

## SPIRITUAL GIFTS (2)

### The Gifts that are Given (Part 1 – People Gifts)

#### A. Introduction

1. Why does this topic of spiritual gifts matter?

It matters because thinking rightly about spiritual gifts is important as this is an area where Christians can easily go astray.

It matters because we need to know what gifts of the Spirit are available to us.

Are all the gifts we read about in the New Testament and more available, as Continuationists believe? Have some of them ceased, as Cessationists believe? Or are all the gifts in theory available, but we should be cautious about pursuing some of them, as those who are Continuationist in theory but Cessationist in practice would believe?

2. What are spiritual gifts?

*"A spiritual gift is any ability that is empowered by the Holy Spirit and used in any ministry of the church." (Wayne Grudem)*

*"Spiritual gifts as gifts of grace granted by the Holy Spirit which are designed for the edification of the church." (Tom Schreiner)*

To these definitions, we might add that they are given while we wait for Jesus to return and bring about a new creation.

"...but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears." (1 Corinthians 13:10)

3. What gifts have been given?

<i>1 Corinthians 12:8-11</i>	<i>1 Corinthians 12:28-29</i>	<i>Romans 12:6-8</i>	<i>Ephesians 4:11</i>	<i>1 Peter 4:11</i>
Message of wisdom				
Message of knowledge				
Faith				
Gifts of healings	Gifts of healings			
Miracles	Miracles			
Prophecy		Prophecy		
Distinguishing between the spirits				
Tongues	Tongues			
Interpretation of tongues	Interpretation of tongues			
	Apostle		Apostle	
	Prophet		Prophet	
	Teacher			
	Administration			
	Helping others			
		Teaching		
		Encouraging		
		Giving		
		Leadership		
		Showing mercy		
		Serving		Serving
			Evangelist	
			Pastor-Teacher	
				Speaking

Some observations:

These are incomplete lists – none of them are exhaustive.

These are illustrative lists – the gifts that were present in those particular local churches show the great variety of them available.

There are two types of spiritual gifts: People Gifts and Ability Gifts (speaking, serving, sign).

#### 4. Who are the people gifts?

They are gifts of the ascended Lord Jesus to His church.

“But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it... It was he who gave...”  
(Ephesians 4:7, 11)

They are given for the perfecting of the saints, for work of service, and for the building up of the body of Christ.

“...to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up...”  
(Ephesians 4:12)

They are the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastor-teachers.

“It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers.” (Ephesians 4:11)

They preach and teach the Word of God.

The order of the people gifts is important.

“And to the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers.” (1 Corinthians 12:28)

Why?

The apostles and prophets lay the foundation by revealing God’s Word to the church.

“Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow-citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.” (Ephesians 2:19-20)

“In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God’s holy apostles and prophets.” (Ephesians 3:4-5)

The evangelists and pastor-teachers build on the foundation laid, by preaching and teaching God’s revealed Word.

“Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.” (1 Timothy 4:13)

“Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage with great patience and careful instruction.” (2 Timothy 4:2)

## **B. The Apostles**

### 1. Who were the apostles?

They were chosen by Christ.

“Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve – designating them apostles – that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons.” (Mark 3:13-15)

"So they proposed two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. Then they prayed, "Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs." Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles." (Acts 1:23-26)

"Paul, an apostle – sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead." (Galatians 1:1)

They were witnesses to Jesus' resurrection.

"Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection." (Acts 1:21-22)

"...and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born." (1 Corinthians 15:8)

They represented Christ by speaking His Word.

"But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you." (John 14:26)

"When the Counsellor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning." (John 15:26-27)

"I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you." (John 16:12-15)

They were proven to be His authoritative representative by signs, wonders and miracles.

"The things that mark an apostle – signs, wonders and miracles – were done among you with great perseverance." (2 Corinthians 12:12)

"This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will." (Hebrews 2:3-4)

A few other men functioned as apostles.

They were messengers of the apostles or the apostolic era churches, who along with the 13 apostles spoke God's Word and were authenticated by signs, wonders and miracles.

## 2. Apostles Today?

*"It seems that no apostles were appointed after Paul, and certainly, since no one today can meet the qualification of having seen the risen Christ with his own eyes, there are no apostles today" (Wayne Grudem)*

The apostle James was not replaced after he died in Acts 12.

*"The New Testament apostles had a unique kind of authority in the early church: authority to speak and write words which were "words of God" in an absolute sense. To disbelieve or disobey them was to disbelieve or disobey God. The apostles, therefore, had the authority to write words which became words of Scripture. This fact in itself should suggest to us that there was something unique about the office of apostle, and that we would not expect it to continue today, for no one today can add words to the Bible and have them be counted as God's very words or as part of Scripture." (Wayne Grudem)*

The foundation of teaching about Christ and His work laid by the apostles has been preserved in the New Testament.

## C. The Prophets

### 1. Who were the prophets?

Prophets played an important role in the New Testament church in laying its foundation.

During this unique period in history when Scripture was still being written, prophets who received the Word of God directly and declared it with the same authority as the apostles, were given to local churches.

The Word of God they spoke was not always predictive. It also addressed present circumstances.

There were others in the church who were given the gift of prophecy, but who were not prophets.

### 2. How did local churches know who the prophets were?

This was an important question because false prophets were prevalent.

"...and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people." (Matthew 24:11)

"Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world." (1 John 4:1)

Prophets were tested on the same basis as their Old Testament counterparts.

"Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil." (1 Thessalonians 5:19-22)

Were they orthodox?

"If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a miraculous sign or wonder, and if the sign or wonder of which he has spoken takes place, and he says, "Let us follow other gods" (gods you have not known) "and let us worship them," you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. The LORD your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul. It is the LORD you God you must follow, and him you must revere. Keep his commands and obey him; serve him and hold fast to him." (Deuteronomy 13:1-4)

Were they accurate?

"You may say to yourselves, "How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the LORD?" If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him." (Deuteronomy 18:21-22)

### 3. Prophets Today?

*"Try to imagine our position if we did not possess these New Testament Epistles, but the Old Testament only. That was the position of the early Church. Truth was imparted to it primarily by the teaching and preaching of the apostles, but that was supplemented by the teaching of the prophets to whom truth was given and also the ability to speak it with clarity and power in the demonstration and authority of the Spirit. But once these New Testament documents were written the office of a prophet was no longer necessary." (Martyn Lloyd-Jones)*

## D. The Evangelists and the Pastor-Teachers

### 1. The evangelists and pastor-teachers continued the work of the apostles and prophets.

The evangelists are men given to the church to reach the lost with the gospel, and the pastor-teachers are men given to the church to feed, lead, and protect the flock by teaching God's Word.

*"Evangelists are much like obstetricians, helping to bring new Christians into the world. Teaching pastors are like paediatricians, seeing that these Christians have a healthy spiritual "diet," that their*

*"diseases" receive proper attention, and that they get plenty of spiritual "fresh air" and "exercise."*  
(Ray Steadman)

2. The gift of evangelists (the extenders of the frontiers).

Evangelists take the gospel to lost people.

Some will be sent out on missions to new places to plant new churches.

*"Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and travelled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea."* (Acts 8:40)

Others will remain within a local church.

*"Leaving the next day, we reached Caesarea and stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven."* (Acts 21:8)

3. The gift of pastor-teachers (the edifiers of the flock).

Pastor-teachers lead local churches by feeding God's people with His Word encouraging their growth to maturity.

*"Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood."* (Acts 20:28)

4. A separate gift of teachers?

*"And to the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers."* (1 Corinthians 12:28)

Teachers might be a broad term that encompasses the work of both the evangelists and pastor-teachers.

It more likely refers to those who explain God's Word, but who are not elders in the local church.

**E. What does this mean for us?**

1. Does Jesus continue to give people gifts to the church?

Yes, but not all of them.

The gifts of apostles and prophets have ceased because the foundation has now been laid.

But the gifts of evangelists and pastor-teachers continue to be given.

*"Every church should be led by a combination of evangelists and teaching shepherds – men gifted to bring the lost in and men gifted for feeding believers and leading them in the Word to build them up."*  
(John MacArthur)

2. If Jesus no longer gives apostles and prophets to the church, what does this mean?

Not all the spiritual gifts are available to the church and should be pursued.

*"Clearly, not everything that happened in the New Testament church is still happening today. That is an inconvenient and embarrassing confession for any charismatic to make, because the apostolic office itself was a gift. Ephesians 4:11 plainly says so. If that office has ceased, we cannot insist, as charismatics do, that all the spiritual gifts described in Acts and 1 Corinthians have continued."* (John MacArthur)