



THE HOLY SPIRIT

THE GIFTS of the SPIRIT

“I do not want you to be ignorant about things that belong to the Spirit (or the spiritual realm: Gk = pneumatikon, “spirituals”)” 1 Cor 12:1

“Eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy” 1 Cor 14:1

BUT “Follow the way of Love” 1 Cor 14:1

These scriptures are very positive encouragements to a study of the gifts of the Spirit. It is important to see this attitude in Paul, especially where it has been fashionable to play down a concern for the gifts. Certainly they cannot be our sole interest in learning of the things of God, but they are not to be ignored and certainly not to be treated with contempt or considered either of little interest or only for the immature. There is much to be gained from understanding them properly if we want to make an impact for Jesus.

The gifts Paul had in mind refer primarily to the list Paul gives in 1 Cor. 12.

THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT in 1 Cor 12:1ff

“There are varieties of gifts (Gk = *charismata* = grace gifts)”

They are listed by Paul but not explained. They are probably best seen in and understood from the ministry of Jesus. Each gift in the list given in the list below has an example taken from Jesus’ ministry.

Paul was not so much interested in explaining them here but in emphasising the fact that all these come from the same Spirit, so there is no competition between them (v.4)

“To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit (i.e. a gift) for the common good and not for the purpose of spiritual pride!” (v. 7) Though he is very positive about gifts Paul is at pains to prevent the interest of the Corinthians in those gifts from becoming self-centred and “super spiritual”. They for the purpose of glorifying God not man.

Paul’s List

Examples Seen in Jesus’ Ministry

1. A Word of Wisdom Lk 20:20ff

Jesus has been given what seems to be an unanswerable question about paying taxes. If he says “pay them” he would be in danger of hatred from the Jews, if he said “don’t pay them” he would be imprisoned by the Romans. The need was for wisdom to give an answer! The reply he gives using the Emperor’s coin was equally unanswerable for the teachers of the law. Wisdom is “finding God’s way through”.

2. A Word of Knowledge John 1:48

After Jesus had made a searching comment about him, Nathaniel asked Jesus, “How do you know me?” for they had not met before. Jesus said he “had seen him under a fig tree”, evidently in vision and seen what he was doing. This supernatural knowledge that Jesus had about him was enough to persuade Nathaniel that Jesus was the Messiah.

3. A gift of Faith Matt 17:14 ff, esp 19-20

The disciples had failed to deliver a demonised boy. Jesus said it was because they lacked faith. This is a gift of faith by the Holy Spirit that is given as part of the process of delivering or healing. It is manifest in a sense of authority.

4. Gifts of Healings Lk 5:17

Luke notes that on the occasion of healing the paralytic man “the power of the Lord was present for him to heal the sick”. Jesus was man full of the Holy Spirit and anointed with the Spirit so that the Spirit was on him to heal and deliver the needy (Lk 4:18). It was through the constant presence of the Spirit and the gifts of healing that consequently flowed into Jesus that he did so much healing work.

5. Workings of power; miracles Lk 4:36

If there is a distinction between healing and miracles or works of power it would be that the latter would be instances of instantaneous healing. Works of power would also include the sheer authority with which Jesus cast out demons and even brought significant change in the natural world (e.g. Feeding of 5,000, turning water into wine etc.) The ability to do that was through the Spirit operating in him.

6. A gift of Prophecy Lk 19:41ff

The last week of Jesus’ life saw him exercising a powerful prophetic gift concerning future events. In this passage he is seen prophesying the destruction of Jerusalem because of its rejection of its Messiah. This actually came to pass 40 years after the prophecy when the Romans destroyed the city. Prophecy is a word that God wants to speak through a person and it can be a means of warning or of encouragement and enlightenment. Prophecy happens through the Spirit prompting such a word.

7. Discerning of spirits Lk 19 Zacchaeus

There is a gift which enables the discerning of the nature of the spirit in another person. This can enable the discerning of the activity or influence of an evil spirit in a person or simply the nature of the person’s own human spirit. Here Jesus has discerned that Zacchaeus’ own human spirit was deeply troubled about his life and was seeking relief. It was as a

consequence of this that Jesus called him out of the tree and entered into a conversation with him that met his need by bringing him to faith

8. Various kinds of tongues see Acts 1 / 1 Cor 14:4 and 18

The gift of tongues is a gift enabling us to speak in other languages (both earthly and heavenly) though we do not understand them as we speak them. This ability is under our control at all times.

There is no evidence of Jesus using this gift or the gift of interpretation. Both were very present, however, from the day of Pentecost onwards and were as much a sign that it was the time for gentiles to be converted as a gift. Since Jesus was sent only “to the lost sheep of the House of Israel” (Matt 15:24) it is understandable that he did not use them for it was not time for the sign until Pentecost. Paul’s commendation of this gift of tongues is strong: “He who speaks in an unknown tongue builds himself up” and “I thank my God I speak in tongues more than you all” Tongues edifies, strengthens our own spirits, releasing faith and other gifts. It is a very powerful prayer gift.

9. Interpretation of Tongues..... 1 Cor 14:27

Though mostly used in private there are occasions when the gift of tongues is properly used in a congregational meeting. It is properly used when the gift of interpretation is also evident enabling what is said to be interpreted so that it can be understood. On such occasions the tongue and the interpretation can be, but need not be, the work of one person. “Interpretation” rather than “translation” is the keynote of the gift.

The importance of the Gifts of the Spirit for the ministry of Jesus is very evident. Without them much of what he did would not have happened.

THE GIFTS OF JESUS in Ephesians 4:7-13

In looking at the gifts of the Spirit it is helpful and worthwhile to put them in the context of other gifts that the New Testament speaks of. One of these other lists is the “gifts” of Jesus, the head of the church. In Eph. 4:7ff we read “**When he ascended on high he gave gifts (Gk = *domata*) to men**”. “**He gave some to be**”: **1. Apostles 2. Prophets 3. Evangelists 4. Pastors 5. Teachers**

These “gifts” are actually people who have special ministries in the church. They describe people who are particularly gifted in certain ways in order that they may exercise those special ministries. For example **the apostle** is a person who has a wide ranging and directing influence in the “church” at large, and moving across different church groups. An apostle is in the forward thrust of the movement of the church. He may have one or even all four of the other ministry gifts. **The prophet** is one who has an authenticated ministry of bringing a direct word from God for the guidance of the churches, for their encouragement and for their warning. An **evangelistic ministry** displays a particular aptitude for actually leading people to faith in Christ. A **Pastor** will show all the insight, patience and wisdom required to handle people’s personal problems. **The teacher** will be endowed with the ability both to understand truth and to convey it with a simplicity that enables others to understand also. And, as with the apostle, it may be that someone given by Jesus to the church may have a combination of such ministries. When we see people granted to the church (frequently in answer to prayer) who have these kinds of ongoing and proved ministries we are looking at a gift that Jesus has put into his body. Their purpose is “**to prepare God’s people for works of service**”. But we need to recognise that even if it Jesus who has put the gift of such persons there, it is still none the less the Spirit whose gifts to enable the prophesying, pastoring, etc.

FURTHER GRACE GIFTS as listed in Romans 12: 6ff *Having gifts (Gk = *charismata* - gifts that come from the grace of God) that differ according to the grace given us, let us use them.. Rom. 12:8*

- 1. Prophecy 2. Service 3. Teaching 4. Exhorting / Encouragement. 5. Contributing to others’ needs (Giving)**
6. Leadership 7. Showing Mercy 8. Hospitality (v.13)

Paul’s main thrust in Romans 12 is not to explain these gifts but to emphasise the fact that the gifts are there for the benefit of the body of Christ. We are to see our gift, not as marking our superiority, but as a grace gift which we have for the sake of others. We are not to get great ideas about ourselves but act with “*sober estimate of ourselves*”. There is no place for “superiority” in considering our gifts because they are simply grace gifts to us and do not properly belong to us!

Nonetheless the gifts are real and to be recognised. Though we all endeavour to show these qualities clearly there are people who have a special aptitude for them and for whom they may be rightly said to be “gifts”.

In fact, apart from prophecy, they are gifts which form a part of our natural endowment when we were created in the love of God and given the breath of life by the Spirit. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, however, all these gifts become much more active and pronounced as the Spirit fills them out with his presence.

These gifts do not have to be exercised on a big platform to be real and important: a small or one-to-one scenario is just as important.

The fact that we are told to use our gift means we are called to have a humble recognition of what gifts we have and make sure we use them as opportunity arises. It is not part of Christian discipleship to “humbly” deny we have any gifts but to soberly recognise what they are. (If we don’t know them, others can help us).

It is very important not only that we are aware of our gifts (normally the result of actually seeing them happen in our lives and the result of others pointing them out to us), but also to be thankfully aware of other peoples’ gifts, not bemoaning what they do not have but strongly affirming what they do have. In this way the body “grows”.

Additional Gifts

The list in Romans is not intended to be exhaustive. There are other gifts such as: **Helps (simple helpfulness in simple tasks) Music / Artistic ability Intercession / prayer** etc.