

TOO HOT TO HANDLE

26 Wisdom, Knowledge And Faith

Scripture Reading

1 Corinthians 12:1 – 11 and 27 – 31

What Are The Gifts OF The Spirit?

Last time we thought about the gifts of the Holy Spirit: where they come from, their character and their purpose.

When Paul wrote to the church at Corinth about spiritual gifts he did so because they had become a matter of controversy and a cause of problems.

He was concerned to emphasise the diversity of the gifts given by the Holy Spirit. There is only one Spirit but He distributes are many different gifts in the church. Some are more spectacular than others but they all work together to get the job done and the Spirit deliberately allots His gifts in such a way that we depend upon one another.

But what are the gifts? That is the question we will begin to answer this evening. Paul lists a good few examples in the chapter we read.

Wisdom

The first gift listed is “the word of wisdom through the Spirit.” We talked at length about wisdom when we studied the book of Proverbs. To be wise is to possess the ability to look at a situation and see the best way — God’s way — forward; to be wise is to do things God’s way. You will remember we also learned that wisdom is freely available to anyone who will seek it. God has given us all the wisdom that is necessary for life in His word.

Never the less, Paul includes “the word of wisdom” here in his list of spiritual gifts. It seems that there are some who, through the influence of the Holy Spirit, have a special ability to bring wisdom to bear. Solomon possessed such a gift and was renowned for it. Jesus displayed it in dealing with the traps His enemies laid for Him.

The tense of the verb “is given” suggests that this gift may not necessarily be given as a permanent possession. It could be that God will meet the need of one situation by granting the ability to impart wisdom to one member of the church on one occasion. On another occasion it may be someone else who manifests the gift — a possibility which helps us remember that the granting of gifts is not for the individual but for the body.

Question: Why do you think Paul says “word of wisdom through the Spirit,” rather than just “wisdom?”

Question: What do you see as the dangers that could arise when we start to say, “My gift?”

Knowledge

The second gift listed is “the word of knowledge through the Spirit.” Knowledge, like wisdom, is also freely available to all who will seek it so again the meaning here must be that there are some in the church who have a greater ability to speak words of knowledge.

Question: How do you think this gift would be manifested in the church?

Question: Some think that this gift refers to the granting of supernatural knowledge — a direct revelation of something that would otherwise be hidden, as when Peter knew that Ananias and Sapphira had sought to deceive the Holy Spirit. What do you think? What dangers does that view leave us vulnerable to?

Faith

Every believer has faith. Once again Paul must be pointing to some who have been granted a greater ability to exercise faith. But whatever their gift is it is neither credulity nor a mere optimistic outlook. Faith is rooted firmly in God’s character and promises. It is the confident assurance that God will do what He has said He will do and it is acting in the light of that assurance, no matter what.

Question: How would the gift of faith be seen at work in the church?

Linked To The Word

Wisdom, knowledge and faith, as portrayed throughout Scripture, are inextricably linked with the word of God. Wisdom and knowledge are revealed in it and faith is based upon it. This is true wherever wisdom, knowledge and faith are manifested and we have no reason to believe that it should be any different when some are granted a special gift by the Holy Spirit.

If we bear that in mind it will help us to be discerning. Not everyone who claims to have a special grant of wisdom, knowledge or faith from the Lord does. But how can we know? The answer is we can refer to the Bible. When someone says something that is truly wise we will be able to recognise it as being taught in Scripture. Knowledge will always be consistent with God's Word. When someone claims to have faith that something will happen he must also be able to answer the question, "And which written promise of God is that based upon?"

Next Week

Next week we will continue our look at some of the individual gifts listed in Scripture.