

THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT, PT. 2
ROMANS 12:3-8

There are many characteristics of Christianity that set it apart from all the religions of the world:

- ✓ Only Christianity recognizes the extent of man's sinfulness and inability to do good to save himself from the judgment of God.
- ✓ Only the God of Christianity initiates the salvation of men.
- ✓ Only in Christianity does God pay the debt of man's sin to prevent them from incurring His wrath.
- ✓ Only in Christianity does God become a man (while maintaining His deity).

This morning we are going to consider another attribute of Christianity that makes it unique: God gives every believer gifts, but those gifts aren't ultimately for us; they are for us to use in serving others.

Paul says about this unique privilege of serving others, "I am already being poured out as a drink offering..." (2 Tim. 4:6). And there is no bitterness in those words; conversely there is joy. He is happy to be used up in serving others.

From the perspective of the world, getting gifts to give them away is crazy. We get in order to keep; we don't get in order to give. And yet that is exactly what our faith in Christ does for us. The Spirit living within us re-orient us to thinking in new and redeemed ways about our lives.

In fact, if we are going to be completely accurate, we aren't just given these spiritual gifts to give to others, but we are given these spiritual gifts to serve others so that we can demonstrate our love to God and serve Him. We give to and serve others with our gifts so that we can give to and serve the Lord.

That being said, we need to determine what the gifts are that the Lord has given us. There are four passages in the New Testament with six lists (1 Cor. 12 has three lists). For the sake of simplicity, I want to focus this morning on the list in Romans 12 and then next week look at a list in 1 Cor. 12.

As we begin, here again is a simple definition of the gifts of the Spirit:

SPIRITUAL GIFTS ARE GOD'S ENABLEMENT FOR EVERY BELIEVER FOR SPIRITUAL SERVICE IN THE CHURCH.

1. **The Foundational Gifts: Prophecy (v. 6b)**
2. **The Serving Gifts (vv. 7-8)**
3. **The Teaching Gifts (vv. 7-8)**
4. **How to Discover Your Spiritual Gift(s)**

Context: A reminder of the essential attitudes towards spiritual gifts (vv. 3-6a)

- What we do in serving others is an overflow of our transformed lives (vv. 1-2).
- Don't think too much about your gifts and giftedness (v. 3a)
- Don't think too little about your gifts and giftedness (v. 3b)
- Gifts are given diversely for mutuality and unity, not superiority (vv. 4-5)
- Spiritual gifts are God's divine and gracious enabling to meet the needs of others (v. 6a)

1. The FOUNDATIONAL Gifts: PROPHECY (v. 6b)

- There were a number of gifts that were given to the early church that were given as transitional gifts until the Scriptures were completed that are no longer in operation today. Primarily they are: *apostle, prophet, and the sign gifts* — tongues, interpretation of tongues, miracles, and healing. We will dedicate an entire message to that one topic since it is such a significant topic.
- For now, recognize that Paul separates the gift of *prophecy* from the other gifts (v. 6), suggesting it is different from the others (he makes that much more clear in 1 Cor. 12).
 - ✓ When the NT talks about *prophecy* and prophets it includes:
 - direct revelation from God
 - an ability to accurately (100%) predict the future
 - “no one can demonstrate that he is a prophet apart from an ability to predict the future... Any individual who claims to be a prophet merely due to an insight into Scripture is making an erroneous claim.” [Thomas Edgar]
 - ✓ The prophecy given must be *according to the proportion of his faith*. I love the NASB, but this is a poor translation (NIV and ESV have *your* and *our*, which are also unhelpful). Literally, it is *the faith*. The article *the* can be translated as “his,” but it’s probably best to take it most simply here: *the faith*. That is, if one is going to prophesy, it cannot deviate in any way from the standard of faith that is revealed in Scripture. It must be consistent with what we already know about God, Christ, the Spirit, salvation, the church, etc.

2. The SERVING Gifts (vv. 7-8)

- In 1 Pt. 4:11 Peter only identifies two gifts: speaking & serving; most agree that he is referring to categories of gifts rather than particular gifts. Those two categories organize the remaining gifts.

- Here Paul identifies four serving gifts — **serving** (the word from which we get “deacon”), **giving**, **leading**, and **showing mercy**. Other serving gifts are: faith, hospitality, and pastor/teacher (perhaps).
 - ✓ *The gift of service*: The word is sometimes translated “ministry” and is the word from which we get our word “deacon.” It is a general and broad word.
 - It originally was used to refer to waiters, but then came to be used of anyone who did any kind of lowly or humble service. It may be that was the gift of Tabitha (**Acts 9:36, 39**).
 - In Acts 6 the church was providing daily meals for widows; those who were tasked to care for them became the first deacons (cf. **vv. 2-3**) — spirit-filled men who *served tables*.
 - A similar idea is contained in 1 Cor. 12:28 — **helps** (the only NT use of that particular word). That word means to assist someone — it particularly refers to assistance of those who are incapable of caring for themselves — the poor, sick, widows, orphans, travelers, strangers,...
 - Service is any kind of practical help that believers can give each other that meets a need.
 - Why does it take the Holy Spirit to produce this gift? Anyone can make a meal, make a house repair, change a tire? It takes the Holy Spirit to do these things because who *naturally* embraces humility? And it takes humility to serve others.
 - Many times people will assume something like, “Well I know I don’t have a teaching/speaking gift and I don’t know what else I could have so it must be helps...” as if serving others and being merciful to those in need is secondary — a “consolation prize.” One writer says, “This gift is not to be minimized. These persons are as significant in a local church as linemen are to a football squad.” [McRae] And another adds, “Many quite brilliant people seem unconstitutionally unable to perform lowly service well. There is a lot of lowly service to be done, and anyone who has the gift of doing it should rejoice at the wonder of divine grace.” [Morris, *Romans*]
 - ✓ *The gift of giving*: The word “gives” means “to share with someone.”
 - The believer who is being transformed should be a giver and not a taker or thief (Eph. 4:28).
 - There are some who are particularly (spiritually) gifted with the ability to give. But that does not mean that one has to be wealthy to have this gift (2 Cor. 8:2; 9:11, 13; Phil. 4:10-16).
 - What one does have to have for this gift is to give **with liberality**.
 - ... This word can be translated as the NASB has done it with the sense that the giving is “open-handed” and “open-hearted.” It is generous giving — “can I give you more???”
 - ... But it can also have the idea of “simplicity,” and the sense is that the one who gives in this way gives with a single goal — he has no mixed motives or ulterior motive — he just wants to help the person in need and his only thought is of that person.
 - If a person has this gift, no matter how much money he has, he has the money but the money does not have him.
 - John Wesley’s principle applies: “Gain all you can; save all you can; then give all you can.”

- ✓ *The gift of leading:* The basic sense of the word is to be in front of someone, so “rule” or “lead.”
- But it also had the idea of going in front of someone for the purpose of protection or representation (1 Tim. 3:4, 5, 12 — of both elders and deacons).
- There is a similar concept in 1 Cor. 12:28 — **administration** — was used of steering a ship. This person provides wisdom and direction for those he leads and serves.
- What is particularly noteworthy is how this leadership is to be given — **with diligence** = eagerness, zeal. He is truly committed to providing care for his people. He is faithful to carry out his responsibilities to his people.
- One does not need to have an official office in the church to have this gift, but the gift will be carried out the way godly elders care for their people (1 Pt. 5:1-3).
- ✓ *The gift of mercy:* The one who has the gift of mercy has compassion and empathy for those who are suffering: the very characteristic of God that produced our salvation (Rom. 12:1).
- The word has a component of feeling compassion for others — Mk. 5:19; Mt. 18:33.
- But the word not only has the component of feeling — it is to recognize someone’s pitiful condition and then be stirred to action (Mt. 18:33). This is why so many said to Jesus, “Have mercy on me...” — they wanted Him to see their difficult position and alleviate their suffering.

- *Matt. 9:27 As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out, “Have mercy on us, Son of David!”*
- *Matt. 15:22 And a Canaanite woman from that region came out and began to cry out, saying, “Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed.”*
- *Matt. 17:15 “Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is a lunatic and is very ill; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water.”*
- *Matt. 20:30-31 And two blind men sitting by the road, hearing that Jesus was passing by, cried out, “Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!” The crowd sternly told them to be quiet, but they cried out all the more, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!”*

- What is particularly significant about this gift, though, is that it is done **with cheerfulness**. It might be translated “graciousness;” we get our word “hilarity” from this word. It is a joyous service — just as Paul and Silas sang when thrown into the depths of prison, the person with this gift sings with delight when he/she gets to be compassionate to someone in need. It is not a grim and begrudging duty, but a happy, impulsive, immediate response. This was the very attitude of the good Samaritan (**Lk. 10:37**).

- SUMMARY of serving gifts:
 - ✓ Most of the gifts that are for today are not prominent gifts — they are done quietly and away from public view. They are designed that way so that we are not tempted to take preeminence but so that the Spirit who fills us and equips us with these gifts is seen as the originator of the gift.
 - ✓ But even more than that, the Spirit's work is designed to make us look like the Savior (Jn. 14:26; 15:26; 16:14). And when we serve with faithfulness, we particularly look like the Savior who did not come to be served but to serve and give His life a ransom for many (Mk. 10:45).

3. The SPEAKING Gifts (vv. 7-8)

- Here Paul identifies two speaking gifts — *teaching, exhortation*. Other speaking gifts are evangelism, pastor/teacher and word of faith/wisdom.
 - ✓ *The gift of teaching:* This is the person who has the ability to interpret and then present the truth of God's Word in an understandable way.
 - The gift of teaching is essential because it is the primary means that God has designed for His people to grow to spiritual maturity.

- *Acts 2:42 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*
- *Acts 4:2 being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.*
- *Acts 5:42 And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.*
- *Acts 11:26 and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers...*
- *Acts 15:35 But Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and preaching with many others also, the word of the Lord.*
- *Acts 18:11 And he [Paul] settled there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.*
- *Eph. 4:11-14 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming...*
- *Col. 1:28 We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ.*

- The pastor will also have the gift of teaching (Eph. 4:11), but not all teachers will also have the gift of pastoring. One of the fundamental means by which the pastor shepherds the church is through his ministry of teaching.
- Don't confuse a job as a teacher with the spiritual gift of teaching; there is a significant difference between being an effective biology teacher and a Bible teacher.

✓ *The gift of exhortation:* To “exhort” means “to call to one’s side.” It has two ideas:

- The exhortation can refer to the action of calling someone to preparation for spiritual battle: he advises, pleads, warns, and strengthens. He may call someone to repentance for a sinful habit or he may appeal to him to continue in obedience and not return to sin.
- The exhortation may also be more of consolation: someone who is weak needs to be strengthened and encouraged to continue on the path of faithfulness. He needs to be reminded of the provision of God to sustain him in his weakness.
- The person with the gift of exhortation has an ability to use the Word of God to stimulate others to action — “I see that; I’ll do it...”
- The distinction between teaching and exhortation is that in teaching the teacher transmits knowledge while the exhorter stimulates his hearers to action. The exhorter confronts those who are wayward and walks alongside those who are weak and hurting and helps them the first to resume his walk with Christ and the second to continue in his walk with Christ.
- We see both of these aspects in 1 Thess. 5:14. Also **Heb. 10:24-25.**

- This passage demonstrates that there are both speaking and serving gifts — some have one, others have another. The point is we need our minds to be renewed and we also need help in tangible ways. And God has provided for both of our needs through the gifts He’s given to the church body.

4. How to Discover Your Spiritual Gift(s)

- Discovering the identity of your gift is not nearly as important as practicing obedience when commanded; for instance, virtually all the “gifts” are commanded elsewhere of all believers:

- **service** — Gal. 5:13 “*For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.*”
- **teaching** — 2 Tim. 2:2 *The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.*
- **exhortation** — Heb. 10:24-25 *and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near.*
- **giving** — 2 Cor. 8:1-4
- **leading** — Titus 3:8, 14 *This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God may be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men....And let our people also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, that they may not be unfruitful.*
- **showing mercy** — Matt. 5:7 “*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.*”

- And since that’s true, just be about the business of being obedient as you have opportunity.
- Now here is what happens: as you are being obedient to do all these things, you will find that in some places, you are able to carry out these responsibilities in a way that indicates you have giftedness:
 - ✓ You give with liberality and without concern that others know.
 - ✓ You lead faithfully, even when some reject your overtures of service and care.
 - ✓ You are joyfully (happily) merciful towards others.
 - ✓ You teach and are given more and more teaching opportunities because others recognize your effectiveness in teaching.
 - ✓ You serve — and serve, and serve and do not grow weary or despondent over the needs; you are just thankful to be used by the Lord in this way.
 - ✓ You exhort — call others to obedience or encourage someone who is weary and they respond to your exhortations.
 - ✓ Those are all indications that you are being particularly effective and you have that gift.
 - ✓ So the first way to discover your gift is just to be busy doing various forms of ministry and seeing where you are joyfully effective.

- What do you want to do?
 - ✓ When one walks in obedient submission to the Lord, delighting in Him alone, then our desires will be aligned with the Lord's and He will give us what we want (Ps. 37:4).
 - ✓ What do you want to do? Some want to serve as elders — leaders and pastor/teachers. They are not condemned for that desire, but told it is a good thing (1 Tim. 3:1).
 - ✓ You will learn, in part, what your spiritual gift is by following your godly desires.
- How do others affirm you when you serve? We can help others discern their gifting by thanking them and giving honest appraisal of their service — I was well-taught, I was ministered to, you are a gracious giver, you told me what I needed to hear, even though it was a hard thing, and I wanted it...
- Summary for discovery of your spiritual gifts:
 - ✓ Be obedient in every area of ministry and then see where you are particularly effective. (This also means that while I am tempted to want to *really* know my spiritual gift, it's far more important for me to be obedient to serve wherever he puts me each day.)
 - ✓ Determine your godly desires.
 - ✓ Listen for the affirmations of others.

CONCLUSION: Cf. 1 Thess. 5:14-15.

- People have needs.
- If you are a believer, the Lord has put you in the church body to meet those needs.
- And the Lord has given you gifts so you can meet those needs. Your gifts are your privilege to serve others.
- When everyone uses his gifts, everyone's needs are met, everyone's gifts are used, and God is glorified — honored and revealed as the great God He is.

BENEDICTION: Heb. 13:20-21