

## SPIRITUAL GIFTS (3)

### The Gifts that are Given (Part 2a – Ability 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 12:28-30</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

From these lists, we can discern two types of spiritual gifts: People Gifts and Ability Gifts.

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

"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)

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

The people gifts are the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastor-teachers (and teachers).

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

They are given for the perfecting of the saints, for work of service, and for the building up of the body, which they do by preaching and teaching the Word of God.

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)

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)

The people gifts of apostles and prophets are no longer given to the church because with the completion of the New Testament, the foundation (the teaching about Christ and His work) 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)

#### 5. What are the ability gifts?

These lists of spiritual gifts show that there are lots of different ways in which we can serve one another.

We shouldn't expect that all the ability gifts listed are present in every local church today.

The Holy Spirit determines what gifts each local church needs in order to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

"All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines." (1 Corinthians 12:11)

#### 6. What gifts did the local church in Corinth need?

"To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues." (1 Corinthians 12:8-10)

"And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts

of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?" (1 Corinthians 12:28-30)

The Corinthian church needed those who could speak a message of wisdom and a message of knowledge, had faith, had gifts of healing, could work miracles, prophecy, distinguish between spirits, speak in different kinds of tongues, interpret tongues, help others, and do administration.

#### 7. What gifts did the local church in Rome need?

"We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully." (Romans 12:6-8)

The Roman church needed those who could prophesy, serve, teach, encourage, contribute to the needs of others by giving, lead, and show mercy.

### **B. Defining the Abilities Gifts**

#### 1. Message of wisdom.

The ability to speak a wise word in various situations.

The ability to apply the truth of God's Word to circumstances of life.

#### 2. Message of knowledge.

The ability to understand the meaning of Scripture.

#### 3. Faith.

The ability to believe that God is able to do far more than we can imagine.

The ability to trust God in the midst of trials and difficulties.

#### 4. Gifts of healing.

Notice 'gifts'.

The ability to heal diseases miraculously.

The ability to pray effectively for healing.

#### 5. Miracles.

The ability to do mighty acts of God, that are unusual, cause amazement, and which have a specific purpose.

This gift may include healings which are miraculous.

#### 6. Prophecy.

The ability to speak God's Word to others (usually spontaneous).

This speaking of God's Word will be understood by those hearing for their strengthening, encouragement, comfort and instruction.

Not all who are able to prophecy are prophets (see 1 Corinthians 11:4-5).

7. Distinguishing between the spirits.

The ability to determine a true prophet from a false prophet.

“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)

The ability to spot bad doctrine and counterfeit gospels.

8. Tongues.

The ability to speak God’s Word in a foreign language.

This speaking of God’s Word will be in a known human language (rather than heavenly or angelic language or ecstatic speech), but this language is not a language the speaker has learned.

9. Interpretation of tongues.

A complementary gift to the gift of tongues.

The ability to translate what God has said in a foreign language through someone speaking in tongues, into a known language.

The interpretation of tongues is equal to prophecy.

“He who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may be edified.” (1 Corinthians 14:5)

10. Administration.

The ability to guide and direct members of the church towards a goal or destination.

This gift is closely linked to the gift of leadership.

11. Helping others.

The ability to assist those in need.

12. Teaching.

The ability to instruct people in sound doctrine.

The ability to make the truth clear and understandable so that people learn.

13. Encouraging.

The ability to exhort others to live a life worthy of Christ.

The ability to press home what someone should be doing.

14. Giving.

The ability to financially support the work of the gospel in a way that is fruitful.

15. Leadership.

The ability to manage and direct the church in the way it should go.

16. Showing mercy.

The ability to helpfully show compassion towards those who are in need.

It is having a burden for and being moved to work with the poor, the sick, the weak, and the suffering.

### **C. Categorising the Ability Gifts**

1. Is there a way of grouping the different gifts we are told about into categories?

Some divide them into prophetic (teaching), priestly (caring), and kingly (leading) gifts.

Others divide them into gifts of knowledge, gifts of power, and gifts of speech.

Helpfully God's Word actually categorises the ability gifts for us.

"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen." (1 Peter 4:10-11)

The different ability gifts can be grouped as to whether they are speaking gifts or serving gifts (although there will be some overlap).

2. Speaking gifts are the many kinds of gifts that involve speech activity.

These will include preaching, teaching, evangelism, singing, praying, message of wisdom and message of knowledge, and encouraging.

3. Serving gifts are the many kinds of gifts that involve helping others.

These will include showing mercy, giving, and others like them.

4. An additional category?

Sign gifts are those which the apostles and those closely associated with them did to prove they were true representatives of Christ and that the gospel they preached was authentic and from God.

These will include the gifts of healing and miracles.

To this category we might add prophecy and tongues (and their interpretation).

### **D. What does this mean for us?**

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

Yes, but not all of them. He gives speaking gifts and serving gifts, but not sign gifts.

2. The variety of gifts means that there are lots of different ways of doing good to one another.

Let's trust that the Spirit will enable us and equip us to make the most of all the opportunities we have to build others up in faith.