

Spiritual Gifts - God's Plan to Supply the Needs of Every Believer

Today's message is on the significance of EVERY MEMBER of the body of Christ God's way in which He meets the needs of the body

Our text is Romans 12:6-8

The outline comes directly from the text

Gifts are different (12:6a)

Gifts are distributed by the Holy Spirit (12:6b)

Gifts are to be used to serve one another (12:6c - 8)

The Gifts are different (12:6a). If we break these three verses into the thematic parts, the first indicates "*We have different gifts.*"

Here - **7 different gifts** are mentioned. This passage is one of four places in the New testament where a listing of spiritual gifts is given.

Some truths about spiritual gifts

1. Every Christian has been given a spiritual gift. The word used for spiritual gift is *Charismata* or a "*gift of grace.*" Every believer possess a spiritual gift. This truth is also expressed in 1 Corinthians 12:7 "*Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.*"
2. The gifts are different. There are four central locations to find New Testament teaching on spiritual gifts, and in these four passages, there are four lists of the various gifts give. We will see that these lists are not meant to be exhaustive, but rather illustrative. The central passages are:
 - a. Romans 12
 - b. 1 Cor 12-14
 - c. Eph 4
 - d. 1 Peter 4

Here's what we learn from observing these passages:

No two lists of gifts are identical. John MacArthur instructs us that "*The list in 1 Corinthians does include some things that aren't here. What that tells me is that these are not rigid absolute lists, but there's a sense of flexibility and a sense of latitude.*"

<http://www.gty.org/Resources/Sermons/45-91>

I agree with MacArthur's observation that these lists of gifts is meant to show us the broad range of gifts. This allows for great diversity within the body of Christ.

Consider two different products, both of which are produced by mixing things together. When you mix flour, sugar, milk and eggs in the right proportion, you end up with a cake. Delicious, wonderful, but something totally different from the sum of its ingredients.

On the other hand, when you mix lettuce, green pepper, garden fresh tomatoes and sweet Vidalia onions, you end up with a salad. Now a salad is different from a cake in that the individual ingredients in a salad all maintain their individual identity, yet they make up something totally new, a salad. The church is like a salad. The Lord gives every member a unique part of the contribution while each member maintains his or her individuality.

3. A GIFT is more than a TALENT or a RESOURCE. Playing the guitar is not a GIFT. Fixing computers is not a GIFT. A gift is a divine enablement to minister to the needs of the other members of the body.
4. The gifts are to build up others, not yourself.. We see this in 1 Cor 12:7 *“for the common good.”* 1 Peter 4:10 instructs us to use our gifts *“in serving others...”*
5. Every member is a minister. The word diakonos means to serve. It is also the word where we get “ministry.” Some of the body ministers in a VISIBLE up front manner. Others labor in the background. All are vital. (See 1 Corinthians 12:24 ff.)

The second major thought from these three verses is found in the middle of Romans 12:6. **The Gifts are distributed by the Holy Spirit (12:6b)** *“according to the grace given us”* Here, the same word is repeated twice, meaning that the gift is both a gift of grace, and that it is a gift from grace. This emphasizes the fact that the gifts are to be used to serve others in the body of Christ, and that the Holy Spirit makes no mistakes as He follows the direction of the Son in distributing spiritual gifts.

Two important passages to consider:

(1 Corinthians 12:7) *“Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.”*

(1 Corinthians 12:11) *“All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.”* (“distributing to each one...” NASB)

(Ephesians 4:7) *“But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.”*

CHRIST blesses the church and DISTRIBUTES GIFTS through the HOLY SPIRIT. THEREFORE, you have the gift that Christ intended for you to have!

The third major section here occupies the majority of the three verses we are studying. We will begin this study today and continue it next week. Here is where we find the listing of the seven gifts we mentioned earlier.

The Gifts are to be used to serve one another (12:6c - 8)

These verses repeat the word, just as we saw in the phrase, “a gift of grace, according to grace. This is to emphasize that *“if you have this gift, USE IT!!”* In other words, if you have the gift of prophesy, prophesy! If you have the gift of teaching, teach! If you have the gift of mercy, show mercy! This removes the idea from our minds that the gifts are

something that is given to us for our own fulfillment or satisfaction. Spiritual gifts are meaningless when they are used for self edification. This is exactly the error of the Corinthians, and the reason Paul devotes three entire chapters to correct their thinking (1 Corinthians 12-14).

Today, we will look at only the first of these seven gifts, the gift of prophesy. There is some disagreement as to whether this gift is something akin to preaching in our sense of the word, or if it is something more spectacular, the ability to proclaim previously non-revealed truth.

I believe that here, the gift of prophesy is simply stating that God has gifted the church with individuals whom He has enabled to proclaim his revealed truth. While there was a time for the Apostles and Prophets to reveal new truth from God, the completion of Scriptures has superceded the need for prophesy as a direct communication of new truth from God. Scripture is all that we need to understand what God wants us to know. Ther reasons for this viewpoint are as follows:

1. Prophesy is listed first here in this list.
2. Prophesy is the only gift that makes all four listings
 - a. 1 Corinthians 12:8-10
 - b. 1 Corinthians 12:28-30
 - c. Romans 12:6-8
 - d. Ephesians 4:11
3. The superiority of Prophecy over tongues. 1 Corinthians 14:2-5, 39
4. Prophecy is the proclamation of God's word through preaching.

Not all preachers hold this view. One whom I greatly respect but disagree with in this matter is John Piper. He writes, "So for these reasons I am persuaded that the gift of prophecy is valid for today and is not equal with Scripture in authority but is valuable as a **Spirit-guided expression of something we otherwise would not know or say**, which is powerful for that particular moment and brings conviction or exhortation or consolation for the awakening or upbuilding of faith. ...It is fallible. It may prove true and it may not because the human channel is sinful and fallible and finite."

(http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Sermons/ByScripture/10/186_Using_Our_Gifts_in_Proportion_to_Our_Faith_Part_1/)

I believe this viewpoint holds danger for Christians and churches because it presents the possibility that someone has authority to witch we must all submit. How can one know if the prophesy is accurate?

One of the reasons for this incorrect interpretation is that we have been swayed by an inadequate Greek translation in many of our versions. In the original, the pronoun "his" is not in the text. The translators of the NIV and NASB (along with several other good translations) have added it because they thought it expressed the meaning more

accurately. I believe that other translations better conveyed the thought of the original language. For example.,

- a. let us prophesy **according to the proportion of faith** (KJV)
 - b. if prophecy, **in proportion to our faith**; ESV
 - c. **The person who has the gift of prophecy should use that gift in agreement with the faith.** NCV. I like this one (New Century Version) the best. In my opinion it most closely reveals the intent of the original language. Here it conveys that prophecy should be done in accordance with THE faith, meaning that preaching should be faithful to the gospel as contained in the Word of God! Indeed, this is the experience that every one of us had in our years of participation in the church. We have listened to preachers Sunday after Sunday proclaim the truth of God's word, and we hold these preachers accountability to the authority of the Word of God!
5. Notice how the phrase "the faith" is simply another way of saying "the gospel."
- a. (Phil 1:27) *"I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel"*
 - b. (1 Tim 5:8) *"If anyone does not provide ..for his family, he has denied the faith"*
 - c. 1 Tim 6:21 *"some have wandered from the faith.."*
 - d. (2 Timothy 4:7) *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."*
 - e. (Hebrews 4:14) *"let us hold firmly to the faith we profess."*
 - f. (Jude 3) *"I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints."*

For 2,000 years, God's people have been blessed through PREACHING!

There is a danger in holding to the option that someone might have some new information from God that we must consider or to which we must submit. The danger is that we tend to *spiritualize our opinions!* For example, it is perfectly OK to proclaim truth revealed in the Bible, such as "You must **proclaim the gospel.**" But it is presumptuous to say to another believer that they must use a particular method of evangelism (You must do **door to door** evangelism).

It is perfectly all right to say something like, "I believe God wants us to move to **take the new job** in Kansas." But we must not make a statement like, "**God spoke to me** and we're moving to Kansas!"

If there is a gift in function today that includes such proclamations, we are all hard pressed to know what is from God and what is not! And furthermore, if the gift is truly from God, it would be right all of the time!

I believe that there are three classifications of Gifts, sign gifts, speaking gifts, and serving gifts. Speaking and serving gifts are clearly delineated in 1 Peter 4:10-11. It is notable that 1 Peter was written almost ten years after 1 Corinthians. The problem over tongues was not mentioned in Peter's epistle (or in our passage here in Romans). In Corinth, there were believers who witnessed the apostolic useage of tongues and wanted this gift for themselves. As more of the Scriptures were comleted, the gift of predictive prophesy gave way to the gift of preaching, and that is how it remained for the next 2000 years of church history, right up to the present time!

This tells us that the pattern existing in most churches today is entirely biblical. We give attention to the Word of God as men enabled by God to preach bear the message. As believers, we are responsible to verify the truthfulness of their message according to the standard of the written Scriptures. Then we are responsible to follow the Word of the Lord.

Today, God's people have been reminded of their responsibility to use their spritual gifts in service for one another. Are you obeying this command and fulfilling your part to minister to others? Next week we will look at how to Identify and Use your Spiritual Gift.