

Working in the Spirit

We have been considering the Bible teachings about the Holy Spirit in our lives for the last four messages. We have looked at the conviction of the Holy Spirit that leads us to the transformation of our lives when we accept Christ as our Savior. We have looked at the abuse and the proper power of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Today we are going to look at the spiritual gifts that God has given us to serve Him in ministry.

1. One body -

People often think of only pastors as ministers, but soon find out that we are all ministers together in the service of God. When you go to a store you might encounter a salesman who wants you to be buying consumer. The store is not made up of salesmen only, though. There are bookkeepers, stockboys, customer service people, administrators, trainers who are also part of the team to make that store run. Probably the most obvious job for Christians is to share the Gospel, but there is also a whole staff of people that operate the work of the church. There is power that the Holy Spirit has given us, but that power has to go to work. It's like an engine in a car. There is all kinds of combustible power in gasoline, but it is only useful when there is an engine with its fuel injectors, spark plugs, pistons, cam shaft, oil pan, water jacket, alternator, fuel pump, water pump, to contain that power. Once we are transformed and empowered, it is then time to go to work.

After we are given the gift of life in salvation, Jesus then gave us people to train us up for the ministry.

Eph 4:11-12 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

These are given by God to the church for a purpose. That purpose is for the perfecting of the saints so they can do the work of the ministry and edify, or build up the body of Christ. The purpose of going to church is not to just absorb knowledge. The purpose of going to church is for *training* people to do the work *together*. We have looked at 1Cor 12 not too long ago to point out that as a body we need each other.

1Cor 12:14-26 For the body is not one member, but many.

Each member of the body has its purpose.

15 If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

16 And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

17 If the whole body *were* an eye, where *were* the hearing? If the whole *were* hearing, where *were* the smelling?

18 But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

19 And if they were all one member, where *were* the body?

20 But now *are they* many members, yet but one body.

Using the analogy of the body, we need to remember that each part does not act independently of the body. I like my thyroid, kidneys, and pancreas. My hands might do the work that you see outwardly, but not without what my thyroid, kidneys, and pancreas are doing inwardly. I am not made up of an arm that is pulling itself along on the other side of the room while my mouth is behind the pulpit and my leg is jumping up and down out on the sidewalk. A synonym for the word *church* is *assembly* which we sometimes see in the Bible. It's like when you get a present for someone and on the box it says that some

assembly is required. A pile of pieces of a barbecue is not an assembly any more than a group of people milling about is a church assembly. They must be fitted and fastened together to be a working assembly.

1Cor 12:21-26 And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

22 Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary:

23 And those *members* of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely *parts* have more abundant comeliness.

24 For our comely *parts* have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that *part* which lacked:

25 That there should be no schism in the body; but *that* the members should have the same care one for another.

26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

In the Great Commission found in Matt 28:18-20 we see the *outward* work of the church evangelizing the world. But, in Eph 4:12 and 1Cor 12:25 we see the *inward* work of the church operating for the good of the assembly. In order to do that, we need the gifts that Christ gave us.

2. Gifts of the Spirit -

When we are given the gift of life in salvation and people to train us, Jesus also gifts us with a measure of the Spirit to serve.

Eph 4:11-12 But unto every one

of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.
8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

Romans 12 lays out some of the spiritual gifts that in order to minister to each other, but I don't think that the gifts of the Spirit are just limited to what we see there. It is a good place to start, though.

Rom 12:3-5 For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

4 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:

5 So we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

Here, Paul reminds us of being one body, and he calls our giftedness a "measure of faith." The connection is that the gifts he then lists are only as good as our faith in God. Your "success" does not depend on your talent, it depends on your faith relationship with God. Next, Paul gives us a sample list of spiritual gifts.

Rom 12:6-8 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, *let us prophesy* according to the proportion of faith;

7 Or ministry, *let us wait* on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching;

8 Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, *let him do it* with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.

Perhaps in the near future we can take the time to go through a more thorough teaching on these gifts, for now, here are some insights on them that can challenge us today.

- **Prophecy**

People think of a gift of prophecy as being something like a fortune teller who predicts the future. When the prophets of the Bible were inspired, they did indeed give predictions, but we don't have new inspiration today. Predictions were not all they were known for. Prophesying also involved preaching. The prophets would often assess the spiritual nature of Israel and warn them. They were spiritually attuned to detect sin and challenged people. This is what someone who has the gift of prophecy does today.

- **Mercy**

Although we might need to be challenged, sometimes we need someone to come alongside us to support us emotionally, to feel our pain with us.

Rom 12:15 Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

- **Ministry**

Sometimes we need people to do more than talk, we need someone to physically help. The word for ministry in Rom 12 is about physically serving. There were those who ministered to Christ, meaning that they waited on Him and served Him in the things He needed.

- **Teaching**

The person with the gift of teaching plays the critical role of researching so that we have a deeper understanding to meet our needs.

- **Exhortation**

Once people identify where they are by the ministry of prophecy, mercy, and teaching, they need someone to cheer them on. That is the person with the gift of exhortation.

- **Giving**

The person with the gift of giving would certainly be handy to have around because some of the progress we make actually costs money. Everyone has a responsibility to provide for the Lord's work. However, the person with this as a gift also has wisdom and discernment about finances. When people are in need, they might be likely to help by training them in financial responsibility.

- Ruling

The person with the gift of ruling is an administrator. All of these gifts have to work together and the work of the administrator knits them all into a workforce – but that is only if they see themselves as a team.

You can see the way a church might use all of the gifts as they visit someone in the hospital. Mr. Prophecy visits you and reminds you that you might need to repent because you hadn't been taking care of your health. You're feeling convicted but you need someone to empathize with you so Mr. Mercy comes in and cries for your pain and you feel understood in your time of need. Mr. Teaching comes to visit and helps you understand what is happening in your body because he has researched what it is all about. Mr. Exhortation visits and cheers you on in your rehab, "Take another step, you can do it!" Mr. Giver stops by to talk to you about your medical bills and how they can be taken care of. Mr. Ministry assures you that he is there to help you: your grass is getting cut or your snow is getting shoveled. Finally Mr. Ruler comes by and says, "Boy have I been busy. I sent Mr. Prophecy because you needed to examine what got you here. I sent Mr. Mercy to comfort you. I had Mr. Teacher research your prognosis. I made sure Mr. Ministry is taking care of things while you are down and Mr. Giver figure out how to pay for everything. I am sending Mr. Exhorter to help you through rehab.

Your spiritual gift is not a superpower as some like to call it today. It is a Holy Spirit enablement that people might think is a talent that you have. We

know we have been gifted so that means there is at least one gift that you have, but it could be more than one. Even if it is only one, every gift listed in Romans 12 is also given as a command for each of us so that we should grow spiritually.

Eph 4:13-16 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

14 That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

We might start off as children and as such we might recognize our spiritual gift because, being untrained, we might *misuse* our gift. The prophet might be obnoxious. The gift of mercy might be used to enable the sinner, the exhorter might use a training program where a prophet's message is needed. The giver might be stingy. The teacher might fail to challenge. Someone serving might over commit himself. The ruler might be focused on the program rather than the people. We need to become more mature in the administration of our gifts.

15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ:

16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

As we purposely take an interest in each other and interact together, each of our giftedness can come out and bless each other just in casual conversation. Seeing ourselves as workers ministering together we bless every ministry of the church. As you study and share in

Sunday School, you are aiding Mr. Teacher. As you have advice at the business meeting you are working alongside Mr. Giver in the financial plan of the church. As you get involved in the cleaning and preparation you are being Mr. Minister. We come alongside Mr. Mercy and Mr. Exhortation to cheer people on. Mr. Ruler is happy to help you fit in the work schedule. Each one of us has to show and be available, not just partly available but for what is actually needed.

3. The manifestation of the love of Christ -

All of these gifts are possible because of the foundation of Jesus Christ in our hearts. The blessings we can share are not just a way to show off our natural talents. What lies at the heart of these gifts is the love of Christ.

1John 3:16-18 Hereby perceive we the love *of God*, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren.

17 But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels *of compassion* from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

18 My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

Phil 2:3-7 *Let* nothing *be done* through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others [**don't only consider your own concerns, think of others' needs also**].

5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

7 But made himself of no

reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

The love of the One Who died for you and took you out of the path of Hell has placed you on the path of Heaven with some great traveling companions. We can then take on the same character that Jesus had in loving others.

John 13:12-15 So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you?

13 Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for *so* I am.

14 If I then, *your* Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet.

15 For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

If you have not called out to Christ to save and transform you by forgiving your sin and making you a child of God, then you are missing out on a home in heaven *and* a purpose while you are here on earth. Is God calling you to salvation today? How will you answer Him?

If you are a child of God, are you able to be counted on to fulfill the work that God has for you, not just in part, but in what is actually needed to be fully blessed? Have you considered what your spiritual gift is? Have you asked God to show you? Are you distracted by temptation and the world to keep you from faithfully joining in? Have you been blessed by someone ministering to you and would like to pass that blessing along? God *will* use you in this highest calling on earth.

1. One body - Eph 4:11-12, 1Cor 12:14-26
2. Gifts of the Spirit - Eph 4:11-12, Rom 12:3-8,15,12:15, Eph 4:13-16
3. The manifestation of the love of Christ - 1John 3:16-18, Phil 2:3-7,

John 13:12-15