

When Paul wrote to the Philippians he opened, as usual, with a prayer for their spiritual establishment;

Php 1:8 For God is my witness how greatly I long after you all in *the* bowels of Jesus Christ.

Php 1:9 And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in full knowledge and *in* all perception;

Php 1:10 that you may distinguish *between* things that differ, that you may be sincere and without offense until the day of Jesus Christ,

Php 1:11 being filled *with the* fruits of righteousness through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Paul's longing for them all was a strong desire of a personal nature, but in the spiritual realm he wanted them ultimately to be filled with the fruits of righteousness to the praise and glory of God. To realize such an objective he wanted their love to super abound more and more in full knowledge and all perception in order that they would be able to discern; to test things differing. Do you notice in most Bible teaching that things different are explained away as being the same?

In this series we have been showing the things differing in Paul our Apostle. Paul had two separate and distinct ministries; one during the time covered by the book of Acts, and one after.

During Acts Paul declared that he was "worshipping the God of his fathers, believing all things written in the Law and in the Prophets", Acts 24:14. During Acts, Paul was saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said were going to happen, Acts 26:22. Even as late as Acts 28:20 Paul was bound for the hope of Israel. The hope of Israel was the hope held by believing Jews and Gentiles of that time.

The Acts period covered about 40 years during which time God was holding out His hands to the nation of Israel, Roms.10:21 and Isaiah 65:2. Eventually Israel was put to one side at Acts 28:25-28 and our Lord descended and revealed to Paul a wonderful dispensation which features a purpose of God for heavenly places and which is independent of the nation of Israel. Paul sums up this post Acts ministry by saying something completely different, namely that his gospel now was concerning the unsearchable riches of Christ which was embraced by a dispensation previously hidden in God, Eph.3:8-9. After Acts, Paul was a prisoner of Jesus Christ for all nations with a completely new dispensation proclaimed.

The internal material in Paul's letters divides them naturally into these two ministries. During Acts Paul wrote Galatians, 1@2 Thessalonians, 1@2 Corinthians, Hebrews and Romans. Seven letters which contain 190 Old Testament quotes and constantly refer to Israel in theme and purpose. After Acts 28 we have seven letters (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1@2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon) wherein Paul quotes the OT about 8 times and reveals dispensational matters which cannot be found in and differ significantly from the first group.

Last lesson we read Galatians 3, an Acts period letter, which is dispensationally the promise, prophecy and purpose for Israel and the earth.

Gal 3:5 Then He supplying the Spirit to you and working powerful works in you, is it by works of the law, or by hearing of faith?

Gal 3:6 Even as Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness.

Gal 3:7 Therefore know that those of faith, these are the SONS (heirs) of Abraham.

Gal 3:9 So then those of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

Gal 3:27 For as many as were baptized into Christ, you put on Christ.

Gal 3:28 There cannot be Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is no male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Gal 3:29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed and HEIRS (sons) according to the promise.

These Jew and Gentile believers of the Acts period were one in Christ but had received an adoption, their inheritance as Sons (heirs) of Abraham and God was the Promised Land and later the New Jerusalem which was to descend to the earth and they were likened to Isaac.

Gal 4:5 that He might redeem those under Law, so that we might receive the adoption of sons.

Gal 4:7 So that you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, also an heir of God through Christ.

Gal 4:26 But the Jerusalem *from* above is free, who is the mother of us all.

Gal 4:28 But brothers, we, like Isaac, are children of promise.

Not one of these dispensational features of the Acts period can be found in the post Acts letters of Paul. We are not empowered with supernatural gifts; we are not to be blessed with faithful Abraham in the inheritance given to Abraham by promise. Our hope is not the Land and the New Jerusalem, our adoption is different. And finally, we are not like Isaac, children of promise, we are a choice made before Prophecy and Promise. We cannot find anything in Paul's post Acts letters which embraces these things.

Let us examine one major difference between Galatians of the Acts period and the dispensational truth after Acts. The supply of the Holy Spirit and powerful works among the believers during the Acts period is conspicuous by their absence after Acts 28.

Not once does Paul state after Acts 28 that his gospel of the unsearchable riches of Christ was accompanied with mighty signs and wonders. But back in the Acts period Paul was empowered as an Apostle and had gifts himself, see Roms.15:19, 1Cor.12:7, 11, 14:18 and Acts 19:11.

Now look at the differences after Acts 28. In Ephesians 4 we quote the gifts, not of the Holy Spirit, but of the Lord who descended and ascended after Acts 28;

Eph 4:7 But to every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

Eph 4:8 Therefore He says, "When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive and gave gifts to men."

Eph 4:9 (Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?

Eph 4:10 He who descended is the same also as He who ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things.)

Eph 4:11 And truly He gave some *to be* apostles, and some *to be* prophets, and some *to be* evangelists, and some *to be* pastors and teachers,

Here in Ephesians there are no supernatural gifts given to anyone today. In this passage it is not firstly apostles, secondly prophets as in 1Cor.12:28, but in each case some.

The reader is invited to compare carefully, noting the differences, the gifts of the Holy Spirit in 1Cor.12 where every believer of the Acts period received one or more of the supernatural gifts. How much distress has this lack of comparing things differing brought upon the Christian community today?

Let us see this absence of supernatural powers in Paul's personal life after Acts 28. When writing to the Philippians after Acts 28, Paul celebrated the mercy of God on Epaphraditus who had been sick nigh unto death, Phils.2:27. No supernatural gift restored Epaphraditus. In 2 Tim.4:20 Paul had to leave his friend Trophimus sick at Miletus and when writing to Timothy in the matter of his frequent sicknesses, 1Tim.5:23, Paul advised a little wine as relief. We feel certain that if Paul retained the powers of the Acts period then these friends would not have suffered in any way.

Returning to the Ephesians 4 passage above we note the following verses;

Eph 4:11 And truly He gave some *to be* apostles, and some *to be* prophets, and some *to be* evangelists, and some *to be* pastors and teachers,

Eph 4:12 for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

Eph 4:13 And this until we all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a full-grown man, to *the* measure of *the* stature of the fullness of Christ;

Notice the gifts of the ascended Christ are for the perfecting of the saints. This word perfecting (which only occurs here) means to complete thoroughly, which is to repair or adjust. Paul is writing to the saints and faithful who had crossed the Acts 28 boundary and these were in need of adjustment. There was a complete change of dispensation after Acts 28. This new dispensation included new blessings in a new place of inheritance, a new calling, a new relationship between Christ and the redeemed, a new hope and a new creation of the One New Man. We hope to look at more of these in later editions.

One final point from Eph.4:13. Please notice the four secondary objectives in view at the giving of these gifts; the unity of the faith, the acknowledging of the son of God, to a full grown man and the fullness of Christ. Let us focus on "a full grown man". The word "man" in this verse is aner and it first appears in the NT in Matt.1:16 where it is translated "husband". It occurs in Acts 15:22 where it is translated "men" and it occurs in 2Cor.11:2 as follows;

2Co 11:2 For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy. For I have espoused you to one Man, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.

Can we see the differences? During Acts, when Paul wrote the Corinthian letters, he was writing to those who "came behind in no gift" (1Cor.1:5-7 & 2Cor.1:21) and they were described as "a pure virgin" to Christ as the man or husband. After Acts 28 in this new dispensation, there are no supernatural gifts and believers are not "a pure virgin" but members of His Body, masculine. The goal of the gifts given after Acts 28 was to adjust the believers unto a full grown or perfect man, masculine.