



The Gifts and Fruit of the Spirit

By: Anthony D. Palma

A number of questions are often raised concerning the distinction between the gifts and fruit of the Spirit. They are sometimes put in propositional form. The following are a few of these, together with a brief response.

1. “The greatest gift is love. Why seek any other gift?” But nowhere does the Bible speak of love as a gift. Nowhere is it found in any list of spiritual gifts. But it is clearly classified as a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22).
2. “The fruit are superior to the gifts.” But where does one find this in Scripture? Those who make this statement often pit fruit against gifts. God has ordained that both should be demonstrated in the lives of believers, without placing one in antithesis to the other. They are intended by God to be complementing, rather than competing, works of the Spirit.
3. “All Christians should have all the gifts.” This is clearly against the divine principle of variety in the Church. In enumerating the gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:8–10, Paul says, “To one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge ... to another faith ... and to another gifts of healing,” and so on (NASB). Furthermore, he asks, “Not all are apostles, are they? ... Not all are workers of miracles, are they? ... Not all speak with tongues, do they?” and so on. (The translation is mine, and correctly renders the Greek form of the questions, requiring a negative response.)
4. “The baptism in the Spirit is charismatic, not ethical, in nature.” It is indeed charismatic in nature, but it also has very important ethical dimensions. How can one be immersed in the Holy Spirit without that experience affecting his personal holiness?
5. “The baptism in the Spirit is a prerequisite for receiving spiritual gifts.” But where does one find this in Scripture? God’s people experienced virtually all the gifts in the centuries prior to the Day of Pentecost. It is more correct to say that the baptism in the Spirit heightens one’s spiritual sensitivity and receptivity, making him a more ready candidate for spiritual gifts. This is amply demonstrated by the fact that there is a much higher incidence of gifts among those baptized in the Spirit than among those who are not.

Distinction in Old Testament Prophecies

The events of the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) were the climax of a promise God made centuries before — that inauguration of the new covenant was also the beginning of the age of the Spirit. God promised through the prophet Ezekiel, “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them” (36:26,27). He also promised through Joel, “I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit” (2:28,29).

The promise given through Ezekiel is that all God’s people of the new covenant shall experience the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This indwelling of the Spirit will enable them to walk uprightly. It is directly related to the New Testament concept of the fruit of the Spirit. The promise given through Joel is of a different nature. In that prophecy the

outpouring of the Spirit is of a dramatic nature whereby the recipients prophesy, dream, and see visions. Joel's prophecy is similar to the wish expressed by Moses that "all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them" (Numbers 11:29). This aspect of the coming of the Spirit is, of course, connected with the New Testament concept of the gifts of the Spirit.

Overview of Gifts of the Spirit

The various terms employed in the New Testament for spiritual gifts help in understanding this work of the Spirit. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 12:7, designates all the gifts as the manifestation (phanerosis) of the Spirit. Properly speaking, the New Testament does not speak about spiritual manifestations (plural). The word is in the singular and occurs only one other time in the New Testament in a context unrelated to spiritual gifts (2 Corinthians 4:2). Perhaps Paul wished to convey that the one Spirit has many ways of manifesting himself but that these "manifestations" are to be viewed as an entity.

A second term is charismata (1 Corinthians 12:4,9,31; 14:1; Romans 1:11; and elsewhere). The singular form of the word (charisma) is made up of two elements. Charis is the Greek word usually translated grace, or unmerited favor. The suffix ma often means "result of." A charisma, therefore, is something bestowed upon a person even though he may be undeserving. It is properly translated gift, but with this special connotation. However, the word itself does not mean spiritual gift; only in certain contexts does it have that meaning. In other contexts it means gift in a general sense, such as Romans 6:23, "the gift of God is eternal life." As applied to our subject, this etymological meaning of the word should help in understanding why it is that sometimes a seemingly undeserving person is given a spiritual gift.

The word pneumatika is also used with reference to spiritual gifts. It is the neutral plural form of pneumatikos, which is an adjective meaning spiritual. The word itself does not mean spiritual gifts, but it is used in this sense in 1 Corinthians 12:1 and 14:1. In Romans 1:11 we find the combination charisma pneumatikon (spiritual gift). This word suggests that gifts operate in the spiritual realm. They come by the enabling of the Holy Spirit and are not to be identified with merely human or natural talents.

The terms doreai and domata are also used in relation to gifts (Ephesians 4:7,8). As with the preceding two words, the meaning is not spiritual gift but simply gift. They are noun forms of the very common Greek verb give (didomi). Yet, Paul does use the nouns when he speaks of leadership gifts in the Church.

The last term is merismois and is found in Hebrews 2:4, which speaks of "gifts of the Holy Spirit." But this word properly means apportionments or allotments or divisions. It comes from the verb merizo that means to divide, distribute, assign, apportion. Neither the noun nor the verb has direct reference to the idea of gifts, even though the context of Hebrews 2:4 suggests this. The emphasis is more on the work of the Spirit in distributing gifts and is comparable to what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:11, "But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills" (NASB).

We have then this variety of terms when the Scriptures speak of spiritual gifts. Each of them contributes to an understanding of the whole.

How then can we define spiritual gifts? They are special enablements given by God to His people for building up the body of Christ and extending His kingdom. The Holy Spirit is the primary divine agent in this distribution of gifts.

Overview of the Fruit of the Spirit

As with spiritual gifts, the New Testament employs several different terms to convey the thought of fruit of the Spirit. The central passage when discussing spiritual fruit is Galatians 5:22,23, which speaks of the fruit (karpos) of the Spirit and then enumerates a suggested list of nine. The expression "fruit of the Spirit" is best understood to mean products of which the Holy Spirit is the source.

It is especially significant that Jesus, in His last discourse, spoke somewhat at length about fruit (John 15:1-17) and

about the coming of the Holy Spirit (John 14:16–18,26; 15:26,27; 16:5–15). It is not accidental that in this farewell discourse of Jesus He speaks also about love, joy, and peace — the first three fruit mentioned by Paul in his list of spiritual fruit. A number of other New Testament passages deal with the subject of fruit (Matthew 7:15–23; 12:33; Luke 6:43,44; Romans 6:22; Ephesians 5:9; Philippians 1:11; Hebrews 12:11).

Other terminology related to this is found in the expressions that speak about being led by the Spirit, walking in the Spirit, and being spiritual. Romans 8:14 says, “All who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God” (NASB).

Closely related to this concept are the words of Paul that we are to “walk in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:16,25). In verse 16, the verb is *peripateo*, which was the everyday Greek word for the activity of the legs and feet in getting the body from one place to another. But in the New Testament, the word is also used in the figurative sense of conducting or behaving oneself. For instance, Romans 6:4 speaks about walking “in newness of life,” and Ephesians 4:1 entreats us “to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called” (NASB).

But the verb in Galatians 5:25 is *stoicheo*, which is more specialized. The general idea of this word is to agree with or to follow. In verse 25, it means to keep in step with the Spirit, to follow Him, to agree with Him. Using this verb, the New Testament talks about walking in an orderly fashion (Acts 21:24), following in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham (Romans 4:12), walking by or following a rule (Galatians 6:16), and “Following in line by that same standard to which we have attained” (Philippians 3:16, margin, NASB).

A final, related term is the word spiritual (*pneumatikos*). While this word sometimes refers to spiritual gifts, as we have already seen, it has the more general meaning of Christian maturity. In this sense, it occurs in 1 Corinthians 2:13,15; 3:1; Galatians 6:1. The last passage reads, “Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness” (NASB).

All these terms are found in the immediate context of the classical passage on fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22,23). This would indicate they are different ways of expressing the same idea.

How, then, can we define what the New Testament means when it speaks of the fruit of the Spirit? We can speak of them as Christlike virtues or qualities produced by the indwelling Holy Spirit as the Christian abides in Christ.

Similarities Between Gifts and Fruit

Gifts and fruit of the Spirit have several points in common. As we have seen, their source is the Holy Spirit. They do not originate with the believer apart from the enabling of the Spirit. The element of the supernatural is found in both. Second, the purpose of both is to edify. The overarching purpose of the gifts is to edify the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:7; 14:26). Likewise, the purpose of spiritual fruit, epitomized by the fruit of love, is to edify (1 Corinthians 8:1).

Third, both works of the Spirit are perfectible. In other words, the believer does not receive them in finished form. The thrust of 1 Corinthians 14 is instructional. Paul does not question the validity of the gifts claimed by the Corinthians; yet he insists the gifts need to be developed to edify the congregation. Similarly, spiritual fruit must be developed. They must be brought to a state of maturity. This is the thought behind the concepts of Christian maturity and growth the continuing transformation of the Christian into the image of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Distinctions Between Gifts and Fruit

As to their nature, the fruit are animistic, whereas the gifts are dynamistic. The former are the result of the indwelling Spirit, the latter the result of the empowering Spirit. Fruit are ethical in nature, whereas gifts are charismatic in nature. Second, there is a distinction with respect to the obligation of the Christian in appropriating the two. All Christians are required to demonstrate all the fruit of the Spirit. But God does not require all Christians to have all the gifts. The requirement here is that of receptivity and earnest desire (1 Corinthians 12:31; 14:1), but the distribution of the gifts is the sovereign work of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:11).

Third, and in a similar vein, believers are always required to manifest spiritual fruit, but the manifestation of spiritual

gifts is at the bidding of the Spirit.

The Divine Ideal

The work of the Holy Spirit manifests itself in both the gifts He bestows on believers and the spiritual fruit demonstrated by them. Our study has shown that both categories are central to the New Testament concept of the activity of the Spirit among God's people.

Inasmuch as both the gifts and the fruit originate with the Spirit, it is unjustified to place them in antithesis to each other. The Corinthian Christians were told, "Make love your aim, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts" (1 Corinthians 14:1, RSV). The two ideas are correlative, but certainly, they must be understood in the light of Paul's pointing to "a still more excellent way" (1 Corinthians 12:31, NASB). This became necessary because of an abuse of the gifts and not because of any inherent inferiority of the gifts to the fruit of the Spirit.

At Corinth, the gifts were being used in competition instead of in cooperation, in the interests of self-gratification rather than for the edification of the congregation. Yet, it is significant that at no time does Paul suggest the gifts themselves are not genuine when manifested in this way. It is the unworthy charismatic, not the gift, that is nothing (1 Corinthians 13:1,2). The gift is genuine; the one who exercises it without love may not be. The "still more excellent way" is the mediation of the gifts through the fruit of the Spirit, and primarily through love.

Love, as we see in 1 Corinthians 13, is the regulative principle behind spiritual gifts. It is patient and kind; it willingly defers to other gifted members by giving them an opportunity to speak as well (14:30,31). It is not jealous or boastful; it recognizes that the Spirit sovereignly distributes His gifts to whomever He pleases (12:11). Nor does it pride itself in its possession of any gift or gifts (12:21). It is not arrogant or rude; it always considers the welfare of the entire body when expressing itself in the congregation and is willing to receive correction (14:29,30). It does not insist on its own way; it submits itself to duly constituted authority in the church (14:37).

Complementariness, not mutual exclusivity, is the New Testament approach to the gifts and fruit of the Spirit. Together they serve to edify the Church. Related to this is the concept of interpenetration, as discussed in the preceding paragraph. The divine ideal is that both the gifts and the fruit be manifested among believers. We are not called upon to choose one over against the other.

A final word is in order with regard to the baptism in the Holy Spirit as it relates to these areas. By way of restatement and summary, we may say the baptism in the Spirit so sensitizes the believer that he is in a much better position to desire and receive spiritual gifts. But the baptism in the Spirit, since it is immersion in the Holy Spirit, also should affect the personal holiness of the believer; that is, it should be a means whereby the believer is better enabled to manifest the fruit of the Spirit.

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