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The Holy Spirit—Our Helper

Bethany Bible Church, Adult Sunday School Class, January 15, 2011

The Spirit's Gift of Gifted Equippers

His Person
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In our last lesson, we had a basic introduction to the subject of the 'spiritual gifts' that the Holy Spirit gives to the church. But in this lesson, we'll begin to study what the Bible tells us about these individual gifts in greater detail.²

His Works
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There are four New Testament passages that give us lists of the specific spiritual gifts (Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 along with vv. 28-30; Ephesians 4:11; and 1 Peter 4:11). It's important to understand that these lists are probably not meant to be thought of as exhaustive. There are, no doubt, far more 'gifts' that the Spirit gives His church than are mentioned in these passages. But taken together, they give us that complete overview that the Spirit would want His church to have of the spiritual gifts as they are revealed in God's word.

His Indwelling
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It's also important to recognize that the way these passage present the gifts to us has a particular order to it. In the broadest sense, the spiritual gifts can be organized under either "speaking" gifts or "ministering" gifts. This is seen in 1 Peter 4:11; "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." And those "serving" gifts should be distinguished from "equipping" gifts. The "equipping" gifts are provided by the Spirit to make the "serving" gifts effective. We see this in 1 Corinthians 12:28; "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."

His Baptizing
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This morning's study focuses on the "equipping" gifts. These are gifts that are specifically identified as *gifted persons* who provide for the equipping of the others in the church, so that they may do the work of the ministry. The main passage for this is Ephesians 4:11-12; "And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers . . ." Note that they are essential to the design of the Spirit with regard to the church; because they are specifically given "for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ . . ." The church cannot do what God calls it to do--with all the other gifts that the Holy Spirit gives--without them!

His Sealing
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These "equipping" gifts can be organized under two categories:

His Filling
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I. FOUNDATIONAL EQUIPPERS.

These first two gifts are the "foundations" that the church has been built on (see Ephesians 2:20). In that sense, they were given just once to the church and are no longer being given.

His Gifting

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A. APOSTLES: those men sent by the Lord Jesus, having seen Him in His resurrection, to testify of Him and provide the foundational witness of the church. The word "apostle" comes from the Greek word that means "sent one". In some churches today, there are those who take this as a gift that is still given in our time; and some even call themselves 'apostles'. But the gift that the Scripture is speaking of refers to those whom the Lord Jesus specifically chose (John 6:70), to bear witness of Him because they had been with Him "from the beginning" (John 15:27) as "eyewitnesses and ministers of the word" (Luke 1:2); and who uniquely shared a witness together of His resurrection (Acts 1:22). They were provided with a special grace of the Holy Spirit to be taught all things that Jesus taught after He ascended, and to have all things that Jesus said to them brought to their remembrance (John 14:26), in order to accurately provide this found-

His Helping
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ational teaching to the church (see 1 Corinthians 2:11-12). Later, Paul was called into the role of apostleship (1 Corinthians 15:8-10; Galatians 1:1ff).

- B. **PROPHETS:** those individuals used by the Lord to serve as the instruments of special divine revelation prior to the completion of the New Testament-- although this may also refer to the writing prophets of the Old Testament. This should be distinguished from the gift of “prophecy” in 1 Corinthians 12:10; because this is speaking specifically of the gift of a “foundational” person in the church (see 1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11). An example of this might be Agabus. In Acts 11:28, amidst the activities of the early church, we read, “Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar.” He is found again in Acts 21:10-11; “And as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. When he had come to us, he took Paul’s belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, ‘Thus says the Holy Spirit, “So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.”’”

II. MAINTENANCE EQUIPPERS.

These second two gifts are given to provide for the ongoing support of that which was built upon the foundational gifts (Ephesians 4:11). They are continually being given to the church.

- A. **EVANGELISTS:** those who were sent out authoritatively as travelling missionaries who introduced the gospel to unreached people and helped establish a church in an unreached area. This gift very much parallels the idea of a missionary. A wonderful example of this gifted person would be Philip. In Acts 8:26-40, we’re given a marvelous story of his work in the fulfillment of this ministry. Several years later in the story of Acts, in Acts 21:8, we find that this man is known as “Philip the evangelist”. (Note that we’re told that he also had “four virgin daughters who prophesied” (v. 9).
- B. **PASTORS AND TEACHERS:** two words that describe one role (“pastor” emphasizing the shepherding work, and “teacher” emphasizing the instructional and exhortational work); those men who serve as the ruling elders and teaching elders of a local congregation. It’s a serious work! Paul told the elders that had gathered to him from Ephesus; “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves” (Acts 20:28-30). The apostle Peter wrote; “The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away” (1 Peter 5:1-4).

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.