER USES
1 Pet 2:25	Acts 20:28 Phil 1:1 1 Tim 3:1,2 Tit 1:7 1 Pet 5:2	Acts 1:20	Lk 19:44 Heb 12:15 1 Pet 2:12

**ELDER = 72 USES (πρεσβυτερος, πρεσβυτεριον, πρεσβευω—66, 4, AND 2, RESPECTIVELY)**

OF PAUL & JOHN	OF THE LEADERS OF ISRAEL	OF NT PASTORS	OF THE 24 ELDERS OF REVELATION	OTHER USES
Eph 6:20 2 Jn 1:1 3 Jn 1:1	Mt 15:2 Mt 16:21 Mt 21:23 Mt 26:3,47,57 Mt 27:1,3,12,20,41 Mt 28:12 Mk 7:3,5 Mk 8:31 Mk 11:27 Mk 14:43,53 Mk 15:1 Lk 7:3 Lk 9:22 Lk 20:1 Lk 22:52,66 Acts 4:5,8,23 Acts 6:12 Acts 22:5 Acts 23:14 Acts 24:1 Acts 25:15 Heb 11:2	Acts 11:30 Acts 14:23 Acts 15:2,4,6,22,23 Acts 16:4 Acts 20:17 Acts 21:18 1 Tim 4:14 1 Tim 5:17,19 Tit 1:5 Jms 5:14 1 Pet 5:1,5	Rev 4:4,10 Rev 5:5,6,8,11,14 Rev 7:11,13 Rev 11:16 Rev 14:3 Rev 19:4	Lk 15:25 Jn 8:9 Acts 2:17 2 Cor 5:20 1 Tim 5:1,2