

Examining Christian Doctrine

Lesson 23: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit Part 5 – Spiritual Gifts

In lesson 22 we left off in our introduction to Spiritual gifts with the three major passages that list various gifts. In this lesson we want to go through and summarize each gift as well as look at the overall general guidelines that we have for these gifts in scripture.

Paul's General Teaching on Spiritual Gifts

Below are some general guidelines found in the New Testament when it comes to spiritual gifts:

1. There is unity in diversity within the Spiritual Gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4-6, Romans 12:3-5)
2. Gifts are a divine empowerment through the outworking (manifestation) of the Spirit for ministry (1 Corinthians 12:7, 1 Peter 4:10 *Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.*)
3. Spiritual gifts are for everyone (1 Corinthians 12:7, 11)
4. Gifts are given 'as the Lord wills' (1 Corinthians 12:11)
5. Not everyone operates in the same gift (1 Corinthians 12:29-30)
6. We are to desire Spiritual Gifts (1 Corinthians 12:31, 14:1, 39)
7. Spiritual Gifts are a part of the life of the church (1 Corinthians 12:28, 14:26)
8. Gifts operating in the church are given to edify the body, not the individual (1 Corinthians 14:4-6, 12)
9. Spiritual gifts are to be governed, judged, and done in order (1 Corinthians 14:27-40)
10. Spiritual gifts are to be done in love (1 Corinthians 13:1-2, Romans 12:9)

Gifts in Romans 12:3-8

Romans 12:3-8 *For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. ⁴ For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is **prophesying**, then prophecy in accordance with your faith; ⁷ if it is **servicing**, then serve; if it is **teaching**, then teach; ⁸ if it is to **encourage**, then give encouragement; if it is **giving**, then give generously; if it is to **lead**, do it diligently; if it is to **show mercy**, do it cheerfully.*

These gifts are gifts given by God's grace and reflect the diverse nature of the 'many-member' body of Christ. These gifts are to be used in the context of ministering to other.

1. **Prophecy:** The gift of prophecy involves speaking God's truth to edify, exhort, and comfort. It can include both forth-telling (speaking forth God's truth) and sometimes foretelling (predicting future events). This gift can include speaking something God has spontaneously brought to mind, or proclaiming (preaching) God's truth/Word.
2. **Servicing:** This gift, often referred to as "ministering," involves meeting the practical needs of others within the church and community. It reflects a heart of humility and a willingness to work behind the scenes to ensure the body of Christ functions smoothly.
3. **Teaching:** The gift of teaching involves explaining and applying God's word in a clear and understandable way. It's about helping others grow in their knowledge of Scripture and understanding how to live out biblical truths in their daily lives.
4. **Encouragement:** Also known as exhortation, this gift involves uplifting and motivating others to stay faithful, persevere, and grow in their relationship with God. Encouragers help strengthen the faith and resolve of others, often providing comfort and hope.
5. **Giving:** This gift involves generously sharing resources, time, and energy to meet the needs of others. Those with this gift give with sincerity and joy, often going above and beyond what is expected, without seeking recognition.
6. **Leadership:** The gift of leadership involves guiding and directing the church or a particular ministry with wisdom, diligence, and care. Leaders with this gift inspire others to follow and work together toward common goals, keeping the mission of the church in focus.

7. **Mercy:** This gift involves showing compassion and care to those who are suffering or in need. Those with the gift of mercy are especially empathetic and often provide comfort and support to those who are hurting, whether emotionally, physically, or spiritually.

Gifts in Ephesians 4:7-13

Ephesians 4:7-13 *But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. ⁸ This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people." ⁹ (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? ¹⁰ He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) ¹¹ So Christ himself gave the **apostles**, the **prophets**, the **evangelists**, the **pastors** and **teachers**, ¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

These gifts are sometimes known as the 'Five-Fold' ministry gifts or the 'offices' of the church. These gifts are defined as gifts that 'Christ himself gave' to the church. The purpose of these gifts, as described in Ephesians 4:12-13, is to equip the saints for the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ, and to bring believers to unity in the faith and knowledge of the Son of God, ultimately leading to maturity and the fullness of Christ. Each of these roles is vital in helping the church grow and function effectively as a unified body.

1. **Apostles:** The gift of apostleship involves being sent out to establish and oversee churches, often in new or challenging areas. Apostles are pioneers who lay the foundation for the church's growth and ensure that it remains rooted in sound doctrine. This New Testament gift should be distinguished from the original Apostles in scripture in terms of place and authority in the universal church. In a broader sense, those with this gift today may function as church planters, missionaries, or leaders who have a significant influence over multiple congregations.
2. **Prophets:** The New Testament office of a prophet in this context would be those who proclaim God's truth, and who often 'hear' from God for direction and guidance for the church. They may reveal insights from God that are crucial for the church's direction and spiritual health.
3. **Evangelists:** Evangelists have a special ability to communicate the gospel clearly and effectively, drawing people to faith in Christ. They are passionate about reaching the lost and often have a compelling way of sharing the message of salvation. Their role is to equip others to do the same, encouraging the church to be active in sharing their faith.
4. **Pastors:** Also known as shepherds, pastors in the New Testament function as the chief elder and overseer of a local church, whose main responsibility is the spiritual well being of the congregation. They provide guidance, support, and protection, ensuring that the members of the church are growing in their faith and living out their Christian walk. Pastors often combine the roles of teacher and leader, nurturing the church through sound teaching and personal discipleship.
5. **Teachers:** The gift of teaching in this passage refers to the ability to explain and apply God's word in a way that builds up the church. Teachers help believers understand Scripture more deeply and live it out in practical ways. Their role is crucial in equipping the saints for the work of ministry and fostering spiritual maturity.

Gifts in 1 Corinthians 12

1 Corinthians 12: 1-11 *Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed... ⁴ There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. ⁵ There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. ⁶ There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. ⁷ Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. ⁸ To one there is given through the Spirit a **message of wisdom**, to another a **message of knowledge** by means of the same Spirit, ⁹ to another **faith** by the same Spirit, to another **gifts of healing** by that one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another **miraculous powers**, to another **prophecy**, to another **distinguishing between spirits**, to another **speaking in different kinds of tongues**, and to still another the **interpretation of tongues**. ¹¹ All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.*

1 Corinthians 12:27-30 *Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. ²⁸ And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. ²⁹ Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰ Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹ Now eagerly desire the greater gifts.*

1. **Message (or Word) of Wisdom:** This gift involves receiving and sharing a divine insight or a supernatural revelation that comes by the Spirit of God concerning the divine purpose and plan (direction) for a person or people.
2. **Message (or Word) of Knowledge:** This gift involves receiving and sharing information that could not have been known naturally. Therefore this is a supernatural revelation by the Spirit of God concerning certain facts, details or understandings.
 - a. Matt 9:3-4, 12:24-25, Lk 6:7-8, 9:46-47 Jesus 'knowing/perceiving their thoughts'
 - b. John 4:15-19 Jesus "you have had five husbands and the one you're with now is not your husband"
 - c. Acts 5:1-11 Peter with Ananias and Saphira knowing they lied to the Holy Ghost
 - d. Acts 9:10-19 Words of wisdom and knowledge to Ananias about Saul
3. **Faith:** While all believers have faith, this gift refers to an extraordinary confidence in God's power and promises. It involves a strong, unwavering trust in God that enables a person to believe for and act upon things that others might consider impossible. This gift often leads to bold actions or decisions made in faith.
 - a. There are different kinds of faith talked about in Scripture:
 - i. Conversion faith: the faith a person exercises to believe in Jesus Christ for salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9)
 - ii. Continuing faith: a fruit of the Spirit which we exercise every day as we look confidently to go to in and through our lives all that He has promised to do. (Galatians 5:22, Heb 11:1)
 - iii. Charismatic faith: a spontaneous and supernatural confidence to believe God for the manifestation of His mighty works, to believe for the impossible (1 Corinthians 12:9)
 - b. Scriptural mentions of the gift of faith:
 - i. Mark 2:1-12 "when he saw their faith"
 - ii. Mark 11:22-24 "if you have faith the size of a mustard seed"
 - iii. 1 Corinthians 13:2 "if I have faith to move mountains"
 - iv. James 5:15 "the prayer of faith will save the sick"
4. **Gifts of Healing:** The gifts of healings are the God-given ability to impart healing to the physical body at specific times. They are for the supernatural healing of the sick, infirmed, or diseased without natural means of any sort. Those with this gift are used by God to bring about healing in others, often through prayer, laying on of hands, or spoken words. It is a demonstration of God's compassion and power.
 - a. Views on Healing Today:
 - i. 1. The gift of healing ceased, there is no promise of physical healing from God today
 - ii. 2. The gift of healing continues but at God's will
 - iii. 3. Healing is a part of the atonement; Christ's work brought physical healing
 - iv. 4. It's God's will to heal all but people lack faith or have sin
 - b. Various means of healing in the scriptures
 - i. 1. By the laying on of hands Mark 16:16-18
 - ii. 2. By the spoken word Matthew 8:5-18
 - iii. 3. By the elders of the church James 5:14
 - iv. 4. By the prayer of faith James 5:15
 - v. 5. By anointed handkerchiefs and aprons Acts 19:11-12
 - vi. 6. By casting out devils Luke 13:10-17
 - vii. 7. By gifts of healings 1 Corinthians 12:9
 - c. Notice there is not the 'gift of healing', it is literally 'gifts of healings' suggesting many different gifts or powers of healing, each appropriate to and effective for its related illness.
 - d. A person may be gifted to heal many people, while another may be gifted to heal only one person at one particular time of one particular disease.
 - e. This 'gift' is not to be interpreted as one person having all power to heal everyone at will wherever they are at any time.
 - f. Gifts of healings are different kinds of gifts for different kinds of healings given to various people according to God's sovereign will.

5. **Miraculous Powers (Working of Miracles):** the ability to perform acts that transcend natural laws, demonstrating God's power in extraordinary ways. These acts might include supernatural interventions in nature, deliverance from danger, or other miraculous occurrences that point to God's glory and authority.
 - a. The word miracle comes from the Latin word meaning 'to wonder at'
 - b. We are familiar with the working of miracles through Jesus' and the Apostles ministry
 - c. Miracles have the following traits:
 - i. Its is an extraordinary or startling observable event
 - ii. It cannot reasonably be explained in terms of human abilities or other known forces in the world
 - iii. It is perceived as a direct act of God
 - iv. It is usually understood to have symbolic or sign value or is accompanied by the preaching of the gospel.
6. **Prophecy:** Similar to the gift of prophecy referenced in Romans 12, this gift of prophecy specifically seems to be the ability to speak something God has spontaneously brought to mind in order to bring about edification, exhortation, and comfort in the setting of the local church.
 - a. What Scripture Says about Prophecy
 - i. Believers should desire spiritual gifts, especially prophecy. (1 Cor. 14:1, 39)
 - ii. These words are to be spoken "to others" to bring about 'edification, exhortation or comfort' (1 Cor. 14:3)
 - iii. Prophecy edifies the church (1 Cor. 14:4, 12)
 - iv. Paul wished that all would prophesy (1 Cor. 14:5)
 - v. Prophecy is for the believers to do (1 Cor. 14:22)
 - vi. Prophecy is to be judged (1 Cor. 14:29-32) – 1 Thess. 5:19-22
7. **Distinguishing Between (Discerning of) Spirits:** the ability to distinguish between the works of the Holy Spirit and works of another spirit (demonic) or perhaps the human spirit. This gift is given to guard the flock, bring clarity and remove confusion, discern evil spirits, bring deliverance, expose error, discern motivations, and to discern the spiritual source of any utterance.
 - a. 1 John 4:1 – All Christians have a responsibility to 'test the spirits to see whether they are from God'
 - b. Acts 8:20-24, Peter is said to "see" (not physically, but to "perceive" or "sense") that Simon Magus was filled with bitterness and iniquity.
 - c. Acts 16:16-18, where Paul discerns that the power of a certain slave-girl is in fact a demonic spirit.
 - d. Acts 13:8-11, Paul discerns that Elymas the magician was demonically energized in his attempt to oppose the presentation of the gospel.
8. **Different Kinds of Tongues:** This gift involves speaking in languages that the speaker has not previously learned, whether human languages or angelic. It can be a form of prayer, praise, or prophecy, often used in a way that requires interpretation for the edification of the church.
 - a. In the New Testament there are three kinds of tongues:
 - i. Known languages spoken on the day of Pentecost and in the book of Acts as the gospel went to various people groups. Here tongues was given as a 'sign' that the Holy Spirit is indeed being poured out upon 'all flesh'.
 - ii. An 'unknown tongue' spoken to God as a prayer language in which the individual is edified.
 - iii. An 'unknown tongue' spoken within the local church which is accompanied by interpretation so the body can be edified.
9. **Interpretation of Tongues:** This gift complements the gift of tongues by providing an understanding of what is being said. The interpretation is given by the Holy Spirit to ensure that the message delivered in tongues can be understood and edify the congregation. It turns the otherwise unintelligible speech into something that benefits the listeners.