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The Holy Spirit—Our Helper

Bethany Bible Church, Adult Sunday School Class, January 29, 2012

The Spirit’s ‘Ministering’ Gifts

“If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen” (1 Peter 4:11).¹

In our last lesson, we considered the Holy Spirit’s “speaking” gifts to the church. This week we consider His “ministering” gifts--that is, special enablements, bestowed on believers as the Holy Spirit chooses, for the purpose of empowering those individual believers to fulfill their ‘hands-on’, practical, needs-meeting ministries to others within the church.² They are:

- I. **SERVICE:** the ability to identify, provide for and complete the physical tasks that the body of Christ needs to have met. The word that is used here is *diakonia*--the word from which the name of the church office “deacon” is drawn. It is translated “service” in the New International Version. This may be a general word that is used to differentiate “ministering” gifts from “speaking” gifts--as in 1 Peter 4:11 (see above); or it may refer to specific acts of ministry. Paul wrote, “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering . . .” (Romans 12:6-7).
- II. **HELPS:** the ability to enhance and enable the ministry of others in the body of Christ (who themselves may have the gift of service) by being a practical support to them in their work. Paul wrote, “And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues” (1 Corinthians 12:28). The basic idea of the word *antilympsis* is to “take up the part” of someone else, or to “take a part in” a thing. Few people are able to be a support to someone else’s ministry without demanding to be in charge. It takes a real gift from God. What a blessing those folks are who see a need in someone else’s ministry, and willingly lend a hand and “take up a part” in it!
- III. **GIVING:** the cheerful willingness, ability and resources from God to contribute materially to the work of Body, thus enabling others to fulfill their ministry and meet pressing needs. In Romans 12:8, Paul speaks of “he who gives”; and he uses the word *metadidomi*; which means “to share” or “to impart”. And he says that such a person should do so *en aplotyti*--that is, with liberality or single-hearted devotion; perhaps also including the idea of sincerity. God gives to some people a material abundance; and He also gives some of them the abundance of heart to use what they have been given to support the ministry of others. As Paul says in 2 Corinthians 9:7, “So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver” (that is, *hilaros*--from which we get the English word “hilarious”).
- IV. **LEADERSHIP:** the ability to, with diligence, discern God’s purpose for a group, set its goals, communicate its vision, and motivate its participants all

the way to the completion of a task that God calls them to. In Romans 12:8, Paul writes that “he who leads” is to do so “with diligence”. The word for “leading” doesn’t mean that someone holds dominance over others. Rather, it refers to the role of “management” or “maintenance”. In Titus 3:8 and 14, Paul uses this word (*proistymi*) when he writes that believers are to “maintain good works”. These are the “quality-control” servants in the church. They make sure things are done--not in a half-baked, “good enough for church” manner--but with “diligence” or “earnestness”.

- V. ADMINISTRATION:** the ability to manage the resources, personnel and organization of the church family toward a certain task in such a way as to most effectively accomplish its goals (1 Corinthians 12:28). This word in the original language (*kubernysis*) is closely related to the word *kubernytys*; translated “helmsman” in Acts 27:11 and “shipmaster” Revelation 18:17.
- VI. MERCY:** the ability to compassionately listen to and understand the suffering, distress, guilt or needs of others, and to minister comfort and encouragement to them in such a way as to help meet their physical, emotional and spiritual needs through Christ in a non-condemning way. Note that, in Romans 12:8, Paul stresses that the person who shows mercy is to do so with “cheerfulness” (*hilaros*). Acts of mercy feel hollow--and perhaps even hurtful--to those in need when done in a merely ‘dutiful’ and ‘begrudging’ attitude. Those who have this gift display an abundantly joyful heart along with an abundantly merciful hand; because they serve a God who Himself “delights in mercy” (Micah 7:18).
- VII. FAITH:** the ability to capture the vision of what God can do and wants done in a particular situation, to believe confidently that He will overcome the obstacles, and to encourage others in the body to likewise trust Him. Paul writes that, to some, “faith” is given by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:9). All are to have faith; but to some is given the Spirit-enabled ability to trust God in remarkable ways; and to spread that faith to others within the body. We might say that the faith of such people is ‘infectious’.
- VIII. HEALING:** the ability to serve as an instrument of faith through whom, in special and remarkable situations, God cures illnesses and restores others to health and soundness. In 1 Corinthians 12:9 and 28, Paul’s particular way of describing this is as “gifts” (plural) “of healings” (again, plural)--which suggest that this refers, not to an ability to heal at will in a general way, but to have the faith to trust God for specific grants by God of healing. Pastor James’ instructions in James 5:14-16 may help us understand this: “Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.”
- IX. MIRACLES:** the ability to serve as an instrument of faith through whom God manifest His power or authenticates His message by remarkable acts. In 1 Corinthians 12:10, this is described by Paul as “the working of miracles”; but in verse 28, it is simply described as the giving of “miracles”--as if the miracle was a thing given in and of itself. This prevents anyone in the church from being viewed as a “miracle worker” (which Peter was careful to avoid in Acts 3:12; see also 14:9-18, where Paul and Barnabas seek to avoid the same

thing), and instead strictly as someone through whom specific miracles are, at times, “worked” by God.

¹All Scripture readings are taken from *the Holy Bible, New King James Version*; copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

²Much of the material for this study was adapted from “Your Giftedness to The Body: A Biblical Study of The Nature, Purpose, and Use of Spiritual Gifts” from Bethany Bible Church, 2005.