

## Introduction to Spiritual Gifts, Part 2 --- Romans 12:4-11

May 31, 2020

Romans 12:4-11 *For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, 5so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. 6We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us. If one has the gift of prophecy, then let him prophesy according to the proportion of his faith; 7if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; 8or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. 9Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. 10Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; 11not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;*

### Introduction

Many portions of Scripture that teach about spiritual gifts include a statement of the need for humility and unity in the midst of diversity.

In the church at Corinth, there were divisions because of the lack of humility. There were those who worked against unity because of self-exaltation. Some people with certain gifts ostracized others who did not share their same abilities and same ways of thinking.

1 Corinthians 12:18-21 *But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired . . . there are many members, but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."*

In similar fashion, you cannot ostracize others just because they are not in line with your thinking as we come together with a variety of opinions concerning COVID.

As we begin to study spiritual gifts in the Church, keep in mind the great need for humility, patience and the need to extend grace. The same is true as we come together again in relationship to the COVID epidemic. This is a time to minister to one another, not separate from each other.

The pagan culture that surrounded the early Church had wrong ideas about what it meant to be spiritual. Those ideas crept into the Church. For example,

in the myths about the Greek gods, the account is told that shortly after the god Apollo was born, he killed the serpent god, Python. Python was a god of prophesy, and his oracle (or seer) was located in the city of Delphi. Apollo took over this oracle for himself, and therefore became a god of prophesy.

A woman known as the Pythoness was the avenue of prophetic utterances from Apollo. It was generally believed that she delivered her oracles under the direct influence of the god Apollo. Supposedly when the god possessed her, it worked like an epileptic seizure and was exhausting and dangerous.

As a preliminary to the god possessing her, she chewed leaves of the sacred laurel then drank water from a prophetic wellspring which flowed underground. But the culminating point was reached when she seated herself on a tripod that suspended her over a crack in the ground. She was supposedly inspired by a mystic vapor that arose from the crack. This prophetess would get worked up into a hysteria and then speak in frenzied, delirious, unintelligible utterances. After her frenzied speech, an interpreter would translate what she said to those in attendance.

Coming out of these false religious systems in the ancient world, there were many in Rome and Corinth and in a number of the New Testament churches who brought into the Church their misconceptions of what it meant to be spiritual. They were arrogant and wanted to exhibit the gifts that put self on display. They were self-serving rather than others oriented. 1 Corinthians 12:7 says, *“But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”*

That tendency to crave the showy gifts is still evident in the modern church. Many want high profile positions that draw attention to self. Paul was direct in his statements as he begins to focus on spiritual gifts in his letter to the Romans. Romans 12:3 says, *“For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.”*

The Church is compared to a body with many different parts that all work together to accomplish the purpose of the Church and ultimately glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. Our purpose as a church is to edify and build each other up so that we are equipped to make disciples. When all those in the Church have the attitude of selfless service, it is amazing what can be accomplished.

If you have trusted in the person of Jesus and His work on the cross for salvation, you have been born into the Church and consequently have been

given unique abilities called spiritual gifts in order to build up the body of Christ so that we may accomplish the purposes for which we exist.

As we begin, I ask you, “What is the primary purpose for your life? What are you attempting to accomplish? Do your goals in life match up with God’s expressed purpose for you in His Word?” Our lives are not to be consumed with just making a living or entertaining ourselves. We were made for greater purposes.

Jesus said in Matthew 6:25-31, “. . . *do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? And do not seek what you will eat and what you will drink, and do not keep worrying. For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek; but your Father knows that you need these things. But seek His kingdom, and these things will be added to you.*”

I have lived long enough as a believer on this earth to have learned firsthand what Jesus promised here is true—Seek first His kingdom and these things will be supplied. Our first priority in this life is kingdom oriented: the glory of Christ. The Holy Spirit has given you a certain ability to build up the Church. Over the next few weeks, our focus will be on what the Bible teaches about spiritual gifts.

## Review

We saw last week that the gathering of the Church is where Christians come to fellowship and are built up so that we can do the work of the ministry. We considered Ephesians 4:11-15.

*And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for (purpose) the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until (result) we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result (result), we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.*

So the purpose of the gathering of the Church is for believers to be built up in the truth and equipped for the work of the ministry. Our growth in doctrinal understanding is not cold theological orthodoxy but dynamic knowledge and understanding of the Word of God so that we are not tossed around with every wind of teaching that comes along and sends us off on a wild goose chase.

As a result of growing in our faith, we are able to better minister to one another. Christians are built up in order to walk in a manner that is worthy of the Gospel. We are built up so that we may effectively speak the Gospel to a lost world.

Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:13-16, *“Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching. <sup>14</sup>Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery (board of elders). <sup>15</sup>Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress will be evident to all. <sup>16</sup>Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you. In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following.”*

The truth is given in verse 16—*“for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.”* It excites me to know that as the Word is taught here on Sunday mornings and the body ministers here on Sunday mornings as well as throughout the week, we grow in ensuring salvation. The preaching and teaching of the Word of God is critical to the life of the Church. The Church is fed and nurtured by the Scriptures so that we are equipped to accomplish the tasks given to the Church.

Furthermore, we saw last week that a primary avenue for edification is the ministry of each person to others by exercising their spiritual gifts. One way that we grow spiritually is when every person in the body is engaged in ministering to others *“being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”*

In 1 Corinthians 12-14, Paul writes repeatedly that spiritual gifts are given to each believer in the Church for the purpose of benefiting others. It is important to know that spiritual gifts are not for self-edification but for the sake of others. 1 Corinthians 12:7 states, *“But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”* 1 Corinthians 12:25 teaches that a variety of gifts are given, *“.... that the members should have the same care for one another.”*

1 Corinthians 14:5 delineates the purpose for spiritual gifts: “...so that the Church may receive edifying.” And in 14:12 Paul commands, “So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the Church.” Paul wraps up his evaluation 1 Corinthians 14:26 of the ultimate purpose of spiritual gifts and the gathering of the Church, “Let all things be done for edification.”

If you are a believer, you are gifted to build up others. The purpose of our gathering is not just to show up on Sunday to be entertained. Fellowship and service among the body is essential. The best way to exercise our gifts is life on life. We must purpose to get to know each other and be committed to one another in order to build up one another.

## Introduction to Spiritual Gifts, Part 2

So in our study of Romans, we have come to a critical application of all the sound theology that Paul has expounded for 11 chapters, namely the coming together of the Church, each exercising his or her gift to be built up in order to make disciples and glorify Christ.

*4For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, 5so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.*

This passage launches us into a full scale study of spiritual gifts. The subject of spiritual gifts has been a hot topic for decades and continues to be a doctrine that is hotly debated in the modern church. So we are going to take our time and study a number of parallel passages in order to gain a firm, biblical understanding concerning what the Bible teaches about spiritual gifts.

I want to focus your attention on 1 Corinthians 12-14 over the next weeks because Paul goes into great detail about spiritual gifts in these chapters. But before we go to 1 Corinthians 12, I want to touch on what Paul says in the first part of Romans 12:6

### Introduction Romans 12:6

*Since we have gifts that differ*

Romans 12:6

*Gifts that differ . . .* Different gifts—Sometimes it is hard for us to accept this, because we want other believers to be like us and function like us. Paul knew Christians who had this trouble, but he tells everyone that we must accept this

diversity if the Church is to function as it should.

Charis'mata, χαρίσματα is the word translated gifts. It occurs seventeen times in the New Testament; sixteen of those occurrences are in Paul's writings. Charismata is based on the word *grace* (charis) and actually means "a grace gift." It is something given to the people of God by God or, more specifically, by the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Spiritual gifts are dispensed by the Holy Spirit according to His pleasure, and they differ.

Every Christian has at least one gift similar to the people who received talents in Christ's parables. Since these are given by the Spirit of Christ, they are to be used for Christ's glory and according to His plans instead of exalting our own glory or furthering our plans. This is where the thrust toward unity comes. We not only belong to Christ, but also we belong to one another.

John Murray says this concerning spiritual gifts: "Christians have property in one another and therefore in one another's gifts and graces. It would be correct to add that you, as a Christian, have a right to the gifts the other members of the body have been given, and they have a right to your gift. You cheat them if you do not use it, and you are poorer if you do not depend on them."

As I said, a problem that Paul had to confront in the churches of his day, and is still an issue today, was the focus on self and the significance of self. I want to quote James Boice at length here, because I think that he articulates this problem well. He says, "Our problem today is our individualism, which I would define as hyper-personalized religion . . . . America has been infected with a deadly virus which is 'radical individualism.' It affects every area of life. People make up their own rules for everything, entirely apart from other people. This 'radical individualism' is particularly noticeable in religion.

Boice continues, "The word for this is narcissism, derived from the ancient story of Narcissus—a young Greek athlete who was in love with himself and spent his time by a quiet pool staring at his own reflection. It is a part of being conformed to this world rather than being transformed by the renewing of our minds, and it is a radical departure from what religion in America used to be and should be. Today, Christian churches in America are as private and diverse as New England colonial religion was public and unified. Clearly you cannot have 'one body in Christ' if everyone is creating a private little a la carte religion for himself."

As we study spiritual gifts, it is vital to keep in mind this tendency in our flesh to use our gifts selfishly instead of benefitting others. I think of Barnabas as an

example of a believer who had a variety of gifts who used them to benefit others. You will find Barnabas in the pages of the book of Acts. He is first introduced as one who sold his property in order to help other believers who had financial needs in the early church at Jerusalem.

Furthermore, you will find Barnabas, whose name means Son of Encouragement, among the teachers in the church at Antioch, encouraging the saints. He is the one who helps the Apostle Paul get involved in the Church after Paul's conversion. Barnabas leaves the pages of Scripture when he takes his cousin, Mark, who proved to be spiritually weak, in order to encourage him. Mark is built up by Barnabas in such a way that Paul calls for Mark to come and help. Mark wrote the gospel that carries his name. All because Barnabas was true to his giftedness and served the Church rather than himself.

We will return to Romans 12:6 and consider the gifts that Paul refers to there. However, I want to take a detour at this point and consider 1 Corinthians 12 in this lengthy introduction to spiritual gifts. Paul provides a far more extensive treatment of the subject of gifts in 1 Corinthians 12-14.

*1 Corinthians 12:1-7 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware. 2You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the mute idols, however you were led. 3Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is accursed"; and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit. 4Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. 6There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. 7But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.*

Concerning the context of 1 Corinthians 12, I told you last week that selfishness and pride were rampant in Corinthian gatherings. In the first four chapters, Paul confronted the pride of the Corinthians that had manifested itself by divisions being prevalent in the Church. They had taken their eyes off the centrality of Jesus Christ and the Gospel and had begun to exalt themselves. Paul warns that some of the Corinthians had become arrogant and unwilling to repent.

Arrogance and selfishness were underlying roots of sin that Paul was endeavoring to pull out. The problem of pride runs throughout the entire letter manifesting itself in a variety of ways. Paul addresses the humble and loving use of spiritual gifts beginning in 1 Corinthians 12.

I want to work our way through these verses and pick out some important

observations. The first observation is that the ultimate goal of spiritual gifts is the glory of Jesus Christ.

The Ultimate Goal of Spiritual Gifts Is the Glory of Jesus Christ  
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2You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the mute idols,  
however you were led. 3Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking  
by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is accursed";  
and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit."*  
1 Corinthians 12:1-3

*Verse 1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware.*

*Now concerning Spirituals . . . .* "Gifts" is added to the text. The original reading was "spirituals" referring to things pertaining to the Holy Spirit, spiritual matters. Paul's main point in this section is to correct the self seeking misuse of the things of the Spirit.

The issue is not only having a correct understanding of the gifts, but also having a correct motivation for the things of the Spirit. So this goes further than just understanding spiritual gifts. Paul's primary motive in writing this is to instruct in the whole area of spiritual life, gifts and motives. So he says in verse 2 . . .

*Verse 2 You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the dumb idols, however you were led.*

*When you were pagans . . .* refers to their B.C. days, their "Before Christ" days. Basically, Paul says that before you were a Christian, you were misled in your understanding about the things of God.

*Led astray/being deceived . . . .* Paul refers to the Corinthian believers' deception by Satan and his demons before they became Christians. Deception is precisely Satan's main plan of attack and to deceive especially in the area of religion. In 1 Timothy 4, Paul points to the doctrines of demons that infiltrate the Church. Also, Satan is referred to as the Deceiver, the Father of Lies, and disguises himself as an Angel of light.

1 Corinthians 10:20 . . . *the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons.*

2 Corinthians 11:14-15 *No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise*

*themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.*

Paul knew that Satan and his demons are the master architects of false religions. But Satan's work is not only outside of the Church in the form of false religions, but also inside the Church in the form of false doctrine and false teaching concerning matters of spiritual life. The idea of being led astray describes the Corinthians as almost non-thinking followers which is not to be the case now that they were Christians. So Paul says, "I don't want you to be in error because you were led astray by Satan before and I do not want that for you now."

*Verse 3a Therefore I make known to you, that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is accursed."*

*Jesus is accursed . . . .* Someone actually was teaching that Jesus was accursed. There was a lack of knowledge and discernment in the church at Corinth. When churches are not solid in biblical understanding and discernment, the Church suffers. Some in the Church will say, "We cannot question another person's word from God, maybe the Spirit told them to say Jesus is accursed."

*2 Cor. 11:3-4 But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully.*

Here is a situation where someone came to the Corinthians preaching a different Jesus than what Paul had preached, and they simply received it without any questioning or discernment. Sadly the same can be said concerning many churches in America. There is not an emphasis on solid biblical teaching, just a feel good sermon; and as a result, people just "bear false doctrine beautifully" as Paul says.

A man tells the story of when he ate dog food unknowingly. It was at an elegant reception where the hostess served dog food on delicate little crackers with a wedge of imported cheese, crumbled bacon, and an olive on top. You could call it hors d'oeuvres a la Alpo.

The hostess was a nut. He claims you gotta know her to appreciate the story. She just finished gourmet cooking school and wanted to put her skills to the

ultimate test. She doctored up those doggy morsels and put them on a couple of silver trays and watched them disappear. The man who tells the story said he could not get enough and kept horking them down

What a picture of how Satan dresses up spiritual dog food and serves it up to the Church, and the Church just wolfs down his garbage. Satan's desire is to distort the truth in the Church, and he has done a particularly "good job" concerning the subject of spiritual gifts.

So in his introduction addressing spiritual matters, Paul confronts the wrong priorities of the Corinthians telling them that they are not to be deceived into thinking that spiritual gifts will ever dishonor the person of Jesus.

Satan will do anything to distort the truth in the Church so that Jesus is seen no longer as Lord, but as a lunatic which leads us to the last part of verse 3 which is the positive statement concerning spiritual gifts to the glory of Christ.

*Verse 3b and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.*

The Holy Spirit and the gifts that He energizes are all about exalting the person of Jesus. The glory of Christ is the touchstone of the Church corporately, and our lives individually. In 1 Peter 4:10-11, as Peter writes concerning the use of spiritual gifts in the Church, he states the ultimate purpose of spiritual gifts is to exalt God through Christ Jesus. *"As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God; whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies; so that (purpose) in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."*

Clearly God's purpose for establishing the Church and giving gifts is so that God may be glorified through Christ. That is the Ultimate goal of Spiritual Gifts.

*Jesus is Lord* refers to a true confession of a believer. An unbeliever can say the words "Jesus is Lord" and a false convert can profess "Jesus is Lord." But a true confession of who Jesus is can only be by the Holy Spirit.

*Jesus is Lord* also refers to His Lordship: Jesus is Master. A believer will readily confess that Jesus is Master of his life. We saw that in our study of Romans 10:9-10 *" . . . that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; 10for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth*

*he confesses, resulting in salvation.”*

You recall that the Lordship of Christ is clearly taught in Romans 6:6 and 6:22  
*“ . . . knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin. . . .”*

Romans 6:22 *But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.*

A Christian is one who is led by the Spirit to accept Jesus as Master of his or her life. We have considered that a good definition of a Christian is one who has died to self and lives for Christ.

Romans 6:4 *“Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.”*

The Spirit’s role is to exalt Jesus, therefore the gifts that He generates will work to the glory of Christ. The Scriptures teach that the Holy Spirit does not draw attention to Himself but exalts the person of Christ. The role of the Holy Spirit is to draw glory to the Son. Much of the emphasis today in parts of the charismatic movement is to accentuate the person of the Holy Spirit, which in one sense is right because He is God. However, the Spirit’s role is to glorify the Son, not Himself.

John 15:26 *When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me. (not Himself)*

John 16:13-14 *But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. “He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to you.”*

I say again, the primary role of the Holy Spirit is not to draw attention to Himself, but to exalt the person of Christ. Therefore the gifts that He gives will accomplish that purpose. So the Ultimate Goal of Spiritual Gifts is to exalt the person of Jesus Christ. Spiritual Gifts are not given to exalt self, rather they are to build up others so they will be more effective in exalting Christ.

Another observation that we can make in these opening verses of 1 Corinthians 12 has to do with unity in the Church. We will begin with The Uniting Goal of

Spiritual Gifts next week.

## Conclusion

The unity of the Church, the edification of the Church is not something that just magically happens. It is the result of each member purposing to focus on others rather than self. I always told my children, “if you want to have a friend, you need to be a friend.” The same principle is true in the Church. If you desire to receive support and spiritual refreshment in the Church, you need to be in the process of building up others and supporting them. If you want to receive edification, then go and start edifying others.

What kind of attitude do you have towards the Church? Is it, what can I do to help? How can I minister to you? Is it an attitude of I am glad to be here, or is it a complaining, critical attitude? The purpose of gifts is to build up the body so we can be effective in spreading the kingdom of God. The goal of spiritual gifts is not for self-edification but for the common good of others and the glory of Christ.

If we desire to see GCF grow in its effectiveness in making disciples, it begins as we function in our Spirit-given ability to minister to one another. As God would lead others to the truth, they will be able to join a body of believers who function as a body.