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EARNESTLY CONTEND FOR THE FAITH WHICH WAS ONCE DELIVERED UNTO THE SAINTS, JUDE 3

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SPIRITUAL GIFTS FOR BELIEVERS

1 Cor. 12:7 "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to Profit withal."

GENERAL PERSPECTIVE. The Holy Spirit is manifested through a variety of spiritual gifts given to believers (1Co 12:7-11). These manifestations of the Spirit are intended for the upbuilding and sanctification of the church (1Co 12:7); (see note "1Co 14:26").

Note: 1Co 14:26, ALL THINGS ... UNTO EDIFYING.

The principle purpose of all spiritual gifts is to edify the church and the individual (1Co 14:3-4,12,17,26). "Edifying" (Gk. oikodomō) means to strengthen and promote spiritual life, maturity, and godly character in believers. It is a work of the Holy Spirit through spiritual gifts by which believers are increasingly transformed in order that they may not be conformed to this world (Ro 12:2-8), but may be built up in sanctification, love for God, concern for others, purity of heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith (1Co 13; Ro 8:13; 1Co 14:1-4,26; Ga 5:16-26; Eph 2:19-22; 4:11-16; Col 3:16; 1Th 5:11; Jude 20).

They are not the same as the gifts and ministries mentioned in (Ro 12:6-8; Eph 4:11), whereby a believer receives the power and ability to minister in a more permanent manner in the church. The list in (1Co 12:8-10) is not necessarily exhaustive and the gifts may occur in various combinations.

(1) The manifestations of the Spirit are given according to the will of the Spirit (1Co 12:11) when need arises and according to the earnest desire of the believer (1Co 12:31; 14:1).

(2) Some gifts may be manifested through an individual on a regular basis, and a believer may have more than one gift to minister to particular needs. The believer ought to desire "gifts," not just one gift (1Co 12:31; 14:1).

(3) It is unscriptural and unwise to assume that because someone exercises a spectacular gift, that person is more spiritual than one who has less spectacular gifts. Furthermore, possessing a gift does not mean that God approves of all a person does or teaches. Spiritual gifts must not be confused with the fruit of the Spirit that relates more directly to Christian character and sanctification (Ga 5:22-23).

(4) The Spirit's manifestation through gifts may be counterfeited by Satan or false workers disguising themselves as servants of Christ (Mt 7:21-23; 24:11,24; 2Co 11:13-15; 2Th 2:8-10). The believer must not believe every spiritual manifestation but ought to "try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1Jo 4:1; cf. 1Th 5:20-21).

INDIVIDUAL GIFTS.

In (1Co 12:8-10), the apostle Paul lists a variety of the gifts that the Holy Spirit gives to believers. Though he does not define their characteristics here, we can glean from other passages of the Scriptures what they might be.

(1) Word of wisdom. This is a wise utterance spoken through the operation of the Holy Spirit. It applies the revelation of God's Word or the Holy Spirit's wisdom to a specific situation or problem (Ac 6:10; 15:13-22). It is not, however, the same as having the wisdom of God for daily living. The latter is obtained by diligent study and meditation on God's ways and Word, and by prayer (Jas 1:5-6).

(2) Word of knowledge. This is an utterance inspired by the Holy Spirit that reveals knowledge about people, circumstances, or Biblical truth. It is often connected closely with prophecy (Ac 5:1-10; 1Co 14:24-25).

(3) Gift of faith. This is not saving faith, but rather a special supernatural faith imparted by the Holy Spirit that enables the Christian to believe God for the extraordinary and miraculous. It is a faith that removes mountains (1Co 13:2) and is often found in combination with other manifestations such as healings and miracles (see note "Mt 17:20"), on true faith; (Mk 11:22-24; Lu 17:6).

Note: Mt 17:20, FAITH ... NOTHING SHALL BE IMPOSSIBLE.

Jesus frequently comments on the nature of true faith. He speaks of a faith that can move mountains, cause miracles and healing, and accomplish great things for God. Just what is this faith that Jesus speaks of?

(1) True faith is an effective faith that produces results: "it shall remove" mountains.

(2) True faith is not a belief in "faith" as a force or power, but it is a "faith in God" (Mk 11:22).

(3) True faith is a work of God within the Christian's heart (Mk 9:24; Php 2:13). It involves an awareness divinely imparted to our hearts that our prayers are answered (Mk 11:23). It is created within us by the Holy Spirit; we cannot produce it in our own minds (Ro 12:3; 1Co 12:9).

(4) Since true faith is a gift imparted to us by Christ, it is important to draw near to Christ and His Word and to deepen our commitment to, and confidence in, Him (Ro 10:17; Php 3:8-15). We are dependent upon Him for everything; "for without me ye can do nothing" (Joh 15:5; 3:27; Heb 4:16; 7:25). In other words, we must seek Christ as the author and finisher of our faith (Heb 12:2). His close presence and our obedience to His Word are the source and the secret of faith (Mt 9:21; Joh 15:7).

(5) Furthermore, true faith is under God's control. Faith is given on the basis of His love, wisdom, grace, and kingdom purpose in order to accomplish the will of God and to express His love for us. It is not to be used for our own selfish interest (Jas 4:3).

(4) Gifts of healing. These gifts are given to the church to restore physical health by divinely supernatural means (Mt 4:23-25; 10:1; Ac 3:6-8; 4:30). The plural (gifts) indicates healing of various illnesses and suggests that every act of healing is a special gift of God. Although gifts of healing are not given to every member of the body in a special way (cf. 1Co 12:11,30), all members may pray for the

sick. When faith is present, the sick will be healed. Healing may also occur as a result of obedience to the instructions of (Jas 5:14-16).

(5) Miracles. These are deeds of supernatural power which alter the normal course of nature. They include divine acts in which God's kingdom is manifested against Satan and evil spirits (see note "Joh 6:2").

Note: Joh 6:2, MIRACLES.

(1) What are miracles?

- (a) They are works of supernatural origin and power (Gk. *dunamis*) (Ac 8:13; 19:11).
 - (b) They function as a sign or mark (Gk. *semeion*) of divine authority (Lu 23:8; Ac 4:16,30,33).
- The central and greatest miracle of the N.T. faith is the resurrection of Christ (1Co 15).

(2) Miracles serve at least three purposes in the kingdom of God.

- (a) They give witness to Jesus Christ, authenticating the truth of His message and proving His identity as the Christ of God (Joh 2:23; 5:1-21; 10:25; 11:42).
- (b) They express Christ's compassionate love (Mk 8:2; Lu 7:12-15; Ac 10:38).
- (c) They signify the age of salvation (Mt 11:2), the coming of the kingdom of God.

(3) The Scriptures maintain that miracles are to be operative throughout the entire church age.

- (a) Jesus sent out His followers to preach and to perform miracles (Mt 10:7-8; Mk 3:14-15); (see note "Lu 9:2").

Note: Lu 9:2, PREACH THE KINGDOM ... HEAL THE SICK.

(1) This is the first time Jesus sent out the twelve disciples to represent Him by word and deed. The instruction given to the twelve, according to the parallel passage in Matthew, was to go to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Mt 10:6). After His resurrection, however, Jesus changed the scope to encompass all nations, in a commission that is to continue "to the end of the world" (Mt 28:18-20; Mk 16:15-20).

(2) The gospel writers make it clear that Jesus' command to preach the kingdom of God, was seldom given apart from the command to heal the sick and to cast out demons (Mt 9:35-38; 10:7-8; Mk 3:14-15; 6:7-13; 16:15,17; Lu 9:2,6; 10:1,9; cf. 4:17-19). The presentation of the gospel today must be accompanied by the same demonstration of the Spirit and of power (see note "Mt 10:1");

(Note: Mt 10:1, POWER AGAINST UNCLEAN SPIRITS.

Jesus wants His followers to wage war against the forces of evil by driving out evil spirits and healing the sick. This demonstration of authority in spiritual confrontation is considered a continuing manifestation of the kingdom of God on earth);

(Mk 16:15-18; Ac 1:8; Ro 15:18-19; 1Co 2:4-5; 4:20); in order to meet Satan's challenge in these last days (1Ti 4:1; 2Ti 3:1-5). That is, we must call people to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ as the Lord and Savior who baptizes them in the Holy Spirit and saves them from sin, and we must continue His works of mercy.

(3) Churches today should not compare themselves with other churches, but with this N.T. message and pattern. Are we seeing and experiencing the kingdom of God as did the early Christians? If not, why not?

(b) Jesus declared that those who believed in Him through the preaching of the gospel were to do the works that He did, and would do even greater works (Joh 14:12; Mk 16:15-20).

(c) The book of Acts speaks of miracle-working in the lives of the believers (Ac 3:1; 5:12; 6:8; 8:6; 9:32; 15:12; 20:7); elsewhere in the N.T. these are called "signs" by which the proclamation of the gospel was confirmed (Ac 4:29-30; 14:3; Ro 15:18-19; 2Co 12:12; Heb 2:3-4).

(d) The Spirit desires to give these signs to the church throughout this present age (1Co 12:8-12,28; Jas 5:14-15).

(4) Note should also be taken that the N.T. teaches that signs and wonders will be performed by false teachers and preachers, especially by the antichrist.

(6) Prophecy. We must distinguish between prophecy listed in (1Co 12:10) as a temporary manifestation of the Spirit from prophecy cited as a ministry gift of the church in (Eph 4:11). As a ministry gift, prophecy is given only to some believers, who must then function as prophets within the church. As a spiritual manifestation, prophecy is potentially available to every Spirit-filled Christian (Acts 2:17-18).

Concerning the second of these two forms of prophecy, observe the following:

(a) Prophecy is a special gift that enables a believer to bring a word or revelation directly from God under the impulse of the Holy Spirit (1Co 14:24-25,29-31). It is not the delivery of a previously prepared sermon.

(b) In both the O.T. and the N.T., prophecy is not primarily foretelling the future, but proclaiming the will of God and exhorting God's people to righteousness, faithfulness, endurance, and encouragement.

(c) The message may expose the condition of a person's heart (1Co 14:25) or offer edification, exhortation, comfort, warning, and judgment (1Co 14:3,25-26,31).

(d) The church must not receive such prophecy as an infallible message, for many false prophets will enter the church (1Jo 4:1). Therefore, all prophecies must be tested as to their genuineness and truth (1Co 14:29,32; 1Th 5:20-21) by whether they conform to the Word of God (1Jo 4:1), by whether they promote godly living (1Ti 6:3-5), and by whether they are uttered by one who is sincerely living under the Lordship of Christ (1Co 12:3).

(e) Prophecy operates under the will of God and not man. The N.T. never indicates that the church actively sought revelation or direction from those who claimed they were prophets. Prophecy was given to the church only when God initiated the message (1Co 12:11; 2Pe 1:21).

(7) Discerning of spirits. This gift is a special ability given by the Spirit to properly discern and judge prophecies and to distinguish whether an utterance is from the Holy Spirit or not (see note "1Co 14:29"); (1John 4:1).

Note: 1Co 14:29, LET THE OTHER JUDGE.

All prophecy must be evaluated and weighed carefully as to what is said. This shows that N.T. prophecy was less than infallible and might need to be corrected.

(1) At times prophecy and speaking in tongues might not be a word from God (cf. 1Jo 4.1). Even evil spirits, through the presence of false teachers or prophets, can work in the congregation. Prophesying, speaking in tongues, or possessing any supernatural gift is no guarantee that one is a true prophet or a true believer for spiritual gifts may be counterfeited by Satan (Mt 24.24 2Th 2.9-12 Re 13.13-14).

(2) If the church has not set up proper and orderly ways (cf. 1Co 14.40) to evaluate and judge prophecies, it has failed to follow Biblical guidelines. Note too that prophecy was not considered an irresistible impulse of the Spirit, for only one prophet could speak at a time (1Co 14.30-32).

(3) What should be the attitude of the church toward prophetic messages?

(a) All prophecy must be tested according to the standard of Biblical truth (cf. De 13.1-3). That means that believers should watch for its fulfillment (cf. De 18.22), preparing themselves for the possibility that the prophecy may or may not be fulfilled.

(b) If the word of prophecy is an exhortation, the congregation needs to ask, "What must we do to obey the will of the Spirit?"

Towards the end of the age when false teachers (see note "Mt 24:5") and distortion of Biblical Christianity will greatly increase (see note "1Ti 4:1"), this gift will be extremely important for the church.

Note: Mt 24:5, MANY SHALL ... DECEIVE MANY.

This first major sign has special importance. Toward the end of this age, religious deception will be rampant on the earth. Christ is so concerned that His followers be aware of the coming worldwide spiritual deception to occur just before the end that He repeats His warning twice more in the Olivet discourse (see note "Mt 24:11"); (Mt 24.24).

Note: Mt 24:11, MANY FALSE PROPHETS SHALL RISE.

As the last days begin to close, false teachers and preachers will be exceedingly prevalent. Much of Christendom will be in an apostate condition. Loyalty and total commitment to the truth of God's Word and Biblical righteousness will be in the minority.

(1) Professing believers will accept "new revelation" even though it conflicts with the revealed Word of God. This will lead to opposition to Biblical truth within the churches (see note "2Ti 3:8"); (see note "2Ti 4:3").

Note: 2Ti 3:8, RESIST THE TRUTH.

False teachers in the church can many times be identified by their opposition or indifference to the essential truths of the gospel (see note "1Ti 4:1" below)

Note: 2Ti 4:3-4, THEY WILL NOT ENDURE SOUND DOCTRINE.

Throughout the history of the church some have always refused to love sound doctrine; yet as the end draws near, the situation will grow worse (2Ti 3.1-5; 1Ti 4.1).

- (1) "They will not endure sound doctrine" (2Ti 4.3). Many will profess to be Christians, gather at churches, appear to reverence God, but will not tolerate the original N.T. apostolic faith or the biblical demand to separate from unrighteousness (2Ti 3.5); (cf. Ro 1.16).
- (2) "They shall turn away their ears from the truth" (2Ti 4.4). Sound Biblical preaching from a man of God will no longer be endured or tolerated by many within the churches. Those who will turn from the truth will want sermons that demand less than the true gospel (cf. 2Ti 2.18; 3.7-8; 1Ti 6.5; Tit 1.14). They will not accept God's Word when it speaks of repentance, sin, damnation, and the necessity of holiness and separation from the world (cf. 2Ti 3.15-17; Jer 5.31; Eze 33.32).
- (3) "After their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers" (2Ti 4.3). These professing believers will not seek pastors according to the standards of God's Word (cf. 2Ti 1.13-14 1Ti 3.1-10), but will seek those who conform to their own self-seeking and worldly desires. They will choose preachers with gifts of oratory, the ability to entertain, and a message that reassures them that they can remain a Christian while living according to the flesh (cf. Ro 8.4-13 2Pe 2).
- (4) The Holy Spirit warns all those who remain faithful to God and submit themselves to His Word to expect persecution and suffering for righteousness' sake (2Ti 3.10-12 Mt 5.10-12). Furthermore, they must separate from people, churches, and institutions who deny the power of God in salvation and who preach a compromising gospel (2Ti 3.5); (1Ti 4.1-2 2Pe 2,1 Jude 1.3 Re 2.24). We must ever be loyal to the N.T. gospel and to God's faithful ministers who proclaim it. Doing this, we can be assured of the close fellowship of Christ (Re 3.20-22) and times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord (Ac 3.19-20).

Those who preach a distorted gospel may even gain strategic leadership positions in denominations and theological schools of Christendom (see note "Mt 7:22"), enabling them to deceive and mislead many within the church (Ga 1:9; 2Ti 4:3; 2Pe 3.3-4).

Note: Mt 7:22, MANY WILL SAY ... LORD, LORD.

In (Mt 7.22-23) Jesus emphatically states that there will be "many" within the church who will minister in His Name and believe they are His servants, yet in reality He never knew them (Mt 7.23). To escape the deceit of the last days, a church leader (or any disciple) must be totally committed to the truth and righteousness revealed in God's Word (see note "Re 22:19") and not consider "ministerial success" as the standard by which to judge his relation to Christ.

Note: Re 22:19, GOD SHALL TAKE AWAY.

John ends this revelation of Christ by warning about the terrible possibility of losing one's share in the tree of life and the holy city. We may not have a careless attitude toward this book or any part of God's holy Scripture. Such an attitude is manifested if we choose to believe only certain parts of God's revelation and reject other parts that we do not like, or if we teach our own ideas as if they are part of God's Word itself (Re 22.18). As at the beginning of the sojourn of the human race on earth, failure to take God's Word with absolute seriousness is a matter of life and death (Ge 3.3-4 De 4.2).

(2) Throughout the world millions will be involved in the occult, astrology, witchcraft, spiritism, and Satanism. The influence of demons and evil spirits will multiply greatly.

(3) Protection against being deceived is found in an enduring faith and love for Christ, in a commitment to the absolute authority of His Word (Mt 4.11 13 25), and in a thorough knowledge of that Word (see note "1Ti 4:16").

Note: 1Ti 4:16, DOING THIS ... SAVE THYSELF.

Living a holy life (#1Ti 4.12), remaining sensitive to the Spirit's operation and gifts (1Ti 4.14), teaching sound doctrine (1Ti 4.13 15-16), guarding the faith (1Ti 6.20 2Ti 1,13-14), and watching over one's spiritual life (1Ti 4.16) are more than a ministerial obligation for Timothy. These things are essential for his own salvation, present and future, and for those to whom he ministers (cf. 2Ti 3.13-15).

Note: 1Ti 4:1, SOME SHALL DEPART FROM THE FAITH.

The Holy Spirit has specifically revealed that in the latter times, there will be a falling away both from a personal faith in Jesus Christ and from Scriptural truth (cf. 2Th 2.3 Jude 1.3-4).

(1) There will appear within the church ministers who are highly gifted and mightily anointed by God. Some will accomplish great things for God and preach gospel truth effectively, but they will depart from the faith and gradually turn to seducing spirits and false doctrines. Because of their former anointing and zeal for God, they will mislead many.

(2) Many believers will fall away from the faith because they will fail to love the truth (2Th 2.10) and resist the sinful trends of the last days (cf. Mt 24.5 10-12); (see notes "2Ti 3:2-3" below). Thus, the distorted gospel of compromising ministers and educators will find little resistance in many churches (1Ti 4.1; 2Ti 3.5; 4.3); (see note "2Co 11:13" below).

Note: 2Ti 3:2-3, LOVERS OF THEIR OWN SELVES ... WITHOUT NATURAL AFFECTION.

In the last days the believer must be prepared to face an overwhelming deluge of ungodliness, (1) Paul gives a list of sins that all have their root in self-love (2Ti 3.2-4). Today some teach that a lack of love for oneself is the root of sin. Apostolic revelation teaches the opposite.

(2) The apostle prophesies that Satan will bring great destruction upon the family. Children will be "disobedient to parents" (2Ti 3.2), and men and women will be "without natural affection" (Gk. *astorgoi*). This denotes "without family affection" and refers to a lack of feelings of natural tenderness and love, as demonstrated by a mother who rejects her children or kills her baby, a father who abandons his family, or children who neglect to care for their aging parents (Lu 1:17).

Note: 2Co 11:13, DECEITFUL WORKERS, TRANSFORMING THEMSELVES.

Satan the great deceiver (2Co 11.3; Joh 8.44) uses evil men as agents, transforming them into "false apostles, deceitful workers."

(1) The Bible speaks of these deceitful ministers and leaders as people who, energized by Satan, (a) appear to accomplish great things for God (2Co 11.15; Re 13.2), (b) preach attractive gospel messages (2Co 1.4); (see note "1Ti 4:1" above), and (c) appear to be righteous, but in reality reject godliness and deny its power (2Ti 3.5).

(2) The people disguise themselves as "apostles of Christ" and "ministers of righteousness" (2Co 11.15). Thus, they imitate real ministers of Christ, putting into their message every available "form of godliness" (2Ti 3.5). They may be sincerely caring and loving, and they may preach forgiveness, peace, fulfillment, brotherhood, and many other helpful things - but they live under the influence of Satan. Their gospel is often one of human reason and not a true interpretation of God's revelation found in the Scriptures (cf. Ga 1.6-7; 1Pe 2.1-3). Their message deviates from the N.T. apostolic doctrine (1Jo 4:1).

(3) All believers must beware of these misleading ministers and leaders (2Co 11.3-4; Mt 7.15; 16.6) and not be deceived by their charisma, oratory, education, miracles, numerical success, philosophy, or popular message.

(4) All religious leaders must be judged according to their attitude and loyalty toward the blood redemption of Jesus Christ and the gospel as presented by Christ and the writers of the N.T. (Ga 1:9).

(3) The popularity of unbiblical teaching will be primarily the result of Satan's directing his demonic hosts in a more intensified opposition to God's work. The second coming of Christ will be preceded by a great intensity of satanism, spiritism, the occult, demon possession, and demonic deception in the world and in the church (Eph 6.11-12).

(4) The believer's protection against such deception involves utter loyalty to God and His inspired Word, and the knowledge that men of great charisma and anointing can be deceived and then deceive others with their mixture of truth and error. This awareness must be accompanied by a true desire within the believer's heart to do the will of God (Joh 7.17) and to walk in righteousness and the fear of God (Ps 25.4-5,12-15).

(5) Faithful believers must not think that because apostasy is prevalent within Christianity during the last days that authentic revival cannot occur or evangelism according to the N.T. pattern cannot be successful. God has promised that during the "last days" He will save all who call upon His Name and separate themselves from this perverse generation (Ac 2.16-21,33,38-40; 3.19).

(8) Kinds of tongues. Concerning "tongues" (Gk. *glōssa*, meaning language) as a supernatural manifestation of the Spirit, the following must be pointed out.

(a) Tongues may be an existing spoken language (Ac 2:4-6) or a language unknown on earth, e.g., "tongues ... of angels" (1Co 13:1); see ch. 14. Such speech has not been learned and is often unintelligible both to the speaker (1Co 14:14) and to the hearers (1Co 14:16).

(b) Speaking in tongues involves the spirit of man and the Spirit of God intermingling so that the believer communicates directly to God (i.e., in prayer, praise, blessing, or thanksgiving), giving expression or utterance at the level of one's spirit rather than the mind (1Co 14:2,14) and praying for oneself or others under the direct influence of the Holy Spirit apart from the activity of the mind (cf. 1Co 14:2,4,15,28; Jude 20). Speaking in tongues with interpretation may at times contain a revelation, knowledge, prophecy, or teaching for the assembly of believers (1Co 14:6).

(c) Tongues in the congregation must be accompanied by a Spirit-given interpretation that communicates the content and meaning of the utterance to the community of believers (1Co

14:3,27-28). When interpreted to the congregation, they function either as a form and directive to worship and prayer or as prophecy. The entire body of believers can then participate in this Spirit-inspired revelation. Interpreted tongues can thus be a means of edification as the whole congregation responds to the utterance (cf. 1Co 14:6,13).

(d) Speaking in tongues within the congregation must be regulated. The speaker may never be in "ecstasy" or "out of control" (1Co 14:27-28).

(9) Interpretation of tongues. This is the ability given by the Holy Spirit to understand and make known the meaning of an utterance given in tongues. The gift may be given to the one who speaks in tongues or to someone else. Those who speak in tongues should pray also for the gift of interpretation (1Co 14:13).