

INTRODUCTION TO SPIRITUAL GIFTS

INTRODUCTION

- Romans 12, Ephesians 4 and I Peter 4 all outline for us various gifts that the Triune God gives to His church. But for our purposes tonight we will be concentrating our study of spiritual gifts to the 9 gifts specifically outlined in I Corinthians 12.

- In part one we'll define the gifts and in part two we'll seek to rightly employ the gifts.

3 initial comments for our clarification and preparation

1. *"We are charismatic as biblically defined."*
 - Our objective is to show from Scripture that the gifts of 1 Corinthians 12, all of them, have not ceased. We believe that all of the gifts mentioned in this chapter are still available today.

2. This is not an exhaustive study on Pneumatology (Study of the Spirit).
 - The Spirit's primary and highest work is to glorify Christ in preaching. We in no way want to suggest the Spirit's ministry with giving spiritual gifts is more significant than His work in salvation, in sanctification and in connection with the Scriptures.

3. We really need the the Lord's grace to help us identify and overcome fear.
 - Much opposition to spiritual gifts *may be* more generated by fear than by exegesis. The fear of emotionalism, the fear of sensationalism, the fear of the unknown, the fear of looking foolish in the eyes of others, the fear of abuse, etc. can lead us into a functional rejection of the gifts.

THE GIFTS

I Corinthians 12:4 - 10, "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues."

“Spiritual gifts are given to equip the church to carry out its ministry until Christ returns and they are given as a foretaste of the age to come.”

Wayne Grudem

Utterance (word) of wisdom and the utterance (word) of knowledge.

- Some would define these gifts as the ability to receive a special revelation from the Holy Spirit and on that basis to speak words that give wisdom in a situation or give specific knowledge of a situation in someone’s life.
- The word for wisdom (*sophia*) and the word for knowledge (*gnosis*) are very common words used frequently in the NT. But specifically in this epistle Paul refers to wisdom in chapters 1 and 2, and knowledge in chapter 8 and in doing so he specifically connects these terms to **the cross**.

Colossians 2:3, *“In Christ there is hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”*

- True spiritual wisdom and knowledge is always centered in the cross, in the gospel, in the Lord Jesus Christ!
- So perhaps more biblically defined, a word of wisdom or a word of knowledge is a Spirit empowered gift/ability to speak into a person’s life helping them to apply the gospel to their lives.
- To the degree we are growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ will be to the degree the Spirit empowers us to speak those truths into others lives and thereby edify them.

Faith

- “This” faith is not “saving faith”! This is not the faith that unites a person to Christ. That faith is established back in verses 1-3 of chapter 12.
- The faith of verse 9 is not saving faith but a special faith. Saving faith is a gift from God and so is this special faith. It’s a gift to move mountains (cf. ch. 13 v.2).
- The gift of faith is a Spirit empowered surge of confidence that rises within a person in a particular situation of need or challenge and which gives an extraordinary certainty and assurance that God is about to act.

Mark 11:22-24, "And Jesus answered them, "Have faith in God. Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him. Therefore, I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours."

Acts 14:8-10, "Now at Lystra there was a man sitting who could not use his feet. He was crippled from birth and had never walked. He listened to Paul speaking. And Paul, looking intently at him and seeing that he had faith to be made well, said in a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet." And he sprang up and began walking."

Gifts of healing

- Literally gifts (plural) of healings (plural). Sam Storms commenting on this gift says, that "The use of Paul's language here suggests either many different gifts or powers of healing, each appropriate to and effective for its related illness, or each occurrence of healing constituting a distinct gift in its own right."
- The gifts of healings are a Spirit empowered ability to heal any form of sickness through the laying on of hands, or the anointing of oil, or both, but both are primarily done with prayer.
- See Luke 4:40; Mark 6:13; James 5:14-15...

Working of miracles.

- The word "working" is the Greek word "energema"; and the word "miracles" is the Greek word "dunamis: power, where we derive the word dynamite. So this would be literally translated "working of powers."
- The working of miracles is a Spirit empowered ability to believe God will act in an extraordinary and supernatural way through a believer.
- Some examples can be seen in Acts 5:19-20, 12:6-11 and 28:3-6.

Acts 4:29-30, "And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus."

Galatians 3:5, *“Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith”.*

Prophecy

- Prophecy is a Spirit empowered ability by which a human report is given by divine revelation. It is the speaking forth in human words what God has brought to mind. Prophecy is not necessarily foretelling the future, but forth-telling the truth (*could be private to individual, or corporate to the church*).

For thorough treatment of this see Wayne Grudem’s Systematic Theology Ch. 53

- In I Cor. 14:30-31 Paul calls prophesy a “revelation”. In other words, God is bringing something to mind that was not only not previously thought, but that it’s coming with a sense of urgency. And when it is spoken it has the effect of *“the secrets of someone’s heart being disclosed and the person falling to their face and worshipping God.”*
- Far from undermining the authority of God’s written word, prophecy calls for our knowledge of and valuing of Scripture because it is only through the Scripture that we can accurately judge prophecy.
- Prophecy must always be tested and weighed against Scripture and it is never to be framed “Thus saith the Lord” (i.e. first person)!

Distinguishing between spirits

- The distinguishing of spirits is a Spirit empowered ability to distinguish between the word and works of the Holy Spirit from the words and works of Satan.
- Great example is Acts 16:16-18
- The apostle John tells us in I John 4:1 to *“test the spirits to see whether they are from God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world.”*

Tongues and the interpretation of tongues

- Tongues is a Spirit empowered ability to pray, worship, give thanks or speak in a language other than your own or one you may have learned. The interpretation of tongues is a Spirit empowered ability to translate a public utterance of tongues into the language of the congregation.
- The use of tongues in Acts 2 is a historical narrative whereas the tongues in I Corinthians 12 is doctrinal instruction.
- Tongues is primarily speech directed to God in prayer and praise.
- Tongues is in most cases not understood by the speaker, or by anyone else for that matter (made clear in ch. 14).
- If no one has the gift of interpretation then the one who would speak in a tongue must do it privately. Where tongues are interpreted, it become a functional equivalent to the gift of prophecy.

MISCONCEPTIONS

1. Miraculous gifts were only given to authenticate the ministry of Christ and the Apostles.
 - The Spirit's gifts, in addition to authenticating Christ and the Apostles are also given for the edification, exhortation and comfort of the body.
2. Spiritual gifts are not necessary since we have the Bible.
 - We believe in Sola Scriptura; but it is for that very reason that we would reject that claim, because the Bible doesn't make that claim. The bible nowhere says spiritual gifts cease once the canon is closed.
3. Since spiritual gifts are so often abused, shouldn't we avoid them altogether?
 - Paul's counsel to Corinth, which was abusing spiritual gifts was not to "disuse" them but to "properly use" them. The solution to the abuse and misuse of gifts, according to the apostle is not prohibition but correction.

ADDENDUM ¹

Concerning the “Baptism” and “Filling of the Spirit” there has been 3 historical streams that emerged in the 20th century to describe “Continuationists” (i.e. the spiritual gifts continue in the church)

1. Pentecostalism – Denominations or groups that trace their historical origin to Pentecostal revival that began in United States in 1901. They believe that (a) baptism in the Holy Spirit is ordinarily an event subsequent to conversion, (b) that baptism in the Holy Spirit is made evident by the sign of speaking in tongues and (c) that all the spiritual gifts mentioned in the New Testament are to be sought and used today.
2. Charismatic – Refers to any groups (or people) that trace their historical origin to charismatic renewal movement of the 1960s and 1970s, seek to practice all the spiritual gifts mentioned in the New Testament, and allowing differing viewpoints on whether baptism in the Holy Spirit is subsequent to conversion and whether tongues is a sign of baptism in the Holy Spirit.
3. Third Wave – A third renewal movement arising in the 1980s. Third wave advocates encouraging the equipping of all believers to use New Testament spiritual gifts today, and say that the proclamation of the gospel should ordinarily be accompanied by “signs, wonders and miracles”, according to the New Testament pattern. They do teach however that baptism in the Holy Spirit happens to all Christians at conversion, and that subsequent experiences are better called “filling” with the Holy Spirit.

RESOURCES

1. Wayne Grudem’s “Systematic Theology”, chapters 39, 52 & 53
2. Sam Storms “The Beginner’s Guide to Spiritual Gifts”
3. D.A. Carson “Showing the Spirit”

¹ This addendum is adapted from Wayne Grudem’s “Systematic Theology”; Chapter 39