

THE PERFECT TENSE IN MATTHEW 16:19 AND THREE CHARISMATA

Paul Elbert

Christian Stature Ministries
San Juan Capistrano, California 92675

INTRODUCTION

Mantey, citing an array of witnesses, argues convincingly that the correct grammatical translation of the periphrastic future-perfect passive participles in Matthew 16:1 is a literal one, yielding "...but whatever you may bind (*ean deses*) upon the earth shall have been bound (*estai dedemenon*) in heaven, and whatever you may loose (*ean luses*) upon the earth shall have been loosed (*estai lelumenon*) in heaven."¹ The common understanding is that this verse and its companion, Matthew 18:18, were (in the mind of Jesus) destined to apply to the oncoming church at large.² Jesus was instituting a process He expected to continue in the church, not to be turned off by the church. Mantey's result is therefore of real concern.

INTERPRETATION

The consensus of ensuing interpretation by Cadoux, Chamberlain, and Albright and Mann is that the church on earth is to be carrying out heaven's decisions, already sanctioned there.³ These decisions are communicated by the Spirit via inspiration or guidance. The reverse process is definitely not in view in this verse.

The common misunderstanding, probably based on the KJV text, is the reverse process where a believer binds and/or looses something on earth and implies to others that this is then true in heaven and is now going to occur on earth, according to the KJV promise.⁴ There are, however, other promises which get things done by faith like Mark 11:22-24, so if requisite faith happens to be present results occur anyway and no one knows the difference. But a work of faith is not implicit in 16:19, neither is it explicitly excluded in the context.⁵

To bind in contemporary rabbinical parlance was to forbid and to loose

1. J. R. Mantey, "Evidence that the Perfect Tense in John 20:23 and Matthew 16:19 is Mistranslated," *Journal of the Evangelical Society*, Vol. 16 (Summer, 1973), p. 129.
2. A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1930), Vol. 1, p. 149.
3. C. H. Cadoux, *Catholicism and Christianity* (New York: Dial Press, 1929), pp. 386, 87; W. D. Chamberlain, *An Exegetical Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (New York: Macmillan, 1941), p. 80; W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann, *Matthew, The Anchor Bible* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1971), p. 191.
4. This misunderstanding is illustrated by F. Davidson et al, eds., 2nd ed., *The New Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), p. 793; J. F. Dake, *Annotated Reference Bible* (Atlanta: Dake Bible Sales, 1963), pp. 18, 34. However, Dake does correctly note that it means "more than declaring something lawful or unlawful by preaching. It also means to confirm the truth by power as Christ and the apostles did."
5. Faith helps create receptivity to charismata, Rom. 12:6, Acts 6:8.

was to permit, although an overly strict application of this idea is out of the question in light of linguistic variables involved in the *deo-luo* idea.⁶ The linguistic evidence argues for no one exclusive application for their meaning in Jesus' statement, but rather, within the framework of the basic idea, for a Spirit-imparted directive for each circumstance. There is, for example, the notion of controlling spiritual forces in the *deo-luo* idea, and that of binding to, chaining to, and marital commitment in *deo* and of releasing, sending forth, expelling in *luo*. Indeed, the words admit a wide variety of application, both scripturally and patristically as well as in contemporary secular use.

This semantic breadth in application of 16:19 would be clarified in experience, not so much by circumstantial context, but principally by part one of the sequence suggested below. This is not to say that all ministerial acts in the *deo-luo* idea are to be performed via the sequence below, but rather that Jesus had this sequence in view when he stated 16:19, thus invoking an ongoing charismatic theology for His church.

Jesus was teaching that if a believer had access to supernatural information in advance as to what *deo-luo* decision was in the mind of God, he could announce it and be right in "prophesying" the forthcoming result. This would impress people with the power of God and confirm what Jesus taught and what His servant said.⁷ The corollary to this is that if you do not have this information, you should not imply results, since this will not impress people when nothing happens. Jesus was pointing to a future time when heaven would use believers to minister through in a special way.

THREEFOLD SEQUENCE

This suggests a threefold sequence in the mind of Jesus: *part one*, receive direction in the form of precise facts and/or decisions from heaven which are recognizable to you; *part two*, verbally perform the appropriate act of *deo-luo*; *part three*, observe that heaven then cooperates with you by supporting your statement with supernatural activities yielding a result.

The use of the subjunctive mood here (*ean deses-ean luses*) implies conditions which are to be "expected from a concrete standpoint."⁸ These conditions are the existence of part one above. The subjunctive mood indicates here the potential probability of these conditions. In general use,

6. C. D. Buck, *A Dictionary of Selected Synonyms in the Principal Indo-European Languages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), pp. 545, 767; W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), pp. 176, 484; J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-Literary Sources* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), pp. 144, 384; G. Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), Vol. 2, p. 60, Vol. 4, p. 328; G. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), Vol. 3, p. 817.
7. Probably similar to Mk. 16:20 and Acts 4:30. The long Markan ending can be treated as a source of historical information regardless of its autograph probabilities.
8. F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 188.

the aorist subjunctive also refers to "something impending," which here is the impending result of part three above.⁹ Further, the dual function of the periphrastic future-perfect tense here is to imply past action (part one) and to affirm the result (part three).¹⁰ The suggested sequence is on solid grammatical ground.

The original dialogue between Mantey and Cadbury revolved around man's ability to forgive sins.¹¹ Mantey concluded that an accurate translation of the perfect tense precludes the possibility of such a thing in the New Testament. Cadbury countered with synoptic instances in which Luke, "who knew the Greek language well enough, in spite of his ignorance of the subtleties of its modern grammarians," could have avoided using a perfect passive (*apheontai*) if by using it Jesus Himself would appear to be unable to forgive sins.¹² This difficulty is removed by realizing that Jesus, whose ministry was replete with practical charismatic applications, had the Spirit *without measure*, so that the stature of Jesus the divine-human is in no way diminished as He moved in close and unified Spiritual communication with God.

According to Saucy, the overriding concern of theology should entail instruction in the Christian life.¹³ Sullivan assesses the role of theology as that of a charism for building up the body of Christ in the world.¹⁴ It is the premise here that Jesus was invoking a charismatic theology in 16:19, which, when understood, cultivated, and applied through the will and manifestation of the Holy Spirit, was conceived and destined to result in edification of the church, the future body of Jesus in flesh.

It remains both to cite examples from the many available in the New Testament which may attest to the threefold sequence, and to survey the probable spiritual mechanisms through which *deu-luo* procedures flow, being initiated from heaven in part one of the above sequence. The examples will be discussed in another note. Prior to this it is necessary to briefly survey and amplify the mechanisms themselves and to briefly discuss motivation for their receptivity and use upon the earth.

MECHANISMS

The inference is that these Spiritual mechanisms will be available to the Sons of God and that Jesus Himself will be involved in that time ahead, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age."¹⁵ Although He is now

9. *Ibid.*, p. 190.

10. J. H. Greenlee, *A Concise Exegetical Grammar of New Testament Greek* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), p. 56. This dual function also motivates Mantey's argument, ref. 1.

11. J. R. Mantey, "The Mistranslation of the Perfect Tense in John 20:23, Matthew 16:19, 18:18," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 58 (Sept., 1939), p. 243; H. J. Cadbury, "The Meaning of John 20:23, Matthew 16:19, 18:18," *ibid.*, p. 251.

12. Lk. 5:20; 7:47. These could easily fit the threefold sequence, but it is unlikely before He appears that anyone will be as closely connected with God as was Jesus.

13. R. L. Saucy, "Doing Theology for the Church," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, Vol. 16 (Winter, 1973), p. 6.

14. E. Sullivan, "Seeing the Whole Church Renewed," *Renewal*, No. 46 (Aug./Sept., 1973), p. 21.

15. Mt. 28:20b NAS.

"seated at the right hand of God," He is the Holy Spirit in spiritual form, "now the Lord is the Spirit."¹⁶

In a following note when examples from Jesus' ministry are cited, it will be clear that He was well acquainted with the practical operation of the Spiritual mechanisms He was teaching about in 16:19. It seems reasonable that in His role of the Spirit He would provide them for us as Sons of God.

It is certain that those "who are beloved of God" and "called as saints" are supposed to achieve the desired status in God's Sonship: "for all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God."¹⁷ As we cultivate our ability to detect and respond to this leading process we grow in our role as sons.¹⁸ A major source of guidance and direction comes from "letting the word of Christ richly dwell within you."¹⁹ The Spirit's first work of leading is to quicken the word to our understanding and then empower us to behave in terms of the written revelation which He inspired. Remembering that God is a spirit and not the intersection of ink and papyrus, our daily lives are in the main to be directed by principles of the written Word, while being healthily sensitive and open to any input the Holy Spirit may give. The charismata are awesome yet gentle things.

To embark upon a discussion of Spirit leading is beyond our scope, but it is definitely within the framework of detectable, cultivated, and practical leading that the Spiritual mechanisms which expedite Jesus' teaching in 16:19 work and function best.²⁰

THREE CHARISMATA

Although the entire array of charismata and operations of the Spirit must be comprehended as a unified move of God towards believers, we will focus on three which fit clearly into the above sequence.

One such mechanism available for part one of the sequence is the Word of Knowledge (*logos gnoseos*).²¹ The Word of Wisdom (*logos sophias*) could very well come into play in part two of the sequence more than in part one.²² A knowledge of certain facts may still definitely require supernatural wisdom for the time and place of the *deo-luo*, but without the facts no amount of wisdom will suffice. Therefore we confine remarks to *logos gnoseos*.

The *logos* implies a word or message from the Living Word of God,

16. Col. 3:1b, 2 Cor. 3:17a. An observation, not an explanation.

17. Rom. 1:7; 8:14 NAS.

18. Thoroughly non-detectable leading, which exists, is undiscussable.

19. Col. 3:16a NAS.

20. Cf. aspects of leading: J. Lancaster, "The Ministry of Another Comforter," *Paraclete*, Vol. 5 (Spring, 1972), p. 3; G. M. Flattery, "How the Holy Spirit Leads," *ibid.* (Summer, 1971), p. 7; A. L. Hoy, "Evaluating Manifestations of Spiritual Gifts," *ibid.*, Vol. 7 (Spring, 1973), p. 16.

21. For eighty documented examples, some of which probably apply to 16:19: R. D. Weed, *The Word of Knowledge* (Ellendale: Trinity Institute, 1973). For general reviews: D. Gee, *Concerning Spiritual Gifts* (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, n.d.), pp. 27, 110; H. Carter, *Spiritual Gifts and Their Operation* (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 1968), p. 27; J. Rea, ed., *Layman's Commentary on the Holy Spirit* (Plainfield: Logos, 1972), p. 62.

22. A. T. Robertson, op. cit., Vol. 4, p. 169.

Jesus, "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."²³ The *gnoseos* implies that out of all knowledge, an attribute of Jesus, comes a small part of that knowledge, imparted to a believer for application on earth. The classical definition of charismata, "free, supernatural gifts perfecting human knowledge, speech, service, and administrative ability, not for personal advantage, but for the good of the church," makes the point that *logos gnoseos* is a supernatural revelation.²⁴ This revelatory mechanism imparts facts, past, present, or future, not learned by so many years at the university or seminary or through efforts of the natural mind. It is wholly dependent on the Word of God Himself via the Holy Spirit.

A second such mechanism is the Discernings of Spirits (*diakriseis pneumaton*). Both words are Greek plurals, hence, "this gift had many and various occasions of exercise."²⁵ In its fulness it includes the discerning, by supernatural input into any one of the five human senses, of spirits such as the human spirit, the Holy Spirit, the Father, Jesus, angels, demons, or Satan and the ability to distinguish the good ones from the bad.²⁶ This information is particularly useful in deliverance work, but very certainly is not confined to this area where the appropriate act of *deo-luo* would be an application of exorcism technique.²⁷

A third such mechanism for use in part one is the plurality of the gifts of healings (*charismata iamatōn*). Noting that both were Greek plurals, Horton in his classic develops their rich multiplicity and application.²⁸ It seems clear that within the *deo-luo* idea, the large framework of this mechanism provides an input satisfying the requirements of 16:19. Also, it functions in beautiful harmony when coupled with *logos gnoseos* and there is some overlap into discernment in cases of "healings" due to demonization, recognition, and exorcism.

We conclude that *logos gnoseos*, *diakriseis pneumaton*, and *charismata iamatōn* were instituted in part to provide the directions in part one of the above threefold sequence and that *logos sophias* could provide input for part two. The supernatural phenomena of the charismata are the mechanisms by which Jesus' prophecy in 16:19 could be fulfilled.

MOTIVATION

Guidelines for the earthly role of the believer in his potential fulfillment of 16:19 were given by the Spirit writing by Paul from the Ephesian school of charismatic theology at Tyrannus' lecture hall.²⁹ "But earnestly

23. Col. 2:3 NAS.

24. *The New Testament of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*, A Revision of the Challoner-Rheims Version, ed. by Catholic Scholars (Paterson, N. J.: St. Anthony's Guild Press, c. 1941), Footnote, p. 471.

25. W. R. Nicoll, ed., *The Expositor's Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), Vol. 2, p. 889.

26. Heb. 5:14, 1 Tim. 4:1, 1 Jn. 4:1.

27. K. Hagin, *Ministering to the Oppressed* (Tulsa: P. O. Box 50126, n.d.), p. 10.

28. H. Horton, *The Gifts of the Spirit*, 10th ed., (Nottingham: Assemblies of God Publishing House, 1934), p. 103.

29. That Paul's daily classroom ministry made this the most likely place of writing is argued in a forthcoming note by this author. The geographical, cultural, and spiritual role of this school in the gentile mission will be discussed.

desire (*zeloute*) the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way. . . . So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek (*zeteite*) to abound for the edification of the church."³⁰ The excellency of the way is to be available to edify our brothers, which is a prominent New Testament theme.³¹ Love is to be translated into deed through the charismata.

Ervin observes that there is no reasonable doubt that "love *plus* the gifts of the Spirit" is being urged here.³² These are both to be found in seeking the Lord. The Old Testament repeatedly records exhortations to seek God and now that we are raised with Christ we are to seek (*zeteite*) the things above, definitely including the flow of charismata from Christ shed through His Spirit.³³ Matthew Henry paraphrases thus, "covet those gifts most that will do the best service to men's souls."³⁴ This is the role and responsibility set before the church in being receptive *and* obedient. Otherwise a hindrance to Jesus' purpose in 16:19 could result.³⁵

We must note that both *zeloute* and *zeteite* in the above passage from the New Testament full-gospel teaching center at Ephesus are present active imperatives addressed to "the church of God . . . saints by calling, with all who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."³⁶ This extrapolates directly to all who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus and who in every place call upon that name today or any other day. The imperative mood was used in commands (not options), exhortations, and entreaties. The present (as opposed to aorist) here is significant in that the command is not a punctiliar singular event precept, but a durative one representing an ongoing action to keep on desiring and seeking.³⁷

30. 1 Cor. 12:31; 14:12 NAS.

31. 1 Jn. 4:8, 16, Mt. 22:36-40; A. Bittlinger, *Gifts and Graces: A Commentary on First Corinthians 12-14* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1967), p. 81.

32. H. M. Ervin, *These are not Drunken As Ye Suppose* (Plainfield: Logos, 1968), p. 154.

33. Col. 3:1. To seek and love God is man's role. Over three dozen OT references to "seeking" and two dozen for "crying" to the LORD establish a base for obedience to 1 Cor. 14:12. Now Christ is to be revealed (in the charismata) by the sovereign operations of the Holy Spirit.

34. M. Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible in One Volume* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1961), p. 1821.

35. See INTRODUCTION. A hindrance to the purpose of the thesis expounded here has developed in the school of philosophy of a "temporary-permanent" dichotomy of gifts. J. M. Walvoord, "Contemporary Issues in the Holy Spirit," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. 30 (Oct./Dec., 1973), p. 315 presents a recent version. Having no direct scriptural support and much direct scriptural opposition, this extremely weak theory contains the presuppositional bias of a divine discontinuity in the charismatic flow, independent and irrespective of the church's role. A systematic point by point grammatical-theological refutation of this theory is beyond our scope. However, we can observe that such a refutation is within the scope of theology for the church.

36. 1 Cor. 1:2 NAS. The possibility of *zeteite* being in the indicative is not urged by context nor by Dana and Mantey's remark on the significance of the imperative in the NT, H. Dana and J. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the New Testament* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1927), p. 176.

37. See INTRODUCTION. W. G. Morrice, "Translating the Greek Imperative," *The Bible Translator*, Vol. 24 (Jan., 1973), p. 129; J. H. Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1908), Vol. 1, p. 126; Blass-Debrunner, *op. cit.*, p. 172; H. Nunn, *A Short Syntax of New Testament Greek* (Cambridge: University Press, 1969), p. 83.

Thus it seems clear that the Lord who is the Spirit writing by Paul had in mind to provide for a continuous flow of charismata (subject to His sovereignty and His church's obedience) to substantiate Jesus' 16:19 prophecy and to otherwise edify His body: "Spiritual gifts in the possession of believers are absolutely necessary to Christ. . . they are as necessary for Him in the carrying out of His present purposes as the limbs and faculties are to the natural body."³⁸

The continuous flow of charismata was set up to edify and unify the Body of Christ and fulfill Christ's claims. It is important to understand that they are primarily a spiritual, not an intellectual or emotional, experience.

This flow was not to be an imbalanced Gnosticism.³⁹ Neither was it to be an extreme and undue preoccupation with hostility toward diverse and specific charismata.⁴⁰

Rather it was to be a balanced walk, as expressed by Didymus the Blind, before the "unutterable and eternal goodness, the fountain of the uninterrupted flow of the charismata."⁴¹ Similarly, Epiphanius of Salamis, while affirming that the Holy Church of God accepted only the veritable charismata (that which is good freely given in various ways), "to another the spirit of knowledge, to another the spirit of healings, to another the spirit of discerning of spirits," charges the faithful of Syedra: "Let us not fall from that which is set before us."⁴² Can we do less in this hour?

38. H. Horton, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

39. For a review of M. Griffiths, F. Brunner, and D. Gelphi and a cogent summary: M. Harper, "Are you a Gnostic?" *Logos Journal*, Vol. 40 (May/June), p. 42.

40. C. I. Scofield et al. eds., *The New Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), Footnote 2, p. 1245, Footnote 1, p. 1247. The tone of these remarks has the unfortunate consequence of casting a cloud of doubt and confusion over the charismata. This tendency and others are reviewed: H. A. Snyder, "Misunderstanding Spiritual Gifts," *Christianity Today*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (Oct., 1973), p. 15.

41. Didymus the Blind, "De Trinitate", Lib. 2, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca*, Greek and Latin Text, ed. by J. P. Migne, Vol. 39 (Paris: J. P. Migne, 1863), p. 452; Didymos Der Blinde, *Psalmekommentar (Tura Papyrus)*, Tiel 2 (Bonn: Rudolf Habelt Verlag, 1968) Vol. 4, p. 200.

42. Epiphanius, "Adversus Haereses", "Ancoratus", *Patrologiae Cursus Completus*, Vol. 43, pp. 28, 45, 152. Cf. A. T. Floris, "Spiritual Gifts is the Post-Apostolic Period," *Paraclete*, Vol. 5 (Spring, 1971), p. 26; A. T. Floris, "Didymus, Epiphanius, and the Charismata," *ibid.*, Vol. 6 (Winter, 1972), p. 26. For a J. P. Migne up-date: A. Hamman, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina*, Supplementum, accurante, Vols. 1-4 (Paris: Garnier Freres, 1958-71).