

Chap. The first in the enumeration of gifts in the 8th verse corresponds with the first officer in the enumeration of the gifted men of the 28th verse. Peter speaking of Paul's letters says, 2 Pet. 3, 15, "Even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the *wisdom* given unto him, hath written unto you." And when the Apostle speaks of his own ministrations, he calls the doctrines which he preached—the *wisdom* of God in a mystery—the hidden *wisdom*—the manifold *wisdom*. Moreover, when mentioning the gifts possessed by the Corinthian church, and correcting the mistakes in exercising them, he repeatedly speaks of prophecy and of the word of knowledge, but never of the "word of wisdom," nor of the Apostles.

Now if these qualifications were necessary in the Apostles, they could have no successors. All pretence to this office, or to the performance of its function by men in our day, is a piece of profane mimicry. It was the highest office in the church; lay within the period of gifted operation, and ceased with the men who first sustained it, and enjoyed *The word of wisdom*; had seen the Lord, and could *confer* gifts.

2. A second class of gifted men were the Prophets, "To another is given the spirit of prophecy." Four things may be observed in reference to this afflatus of the spirit.

1. The gift was to be directed according to the proportion (or measure) of faith. The prophets were not expositors of the Scripture, but the original organs of the Holy Spirit; beyond the sure ground of the inspiration they had received, they were not authorized to proceed. *The measure of faith* instructed them as to the extent of their inspiration, and if beyond that, they delivered any thing to the church; they were liable to advance error as much as any inspired brother. Hence the importance of discerning spirits.

2. Prophetic inspiration is distinguished from other gifts by its impetuosity and suddenness. Chap. 14, 29-30.

3. Though sudden and impetuous it was in subjection to the Prophets, verse 31. "The spirit of the Prophet is subject to the Prophet."

4. It was an attribute of prophetic inspiration to utter important truths which they themselves did not always understand. See 1 Pet. 1, 10-11: Dan. 12, 8, &c., &c.

At the same time it is proper to observe that prophecy comprehends more than simple prediction. It includes also the general instruction of the people. That they taught them statedly is plainly implied in the question of the Shunammite's husband, when she was setting off to visit Elisha, in consequence of the death of her son; "Wherefore wilt thou, go to him to-day? It is neither new moon, nor Sabbath?" See also Jer. 35, 15: 2 Chron. 36, 15-16. So much for the gift of Prophecy.

Thirdly. There was the gift of the "Word of knowledge." The office for which this qualified, is designated by a somewhat general term, *Teacher*; and in

Eph. 4, 11, it comprehends three, Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers. It stood related to the word of wisdom as to a teacher, that is to say what wisdom is in the contriver, knowledge is in the learner. The celebrated Watt contrives the steam engine, and makes it known; then others soon acquire the knowledge of its principles, and can work it to purpose. The *word of knowledge* consisted much in understanding, and remembering truth when revealed. It enabled the individual to understand the words of the wise. This, we apprehend, is the gift which Timothy and Titus had, and which the former was exhorted to stir up. Says Paul, "And the things which thou hast heard of me, among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others. It was not what Timothy discovered or originated, but what *he heard*, that he was to commit to faithful men. It was not their office to originate anything new, but to detail *accurately* that which had already taken place, or had already been made known. It is probable, that all the primitive Pastors possessed this gift; it did not supersede reading, attention, and the most absorbing meditation, 1 Tim. 4, 13. We apprehend thus an energetic, evangelical ministry enjoy, in a greater or less degree, this gift in the present day. It produces their love for the *work* of a Bishop, and endows them with their *aptitude* to teach, and we often witness its threefold development in the ministry of our own times. Some strongly prefer the work of an Evangelist; they love to wander, proclaiming the glad tidings! others who greatly prefer the *study* and the *pulpit*. Their ministrations are truly *instructive*.—They are *teachers*. A third, whose care for the flock amounts to a passion; "Gentle among you as a nurse cherisheth her children." We live, if ye stand fast. They care for the sheep; they are pastors. By all this we do not mean to insinuate, that the Evangelist does not instruct, or care for the flock—the teacher does not go about at all, or care for the flock, or that the pastor cannot instruct or itinerate; but mean, that these are, respectively, their protrusions of mind, or, in other words, their forte. Happy, indeed, are the men who possess them *all*, in full and harmonious development.

A wide expanse of water pleases; that fluid gushing through a narrow channel over a precipitous bed, awakens attention; that wide expanse sweeping with the rapidity of a fast-running river, stirs the emotion of the sublime. How nobly did the whole panoply of gifts sit, on the man who made the Governor tremble—the monarch feel his persuasive power, and the poor run-away slave enjoy the gentle force of his pastoral care: "I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds, receive him that is my own bowels." On the completion of each department in the days of creation, it was written, "and God saw it was good"—but on the completion of the whole, he gives his accent to his benediction, and pronounced it *very* good. Have you but one gift, employ it in its proper sphere, for it is good—have you