

“THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT”

I Corinthians 12:4

“There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.”

The “gift” of the Spirit and the “gifts” of the Spirit are entirely different subjects. The giving of the Spirit was realized at Pentecost and was experienced by the Church corporately in answer to the promise and prayer of the Lord Jesus (John 14:16-18; John 16:7). The gifting by the Holy Spirit is bestowed upon believers individually for the “equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” (Eph. 4:12)

Arthur T. Pierson puts the gifts of the Spirit in perspective for us as follows:

“Everyone has some gift, therefore all should be encouraged. No one has all gifts, therefore all should be humble. All gifts are for the one Body, therefore all should be harmonious. All gifts are from the Lord, therefore all should be contented. All gifts are mutually helpful and needful, therefore all should be studiously faithful. All gifts promote the health and strength of the whole body, therefore none can be safely dispensed with. All gifts depend on His fullness for power, therefore, all should keep in close touch with Him.”

Let us explore the Gifts of the Holy Spirit by first looking at the categories of the various gifts. The New Testament provides three lists of spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12; Romans 12; Ephesians 4). Ephesians 4 provides the orders of ministry given the church, while 1 Cor. 12 and Romans 12 list the gifts themselves. Let us look at how they are presented:

I. THE PRESENTATION OF THE SPIRIT’S GIFTS.

Theologians, teachers and writers classified the Spirit’s gifts in various ways such as:

- Ministry of the word vs. practical ministry gifts;
- Some group them as permanent gifts and temporary gifts;
- Others categorize them as motivational, ministering, and manifested gifts;
- Still others set them apart as signifying gifts, speaking gifts and serving gifts;
- Many divide them into the apostolic gifts, the announcing gifts and the assembly gifts.

I prefer the last division of the gifts and the following is an explanation of each section of gifts:

A. The Apostolic Gifts.

These were gifts such as miracles, healings, tongues and interpretation. The word “apostle” refers to an office that died out when the apostles passed away. It does not exist in the church today - that is, there are no biblically authorized apostles today.

B. The Announcing Gifts.

Romans 12:6-8 - “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.” These are gifts for leadership and/or speaking gifts principally.

C. The Assembly Gifts.

These gifts are for the assembly of believers in general. They have been referred to commonly as "help gifts". The gift of "helps" is the Spirit given ability to serve the Church in any supporting role. The gift of helps listed in I Corinthians 12:28 carries the meaning of assistance or support.

II. THE PRACTICE OF THE SPIRIT'S GIFTS.

Now we come to individual gifts. Every believer has at least one spiritual gift (1 Cor. 12:7, 11; Ephesians 4:7), given at his or her salvation. No believer has every spiritual gift (1 Cor. 12:12, 27, 29-30). Our gifts differ from each other (Romans 12:3-6a). We receive our gifts according to God's will, not our own desire or experience (1 Cor. 12:11; Eph 4:7-8). Combining the various lists of the Spirit's gifts, we discover these gifts:

administration: organizing people and ministries effectively;
apostleship: adapting to a different culture to share the gospel or do ministry;
discernment: distinguishing spiritual truth from error or heresy;
evangelism: sharing the gospel effectively and passionately;
exhortation: encouraging others as they follow Jesus;
faith: seeing God's plan and following it with passion;
giving: investing with unusual sacrifice and joy in God's Kingdom;
healing: being used by God to bring physical health in supernatural ways;
intercession: praying with unusual passion and effectiveness;
knowledge: discerning and sharing the deep truths of God's word and will;
leadership: motivating and inspiring others to serve Jesus fully;
mercy: showing God's grace to hurting people with unusual passion;
miracles: being used by God in ministry which transcends natural explanation;
prophecy: preaching the word of God with personal passion and effectiveness;
servicing: meeting practical needs with unusual sacrifice and joy;
shepherding: helping others grow spiritually;
teaching: explaining God's word and truth with unusual effectiveness;
wisdom: relating biblical truth to practical life with great effectiveness.

How Can You Know Your Gifts?

Some believe that God reveals our spiritual gifts to us directly, as his Spirit speaks to us. Others depend on the insight and opinions of godly believers. Most theologians would add a third approach: give attention to your God-given opportunities for service, and to your interests, passions, and abilities. The Lord typically uses us in ways consistent with our gifting. For instance, if you are often asked into a leadership position, you may well be gifted for that role. The Lord usually gives us a desire to become involved in those ministries for which we are gifted. And he blesses the uses of our gifts, so that we can identify their existence by their effectiveness.

When you find and use your spiritual gifts, you will also find the passion, purpose, and peace of God. We can measure the degree to which we are surrendered to the Spirit by

the "fruit" or results which manifest themselves in our lives: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Galatians 5:22). Would those who know you best say that they see the Spirit at work in your life?

III. THE PURPOSE OF THE SPIRIT'S GIFTS.

The purpose of the Spirit's gifts to members of the Body of Christ is threefold: To exalt God, to edify believers and to extend the Church in the world.

A. The Exaltation Of God.

The New Testament emphasis is upon utilizing whatever gift one has for the glory of God as one's giftedness is exercised in the advancement of the Church of Jesus Christ.

Gifts were given not for show but for the service of the Lord, the Head of the Church. From what one sees and hears on religious television, there are some who are more interested in seeking a "gift" than they are in seeking the "Giver."

A. B. Simpson put it like this: "Once it was the blessing, now it is the Lord; Once His gifts I wanted, now the Giver own."

B. The Edification Of Believers.

In I Cor. 12 Paul uses the analogy of the human body to illustrate the functionality of the church, the Body of Christ. The purpose of the Spirit's gifting is to promote within the church unity, diversity, maturity and utility.

The Pauline Epistles clearly teach that whatever gift one possesses he/she does not possess it for their personal enjoyment but for the purpose of ministering to others. Today's emphasis, in so many churches, is almost totally focused upon ones own personal experience (to prove ones salvation and/or to demonstrate ones spiritual superiority), which leads to spiritual pride.

"The Church is the Body of Christ and the characteristic of a healthy body is that every part in it performs its own function for the good of the whole. But unity does not mean uniformity, and therefore within the Church, there are differing gifts and differing functions; but every one of them is the gift of the same Spirit, and every one of them is designed, not for the glory of the individual member of the Church, but for the good of the whole." – William Barclay

"The gifts are given for the good of the whole church. They are not for individual enjoyment, but for corporate employment." - Warren W. Wiersbe

Paul told the Corinthians that "the members should have the same care for one another." (I Cor. 12:25) The gifts were to be shared for the benefit of the Body.

C. The Extension Of The Church Of Jesus Christ.

(Rom. 12:3–8; I Cor. 12–14; Eph. 4:7–16; I Pet. 4:10–11)

The “gifts of the Spirit” were for the internal efficiency of the Church; the “fruit of the Spirit” is for the external effectiveness of the Church. If the Church is to reach its arms around the world of lost humanity it must first reach its arms around each other! As the gifts of the Spirit are employed within the Body it will be matured and its vitality will produce the “fruit of the Spirit.”

A disharmonious Church will not be a Church that demonstrates to a watching world the fruits of new life in Christ. The external world may not see the internal functioning of the gifts that we possess but it cannot miss the fruit that we produce. The Church is extended when we let our “light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”(Matt.5:16)

Today's emphasis, in some churches, is totally upon the "gifts" of the Spirit not the "fruit" of the Spirit. The "gifts" of the Holy Spirit, especially the original Pentecostal gifts, were temporary during the transition period from Old Testament Law keeping to New Testament Grace and are principally referred to in the book of the Acts of the Apostles, which is a transitional book.

The overriding emphasis in the Epistles is not the "gifts" of the Spirit but the "fruit" of The Spirit scattered throughout all the Epistles but capsulated in Galatians Gal 5:21-26: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another."

The major emphasis in the New Testament is not about the "gifts" of the Spirit but the "fruit" of the Holy Spirit; not in an “emotional experience” of gifts but upon a “volitional expression” of fruit; not on “talking in the Spirit” but “walking in the Spirit” and that is what extends the Church of Jesus Christ.

SUMMATION:

There is no conflict in scripture between its teachings on the gifts of the Spirit and its teachings on the fruit of the Spirit, but there are distinctions between the two:

- The gifts of the Spirit are related primarily to the collective body of believers; the fruit of the Spirit is related to individual believers in the body.
- The gifts of the Spirit are related to ministry; the fruit is related to character.
- The gifts of the Spirit may be classified as to order of importance; all of the fruit is essential.
- No single believer receives all the gifts of the Spirit; every believer may bear all the fruit all the time.
- The scriptural ideal is the exercise of the gifts of the Spirit and the expression of the fruit of the Spirit at the same time. It is not one apart from the other; it is a case of both simultaneously.

- We should not emphasize the gifts apart from the fruit of the Spirit; nor should we emphasize the fruit of the Spirit apart from His gifts. Both should be combined for the most effective witness.

CONCLUSION

Illust. One of my favorite stories concerns a father arriving home from work one day. His two little girls ran to meet him. The five-year-old got to him first, throwing her arms around his legs. Hedges on either side of the sidewalk kept the three-year-old from going around her big sister to her father. Standing on the sidewalk, she began to cry. So her father reached down and picked her up.

The big sister then taunted her little sister, "Ha, ha, ha--I've got all of Daddy there is." The little sister replied, "Ha, ha, ha--Daddy's got all of me there is." If Jesus is your Lord, you have all of the Spirit of God there is. Does he have all of you?

(See also the series on "The Fruit Of The Spirit.")

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