

CLARITY TRUMPET

For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle? So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air. — I Corinthians 14:8, 9

Evangelism — A Spiritual Gift?

It isn't unusual to hear Bible teachers and others refer to someone having the *gift* of evangelism. I have done so myself. I want to consider two questions — "Is evangelism a spiritual gift?" and "Does the answer to this question determine whether I am commanded to share the Gospel?"

I'll just walk you through my thought processes over the recent past and see where the path leads. You may not agree with me, but I at least hope you will be willing to seriously weigh the possibility that every child of God is equally responsible as to their treatment of Christ's last command to reach the world with the Gospel. Along with the gift of evangelism, we also hear or read references to the gift of apostleship, and the gift of pastor/teacher. Are these spiritual gifts or possibly positions or offices of the church?

We begin with apostleship. What determined a man being an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ? Was it his giftedness or spiritual gifts? His talents or abilities along certain lines? We turn to Luke 6:13. In verse twelve Jesus prayed all night, and then in verse thirteen it says, "And when it was day, He called His disciples to Him; and from them He *chose* twelve whom He also named apostles." So what does Luke say was involved in these men becoming apostles? Jesus *chose* them. Now I realize that He could have chosen them because of their giftedness, but what of Judas? Could that be said of him? Likely not.

Mark 3:13, 14 says: "And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself *wanted*. And they came to Him. Then He *appointed* twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach." Whereas Luke states these twelve were *chosen*, Mark says they were *appointed*. Nothing is said or implied that He recognized their gift of apostleship. In fact, it is important to note that the Holy Spirit had not yet been given to dwell in believers; therefore, spiritual gifts had not yet been imparted. The

only thing in this context that sheds any light on why they were appointed is that He "wanted" them to be apostles.

Now we turn to the pastor/teacher. The key passage to all of this is Ephesians 4:11 where it states, "And He Himself *gave* some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers." Many would say, "Well, there it is. He *gave* them to the church. They were given the spiritual gifts of apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers!" But rather than these being spiritual gifts imparted by the Holy Spirit, I am asking are they possibly positions or offices of the church. Consider this — Christ *appointed* twelve to be apostles and the apostle Paul told Titus to "*appoint* elders in every city" (Titus 1:5). So, an elder (which most feel is a pastor of some sort) is an *appointment*.

And how does one advance to being an elder or pastor? First, by *desiring* it. First Timothy 3:1 says that "if a man *desires* the position of a bishop (or elder), he *desires* a good work." Notice, too, this verse calls eldership a "position" not a gift — though every member of the Body of Christ is gifted in one or more ways. Secondly, one may become an elder/pastor by *being qualified* and those qualifications are listed in First Timothy 3:2-7 and Titus 1:6-9. It seems from the New Testament that the pattern was as follows: Christ appointed the apostles, the apostles appointed elders (see Acts 14:23), and elders appointed other elders (Titus, an elder, appointed other elders in Titus 1:5). The appointments were apparently based on the *spiritual* qualifications listed, not upon popularity, availability, willingness to serve, or not even primarily upon spiritual gifts. Their character of life is what is primary. How one is gifted is not the criteria here. Each appointed elder/pastor was gifted in various ways, but the *office* was not a gift; it was a position which they desired and qualified for. The same may also hold true of the other "gifted men mentioned — apostles, prophets and

*God never
commands us to do
anything where
His grace will not
enable us.*

evangelists.

Now let's go back for a moment to our original question: *Is there a gift of evangelism?* I've come to the conclusion that there is not.

Consider these facts: 1) in the New Testament passages where the "gifts of the Spirit" are listed, none mention evangelism (see Romans 12:3-8; First Corinthians, chapters twelve through fourteen, and First Peter 4:10, 11. 2) Also, Paul told pastor Timothy to "do the work of an evangelist." This is in the context of "preaching the Word...convince, exhort, rebuke...fulfilling your ministry" (Second Timothy 4:1-5). The exhortation to Timothy holding the position of elder (pastor) was to evangelize and convince, exhort and rebuke when preaching the Word. Oh, that all pastors would "do the work of an evangelist" and not focus only on "my job is to feed the sheep." A key element in "feeding the flock" is giving the Gospel so clearly and faithfully that every member would, by the pastor's example, be equipped to share it effectively wherever they go.

Secondly, *Does the answer to this question determine whether I am commanded to share the Gospel?* Whether one believes evangelism is a spiritual gift or not has no bearing on whether I am accountable to share the Gospel. If one takes the position that there is no spiritual gift of evangelism then they readily believe all verses regarding witnessing certainly applies to them. But even if one takes the position that evangelism *is* a spiritual gift, this does not negate the commands to all believers to share the Gospel.

First, there is the record of the Great Commission in the Gospels that was given to all twelve of the apostles. Jesus said, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15, KJV). "Ye" in the verse is plural. All twelve of them were to be involved in the spreading of the Gospel throughout the world. Nothing is said or implied that only those who were specially gifted in evangelism were to do so.

Acts 1:8 gives another rendition of the Great Commission. There Christ said, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and

Samaria, and to the end of the earth." The "you" is all of the apostles. They were slow in getting started so God allowed persecution; as a result "they (the believers) were *all* scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles." Verse four adds this bit of insight: "Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the Word." Again, there is no hint that only certain gifted ones did the preaching. *All of them* did it.

Are some of us simply justifying our disobedience to the Great Commission to "preach the Gospel to every creature" by rationalizing that, "I don't have the gift of evangelism?" (Mark 15:16). It is my contention that it is Satan, not God, who has cleverly convinced virtually the entire Body of Christ that most of us are not gifted or qualified to share the Gospel with the lost. And being convinced that the spiritual gift of evangelism is a *Biblical* teaching, the majority make very few, if any, attempts at leading others to Christ. It is hard enough to persuade myself to witness faithfully believing that I am *commanded* to. If I believed that there is no need to witness because I don't have the gift of evangelism, I would never do it — *period*. And that is what has happened to Christians throughout the world.

The word *gift* as used in connection with the Spirit's work in our lives, basically means an *enablement* or *ability*. If the Holy Spirit has given you the gift of giving (Romans 12:8) then He will enable you or gift you to give. But do all verses having to do with giving, such as "so let each one give as he purposes in his heart...(2 Corinthians 9:7), only apply to those with the spiritual gift of giving? No, we are all commanded to give. Those gifted in particular areas may be more effective in those areas, but as believers we are responsible to obey the commands God gives us.

These enablements or abilities God's Spirit gives us will be developed and refined through use. *What you don't use, you lose!* is a good reliable admonition in this regard. There *must be a willingness* to step outside your comfort zones to allow God to develop and strengthen the area of evangelism or witnessing. In essence, that's what is taught in Hebrews 5:12-14. Read it!

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Clarity Trumpet #46

*To evangelize
is a divine
command to obey.*