



Spiritual Gifts for Today



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THE transcendent nature of the present outflow of God's favor corresponds with the exaltation of Christ among the celestials. Because He is "up above all the heavens" (Eph. 4:10), we are raised to the heights supreme. It is not, indeed, as the English may suggest, that He is located in space at a point outside of and beyond the universe, for that is a palpable absurdity. As to space, the universe is made up of the earth and the heavens. The more accurate Greek makes it *of* the heavens, for He is the highest *of* the celestial hosts, not as to space, but as to dignity and glory. There can be no higher exaltation. He completes the universe (Eph. 4:10).

He Who descended into the lower parts of the earth has now ascended to the highest heavens. Just as the celestial aspect of the mystery of Christ is the basis of the secret economy, so now also, the completeness of Christ's sweep of all creation is the basis of our maturity. A complete revelation raises us to the plane of adults. Being associated with Christ in His headship of the whole universe the believers now have attained their majority.

The inauguration of the present administration of God's grace brought many changes with it. This called for an *adjusting* of the saints, in the language of inspiration (Eph. 4:12). It is figuratively presented as the change from minority to manhood (Eph. 4:13; 1 Cor. 13:10). The new celestial destiny severed the saints from earthly, physical blessing, which they had enjoyed

as guests of Israel's covenants. The new status of the nations demanded that their spiritual growth be completed, so that they may truly be the complements of Christ among the celestials.

The spiritual manifestations of so-called "gifts" give us a graphic illustration of the changes involved. The twelfth chapter of first Corinthians shows what the nations had before the mystery was revealed. The fourth of Ephesians tells us what gifts are ours today. There are great changes. Most of the early gifts were dropped in this adjustment. They are no longer needed. Two new ones were added. Three are carried over. Of the gifts which enter this administration, apostles, prophets, and teachers were known before. They link us with the past. Evangelists and pastors are unique, for they had not been classed as gifts before.

SPIRITUAL MANIFESTATIONS

1 Cor. 12:7-10	1 Cor. 12:28-29	1 Cor. 13:8	Eph. 4:11
<i>By the spirit for expedience</i>	<i>By God in the ecclesia</i>	<i>Abrogated by maturity</i>	<i>Given by Lord for adjusting</i>
wisdom	1. apostles	prophecies	apostles
knowledge	2. prophets	languages	prophets
faith	3. teachers	knowledge	evangelists
healing	powers		pastors
powerful deeds	healing		teachers
prophecy	supports		Eph. 2:20
discrimination	pilotage		<i>In the</i>
of spirits	languages		<i>foundation</i>
languages	(future tran- scendence)		apostles
translation			prophets

The accompanying lists of the spiritual endowments given in Paul's ministry will help us to compare and study these "gifts." First we have the nine gifts which were temporary expedients during the transitional era between the pentecostal administration and the present. These are individual manifestations of the spirit. Next we have eight corporate endowments, connected with membership in the body of Christ. These are arranged

in the order of their rank. Note particularly that the first three—apostles, prophets, and teachers—are found again in Ephesians. Then we have a special list of those which were to be discarded by the incoming of maturity. The last column gives us the facts in Ephesians. First we have the list of those given for adjusting the saints. Finally we find that two of these are confined to the foundation. This leaves three spiritual endowments today—evangelists, pastors, and teachers.

It is worth every effort needed to clear up the relation between the gifts in first Corinthians and Ephesians. Two extreme and opposing positions are based on untenable views of this relation. A large number of zealous believers claim that all of the gifts may still be appropriated by faith and that many are in exercise today. As in Corinth, they emphasize the gift of "tongues." Healing is also pressed. On the other hand, some cut off Corinthians entirely, claiming that we have absolutely no connection with them. We are told that the dispensation of the mystery is unique, and is neither a blend nor a development of Corinthians, but a newly *created* thing, far above all. In contrast with both of these positions, the Scriptures, both in Corinthians and Ephesians, illustrate the relation between the two by the figures of *minority* and *maturity*. This is the key to the subject.

This figure avoids both extremes. It is in harmony with the fact that some of the gifts were present in the past which are ours today. It agrees with the setting aside of the lesser gifts and the retention of the greater. It accords with the character of the gifts which have been retained and those which have been repudiated. Paul and others were apostles and teachers in Corinthians and remained such in Ephesians. They were not reappointed, as though their previous services were not recognized. The figure of a new creation is not in point here. A man is not recreated when he reaches maturity.

Some things remain as they were. Others are dropped because they are suited only to minority.

The believers among the nations had been enjoying some things, as the guests of Israel's promise covenants, which find no appropriate place among the spiritual, celestial blessings which characterize the present grace. Perhaps if such a change should be brought about in these days we would call it a reorganization. If a great business should change the sphere of its operations and the character of its products, some of its machinery would become useless and be discarded. Its system of doing business would be revised to suit the new conditions. So it was when this charter of our faith was first given. Some things were entirely dropped, others merely modified. Physical benefits vanished. Earthly disabilities disappeared. In Paul's preparatory epistles the believers are seen in the period of adolescence. They verge upon manhood. Some of the gifts given them at that time were the relics of childhood. Others were intended to develop them into manhood. The youth learns to talk and to care for his physical frame. These are represented by the gifts of healing and "tongues." The principal task of adolescence is the schooling and training for the duties of life. It is concerned with self-development, not with the care of others or the duties of maturity.

GIFTS FOR EXPEDIENCE

The manifestations of the spirit, given to the Corinthians, were *expedients* (1 Cor. 12:7). Let us not miss this inspired characterization, which assures us that they were not ideal, permanent endowments, but only temporary measures to fill a lack which has since been supplied. "Now to each one is being given the manifestation of the spirit, *with a view to expedience.*" The Authorized Version rendering, "profit" is misleading, though of course it is not untrue. Expedients are resorted to because they are profitable or helpful for a time. This

word, *sumpherō*, they translate *profit* seven times, and seven times *expedient*. Another word, *oninēmi*, means *profit*. The loss of an eye or a hand can hardly be called *profitable*, though it may be *expedient* (Matt. 5:29, 30). It was *expedient* for the Lord to go away (John 16:7). Absence is not His permanent condition. All is allowed us, but not all is *expedient* (1 Cor. 6:12). In every occurrence there is but a transient advantage gained by expedience.

This is confirmed by the fact that *none of these endowments are reaffirmed in Ephesians*. They are suited to the times of transition which introduced the present grace. It is put beyond all question by the further fact that *all three of the gifts which are definitely discarded are found in this list of expedient spiritual endowments* (1 Cor. 12:7-10). These are prophecy, languages, and knowledge (13:8). They were necessary at that time, but such expedients are no longer needed since the present administration has been fully established. Instead of giving a few individuals supernatural fragments of information, God has completed the whole circle of knowledge in His latest revelation. This is open to all. Now each believer has access to all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, in Christ.

The more we know of the transitional era which accompanied Paul's early ministries, the more we see the necessity of temporary spiritual manifestations to tide the believers over into the present grace. Although we now have a record of this period in Paul's earlier epistles, as well as the full revelation which closed it, how few of the believers are really clear about it! Since early times the church has found this period prolific in confusion, for few understood that it was not a permanent part of the present. If this is so, how difficult must it have been for those who lived in those changing times to keep step with God's operations! There was no finally formulated system of truth, as we now have it in Ephesians. God

was still occupied with Israel. If we lived in an era in which God was winding up one system of truth while He was unfolding another, there would be more excuse for confusion than there is. They needed temporary help to tide them over the time of transition.

The expedients are of two different kinds. Some linked them on to the kingdom and the powers of the coming eon. These were *powerful deeds, healing, languages and translation*. These will find their fullest fulfillment in the millennium. Humanly speaking, if Israel had not rejected the Messiah in Acts, these gifts would have flourished more and more, yet they would be exercised only in subordination to Israel. They could not continue when Israel was set aside. The other gifts linked them to the approaching change, when Israel should be rejected. Without knowing what was in store for them, they would naturally fall into folly and ignorance. Hence some were specially endowed with knowledge and wisdom. Their faith would fail, as did that of so many in Israel, as the kingdom receded. There was need of the gift of prophecy, to receive direct word from God. Spirits must be discriminated, lest they be led contrary to God's intention. All of these gifts are displayed in Paul's epistles to them. All of the other group were found exemplified in the narrative of Acts, which begins with a special exhibition of "tongues" and ends with a notable example of healing (28:8).

But do we not need all of these things today? As our blessings are spiritual, among the celestials, we cannot claim the physical endowments of the coming eon. Instead of healing we are given grace for our infirmities. Instead of power we are promised weakness (2 Cor. 12:9). Languages are directly denied to an era of maturity (1 Cor. 13:8). Wisdom and knowledge, faith, and prophecy, and the discrimination of spirits may be greatly needed today, but they are no longer individual gifts. All the wisdom and knowledge we need is found

in the secret now revealed. That is God's final word to us. No gift of prophecy is needed (1 Cor. 13:8). And by this completed revelation we may test all spirits. The dispensation in which we now live abrogates all of the spiritual manifestations which the apostle so carefully labeled *expedients*.

We are not aware that this point has been pressed before. Hence we wish to urge it upon all who believe God. Many lines of reasoning may be developed to show that these gifts are no longer with us, but none should appeal to the man of God as the word here used by the holy Spirit. Before we are even told that these gifts existed, their temporary character is asserted. This will be enough for everyone who wishes to believe God. We do not doubt that there are spiritual manifestations today which seem to correspond to the lesser gifts. Such there were even in those days. A special gift was needed to discriminate the spirits. If this endowment existed today it would unhesitatingly class all of these as the work of deceiving spirits. It is an effort to engross the believers with the things of minority in order to keep them from attaining majority, which is the primary object of the real gifts we have today.

Let us note carefully the opposite effect, the direct contrast, between the modern "gifts"—healing and tongues—and those given us by God. The former drag us back to childhood; the latter bring us to manhood. Pastors, evangelists, and teachers are given "toward the adjusting of the saints for the work of dispensing, for the upbuilding of the body of Christ, unto the end that we should all attain to the unity of the faith and of the realization of the son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature of Christ's complement, that we may by no means still be minors, surging hither and thither and being carried about by every wind of teaching..." (Eph. 4:12-14). Languages are listed by God as the least of all the gifts of minority. True pastors,

evangelists and teachers lead in the contrary direction, toward maturity. That is their special function if they are faithful.

There are many methods of testing God's servants today which are without warrant in the Word. Success sometimes signifies failure in God's sight. Here, however, we have God's standard. Here He tells us what He expects. The test we should apply is found in this passage. Do they dispense that which edifies the body of Christ, so that all have one faith and realize their sonship and maturity in Christ? Alas! the very idea of maturity is unknown to many and their ministry is more calculated to make infants out of full-grown believers than to make mature saints out of minors. Let us note that *the prime object of the gifts we now possess is to lead the saints beyond the lesser gifts which characterized minority*. We are mature in Christ! Let us not relapse into infancy!

MAJORING TOWARD TRANSCENDENCE

THE eight spiritual endowments placed in the ecclesia by God are not introduced as expedients, hence we find that three of them enter the present administration. The notable point is that these three are expressly put at the head of the list and numbered, lest they should be misplaced. "*First*, apostles, *second*, prophets, *third*, teachers, thereupon..." (1 Cor. 12:28). Furthermore, the other gifts are discounted by the exhortation, "Be zealous for the greater graces." This is followed by a statement which practically repudiates the lesser gifts. In confirmation of this we read that the last and least—languages—is to *cease* (1 Cor. 13:8). The five unnumbered gifts, powers, healing, supports, pilotage, languages, are not suited to the present era of transcendence (1 Cor. 12:31).

ABROGATED BY MATURITY

Prophecies, languages, knowledge are the gifts which are expressly discarded in the thirteenth chapter of first Corinthians. All three are found in the first series which are expedient, and one—languages—is also the last of the second group, which is arranged according to rank. The gift of "tongues," therefore, is the least of all the gifts. But the path of transcendence which we now tread does not merely discard the signs of the coming eon, as languages and powers and healing, but also abrogates prophecies and the gift of knowledge. The reason given

is that these were but installments and, in the impending era (in which we now dwell), such fragmentary revelations will be unnecessary because God will have given a full-orbed prophecy embracing all knowledge. Such we have in this Ephesian epistle.

The fact that the gift of prophecy has been abrogated is evident from the many modern attempts to supplement God's revelation. All who have sought to add to God's Word have only manifested their ignorance of what He has already revealed. I would advise those who imagine that they have a direct message from God to get a grasp of the Ephesian letter. They will find His Word final and complete. It is sufficient for every present need. The gift of prophecy, or the power to speak as the mouth-piece of God, has been abrogated. The only prophets in this economy are in the foundation, and all that they might reveal is already spread out before us in the epistles of Paul, the greatest prophet of them all.

A distinction should be maintained between the gift of prophecy, as one of the spirit's manifestations, which was given for individual exercise in the ecclesia, and the office of prophet, as given to the ecclesia to *complete the Word of God*. Paul was the great apostle and prophet through whom the truth was given in permanent form and incorporated in the Scriptures. The fragmentary prophecies were temporary expedients, but the gift of prophecy remains with us, in spiritual form, in the sacred scrolls. The prophet is found in the foundation. His prophecies, unlike those earlier manifestations of which we have no record, are written for all to read.

In the Corinthian letter we notice that some gifts are discounted, though not forbidden. The gift of languages, or "tongues," together with interpretation is last on the lists, and is discouraged. The apostle declares he would rather speak five words with his mind, to instruct others, than ten thousand in a language which they could not understand (1 Cor. 14:19). He gives notice that it is

only a temporary endowment, for it would *cease* (1 Cor. 13:8). It is not included in the latest list, given in Ephesians (Eph. 4:1). It is beyond question that the "gift of tongues" is the least adapted to maturity.

The testimony of the Scriptures is sufficient, and I am not adding what follows to confirm it. It may, however, be helpful to those who do not clearly see that this gift has ceased, and who appeal to its presence as a fact. I have lived for about a score of years at the very center of the tongues movement and have had ample opportunity to hear it exercised. I have listened most carefully, each time I have heard, in order to determine if the utterance had the characteristics of language. It never has. There is usually a tell-tale repetition of sounds, such as one who is imitating a foreign tongue would use, after a slight acquaintance with it. No one who has a knowledge of a variety of languages has any reason to suppose that the "gift of tongues" today is a real language at all.

We do not need to turn to Ephesians to prove that most of the gifts were temporary and unsuited to the present economy. That is the burden of first Corinthians. Not only does the thirteenth chapter definitely name some which were to be abrogated, or cease, but the twelfth chapter, in which they are cataloged, just as definitely labels them as expedients, or turns us from some of them to a path suited to transcendence (1 Cor. 12:31). Is it not remarkable that these two warnings, one before and one immediately following the lists of the gifts, should have been so insistently ignored or obliterated by mistranslation and misinterpretation, that the object of God's spiritual endowments has been actually reversed? Almost everywhere the believers are enticed back to babyhood instead of being built up into Christ.

It is commonly supposed that the thirteenth of first Corinthians contrasts our present experience with our future glory in resurrection. Now we are supposed to

see in a glass darkly, but then face to face (1 Cor. 13:12). Then we shall know as we are known. This popular and erroneous interpretation has practically robbed us of the true teaching of the chapter. The apostle is not comparing our experience in this life with that in the next. He is comparing the dispensation before it with that of the present. That was minority. This is maturity. Then matters were dimly seen which now are clear and plain. Now knowledge is not being doled out in installments. We have a full revelation since the mystery has been revealed.

The fourth of Ephesians gives us the gifts for the present. The mere fact that most of the endowments listed in Corinthians are not repeated here does not prove that they are abrogated. That would not be sufficient ground for discarding them. We must intelligently consider what is said about them in Corinthians. We must recognize the fact that the time of maturity has come. Then we will see why it is that the lesser gifts cannot enter this era of transcendence. Then we will exult in their disappearance. We will thankfully take our place as mature men, and refuse even the appearance of immaturity.

APOSTLES AND PROPHETS

Of the five gifts which belong to this administration, three have continued and two are in the foundation. Apostles and prophets were imperative needs for its inauguration. God's mind must be made known by His spokesmen, and it must be accompanied with all the authority of God's commissioner. Since Paul, the greatest of all the prophets and apostles of this economy, has made a permanent record of the new revelation in his epistles, these have served the purpose of prophets and apostles. *They remain with us, in spirit, in these writings.* The evidence for their absence among us is not merely the lack of accredited men, but the statement that

these gifts are confined to the foundation (Eph. 2:20). A prophet who could not add to Paul's epistles would be useless. All who have tried it have proven to be false.

EVANGELISTS, PASTORS, TEACHERS

God's gifts today are three in number, the evangelist to preach to the world, the pastor to care for the saints, and the teacher to edify the body of Christ. The great weakness in Christendom today lies in the attempt to combine all three in a single cleric, who must entertain and shepherd saint and sinner alike, who seldom is gifted in more than one way, and often in none. With a rising tide of spirituality there has usually followed a separation of these ministries. Evangelists leave all else for their message to the unbeliever, and teachers arise and conventions are held for the one purpose of edifying the saints. In seasons of spiritual refreshing these divine manifestations come to the front.

In these last days the special need is for teachers who are themselves mature and who can establish the saints by dispensing the grace which has come to them by the revelation of the mystery. Alas! most of those who are giving religious instruction today are bringing their hearers into the bondage of law and ceremony, or occupying them with the affairs of minority, and are thus dragging the believers down when they should be building them up. Here we have the divine test of the true teacher. Does he correspond to Ephesians 4:12-14? Is he adjusting, dispensing, upbuilding, unifying, giving the realization of sonship, maturity, and adulthood? These are the seven signs of the ideal teacher.

Most of the believers today need adjusting quite as much as those to whom Ephesians was addressed. Their doctrine and experience is limited to the teaching of our Lord while on earth, or his apostles in the book of Acts. Under the false impression that "the church began at Pentecost," they seek to utilize the varying presenta-

tions which follow it to determine their creed and practice. Others go further and seek to include some of the teachings of Paul's earlier epistles, notwithstanding the grave differences between the two. How few go to Paul's final presentations and modify even his previous ministries to accord with these transcendent truths! This is the task of the true teacher today. He must, first of all, be an adjuster.

He must also be a dispenser. Much of the teaching we hear fails to emphasize the grace of God and the gratuitous character of His gifts. He is not running a bargain counter or a commercial enterprise, but a free dispensary. Very few believers even know what He has for them. It is the duty of the teacher to put them into possession of their riches in Christ Jesus.

He must edify, or build up, the body of Christ. This is a vastly different matter from entertaining the members of a church or the adherents of a denomination. The teacher who merely recognizes the fact that there is a spiritual organism to which all believers belong, irrespective of creed or affiliation, is edifying or building up the body of Christ. The teacher who ignores it or displaces it by human organizations is demolishing the one body. He who discounts human associations, and presses upon the believers their place in that marvelous organism of which Christ alone is Head, is a God-given gift, fulfilling the work of building up the body.

Many are the attempts which have been made to unite the saints. The true basis of such a unity is the one faith which we have today, which is set forth in this epistle. The cause of the divisions is the multiplicity of beliefs resulting from ignorance of this consummating revelation. If it were God's intention to make us all one before Christ comes again, He would probably call for teachers to make known the truths of this economy. This is a test of the ideal teacher. Does his message lead to the unity of all in Christ? Or does it divide the be-

lievers into classes? Especially, does it form a special, superior clique of all who heed his teaching? Let us remember that, if we all believed God we would be one in fact as we are in truth.

Sonship is a much higher thought than that conveyed by the figure of the new birth. Indeed, Paul leaves that illustration to the kingdom proclamation. He makes us a new creation, rather than a regeneration. Sonship is not necessarily based on birth. It may be obtained by adoption. It does not figure mere relationship, but the honors granted only to the heir when he comes of age, and is invested with the highest dignities which his father can bestow. It is vastly more to be a son of God than a child. A teacher in this economy should press this point, so that the saints may realize their sonship (Eph. 4:13).

The crowning result of true teaching today has already been elaborated. It brings the believers to mature manhood, to the adult stature of Christ's complement (Eph. 4:13). This can be accomplished only by showing them the immature character of previous economies, and the fullness which is theirs in Christ in this transcendent administration. It is only as they realize that they have outgrown much that God once gave, and that, in Christ, they have attained their full stature, that they are fitted to stand steadfast in the midst of the turmoil in which they find themselves. False teaching carries them about (Eph. 4:14), the true establishes them in grace.

The phrase "systematizing of the deception" (Eph. 4:14) is a most apt description of modern methods of maintaining error. Isolated departures from truth are difficult to promulgate. They must be worked up into a philosophic system in order to become popular. The great theologies are systematized to agree with their main position, which may be a half-truth. Many of the movements of the day which appeal to the Bible for support, have so systematized their deceptions that they

appear to rest on divine revelation. They seem to have enough contacts in the Scriptures to give them the appearance of truth. However the mature believer will not be deceived by them.

The path of transcendence is the way of love, as the apostle shows in the thirteenth of first Corinthians. So it is in Ephesians (4:15, 16). It is further figured by the human frame, all parts of which are in loving sympathy with all the rest, through the head. Christ is Head of the body now, and the believers are its members. There is a vital union, which makes us one with Him and with every other member. All real growth and service in the church today has this for its basis. Its motive is love. Its impulse is from the Head. Its end is the upbuilding of the body.

In this meditation we have found that the revelation of the Ephesian secret was accompanied by the incoming of maturity. Minority prevailed before, even among the Pauline ecclesias. Hence many of the gifts are discarded and only a few enter this economy. Teachers are specially given to lead the believers into a realization of the fact that they have outgrown the immaturities of past eras, and are now mature in Christ. It is our privilege to tread the path of transcendence. May God grant that many who read these lines will enter that path in conscious appreciation of the privileges of their majority.

SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS

"Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who blesses us with every spiritual blessing among the celestials, in Christ.

(Eph.1:2,3)

"GRACE to you and peace from God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." Divine favor, and the weal it works, is the height of human blessedness. The usual Eastern salutation was *Peace!* It was a wish for welfare in all things. Paul always prefaces it with *grace*. This is the keynote of our relationship to God and Christ in all of Paul's epistles. And he does not only wish us to have it, but he proceeds to present it to us. This is especially true of the epistle before us. In it the grace of God is not only the first to greet us as we enter, but enriches us with its lavish redundancy to the very end.

Nowhere is this invocation more fitting than here, for it introduces us immediately to the grandest and most glorious exhibition of divine favor which ever illumines God's love, either in the past, the present, or those wondrous future eons which are the special display of His power and perfections.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who blesses us with every spiritual blessing among the celestials, in Christ." With inimitable

wisdom the whole message of this epistle is compressed into these two introductory phrases, *every spiritual blessing* and *among the celestials*. All the rest may be referred to these two themes. The secret itself begins with a repetition of the first, for everything said to be "joint" is *in spirit* (Eph.3:6). And the three items of the Ephesian secret are entirely dependent on the fact that our blessings are not on earth, but *among the celestials*.

The strongest possible stress, however, is laid on the statement that our blessings are *spiritual*. It is difficult to see how greater emphasis could be given this foundation fact. Ephesians, the fullest exposition of God's present dealings with the nations, opens with this striking declaration, and it is confirmed at every step. The believers among the nations have become joint enjoyers because they were sealed with the spirit of promise (1:13). In flesh, they were apart from Christ (2:12). Access to the Father's presence is by spirit (2:18). We repeat, the mystery itself is limited to the realm of spirit. It is only *in spirit* that we are joint allottees, and a joint body and joint partakers.

The full force of this phrase will not dawn on us until we have fully considered its implications. When we say that our blessings are among the celestials, nothing is actually said of our place on earth, but the mere mention of the higher sphere is the most conclusive evidence that our blessings are *not* on earth. So with the character of our bliss. The word *spiritual* is contrastive. It insists that the physical and the soulish have no place in our blessedness.

In the Kingdom Israel will have spiritual blessings, but they will be mingled with all the delights which we can only sip, because of the frailty of our mortal frames. Disease and death, which crush our efforts to

quaff the cup of pleasure to the full, will be defeated. The paradise, the "heaven" of which men dream, will be on earth.

Our blessings are above all this. It is not really right to say that we will have no physical or soulish blessings, because this would indicate a lack, a loss, a deficiency. The positive statement that we have every spiritual blessing, in Christ, gives us the gold that makes silver and copper of no account. So superior is the spiritual bliss that all need, all desire, for the inferior felicity will vanish. At present we do not apprehend this. We long for the lower delights. But they are not ours in Christ. Just as we will be satisfied with being "confined" in a universe and leave the earth for Israel, so we will be supremely content with our transcendent spiritual felicity and leave the physical pleasures to the earthly people.

We must also read this phrase in the light of the previous position of those to whom it was written. They had already enjoyed some spiritual and physical blessings, in anticipation of the future Kingdom, in which they were supposed to have a part. There is a change in two directions. Their place in flesh vanishes and leaves them no title to physical felicity. Their place in spirit develops until it includes the very limits of spiritual bliss.

It is evident that these phrases, "spiritual blessings" and "among the celestials," are new revelations, and denote a change in God's dealings with the believers among the nations. The celestial destiny was not made known before, though much had been revealed in preparation for it, as we shall see when we consider the phrase more closely. So also, the exclusively spiritual character of our blessings had not been previously expressed, yet there had been a constant trend in their

direction, from the very first indication that God was doing a distinct work among the nations. They were weaned from the physical gradually. Here we have the climax, for all physical precedence must be set aside in the administration of the mystery.

Parabolically, we are given a graphic representation of the retirement of the flesh and the ascendancy of the spirit in the apostle's personal career. From his call to his severance at Pisidian Antioch, his ministry was based entirely in his physical presence. He spoke by word of mouth only, he wrote no epistle. Later, when he went among the nations, he supplemented his personal presence by writing to the Thessalonians, and to the Corinthians, and to the Galatians, and to the Romans. But before he writes to the Ephesians he is put in prison. Physically, he is retired from service. Only by his epistles he held spiritual communion with the saints. It is a parable of the spirit's gradual ascendancy over his fleshly presence in the ministry.

As we shall see, this is often enforced in his writings, and it is even emphasized in the account of his ministry in Acts. His very severance was by the direct decree of the holy Spirit, and he is sent forth in the same way (Acts 13:2,3). This is in undoubted contrast to our Lord's method with the twelve apostles. These He separated and sent forth during His physical presence on the earth.

Those who can see beneath the surface will discover continual intimations of the tendency toward spirit throughout Paul's acts. Consider the marked contrast between his long personal sojourn in Ephesus and his last visit. He did not even go to the site of the city, but called the elders to meet him at Miletus (Acts 20:17). He told them that they would see his face no more. Physically, he faded from their view, never to return.

Spiritually, he came to them again in this epistle (for it undoubtedly was sent to Ephesus, too). They were pained to part with him, but who can tell what joy he brought to them in his spiritual return?

The prophesy of Agabus (Acts 21:11) points in the same direction. Its very wording is significant. "This the *holy Spirit* is saying, 'The man whose girdle this is, shall the Jews in Jerusalem be binding thus, and they shall be giving him over into the hands of the nations'." The holy Spirit is the speaker. The girdle speaks of service. It was the action of the Jews in Jerusalem which was forcing the flesh to retire. They were compelling Paul to enter a ministry to the nations in which his flesh would have no place. All this is graphically represented, not only by the action of Agabus, but by the actual occurrence.

Have we ever fully realized the meaning of Paul's imprisonment at the close of Acts? Have we comprehended the significance of the fact that the perfection epistles come to us from a *prisoner* — a man who cannot claim or dispense physical benefits, or serve by means of his personal presence? There is a close accord between the circumstance and the substance of all revelation. While Paul's flesh is being confined, his spirit is set free.

THE SPIRIT IN THIS ECONOMY

The great change in the operation of the Spirit can be understood only when we carefully consider the force of the terms used. We read of the Spirit *coming on* for power, of *filling* for utterance, of *baptism* for cleansing, of *sealing* for safety, of the *earnest* as a pledge, and of *homíng* for communion. The first of these, *coming on* for power, Paul never applies to the nations. The last, *homíng* for communion, which takes

its place, is used only by Paul, in view of the impending climax of Ephesians. Instead of receiving an occasional visitation, the believers among the nations become the permanent home of the holy Spirit. This is not for the operation of miraculous displays, but for the maintenance of constant fellowship. Almost all of these are continually confused with the baptism of the Spirit, which we will consider first.

THE BAPTISM OF THE SPIRIT

What is the baptism in holy Spirit? Aside from the promise given by John the Baptist (Matt.3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33) that they would be baptized in holy Spirit at the coming of Christ, and our Lord's declaration that they should be baptized with holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 1:5), we have only one other mention of Spirit baptism in the Scriptures. This is Paul's declaration that, "in one Spirit we all are baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slave or free" (1 Cor.12:13).

If we allow an interpretation of this phrase which is often heard, that the baptism of the Spirit is known only when evidenced by miraculous manifestations, we are confronted with a serious difficulty at the outset. We know that many are members of the body of Christ who have never experienced some of these supernatural signs, yet we are assured by the apostle that *all* who are members of Christ's body have become such by the baptism of the Spirit. We must either deny that all who are members of Christ have this baptism or modify our conception of its meaning to accord with the experience of all who are His.

Baptism in water was the type or symbol of the spiritual reality. It spoke of *cleansing* and *union*. It was ceremonial washing, and associated its subjects by

a common bond. Saul of Tarsus washed away his sins (Acts 22:16). The sons of Israel were baptized into Moses (1 Cor.10:2). These two thoughts — cleansing and unity — are only typified by water, but realized in spirit. The disciples were cleansed on the day of Pentecost and the believers in Corinth were united into one body by the baptism of Spirit.

There is not the least suggestion of power in the term baptism — either in water or in Spirit. John the baptist wrought no miracles, neither did his baptized disciples. Those who were baptized by our Lord’s followers received no enduement. His apostles and disciples needed a special commission to enable them to cast out demons, cure the sick or strengthen the infirm. Their baptism conferred no power. The same is true of the antitype. The baptism of the Spirit does not endue the believers with might. It only *cleanses* and *unifies*.

At first sight, this seems to be contradicted by the record in Acts. Did not the Lord say that they would be baptized in holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 1:5)? And did not the holy Spirit come with power, accompanied with tongues of fire and the gift of languages? This is true. At Pentecost they were not only *baptized in* holy Spirit, but the holy Spirit *came on* them (Acts 1:8) and they were *filled* with holy Spirit (Acts 2:4). The power was not due to baptism but to the other manifestations of the Spirit’s presence.

Consider carefully the two distinct promises given by our Lord concerning Pentecost. First He said, “*You shall be baptized in holy Spirit after not many of these days.*” Then, when the testimony to the Kingdom is before Him, He says, “*But you shall be obtaining power at the coming of the holy Spirit on you, and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in entire*

Judea and Samaria, and as far as the limits of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Power is not associated with baptism, but with the *on-coming* of the Spirit. The figures are opposites. Baptism is a *dipping in*. Power springs from a *coming on*.

The same important distinction is manifest in the twelfth chapter of First Corinthians. The baptism of the Spirit is the ground of *unity*, not of *power*. The Spirit is the *channel* of the graces, which it gives and operates. What a vast difference between this thought and the *dipping* of all *in* the Spirit! O that we could clear away the cloudy conceptions which are confusing so many believers today! The baptism of the Spirit has become connected with so much which is unwarranted by the Word that it has become the cause of division, rather than unity. We beg of all to search and see that *baptism never brings power*. It never is the source of Spirit manifestations. It is used only of cleansing and consequent unity.

The perversion of the doctrine of Spirit baptism should be a helpful warning to those whose hearts yearn to know and obey the will of God, for it points out how easily we may deflect from the truth unless we use the utmost care and accuracy in considering the inspired records. It shows how easily we may reason from false and insufficient premises, and found a great movement on a figment of human imagination. Power came down at Pentecost. The disciples were baptized in holy Spirit at that time. But this does *not* prove that one was the consequence of the other. The fact that power was promised in connection with the coming on of the Spirit, and is never associated with baptism, disproves it. Yet what a marvelous movement is based upon this blunder! An untold amount of teaching concerning the operation of God's

holy Spirit is centered around this serious error. Good men and godly find it a challenge to their faith, and they seek to make it their own. The lesson we should learn is the stupendous importance of trifling departures from the Word. For the enemy ever seeks to deceive and seduce God's chosen ones.

The great lesson for service in this economy of God's grace is almost the reverse of that which obtains at Pentecost. That power did not continue. Let anyone trace the exhibition of power through the book of Acts and he will be convinced that, as the Kingdom hope vanishes, power also departs. At the beginning the twelve are mightily endued and are able to brave the opposition of their rulers. At the end they have been forced from the holy city and their cause is lost. Only a lone apostle, a prisoner in Rome, remains as God's ambassador. All the power he has, lies in this weakness.

That is the great lesson which is needed today. God's strength is now being perfected in infirmity. God is working with weak instruments so that the glory may be His. Great power would disqualify us. It is one of the special excellencies of grace that it operates more freely in infirmity than in strength. God can, and has, wrought great things through those whom He has empowered. He is doing far greater marvels through the feeble, the faint, those who cannot claim a share in the glory of His achievements. Let us, like Paul at the close of his career, boast in our lack of physical power, for then we are more acceptable servitors of His grace.

THE "COMING ON" OF THE SPIRIT

In ancient times the Spirit of the Lord *came upon* those who were His instruments. Balaam prophesied under its power (Num.24:2). Othniel delivered Israel

(Judges 3:10), and Gideon acted in its strength (Judges 6:34). When Samuel anointed David the Spirit of Jehovah came upon him from that day forward (1 Sam.16:13). His captain, Amasai, had the Spirit come upon him (1 Chron.12:18). The Spirit of God came upon Azariah the prophet, and he encouraged Asa to put away the idols out of the land (2 Chron.15:1,8), as well as on Zechariah the priest, who was stoned in the court of the temple (2 Chron.24:20,21). The Spirit of Jehovah fell on Ezekiel (Ezek.11:5); He worked, not by an army, nor by power, but by His Spirit (Zech.4:6).

This same *coming on* is continued as the *power* of God's operations when Christ and His apostles were proclaiming the Kingdom. He Himself was generated in this way (Luke 1:35). Such was the power of Pentecost (Acts 1:8). But never, in all of Paul's career, does the Spirit operate in this way. It is not now an occasional outpouring. The Spirit is not outside of us. It dwells in us. It is there, not to work miracles, but to vivify every act of these mortal bodies (Rom.8:11).

At Pentecost the Spirit *came on* them for power, *filled* them for utterance, and they were *baptized in* it for cleansing. The baptism and the filling continue, but the coming on is replaced by another nearer and closer relationship which was not known at Pentecost. Only in Paul's epistles do we read that the Spirit is *making its home* in the believers (Rom.8:9,11; 1 Cor.3:16; 2 Tim.1:14). Instead of an occasional visitation it has a settled habitation.

As this operation of the Spirit is most important in its contrast with the present method, we give a list of the passages in which it is referred to, so that the student may study them for himself. There is some variety in the imposition of the Spirit. It *falls* on the

proselytes (Acts 10:44; 11:15). It will be *poured* on Israel and all flesh in the coming Kingdom (Acts 2:17,18) as it was in the past on the believing proselytes (Acts 10:45). It is *placed* on Christ (Matt.12:18). It *remains* on Him (Mark 1:10; John 1:32,33).

THE HOMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Up to the end of Acts the Spirit is found ON the saints: from Romans, through Paul's epistles, the holy Spirit makes its home IN the members of His body. This change is fraught with far-reaching significance. There is all the difference which we find in Israel's early history, where Jehovah manifested Himself in two distinct methods. He occasionally came upon men, such as Othniel and Gideon, David and Amasai, Zechariah and Ezekiel, energizing them for some superhuman effort. But He also made His home in the holy of holies. One was intermittent and temporary. The other was His permanent abode.

Since sin has invaded the universe God makes His home in inaccessible light (1 Tim.6:16), and in houses specially prepared and sanctified for His presence, such as the tabernacle of the wilderness, the temple of Solomon, the more glorious sanctuary of Ezekiel (Ezek.43), in the person of His Son (John 2:19-21) and, in this economy of transcendent grace, which anticipates the glories of the ultimate consummation, in the bodies of His believing people. In the time to come He will dwell in a temple made of living stones. They will be a part of His abode. We, each one, *are* His temple.

We need not doubt the reality of His homing in Israel's sanctuaries. Our common version is inaccurate in saying that the Most High *dwelleth* not in temples

made with hands. He is not now *dwelling*, or making His home in them. It is very true that He does not make His home in Ezra's building (Ezra 6:3), or Herod's house, or the temple of the end time (2 Thess.2:4). But we may be sure that the tabernacle and the temples of Solomon and Ezekiel are hallowed by the Shekinah. In the past He dwelt in houses made by men's hands, and He will deign to do so once again. But now He is not making His home in such structures, but in bodies made by Himself as the Creator and hallowed by the sacrifice of Christ.

The figure of the temple is transferred to our bodies by the apostle. "Are you not aware that you are the temple of God and the Spirit of God is making its home in you?" (1 Cor.3:16). As the presence of Jehovah sanctified the temple, so we also are holy because we are His home. This is the true basis and power of holiness. It is not in ourselves, but in Him Who homes in us.

The homing of the Spirit is set forth most fully in the eighth of Romans (verses 9-11). There we read, "Yet *you* are not in flesh, but in spirit, if so be that God's Spirit is making its home in you Now if the Spirit of Him Who rouses Jesus from among the dead is making its home in you, He Who rouses Christ Jesus from among the dead will also vivify your mortal bodies because of His Spirit making its home in you." This is the marvelous and continual miracle of the Spirit in this economy. It gives life to the dead. We should be in constant enjoyment of resurrection power, which makes the body of sin, though dead, the instrument of righteousness.

The Spirit homing within us, not only hallows our mortal frame and gives it life, but also guards that which He has committed to us. Paul charged Timothy,

“Guard that ideal thing committed to you, through the holy Spirit making its home in us” (2 Tim.1:14). These three passages fully set forth the present place of the holy Spirit in contrast with its place in the past. Then its presence was occasional and extraordinary. Now it is the normal experience of all believers. Then God dwelt in temples, now He homes in those whom He has hallowed.

THE SEALING AND EARNEST OF THE SPIRIT

The sealing and earnest of the Spirit are also exclusively ours. In fact, as both are permanent and the earnest is a foretaste of the very blessings we are considering, these tokens could not be given to other believers. As these phases of the Spirit's operation will come before us at length a little later on (Eph.1:13), we will not unfold them at this point.

The full import of the phrase “spiritual blessings” cannot be obtained by reasoning. We are not able to formulate premises from which any safe deductions can be made. This may be illustrated by what may be termed the Kingdom argument, which is as follows: There are spiritual blessings in the Kingdom. We are in the “kingdom” (Col.1:13). Hence all of the spiritual blessings of the Kingdom are ours. This is beautifully simple and convincingly logical, if only the premises were true.

The “kingdom” in which we find ourselves today is, in some ways, a contrast to the Kingdom of the heavens. That will destroy and displace the kingdoms now on earth. That will rescue mankind from human rule and deliver them into the Kingdom of Christ, as the Son of Mankind. “The kingdom of the Son of His love” delivers us out of the jurisdiction of darkness into a realm which in no way interferes with our sub-

jection to the powers that be. It is a strictly spiritual kingdom, in opposition to Satan's present sovereignty.

That it is not even the spiritual counterpart of the millennial Kingdom is evident from the title used. The "kingdom" of the *Son* (Heb.1:8) is not to be referred to the thousand years, but to the "eon of the eon" — the succeeding eon, in the new creation. The reason doubtless lies in the fact that, in that future "kingdom" of the *Son*, unlike the millennium, there will be conciliation. God will be on terms of amity with all mankind. It is not the rule of the iron club, but of the scepter of the *Son* — a title of relationship and affection. Such is the future type of the present "kingdom" of the Son of His love (Col.1:13).

Without repeating all that we have written on the subject of the heavenly kingdoms, we wish to press the two great phases of the future sovereignty of the earth and their spiritual counterparts, so that we may not be misled by mistaken analogies.

As to *time*, let us note that the *Priest-Kingdom* of Christ and His saints is for the thousand years. This is commonly called the millennium. Let it be clearly noted that this has two distinct aspects toward the nations. It is a Melchizedec reign. Christ and Israel are intermediaries between God and the nations. They are *Priests* as well as *Kings*.

The spiritual counterpart of this period is found in Paul's earlier ministries, when he as a *priest* ministered the evangel of God to the nations, and as an ambassador conveyed the decrees of the elders to his converts. During this interval we find the powers of the coming Kingdom exercised by Paul himself and by those who received his message. There was blessing in body and soul as well as in spirit, but all in subordination to Israel.

But the reign of the saints is not limited to the millennium. That is only the first phase of the coming Kingdom. They are to reign for the eon of the eons, *but not as priests*. Priesthood vanishes in the new creation. The power of God's Christ is replaced by the loving sway of His Son. The present "kingdom" is the spiritual anticipation of this sovereignty. Hence it is called "the kingdom of the Son of His love" (Col. 1:13). The figure is continued in Colossians, for we are said to have deliverance and the pardon of sins, *in this "kingdom."*

Christendom has confused the spiritual counterparts with the future fulfillments, so that the coming Kingdom has been spiritualized away. Others have reversed this process, and have tried to make the Kingdom a present reality. Let it be ours to separate the coming phases, the Kingdom of Christ for a thousand years, the sovereignty of the Son, for the final eon, and the kingdom of the Father, after the eons are past. And let us also distinguish the anticipatory spiritual fulfillments. The Kingdom of Christ, and the powers of the millennial era do not illustrate *our* blessing. *The succeeding "kingdom" of the Son speaks of the present grace.* We are in a new creation.

Beyond this, let us note that the present "kingdom" is a figure of speech. There are certain points of likeness between that which we enjoy and that which will be the position of the nations in the new creation. We are not at liberty to define these similarities. This is done for us by the Spirit. The nations at that time will not be rescued from their human governors. Neither are we. They will be liberated from the thralldom of Satan and his hosts. So are we. We are rescued out of the jurisdiction of darkness (Col.1:13).

Godward, they will have deliverance and the par-

don of sins. *Considering ourselves under the figure of this "kingdom" of the Son*, we also have these blessings, for they are the only means of conciliation known to government.

These two aspects are the only ones which we have any right to press without doing violence to the laws of language and the Word of God. There are aspects of that "kingdom" of the Son which have no counterpart in the present. Indeed, they are contrary to this administration. For instance, Israel will still rule over the nations. That must not be imported into the present grace. Likewise, there will be physical felicities at that time to which we are strangers. These are not elaborated in the figure, hence we may lawfully deduce that they are *not* a part of the picture.

Even now, therefore, we have spiritual blessings among the celestials, though we have no physical blessings among terrestrials. Unknown, despised on earth, yet we are the first of its inhabitants to be freed from the fearful influence of the powers of darkness, who are hurrying humanity to its doom. They already recognize us as the supreme sovereigns of the universe, to whom, as members of the body of Christ, is pledged the pinnacle of creature bliss.

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