



CHARISMA AND CHARACTER

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“And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge.”
 – 2Peter 1: 5

“Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.”
 – 2Corinthians 8: 21

Charisma is defined as the strong personal charm or power to attract, that makes a person able to have great influence over people or win their admiration. Character on the other hand is all the mental or moral qualities that make up the personality of a man. As humans, we make a lot of efforts to impress our fellow men. The best we can get out of this though is a good reputation and not character. Character is more fundamental than that! Your character is who you truly are before God. A believer is endued with charismatic power when he is baptized in the Holy Ghost. As a result, the signs Jesus Christ prophesied about earlier on in the book of Mark start to manifest in him:

“And these signs shall follow them that believe. In my name, they shall cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.”
 – Mark 16: 17-18

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are also called charismatic gifts because they constitute a display of God’s power and abilities in our lives and help us influence men for God. These are the gifts of the word of wisdom, word of knowledge, faith, healing, working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, diverse kinds of tongues and interpretation of tongues (1Corinthians 12: 4-

11). According to Apostle Paul in 1Corinthians 12: 7, these gifts are the manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer and they are given so that the recipient might profit in his exploits for God. These gifts simply attract men to us so we can influence them for Christ.

The charismatic gifts are not ends in themselves. Rather, they serve as means to an end. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are to serve as signs to the unbelievers that our witness or testimony about Christ is true. They are to serve as evangelism aids. Many have wondered why there seems not to be as much manifestation or display of the charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit in many congregations today unlike what we read about in the account of the Early Church in the book of Acts of the Apostles. The truth lies in the fact that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are given primarily to serve as aids or support to evangelism. And where evangelism is dying, there shall be also a corresponding decline in the manifestation of the charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Since the various manifestations of the Holy Spirit in believers are gifts God gives to achieve His desired purpose then, we need the help of God, the Giver Himself for proper and profitable use of these gifts. The Holy Spirit therefore does not just give us His gifts; He gives us His fruit also. The fruit of the Spirit constitutes the character of God manifesting in man. Just as there are nine charismatic gifts in all, there are nine segments in the fruit of the Spirit also. They are love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance (Galatians 5: 22-23). It is like we need a segment each of the fruit of the Spirit as believers to manifest the nine gifts of the Spirit.

Many who pray for the manifestation of the charismatic gifts today do not balance their quest for power with that for godly character or fruit of the Spirit. However, the truth is that we need the fruit of the Spirit to properly and profitably use the gifts of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Gospel ministers or Christians generally today who have charisma without character are like Uzzah whose story is found in **2Samuel 6: 2-8**.

“And David arose, and went with all the people that were with him from Baale of Judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the LORD of hosts that dwelleth between the cherubims. And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that was in Gibeah: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drave the new cart. And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab which was at Gibeah, accompanying the ark of God: and Ahio went before the ark. And David and all the house of Israel played before the LORD on all manner of instruments made of fir wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and cymbals. And when they came to Nachon’s threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God. And David was displeased, because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzzah: and he called the name of the place Perezuzzah to this day.”

Although, Uzzah was zealous for God, his zeal was without knowledge. And God said, ***“My people perish for lack of knowledge” in Hosea 4: 6.*** Uzzah had charisma but lacked character! He died cheaply for want of character, and not charisma.

Those who seek after charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit without seeking for godly character in form of the fruit of the Spirit need to learn a major lesson from the life of Uzzah. The Scripture is full of examples and warnings to this effect. In Leviticus 10, Nadab and Abihu, the two sons of Aaron were smitten because they offered a strange fire before God. They had charisma without character. In 1Samuel chapters 2 to 4, Hophini and Phinehas, the sons of Eli were rejected and destroyed by God for abuse of office and power. They were more interested in the spoils of office or benefits of priesthood than the ethics of priesthood. Gehazi also, the apprentice prophet under Elisha was zealous but had a major character flaw – he was covetous! All he saw and made of the charismatic ministry of his master was corrupt personal enrichment from the wealth of Naaman, the leprous army general of Syria Elisha healed. But he also got Naaman’s leprosy in addition.

God’s standard over time has not changed. Jesus Christ is still the same – yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13: 8). This, Apostle Paul affirmed when he said”

“Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His. And, let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity”
– 2Timothy 2: 19

The bible insists in its teachings that church leaders and ministers must be blameless and live above reproach. 1Timothy 3 and Titus 1 are full of principles and precepts that should serve as codes of conduct for preachers and church leaders. Those who ignore such clear Biblical standards for ministerial ethics and continue to display charismatic gifts while they themselves are morally bankrupt only do so to the peril of their own souls. After all, the gifts and callings of God are without repentance (Romans 11: 29). God may not take His gifts, the gifts of the Holy Spirit from such men but they will not make heaven eventually except they repent of their sin and waywardness. Such people in the end are only comparable to touts in a motor park, filling up a vehicle with passengers without actually travelling along in the vehicle. What a tragedy!

Surely, God has not changed yet to tolerate men who want to display charisma without character. After the Apostles experienced the power of Pentecost in Acts 2, signs and wonders started to accompany their ministry. Several souls were won for Christ, the church grew rapidly and the name of the Lord was glorified. A man called Simon was one of the converts then in Acts 8 who desperately wanted the power of the Holy Spirit but for a wrong reason. Before his conversion, Simon had enjoyed a lot of influence and affluence as a sorcerer and simply saw the manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit as another means to achieve the same end. He therefore offered Peter money to purchase the gifts of the Spirit but Peter rebuked him and told him to perish with his money.

Men like Simon still abound in the church today. These are those who seek to corruptly influence church leaders with money and material gifts to get spiritual power, positions and titles. Their intentions are ungodly; they only want to use spiritual gifts, titles and positions as means of merchandise for self-recognition and corrupt enrichment without giving glory to God or bring gains to His kingdom. They see the gifts of the Holy Spirit in their lives as tools for showmanship. Rather than giving God the glory, they draw attention to themselves and enjoy fame and limelight. Such tendencies are only destructive in the end.

We should all learn from the fall of Samson, the charismatic but wayward judge of Israel. He had charisma but lacked the character to sustain it. He used God's gift without God, the Giver of the gift and so, failed woefully and died shamefully. Those who live like Samson will also end up like him. Let us therefore desire not just to have charisma to mightily demonstrate the power of God but much more, let us pray for the fruit of the Holy Spirit to put on the character of Christ in order to have good testimony before God and man. Those who are called by the name of Christ and yet bring The Lord's name into disrepute through their careless and reckless living will surely not go unpunished!

