

ABOUT SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND STUFF

BY: BRAD CULLEN – FEBRUARY 5, 2003

ON SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND STUFF...

"Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant..." -Paul to some believers at Corinth. (I Cor. 12:1)

Because of the way Paul phrases some of what he writes that follows the above reference ...some people get the idea that they already have "a" spiritual gift... and they simply need to discover what it is. No few others ignore the entire topic because they don't think they are worthy enough to have received any spiritual gifts. Yet others place the title of "gift" on all sorts of natural or developed talents, e.g., "the gift of hospitality" and never get to the place of being able to operate in the presence and power of God's own Spirit.

Rather than recount Paul's list – let us simply understand that the Source of all Spiritual gifts... is God's own Spirit. The gifts are not to be worn as badges of accomplishment... in fact, they merely demonstrate that a person has broken beyond the pale of the natural into the realm of being a vessel used for God's purposes and for God's own honor and glory. A demonstration of "The Christ" operating in an individual beyond his own natural abilities. This does not mean that natural abilities cannot be dedicated to God's use. But let's transfer our focus to an entirely different level of contemplation... something that Jesus said... and all too few Christians understand or believe.

"He that believes in Me will perform the very same miracles you have seen Me perform and even greater miracles than I have performed. It is not I that performs miracles, no... it is the Father in Me who does it."

There it is in a nutshell. Back to Paul and his letter to some believers in Corinth... asking the question, "Do all work miracles? Do all perform healings? Do all speak in other languages that they have not learned by natural means? Do all have the ability to interpret these languages for the benefit of all?" These questions are written rhetorically... that is, Paul's answer is obviously "no." Following this, Paul says two things we should wake up to: 1) "Earnestly desire the greater gifts." 2) "And I show you a more excellent way..." (to exercise these gifts) – This is his introduction to what some refer to as the "love chapter" and misinterpret the message... as being that having "love" does away with the need for Spiritual Gifts. NOT SO! What Paul is clearly saying is that love is the basis for operating in the gifts... and without love they are nothing.

The opening of the 14th Chapter dispels any doubt. "Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, especially that Holy Spirit might speak through you! [emphasis mine]. He then goes into a rather long dissertation on speaking in languages that one has not learned by natural means... i.e., "tongues." During which he says, "I WISH YOU ALL SPOKE IN TONGUES." And... "I THANK GOD THAT I SPEAK IN TONGUES MORE THAN YOU ALL." In between these two sentences he lays down his rules for how tongues should be used during an assembly of believers. I suggest that anyone who has any question about "tongues" carefully read the 14th Chapter of I Corinthians... near the end of which is, "...and do not forbid to speak with tongues." Now let's get on with far more exciting stuff.

Jesus actually provides us with a formula for getting an increased amount of Spiritual power... that is, operating in the presence and power of Holy Spirit... so that we can say... "it is not I that does the works... it is the Father in me." In other words the fulfillment of Jesus' prophetic, "...anyone who believes in me will perform the same miracles you have seen me do."

Just to bring a bit of clarity into the discussion... Jesus said... God is a Spirit. We are so jammed up with traditions and doctrines about "the" Holy Spirit as being a separate part of the "Trinity" – that we waltz right on by the fact that the Father in us – is the presence of God... Spirit... Holy Spirit! Chew on that for a bit... and then let us move on.

When Jesus gave his "model prayer" in response to his disciples saying, basically, "How come you don't teach us to pray? After all, John taught his disciples to pray..."

Before we dissect this "prayer" in its entirety... thirteen verses of it... and the aforementioned "formula" for getting an increased amount of Spiritual power... let's look at the final verse which is the object of the entire prayer. Unfortunately we tend to forget, in our endeavor to have a "word-for-word" and "word-by-word" translation from the original languages into English, that the syntax of many languages other than English looks "reversed" to us. The English version of the old Hungarian maxim, "Throw your mother from the train a kiss," made into a humorous movie title... is a good case in point. Most Europeans who also speak English are very comfortable with the maxim – but didn't get the humor that Americans

instantly grabbed onto. The maxim, by the way, actually means “to honor your mother by saying goodbye before you leave on a long trip.

Back to the topic... the final verse of Jesus’ “formula” for acquiring more and more Holy Spirit presence and power:

“If you then, being less than perfect as you are, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!”

Again, we have a real problem with syntax... in the original it is clear that for our American ears... the meaning is, HOW MUCH MORE OF HIS OWN SPIRIT WILL THE FATHER GIVE TO THOSE WHO KEEP ON DEMANDING IT AS A LITTLE CHILD DEMANDS.

Our traditions and doctrine get in the way of what Jesus is actually saying in the original language. He is instructing us to impudently (without awe), persistently and continually DEMAND (the word in the original translated as “ask” is a financial term meaning demand on due) for more of God’s own gift... MORE OF HIS OWN PRESENCE. Don’t stop knocking and demanding until you see more evidence of his presence...

More on this topic is available to anyone who desires MORE of God’s own Spirit.

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