

THE SPIRIT WHO ‘GIFTS’ THE CHURCH

Theme: The Holy Spirit uniquely gifts each believer to serve for the growth of Christ's body.

In this portion of our study of the Holy Spirit's ministry, we take up a wonderful and practical subject—that is, the subject of the Spirit's gracious “gifting” of the Church. As the Bible affirms to us;

“There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all” (1 Corinthians 12:4-6).¹

The “spiritual gifts” can be defined as: "special enablements, bestowed on each believer, as the Holy Spirit chooses, for the purpose of empowering those individual believers to fulfill their ministry to others in the church."²

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Let's start off by considering the difference between ...

I. THE “GIFTS” AND THE “FRUIT” OF THE SPIRIT.

A. The “gifts” of the Spirit are sometimes confused, in the minds of some, with the “fruit” of the Spirit. As Galatians 5:22-23 tells us,

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law (Galatians 5:22-23).

The “fruit” (singular) and the “gifts” (plural) are not the same thing however, and should be kept distinct in our thinking.

B. Nevertheless, these two things are related to one another in some important ways. The fruit of the Spirit is the manifestation of the life and character of Jesus Christ that the indwelling Holy Spirit produces in and through us when we yield ourselves to Him. What the Bible tells us about the ‘fruit’ or ‘produce’ of the Spirit in us helps us describe the kind of person we should be as members together of the body of Christ. And the ‘gifts’ of the Spirit describe the kinds of things that the Spirit empowers those members of the body of Christ do in service to one another. The “gifts” of the Spirit—as empowered by the Holy Spirit—are to be expressed in us in a way that is consistent with the “fruit” of the Spirit. In other words, we can be certain that the Holy Spirit will never lead us to exercise the gifts He gives us—nor will He ever bless the use of those gifts—in any way that's ‘unloving’, ‘joyless’, ‘divisive’, ‘impatient’, ‘unkind’, ‘evil’, ‘unfaithful’, ‘harsh’, or ‘out-of-control’. The ‘gifts’ of the Spirit—if submitted to the Holy Spirit's control—will always be exercised in harmony with the ‘fruit’ of the Spirit.

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Keeping in mind the Christ-like character that the Holy Spirit always maintains with regard to the gifts He gives, let's next seek to understand the nature of the gifts themselves. Let's start by considering ...

II. THE VARIOUS MEANINGS OF "GIFT" IN SCRIPTURE.

- A. There are basically four words that the New Testament uses with respect to the word 'gift'. The first word—the Greek word *dōrea*—is one that refers to something that is given freely from one person to another. Paul was thrilled to talk about the unique ministry God gave him of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles; and he used this word when he spoke of it. He considered his ministry to be a great honor, and called it “the gift [*dōrea*] of the grace of God given to me” (Ephesians 3:7). But he wasn't alone in this. He also affirmed, “But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift” [*dōrea*] (Ephesians 4:7).
- B. A similar Greek word used in the New Testament is *dōma*. While *dōrea* seems to highlight the generosity that stands behind a gift, *dōma* seems to speak of the gift itself. Paul used it to describe a sacrificial monetary gift he was once given by some believers to support him in his work. He was grateful; but told them, “Not that I seek the gift [*dōma*], but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account” (Philippians 4:17). But he also used it to describe what Jesus has given to us: “When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts [*dōma*] to men” (Ephesians 4:8).
- C. Sometimes, the Bible simply uses the word *pneumatikas*, which is an adjective that means “spiritual”. When using it in reference to the gifts, the Bible uses it as a substantival adjective—that is to say, the word “gift” doesn't appear but is implied in the adjective “spiritual”. It can be translated ‘spiritual gift’; and when it is used this way, the focus is on the spiritual nature and origin of the gift. Paul introduced his great discourse on the spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:1, for example, by writing, “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant” (the word “gifts” being supplied in the English in most of our translations). Similarly, he wrote, “Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts ...” (14:1). These references emphasize the divine origin of these gifts, as well as their nature.
- D. But the most common word used is the word *charisma*. A whole movement in the Christian family that highlights the spiritual gifts takes its name from this word and has called itself “Charismatic” (although almost all of our Charismatic brethren would agree that all genuine believers in Christ are given spiritual gifts and, in that sense, are truly ‘charismatic’). A standard New Testament Greek dictionary defines *charisma* as “special gifts of a non-material sort, bestowed through God's generosity on individual Christians”.³ This word is related to another important word—*charis*, which means “grace” or “favor”; but that is also sometimes translated “gift”. The apostle Peter used both words when he wrote, “As each one has received a gift [*charisma*], minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace [*charis*] of God” (1 Peter 4:10). Paul also uses these two words in this way in Romans 12:6 when he wrote, “Having then gifts [*charisma*] differing according to the grace [*charis*] that is given to us, let us use them ...” The word *charisma* is used by Paul to describe the spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:4 (“There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit ...”), verses 9, 28 and 30 (“... gifts of healings ...”), and verse 31 (“But earnestly desire the best gifts.”).

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Most of what we will study in the weeks to come about the ‘gifts’ of the Spirit comes from the New Testament’s use of those last two words *pneumatikas* and *charisma*. But let’s close our time in this lesson by considering ...

III. SOME BASIC BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES ABOUT THE SPIRIT’S “GIFTS”.

- A. The Bible impress upon us that each redeemed believer in Jesus Christ—indwelt by the Holy Spirit—has been uniquely gifted by the Spirit. If you are a believer, you may not think that you have anything unique to offer to the Body of Christ; but the Bible clearly teaches otherwise. Ephesians 4:7 tells us, “But to each one of us grace [*charis*] was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift [*dōrea*].” 1 Peter 4:10 similarly says, “As each one has received a gift [*charisma*], minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace [*charis*] of God.” You may not yet know what that gift is, or understand yet how God wants you to use it. But you can take God at His word that you have already been gifted by the Holy Spirit in some unique way—and all as an act of His grace.
- B. Each believer has been uniquely gifted as the Holy Spirit chooses. Neither you nor I can choose our own spiritual gifts. We cannot look over the list of spiritual gifts that the Bible describes, and decide which one we would like. Rather, “one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills” (1 Corinthians 12:11). He is wiser than we could ever be in this choice; and we will find our greatest happiness in service through seeking to grow in the gift that He has chosen to give us—and not in desiring what He has chosen to give to someone else.
- C. The gifts are given to individual believers by the Holy Spirit for the benefit of the rest of the church. This is very important to keep in mind. The spiritual gifts that you have been given were not mainly for your own benefit. It’s true that they are a blessing to you; but they have been given mainly for the benefit of others in the Body of Christ. As Paul tells us, “... [T]he manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all ...” (1 Corinthians 12:7). The gifts are distributed by the Holy Spirit accordance with Christ as the Church’s Head,

from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love (Ephesians 4:15-16).

What an amazing way it is that the Spirit of God has united the body of Christ together; and in such a way that each part is ‘gifted’ by Him to minister to the needs of the others!

- D. And finally, let’s remember that—though each gift is given by the gracious work of the Holy Spirit—it’s up to you and me to put our spiritual gift(s) to work and grow in our use of them. In fact, this is put to us in the form of a command in the Scriptures: “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Peter 4:10). Our gifts have been given to us to be used, in obedience to God, to benefit others in the Body of Christ. So; let’s learn about those gifts, grow in our development of them, put them to faithful use, and truly bless one another in the

love of Jesus.

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.

³*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (BDAG)*, 3rd. Ed., p. 1018.