

Life in the Body Spiritual Gifts 7/9/24

1. Introduction

Romans 12:4-8 – “4 For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another, 6 but having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: whether prophecy, in agreement with the faith; 7 or service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; 8 or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with generosity; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.”

1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 28 – “4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. 6 And there are varieties of workings, but the same God who works everything in everyone. 7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for what is profitable. 8 For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; 9 to someone else faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 and to another the workings of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to someone else *various* kinds of tongues, and to another the translation of tongues. 11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills... 28 And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, *various* kinds of tongues.”

Ephesians 4:11 – “And He Himself gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers...”

1 Peter 4:10-11 – “As each one has received a gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God— 11 whoever speaks, as one *speaking* the oracles of God; whoever serves, as one *servicing* by the strength which

God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and might forever and ever. Amen.”

- a. We do not have the time to get into the issues of cessationism and continuationism. If you would like to talk about that after, please talk with me. You can also read these articles on thecripplegate.com ("Why There is No Such Thing as the Gift of Tongues," "Why Reformed Pastors Need not Be Charismatic" parts 1, 2, & 3, "Why I'm not a Charismatic", "Addressing Continuationist Arguments from 1 Corinthians 14." You can also listen to pastor Eric's sermons on 1 Cor 12-14.
- b. No single list of the spiritual gifts in the NT (Rom 12:6-8; 1 Cor 12:4-11, 28; Eph 4:11; 1 Pet 4:11) is exhaustive. Meaning, that we need to look at the 4 passages to get a full list of all of the spiritual gifts. This also means that the only spiritual gifts that are given are found in these texts.
- c. Spiritual gifts are not natural abilities, but a special empowerment by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. Natural abilities, however, could be used by God as gifts. For example, someone who plays music well could have the gift of serving.
- d. Even though these are gifts of the Holy Spirit, they can still be hindered by sin in your life. Sin is like mud on the floodlights of the Holy Spirit who would otherwise shine Christ through you.
  - i. Lack of teaching. Christians want to use their gifts, but have not received adequate shepherding and teaching from God's word.
  - ii. Unrepentant sin. If there is sin in our lives that we are tolerating; allowing; not putting to death; that drains our spiritual vitality.

- iii. Self-centeredness. The person who knows what the Bible says but is just more about themselves than using their giftedness.
  
  - iv. Not sure what my gifts are. Which is what we will be looking at to help you learn what they may be.
  
  - e. Gifts may take time to refine.
  
  - f. Most Christians probably do not have only one gift, but a variety. We do not all have the same gifts. As we looked at last week, we are each a different part of the whole body. Therefore, it would make sense that we each have different gifts for the purpose of building up the whole body.
  
  - g. Spiritual gifts can be used by the person at will. These are not spontaneous abilities that just come about. This is one major reason why we would argue that the sign gifts of apostle, prophet, languages (tongues), miracles, and healing have since ceased. Note: as will be mentioned below, this does not mean that we don't believe that God does not perform miracles. But that no one has the ability to heal someone at will.
  
  - h. We do not choose our own spiritual gifts. God gives them as He wills. Romans 12:6.
    - i. Which means that we cannot be jealous that we do not have a gift that someone else does.
  
    - ii. Or that our gifts are more important than another's. This is exactly what Paul was addressing in 1 Cor 12-14.
2. What is the Purpose of the Spiritual Gifts?
- a. As we read in 1 Corinthians 12, the main purpose of the gifts are to display Jesus Christ (12:1-3).

- b. Serving/ministering in and to the church. 1 Cor 12:4, 7, Eph 4:11 - Ministry — the word here has the idea of useful service; used of table waiters in the 1st century. The gifts empower us to serve in a way that God wants. Also, critical to keep in mind: the gifts enable all Christians to be ministers. It is not exclusively pastors who are ministers.
  
  - c. They are not for our own personal use/benefit but for the church.
    - i. 1 Cor 12:7 - "to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" – "common good" means literally to bring together.
  
  - d. The variety of spiritual gifts means that local churches are not only built around a few rigid programs, but from the gifts of every believer as we rightly serve (Eph 4:12-16).
3. What are the Spiritual Gifts?
- a. “Word of knowledge” (1 Cor 12:8)– Ability to accurately understand God’s word, which cannot be rightly grasped apart from the Holy Spirit. This could be used in situations where people are sharing struggles or asking questions and verses just start flooding your mind. Anyone from moms to pastors to nursery workers can have this, as this gift is used to impart the knowledge of God and his word to others in many ways.
  
  - b. “Faith” (1 Cor 12:9) – Probably not saving faith, but an extra ability to totally rely on God, especially in trying circumstances; a stable confidence in the person and work of Jesus Christ despite unstable circumstances; a supernatural conviction that God will reveal his power or mercy in a special way in a specific instance. Contrary to some teaching, this is not the ability to believe God such that you

don't get sick, poor, or go through trials. It's the opposite: to be in those situations but to have a firm peace rooted in the sovereignty of God and Person of Christ.

- c. "Gifts of healings" (1 Cor 12:9) – the ability to totally heal various physical and spiritual sufferings. During the first century when Christianity was thought to be a bizarre sect of Judaism, God gave this as a gospel-authenticating-gift; a gift to authenticate the validity of the gospel message to the world as God was doing incredible things in building the fledgling Church.
- d. "Effecting of miracles" (1 Cor 12:10) – literally "works of power;" the ability to work completely contrary to God's natural laws. Like "gifts of healings," the willful ability to perform miracles seems to be a gospel-authenticating-gift during the days of the early Church.

It does not seem that believers have the willful ability to perform those gifts (miracles, healing, languages). However, this does not mean God does not miraculously heal and do miraculous things. At the same time, it may not be best to speak of gifts in categories of miraculous and non-miraculous. It is nothing short of a miracle when someone calls you up and says, "Hey there, can I fix those damages in your house?" Or, "Can I come over and clean your place every week before small group?"

- e. "Prophecy" (Rom 12:6, 1 Cor 12:10) – the word means to "speak forth, or to proclaim." Such is the gift: the Spirit-empowered ability to speak and communicate the word of God such that Jesus is displayed and people are transformed. Not just dispensing information but doing so such that there is power and persuasion. It does not exclusively mean to foretell the future, though prior to the formation of the canon, it could mean that.
- f. "Distinguishing spirits" (1 Cor 12:10) – The word "distinguish" has the idea of "ability to separate truth and non-truth." This gift likely is the Spirit-empowered

ability to recognize biblical truth from a lack thereof in a variety of situations. It is not to be used for blanket criticism, but to distinguish truth from error so that people are drawn towards the truth of God's word and, therefore, built-up in Christ.

- g. “Tongues and interpretation of tongues”(1 Cor 12:10, 27) –The Greek word means “languages.” The gift seems to be the miraculous ability to speak an unlearned language that is known by others for the purpose of exalting Christ. Interpretation corresponds, therefore: interpreting unlearned languages so that truth is ascertained and others are built-up in him. Much more could be said about this gift, of course. It should be noted that on the day of Pentecost, when those in the upper room went out, likely into Temple Square, they spoke in known languages such that the truths of the gospel were understood by various foreigners present (cf. Acts 2:4-11). This would have likely been equivalent to a massive “street evangelism” scene in which many heard the gospel and repented (Acts 2:37-41). As miracles and healing, this appears to be a gospel-authenticating-gift for the early Church days.
- h. “Apostle” (Eph 4:11) – A small group of people that were given to at the beginning of the church to help lay the foundation. To be an apostle you have to meet 3 qualifications. 1) You have to have personally seen the risen Christ (1 Cor 9:1), 2) Have been personally appointed by Christ (Acts 26:15-18; John 20:21), 3) You have to be able to perform miracles to prove apostleship (2 Cor 12:12). Therefore, there is no longer any apostles today.
- i. “Helps” and gifts of assistance (Rom 12:7, 1 Cor 12:28) – The Greek word in 1 Corinthians 12:28 has the idea of “taking the burden off someone and placing it on yourself.” We all get to serve one-another, but those with this gift have extraordinary abilities and joy in relieving burdens of any kind, which God uses powerfully. It's that self-denial and humility, imitating the One who came to serve by giving his life a ransom for many, such that he is displayed.

- j. “Administrations” (Rom 12:8, 1 Cor 12:28) – In 1 Corinthians 12:28, the word has the idea of “steering or piloting a ship.” The Greek word is also used to “give guidance and direction.” This gift is the idea of guiding people according to the Scriptures to maximize their effectiveness and God’s glory. This could be used in all sorts of scenarios, for example, you may be gifted in seeing needs and helping plug in people to those needs such that the body works well; or seeing what God calls us to do in his word, then rallying his people to follow him; and so on. It could also be thought of as the ability to understand God’s will and empower and motivate people to follow him in various ways.
  
- k. “Exhortation” (Romans 12:8) – The word literally means “to call alongside,” and is used in the NT to convey the idea of “encouragement,” “exhortation,” “appeal,” “request,” “admonish,” “comfort,” and “consolation.” This gift is used specifically to speak the word of God into people’s lives, whether in a group setting or one-on-one, such that others are edified according to the aforementioned list (i.e. encouraged, exhorted, comforted, etc.).
  - i. And, if God gave this gift, should we be unreceptive to its use in our lives?
  - ii. Is God using this gift through people in our lives for our good? Of course
  - iii. Also, let’s keep in mind that exhortation is not only required of people with the gift, but all of us (cf. Matt 18:15, Heb. 3:12-14).
  
- l. “Giving” (Romans 12:8) – The word has the idea of “giving a part of” and “sharing.” This gift includes all forms of giving of oneself sacrificially such that others are benefited and Christ is glorified. This may include abundant financial giving in a sacrificial manner, giving of other resources, or the giving of oneself to those in need.
  
- m. “Showing mercy” (Romans 12:8) – The word has the idea of “mercy, compassion, pity.” This gift, which should be characteristic of all Christians, includes a

compassion on those weighed down or suffering that is moved into action such that the burden is shared and/or removed in some way.

- n. “Preaching/Teaching” (Romans 12:7, 1 Pet 4:11, and also “teachers” in Eph 4:11)
    - This gift is the Spirit-empowered ability to teach God’s word in a variety of settings such that people comprehend biblical truth and are edified. The gift is also included in the elder qualification list (1 Tim 3:2).
  - o. “Evangelism” (Eph 4:11) – the gift of speaking the good news of Christ crucified and risen for sinners; in a way that is biblically accurate.
  - a. It should also be noted that two gifts are mentioned in 1 Peter 4:11 (“speaking” and “service”). These broad categories could be inclusive of other gifts. For example, speaking could include teaching, exhortation, and prophecy, while serving could include giving, showing mercy, and helps.
4. How Do I Discover and Use My Gifts?
- a. Be consistent, candid, and committed in a local church.
  - b. Ask a spiritual leader in the church for help
    - i. Recall that church leaders are to equip the church (Eph. 4:11-13). One of the great ways they are to help us is discerning our gifts.
    - ii. Ask them to watch how you serve in the church.
    - iii. Ask them for feedback. Ask things like, “Were people blessed and built up by how I was serving in this particular way?” If the answer is no, avoid being defensive. It’s ok. God is sovereign. He will guide us in our giftedness.



- iv. Err on the side of receiving more than less feedback from ministry leaders.  
They are given by God to help us grow in Christ.
  
  - c. Be open to serving in a variety of ways in the church.
    - i. Oftentimes, people are surprised by their spiritual gifts. They may be gifted in an area that they never would have imagined.
  
    - ii. Be willing to serve in various ministries in the church with humility. It's about God.
  
  - d. Be patient, persistent, and prayerful.
    - i. Ask God for help in this.
  
    - ii. Keep serving and be patient.
  
  - e. Make your motivation the glory of Christ and good of your church.
    - i. Remember from 1 Corinthians 12 the purposes of the gifts.
  
    - ii. Keeping Christ's honor and the benefit of the church as the goal will align you with God's purposes for the gifts, thereby helping you to discern and develop them.
5. Questions & Objections.
- a. If we are uncertain about our gifts, should that hinder our zeal to serve in the body of Christ?
  
  - b. If I am gifted with speaking gifts, can I just not serve in the more "labor" focused ministries of the church? (Ex. I don't want help set up or break down because that is not my gifting).
  
  - c. What if I do a bad job? What if I don't know how to use my gifts?

- d. “My spiritual gifts aren’t as important as others..” – but we’ve seen that God gives gifts as he wishes. It’s not our job to decide if our gifts are important, but to start using them.
- e. “I have made too many mistakes in the past, so how could I be useful now?” – It may be true that we have crashed and burned in the past...
  - i. God took a murderous Saul and made him a ministering Paul. And God took a cowardice Simon and made him a courageous Peter.
  - ii. Trust the power of God more than the sin of your past.
  - iii. You’re not so bad that God wouldn’t know how to use you. Beware of reverse form of pride there, also.
  - iv. The majesty of Christ, the cross, and resurrection is that he cleanses us of our sin, gives us the Holy Spirit, and uses his for his glory.
- f. “I don’t have time to use my gifts.” Certainly there are seasons in our lives where life is more full. This can be tough; we have times where we feel like we are drowning.

But, we have a great God to whom we can pray: and ask, “Father, you have given me these gifts; commanded me to use them.. I don’t see how I can .. could you please help me? Show me?” – and we would seek the help of church leadership to see what that might look like

- g. “There aren’t any needs in the church.” – There are always needs. Talk to church leadership. Be flexible in how you serve.