

Spiritual Gifts - Introduction - a study for the Gulf Coast Baptist Church Bible Institute for the Winter session 2020-21 by Steve Thomas

Christ gave gifts

In Ephesians 4 Paul tells the believer what he should look like when he understands and focuses on his position in Christ (found in chapters 1-3). The mature spiritual believer is humble and loving (vs 2), unified (vs 3) and is one who understands the makeup of the Body (vs 4-6.). After the Ascension of Christ, gifts were given by Christ. These gifts have specific purposes, listed in verse 12. For the perfecting (maturing) of the saints, for the work of the ministry, and for the edifying of the Body of Christ. This process is to be worked on continually until the Body is complete and the believer has reached full maturity, and is like Christ.

In order for this to happen, the believer must present his body to Christ so that the purpose of the Godhead can be fully realized. This admonition is in Romans 12. Romans is one of the two main passages that contain revelation about the Spiritual gifts mentioned in Eph 4, the other being 1 Corinthians chapter 12. The Body has members that are different, and their gifts are also different. Each believer is to use his or her gift “according to the grace (gift) that has been given to us (vs 6-8).”

Equipping our minds

Peter mentions these gifts as well. In chapter 4 he recommends that the believer “arm” himself with the mindset that Christ had. Part of the carrying out of this process is to “use the gift” as every man has “received the gift” (vs 10). Peter describes this believer as a good “steward” of the manifold grace (gift) of God.

In the last two paragraphs we have used the term for grace and gift interchangeably. The Greek word *Charis* is actually the root to the word for Gift - *Charisma*. God has essentially “graced” the Body of Christ with different gifts, for a specific purpose - to grow the church, do the work of the ministry, and to build up the Body.

The purpose of the Church

This incidentally is the purpose of the Assembly of believers. God, upon leaving this earth’s scene, promised his disciples a gift of the Holy Ghost, so that they could make disciples.

Imagine a family in modern day America that was gifted with an automobile, but they lacked the understanding of the purpose of such a gift. This family rises hours before school, and walks the children for two hours, dropping them off at school (while avoiding these strange, noisy, fast-moving objects) and returns home after work with those children exhausted long after dark. Only to put them to bed to repeat the same madness each day. This is what the modern church must look like to God. Believers who go to a building every week, sometimes multiple times a week, only to grunt and strain, doing things through the power of their flesh that God will empower them to do supernaturally. The believer is not doing the work efficiently, or effectively. Jesus gifted the church with certain gifts to be directed towards the Body of Christ. The gift is for the Church but it resides in the Believer. For the Church to receive, appreciate, and be affected by the gift, it must be exercised by the believer in which it resides.

Listing the Gifts

As the church exists today, not all the gifts given after Christ's Ascension are still operable. Those gifts served their purpose and are no longer needed. Their cessation was either implied or predicted in scripture. The temporary gifts are revelatory, teaching, and validating. The Revelatory gifts are prophecy and the word of knowledge. The Teaching gifts are apostleship and the word of wisdom (wisdom being applied knowledge). The Validation gifts are healing, miracles, discerning of spirits, and tongues and their interpretation. This grouping of gifts served a purpose that is no longer needed for the Church. During the early stages of the formation of the Body, God gave information to His people through various methods (Heb 1:1). When the formation of the scriptures was complete, this piecemeal method of dispensing revelation was no longer needed, nor was the method by which the individual speakers' credentials were validated. This is explained clearly in 1 Corinthians 13 and will be studied deeper in weeks to come.

The gifts remaining in operation can also be grouped. God gave the church Teaching gifts, Motivating gifts, Order gifts, Benevolent gifts, and an Outreach gift. The Teaching gifts are Pastor-teacher and Teacher. The Motivating gifts are exhortation and faith. The Order gifts are organization, administration, ministry (deacon), and helps. The Benevolent gifts are mercy and giving. The Outreach gift is evangelism. Some teachers pare this grouping down to only seven active service gifts. The list we will study will include eleven. Each listing contains the meat of what Christ provided.

In the weeks to come, study will be given to how the believer should know the temporary gifts are no longer operable, what the term spiritual means, what can hinder the believer from exercising his gift, and a detailed study of each of the eleven gifts. There will be two tests given, to assess that the main points of this course are being grasped.