

Spiritual Gifts

David 2012

Spiritual Gifts are given by God to believers in Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit to enable the believer to minister to the church. These gifts are spiritual abilities to help serve other believers. The purpose of the gifts is to aid saints in their walk with God. 1 Corinthians 12:7 says, "To each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."

The main passages describing the Spiritual Gifts are Romans 12:3-8, 1 Corinthians 12-14 but notably 12:8-10, and Ephesians 4:7-16.

Romans 12:3-8

Prophecy Giving	Ministry – serving Leading	Teaching Mercy (compassion)	Exhortation
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1 Corinthians 12:8-10

Wisdom	Knowledge	Faith
Healing	Miracles	Prophecy
Discerning Spirits	Speaking in Tongues	Interpretation of Tongues

Ephesians 4:7-16

Apostles	Prophets	Evangelists	Pastors	Teachers
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Warning

The purpose of this article is not to discuss and explain the Spiritual Gifts. You can find that information from many different good sources. I may even write one myself. But my purpose in writing this article is to show how my view deviates from those of standard Dispensationalist and Calvinist views. Many good men take different views, but I believe I am at least partially right. Please take this with a grain of salt.

How many gifts per person?

The debate often arises on the question of how many spiritual gifts does or can a person receive. Who gets what Spiritual Gift, and can someone be gifted in more than one area? There are some people who believe that a man only receives one spiritual gift; whether it is pastoring, teaching, evangelism, giving etc. There are others who believe that you can be gifted with one or a few gifts. They point to Barnabas who seemed to have the gift of encouragement and apostleship.

I tend to think that all Christians are gifted, in some way or another, with every spiritual gift. While I do believe we are more heavily gifted in a certain area, I think every believer has a measure of faith in every gift. To make myself clearer, some of the spiritual gifts are teaching,

encouragement, evangelism, mercy, and leading. In the Bible we are all commanded to do many of these gifts. In Paul's letter to Timothy, he tells him to do the work of an evangelist even though it's apparent he has been gifted in both teaching and leading (2 Timothy 4:5). Likewise we are all commissioned to be evangelists, but there is no way we could unless we were so enabled to by the Spirit.

Another commandment we see is for all husbands and fathers to lead their families, and bring them up in godliness. (Ephesians 5:23) Obviously this godly leading is also a work of the Spirit. Another gift is giving. All Christians are commanded to give back to the Lord of their monetary blessings. If that is the case why have only some Christians been gifted with giving? I would say that all believers have been gifted to some extent in giving. Some believers give much from what little they have, others give 10%, still others joyfully give more. I believe the only way someone would be able to give to the Lord with a joyful heart is if they were empowered to do so.

Possibly the gift that was most pertinent in my deciding to take this view is the gift of faith in 1 Corinthians 12:9. All Christians have been given the gift of faith; that is how we came to believe in the savior. Some believers may have more faith, and others may worry a bit more, but all of the children of God are children of faith. 1 Corinthians 14:1 says, "...desire earnestly spiritual gifts..." You'll notice that the word gifts, here, is plural. I think that you may ask God for more grace in any area of spiritual gifts. 1 Corinthians 12:31 says, "But earnestly desire the greater gifts". God says if you ask for faith, He will grant it to you. If you pray to become a better teacher to more effectively impart God's wisdom to others, He will make you a better teacher. I believe this is true for everyone.

So I think everyone is gifted in some way with every gift: be it teaching, exhortation, serving, evangelizing etc. The extent to which God enables us to perform His will is determined by His providence and our faithfulness. "Earnestly desire the greater gifts."

Have Some Gifts Ended?

In Acts, we see many instances of miracles being done by saints through the power of the Holy Spirit. We have recordings of prophesy (direct revelation from God), tongues (speaking fluently an earthly language that is unknown to you), Healings, and other miracles. These miracles had different purposes: some were to affirm authority of the Gospel, others to affirm the authority of the Apostles in the church. Still others were meant to prove that the Holy Spirit was present. We don't see a whole lot of miracles anymore. No one just gets up in church and prophesies (that has basis in truth). So the idea that stems from this is that some Spiritual Gifts have passes away.

1 Corinthians 13:8-13 says, "⁸Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away.⁹For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. ¹¹When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. ¹²For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. ¹³So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

Some (almost all dispensationalists) take this to mean that the miracle or charismatic gifts were used only in the early church before the canon of scripture was complete circa AD 300. They consider the partial mentioned in verse 9 to be the Old Testament and the perfect to be the completed canon.

I tend to think that this passage is referring to the second coming of Christ and the eternal Kingdom. In the Kingdom love will never end, but we will have no need of spiritual gifts since the “perfect” (the revelation of Christ) has come. We will have no need of prophetic revelation or tongues or healing etc. because we will have perfection of body and communion with Christ. That would make the “face to face” phrase in verse 12 have more meaning. Also in verse 12 “Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.” It would make sense that currently we know God in part from what He has revealed in His Word, but at the second coming we shall know Him fully even as He knew us from the beginning of time.

Going back to verse 8 where it says prophecies and tongues will be done away with. It also says that knowledge will be done away with. If it is true that prophecy and tongues have ceased then knowledge would have also ceased, and though watching the news it may seem like knowledge has left the world, I personally know several people that have been very gifted in understanding God’s Word.

There is still the problem that we don’t see certain gifts used in the church today. That is not to say that they aren’t ever used or seen though. There are recorded instances of prophesy, tongues, and other miracles. These are usually in other countries or on the mission field or places that don’t have the Word of God readily available. I believe this is so because we in America are a people of little faith. We are comfortable with what we know and what we have and we don’t need or believe in miracles. Jesus said in Matthew 17:20, “for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.”

Just as a side note: The “miracles” we see in Charismatic churches are not from God. I do not believe in any “faith healings” or modern day apostles. The Charismatic Pentecostal babbling tongues movement is not Biblical either. The gifts of tongues is not babbling nonsense, it is real earthly languages as seen in Acts chapter 2.

The only gift I can say for sure has passed is the gift of Apostleship. There were criteria to be an Apostle. In Luke 6:13, it says Jesus specifically called them as Apostles. In Acts 1:21, an Apostle must be witness to the resurrection of Christ. Paul was the last to be a witness to Jesus’ resurrection. So he was the last person who could qualify to be an Apostle. There are no Apostles today.

Though I believe the “charismatic gifts” have decreased quite a bit since the early church, I do believe they are still around. Paul tells us to desire prophesy and not forbade tongues. But use discernment (another Spiritual Gift) when believing in miracles. Most of them are scams by false teachers who peddle the Word of God to their own destruction.