

08.08.2020 UNLIMITED POSSIBILITIES

***“But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills”
1 Corinthians 12:11***

“There is no limit to the usefulness of one who, putting aside self, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon his heart, and lives a life wholly consecrated to God” *Ministry of Healing. P 159*

This week we study the gifts of the Spirit. They are also called spiritual gifts. The gifts of the Spirit are given to glorify God and to build up (edify) the Body of Christ, which is the church.

The Fruit of the Spirit and the Gifts of the Spirit

The fruit of the Spirit is produced in all believers who live by faith. In contrast, the gifts of the Spirit are particular i.e. the Spirit chooses who should receive a particular gift.

God is glorified by both the fruit and the gifts of the Spirit.

The fruit of the Spirit is the outworking of the character of God in the life of a surrendered Christian. It is to reveal ‘Christ in you’. It is the work of the Holy Spirit in you and through you.

A spiritual gift is an ability imparted to every Christian for the benefit of the whole church. A believer may receive more than one gift. The gift is given to fulfil a particular need in the Body of Christ; a particular task for ministry – either for witness to the world or for building up the church spiritually. It may be given as a permanent gift or temporarily as the need may be.

For I wish that all men were even as I myself. But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that. 1 Corinthians 7:7

Differing Gifts: United in Service

For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free – and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12:12, 13

*There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all... **Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. 1 Corinthians 12:4- 6, 27, 28***

Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, in all, and living through all.

However, he has given each one of us a special gift (of grace) through the generosity of Christ. That is why the Scriptures say, “When he ascended to the heights, He led a crowd of captives and gave gifts to His people.” Ephesians 4:3-8

God the Giver of all Good Gifts

But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore He says: “When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.” Ephesians 4:7, 8

Jesus Christ gives gifts to men because He has defeated Satan the strong man, and redeemed His people. He has ascended on high and gives gifts to men. The gifts are made available to the believer through the Holy Spirit who is Jesus’ representative on earth.

All the gifts are gifts of grace. We have done nothing to deserve them. We receive them according to His will.

But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills. 1 Corinthians 12:11

Our natural talents or abilities are not spiritual gifts. If unconsecrated, they are also part of the 'flesh' and are of no use to God. They must be laid on the altar of sacrifice and we must be sure that God has given them back to us as His gifts to be used by Him in His service.

"The special gifts of the Spirit are not the only talents represented in the parable. It includes all gifts and endowments, whether original or acquired, natural or spiritual. All are to be employed in Christ's service. In becoming His disciples, we surrender ourselves to Him with all that we are and have. These gifts He returns to us purified and ennobled, to be used for His glory in blessing our fellow men". *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 328.

The Purpose of Spiritual Gifts

*And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, **for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.** that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. Ephesians 4:11-16*

For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. Romans 12:3-8

The verses above make it clear that the Spirit gives gifts, the Spirit guides the use of these gifts and that those who have received the gifts have a responsibility to use the gifts wisely as good stewards of the grace of God.

The gifts are given for the work of the ministry, for the unity of the Body of Christ and the building up of the church in love. We do not work as just as individuals, priding ourselves on our contribution, but we each follow the guidance of the Spirit, so that together we honour Christ.

Discovering Your Spiritual Gifts

The gifts are already ours in Christ. We have to be willing to be used of God, we must ask God in full assurance of faith and the Holy Spirit will make clear to us His will regarding the ministry He has for us.

When we look at the gifts described in Ephesians 4, Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12, they can be divided into 2 broad categories – **the ministry of the word and the ministry of works**. One commentator puts it thus, 'the gifts of speaking and of service'.

The ministry of the word includes gifts of preaching, teaching, prophesying ('telling forth'), speaking in tongues and interpretation of tongues, the word of wisdom and knowledge.

The ministry of service includes gifts of hospitality, helping, leadership, administration, healing, encouraging, giving and mercy, service, discernment.

Growing Your Spiritual Gifts

"For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Matthew 25:29, 30

How do I build up the Church with my gift?

1. Take Responsibility for your gift.

If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. 1 Corinthians 12:15-18

Use what you have been given, for it has been given to you by God. It is His God-given task for you. Do not compare your gift with another's gift and be envious. If you use your gift, the church will be blest and God will be glorified. *'Freely you have received, freely give'.*

2. Accept limitation.

If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? 1 Corinthians 12:17

This addresses the opposite issue. Use only what you have been given; do not take over the function of others in the church. You are not only to give of your gift, but you must be willing to receive the gifts and service of the other members of the Body of Christ and allow them to function. Do I like to talk? I must learn to listen to others. Do I always want to lead out in prayer? I must let others who are quieter, lead out instead.

*'There is no single organ monopoly in the physical body!' In fact, though all cells of a human being contain the same DNA (over a hundred trillion cells!), nevertheless the more specialised a cell is, the more limited it is. And yet, in this sacrifice of limitation, the cell contributes to the well-being of the whole body. For example, the specialised cells of the eye, the rods and cones are confined to the eyes and yet provide me with glorious technicolour visions of God's creation. So it is with the Body of Christ; though our gift requires self-sacrifice and limitation, nevertheless, it contributes to the building up of the church to the measure of the fullness of Christ.' Paul Brand. *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made**

3. Honour Others

And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. 1 Corinthians 12:21, 22

Every member of the church is of value to God and so must be of value to us. There is no discrimination in the Body. We do not follow the principles of the world and live independent lives. We are now committed to the will and ways of God. What God values in us is not our talent or charisma or wealth, but our loyalty to Him. That loyalty will give us the mind of Christ and lead us to love and esteem our brothers and sisters in the faith. We want to reveal to the world only the love of Jesus Christ, and the world will see it and exclaim, *'Behold how they love one another!'*

4. Promote Unity

But God composed the body, having given greater honour to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. 1 Corinthians 12:24, 25

Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. Ephesians 4:3

We are called to accept one another, serve one another, wash one another's feet, pray for one another, forgive one another, confess our sins to one another, teach and admonish one another, comfort one another, bear one another's burdens and above all, to love one another.

If we allowed the Spirit to rule our lives, we would have a community of believers to whom people would come, as they came to Jesus, for no-one would be made to feel unworthy, rejected or unloved.

This is the Christian manifestation of unity. The 'tie that binds' us is the Spirit, who leads us to provide the support that each member of the Body requires.

5. Pursue Love, which is the more excellent way.

'Earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way...' 1 Corinthians 12: 31

Pursue love...1 Corinthians 14:1

Paul states that while gifts are good, and are an outward manifestation of the work of God in our lives, nevertheless God is most glorified when His servants show the evidence of the inward work of the Spirit in their lives. They love each other with the *agape* love of God that is the fruit of the Spirit – unconditional, unchanging and self-giving love.

'By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another'. John 13:35

And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment. 1 John 3:23

Conclusion:

Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful... we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. 1 Corinthians 4:1, 2, 9

'The gifts are already ours in Christ, but their actual possession depends upon our reception of the Spirit of God. The promise of the Spirit is not appreciated as it should be. Its fulfilment is not realised as it might be. It is the absence of the Spirit that makes the gospel ministry so powerless. Learning, talents, eloquence, every natural or acquired endowment, may be possessed; but without the presence of the Spirit of God, no heart will be touched, no sinner be won to Christ. On the other hand, if they are connected with Christ, if the gifts of the Spirit are theirs, the poorest and most ignorant of His disciples will have a power that will tell upon hearts. God makes them the channel for the outworking of the highest influence in the universe.' Christ Object Lessons. P 327, 328

But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins."...As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. 1 Peter 4:10, 11
