

A SECOND BENEFIT

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In 2 Corinthians 1:15, the divinely inspired Apostle Paul said, “And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit.” The word “benefit” here is the Greek word *charis* (Strong’s #5485), which literally means grace or favor. What is this *second benefit* that is being spoken about in this passage?

This “benefit” was not Paul’s preaching

Is this “benefit” speaking of the preaching of God’s word? Not likely, because by the time Paul wrote this, he had already been to Corinth twice (2 Cor 13:1). Thus, two prior visits had only produced *one* of whatever kind of benefit he is speaking of. The first time Paul was in Corinth, he had preached the gospel to those people and many were converted to Christ (Acts 18:1-18). That was when the church at Corinth was established. It is not at all realistic to believe that on Paul’s second visit to Corinth (whenever that was), he had not done *any* teaching! A third visit to Corinth by Paul would have brought a *third* benefit of preaching God’s word to them.

Miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit

That leaves only one major possibility for explaining what this “second benefit” would have been. The Corinthians had already received the “benefit” of miraculous spiritual gifts. Paul thanked God for the “grace” (the exact same Greek word that is translated “benefit” in 2 Cor 1:15) that God had given them by Jesus Christ “that in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 1:4-7). What “gift” of “utterance” and “knowledge” had the Corinthians received that served both to enrich them as well as to confirm the testimony of Christ? There are nine miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit listed in 1 Corinthians 12:1-11. These miraculous gifts included the gift of “the word of knowledge” (1 Cor 12:8; 13:8), and several gifts of “utterance” (such as prophecy, speaking in tongues, and interpretation of tongues, 1 Cor 12:10). And these gifts were for the purpose of confirming the word

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(continued)

of God (Mark 16:20; Heb 2:3-4).

The means and purpose of the miraculous gifts

Only an apostle could give these miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit by the laying on of his hands (Acts 8:14-18; 19:1-7; 2 Tim 1:6).

Paul was the one who had laid his hands on the Corinthians to give them these miraculous gifts, which were the “sign of his apostleship” (1 Cor 9:2; 12:12). Within the congregation at Corinth, evidently *all* the members had received at least one miraculous gift via Paul’s hands (1 Cor 12:7,11; 14:26). But that did not in any way preclude the possibility of their receiving an additional “benefit.” In fact, these Corinthians who already possessed miraculous gifts were explicitly told to “desire spiritual gifts,” especially the gift of prophecy (1 Cor 14:1). They were told to “pray” to be able to interpret tongues (1 Cor 14:13), although this prayer could only have been answered by the sending of Paul or another apostle to them to lay their hands on them again. They were told to “covet earnestly the best gifts” (1 Cor 12:31), especially “to prophesy” (1 Cor 14:39). The only way this could have been fulfilled would have been for Paul or some other apostle to go to Corinth and lay hands on them so that they could receive these additional gifts. Paul had been “minded” to go to them so that they could receive a “second benefit,” almost certainly speaking of laying his hands on them so that they could receive the additional miraculous gifts that they had been told to “desire,” “pray for,” and “covet.” There were likely some new members that Paul had not seen before who also needed to receive the gift(s). These miraculous gifts were necessary to be present with the church in abundance during the First Century to complete the revelation of the New Testament, and to confirm that word as it was being revealed. The New Testament was completed during the lifetime of the apostles (John 16:12-13; 17:20), and it was these same apostles, and *only* those apostles, who could give those gifts by the laying on of their hands. After that, the miraculous gifts would be done any, as their purpose was fulfilled and the means of giving them came to an end (1 Cor 13:8-10).