

Spiritual Gifts Overview *Various Scriptures*

After last Sunday's message, I felt that I had rushed through a very important and practical issue

- So I want to take this morning to go back and explain in a bit more detail this issue of spiritual gifts

Sadly, there is a lot of confusion regarding this issue of spiritual gifts

- Which ones are still in existence?
- How do I know what my spiritual gift is?
- Why does it have to seem so hard?

These are just a few of the questions that I have heard expressed over the years

- I hope that today's overview will help bring some clarity to these issues

We will be looking at various Scriptures today

- So make sure that you have your Bible ready

I want us to start with some basic questions and then progress from there

- Again, I won't answer every question
- But I do hope that I can broaden the scope of this issue more than I did last week

I have a lot more information on the website than I can cover this morning

- I would simply point you to the website as a resource for you, if you are interested

1. What is a spiritual gift?

This may seem like a very commonsense question, but it is important nonetheless

- There has been some level of confusion between this and a natural ability or talent

A spiritual gift is given only to a believer

- Natural gifts and abilities are given to everyone, including unbelievers

A spiritual gift is given by God for service in the local church, for God's glory

- A natural ability or talent may be used outside the church for one's own glory

The Holy Spirit decides what spiritual giftedness is given to each believer

- We don't have a say in what our spiritual giftedness is

This is undoubtedly the most significant difference between a spiritual gift and a natural ability

- The Holy Spirit is the One who bestows the privilege of serving on every believer

One of the Greek words for spiritual gifts is actually "grace gift"

- Something that we don't deserve

There are eighteen (18) spiritual gifts listed in the New Testament

- But there are untold numbers of natural abilities and talents
- Obviously, too many to be counted

Singing is not a spiritual gift

- That is a natural ability that can be used by God
- But it is not a spiritual gift per se

A school teacher doesn't automatically qualify as being a teacher of God's Word

- There is different content
- There are different qualifications

So we need to go to God's Word to determine what spiritual gifts are

- And how they are used

2. Who receives spiritual gifts?

Again, the Bible is very clear about this matter

- If we will take the time look into God's Word

Let's turn to 1 Peter 4:10

- 1 Peter 4:10, "As each one has received a *special* gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

So the apostle Peter is very clear that "each one has received a *special* gift"

- "gift" reminds us that we don't deserve the privilege of serving
- Something that shouldn't be overlooked or minimized

Let's turn to 1 Corinthians 12:7

- 1 Cor 12:7, "But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."

Again, the wording is the same, "each one"

- Every Christian, with no exceptions

EVERY born-again believer has received at least one spiritual gift!

- You may not know what your spiritual gift is
- But that doesn't mean that you don't have any!

Again, this may sound so simple

- But it is fundamental that you come to grips with this reality

3. When are spiritual gifts given?

We have already discussed the fact that spiritual gifts are not given to unbelievers

- So that limits the timeframe of when spiritual gifts are given

It would stand to reason, then, that spiritual gifts are given at the time of our spiritual birth

- Natural abilities are given at the time of our physical birth

At the moment of conversion, we undergo a radical transformation that affects even the way that we serve

- We are given new desires
- We are given spiritual gifts
- We are given a hunger for God's Word

In every way, we are truly born again

- The old is faded out
- The new is ushered in

4. Why are spiritual gifts given?

This is a great question

- In other words, what is the purpose of spiritual gifts?

Let's turn to 1 Corinthians

- 1 Corinthians 12:4-7, "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. 6 And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all *persons*. 7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."

So the first purpose of spiritual giftedness is clear

- For the common good

In other words, my spiritual giftedness is to result in the common good of the body

- Not necessarily me

This helps us from becoming arrogant over our giftedness

- I am here to minister to others

Fast-forward two chapters to 1 Corinthians 14

- 1 Corinthians 14:12, "So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual *gifts*, seek to abound for the edification of the church."

What is the second purpose of spiritual giftedness?

- The edification of the church

Again, notice how Paul speaks in corporate terms

- The body, not the individual
- The church, not the specific parts

No spiritual gift is designed to be self-seeking and self-serving

A third purpose is given in 1 Peter 4:10-11, "As each one has received a *special* gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 11 Whoever speaks, *let him speak*, as it were, the utterances of God; whoever serves, *let him do so* as by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

So the third purpose of spiritual giftedness is to bring glory to God through Jesus Christ

- When we serve with right motives, we bring glory to God

Let's review the three purposes of spiritual gifts

- The common good of the body
- The edification of the body
- The glory of God

1 Cor 12:8-10, “For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another *various* kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues”

1 Cor 12:28b, “And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, *various* kinds of tongues”

Rom 12:6-8, “And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, *let each exercise them accordingly*: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; 7 if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; 8 or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness”

Ephesians 4:11, “And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers”

		early 55 AD		late 56 AD	60-62 AD	
		1 Cor 12:8-10	1 Cor 12:28	Rom 12:6-8	Eph 4:11	
Temporary gifts	Revelatory	Apostle		1		1
		Prophet	6	2	1	2
		Distinguishing of spirits	7			
		Word of wisdom	1			
		Word of knowledge	2			
	Confirmatory	Faith	3			
		Healings	4	5		
		Miracles	5	4		
		Tongues	8	8		
		Interpretation of tongues	9			
Permanent gifts	Speaking	Evangelism				3
		Teaching		3	3	4
		Pastor-teaching				
		Exhortation			4	
	Auxiliary	Helps/ministry		6	2	
		Mercy			7	
		Giving			5	
		Ruling		7	6	

5. How many spiritual gifts are listed in the NT?

I have included a handout in your bulletin
 - It has a lot of information on it

At the top, I have included the four major texts on spiritual gifts

- 1 Corinthians 12:8-10
- 1 Corinthians 12:28
- Romans 12:6-8
- Ephesians 4:11

I have listed them in the order in which they were written

- 1 Corinthians was written in early 55 AD
- Romans was written shortly thereafter, in late 56 AD
- Ephesians was written some years later, around 60-62 AD

This is significant, because as you move from left to right (from early to later), what happens to the number of spiritual gifts?

- They lessen
 - o 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 has 9 gifts
 - o 1 Corinthians 12:28 has 8 gifts
 - o Romans 12 has 6 gifts
 - o Ephesians 4 has 4 gifts

Have you ever noticed that before?

- As more books were being added to the canon of Scripture, the number of spiritual gifts was decreasing!

Furthermore, notice what spiritual gifts were being highlighted

- As you move left to right (early to later), temporary gifts were passing off the scene
- The predominant gifts were the eight permanent gifts

As you read the New Testament, especially the later epistles, you will find that the temporary gifts are not discussed much

- What you will find is an emphasis on the permanent gifts

For example, in 2 Timothy 4:20, Paul writes to young Timothy, “**Trophimus I left sick at Miletus**”

- This is significant

In the book of Acts, we read of the apostles being given ability to heal people

- In chapter 3, Peter healed a man lame from birth (3:2)
- In chapter 8, many who were paralyzed and lame were healed (8:7)
- In chapter 14, Paul healed a man who was lame from his birth (14:8)
- Remember Eutychus, the young man who fell to his death as Paul was preaching?
 - o He was raised to life (20:9)

But as we read 2 Timothy, Paul’s last known writing before his death, we find that Paul had to leave someone sick

- The evidence certainly points to the fact that the temporary sign gifts were beginning to wane, even in the first century

Let’s turn to 1 Corinthians

- The most detailed explanation of spiritual gifts is found in 1 Corinthians 12-14

1 Corinthians 13 has been misapplied throughout the centuries

- Many couples have this chapter read at their wedding

But the original intent of this chapter is not marital love

- **1 Corinthians 13 is the right motivation for using spiritual gifts**

The word for “love” is repeated nine times in this chapter alone

- It stands out as the overarching theme of the chapter

The Corinthian believers were messed up over many things

- Divisive
- Man-pleasers
- Tolerating immorality in the church
- Suing other believers
- Misunderstanding marriage
- Abusing spiritual liberties
- Misunderstanding Israel’s past
- Misunderstanding spiritual gifts
- Misunderstanding the importance of the resurrection

Corinth was not the model church

- It had its share of problems

Yet oftentimes, when someone wants to argue about spiritual giftedness, where do they turn?

- To the book of 1 Corinthians!

This is where we must be careful

- 1 Corinthians was written during a time when new revelation was being added to the canon
- 1 Corinthians was written in order to address some key problems and concerns in living during such a time and age

We, however, don’t live in such a time

- There has been no new revelation in over 1900 years
- That is quite a difference than the situation of 1 Corinthians

But notice what Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 13:8-12, “Love never fails; but if *there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.*”

- Even though Paul is speaking during a time when new revelation was being added, he states directly that prophecy, tongues, and knowledge are temporary

Verse 10 is crucial, “*when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away*”

- So there would be a time when these sign gifts would be done away

Verse 11 helps us to understand when that time is, “*When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things.*”

- A child is immature
- A child has not learned how to think properly

Notice how Paul links verses 8 and 11

- Both mention the gifts of prophecy, tongues, and knowledge

Paul describes the time in which he wrote as one of immaturity¹

- “I used to speak like a child” – this is tongues
- “think like a child” – this is prophecy
- “reason like a child” – this is knowledge

A child becomes a man when he becomes mature

- Can think for himself
- Can provide for himself

The apostle Paul says that the Church will be mature when it puts away childish things

- That is a reference to the temporary sign gifts of prophecy, tongues, and knowledge

Verse 12 is clear, “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.”

- Ultimate maturity will be when we stand in the presence of Jesus Christ
- We will be made perfect in every way

But until then, Paul writes, “we see in a mirror dimly”

- Things aren’t as clear as we would like them to be

No matter where you are on the issue of spiritual gifts, you have to deal with 1 Corinthians 13

- What is “the perfect” that will make the Church mature?

If you say that this points to the return of Christ, then you have to answer other questions

- Why are the sign gifts decreasing in frequency and focus throughout the latter epistles?
- Why are the “permanent” (my terminology) gifts being emphasized more in latter epistles?

I think a better answer is to see “the mature” as referring to the completion of the canon of Scriptures

- With the close of the book of Revelation, all 27 books of the NT were finally added
- 66 entire books of the Bible

As you read the Bible, signs and wonders are the exception, not the rule²

- They only occurred during select times

A. The time of the book of Exodus was one such time

Why were the signs and wonders given to Moses?

- To authenticate him as the messenger of God!

Moses needed to have some sign to show to Pharaoh in order to prove that he was God’s spokesman

B. The time of Elijah and Elisha was another such time

There was prevailing apostasy in the land

- God’s messengers needed to be heard

Again, the signs and wonders were needed in order to validate the message and the messenger

¹ Robert L. Thomas, *Understanding Spiritual Gifts*, 80-81.

² *Ibid.*, 81-82.

C. The time of Christ and the apostles was the last time

There was a huge transition between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant

- Jesus Himself, the God-Man, was on the scene in physical form for 30+ years

The apostles were given signs and wonders for verification and validation

- That they were the messengers of God
- Also, that they brought the message from God

We don't see signs and wonders throughout history

- They were sovereignly given for specific times and specific purposes

Between the prophecy of Malachi and John the Baptist, there were 400 years of prophetic silence!

- There were no signs and wonders taking place
- There was no need for this!

As we look back on history, we understand that the Scriptures have been closed for 1900+ years

- There is no need for signs and wonders to be performed these days

Our task as 21st century Christians is not to seek for a sign from God

- But to know His Word which has given “**us everything pertaining to life and godliness**” (2 Pet 1:3)
- We are also told that “**all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.**” (2 Tim 3:16-17)

We don't need something other than the Word of God

- We have everything that God intended to give to us

6. What were the temporary gifts during the early Church?

As you look at your sheet, you will notice that there are ten (10) temporary gifts that I have listed

- These are further broken down into two groups
 - o 5 revelatory gifts – designed to bring new revelation to the Church
 - o 5 confirmatory gifts – designed to authenticate the bringing in of new revelation

As you can see, these two groups work hand-in-hand

- They weren't two separate groups, working against one another

As new revelation was being added to the Church, there was a critical need to ensure that this revelation was from God

- There have always been individual who claim to speak for God, but are, in fact, not speaking for God

A. Apostle

An apostle was the highest office in the Church

- It literally refers to one who is “sent out”
- They are God's ambassadors

There were four (4) qualifications that all apostles had to meet³

- He must have had personal contact with Jesus during His 33 years on earth (Acts 1:8, 21-23)
- He had to be a personal eyewitness of Jesus' resurrection from the dead (Acts 1:21-22; Lk 24:48; 1 Cor 9:1-2)
- He had to have a direct appointment to this office by Jesus Himself (Lk 6:13-16)
- His ministry had to be authenticated by "signs and wonders"

2 Cor 12:12, "The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles"

There are no female apostles discussed in the New Testament

- They were all males

But apostles did not enjoy infallibility

- In Galatians 2, the apostle Paul had to rebuke the apostle Peter for his hypocrisy

Furthermore, all that the apostles wrote was not inspired

- We know for a fact that Paul wrote at least three, if not four, letters to the Corinthian church
- Yet we only have two of these

The gift of apostleship was foundational to the early church

- As a matter of fact, Paul writes in Ephesians 2:20 that the Church was "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets"

The apostles carried the very authority of Jesus Christ while they were on Earth

- Authority to speak forth new revelation
- Authority to perform signs and wonders

But as the NT is added, the office of apostle decreases

- Timothy, Titus, and others were not apostles
- Yet they were viewed as the future leaders of the Church

Paul was the last official apostle who experienced a post-resurrection appearance by Christ, "then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; 8 and last of all, as it were to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. 9 For I am the least of the apostles, who am not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God" (1 Cor 15:8-9, emphasis mine)

- It appears that the door is now closed to any further official apostles

Revelation 2:2 – Jesus commends the church at Ephesus, "you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false"

- These were men who claimed to be representatives of Christ, but were not
- These were not one of the Twelve or Paul

B. Prophet

We discussed the gift of prophecy last week

This gift went hand-in-hand with the gift of apostleship

³ Ibid., 174.

- They were both part of the foundation building of the Church (Eph 2:20)
- This is because they were both adding new revelation to the Church

A prophet had insight into the mysteries of God (1 Cor 13:2)

- So they would edify and encourage the local body through the revelations given to them

An apostle ministered to the Church at large – they enjoyed authority in all the churches

- A prophet was localized in one particular congregation (Acts 13:1; 15:32)

With the closing of the NT Scriptures, this gift also ceased

- Rev 22:18-19, “I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book; 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.”
 - Since there is no more direct revelation to be given, there is no more need of this gift of prophecy

C. Distinguishing of spirits

This gift is very close to the gift of prophecy

- As a matter of fact, it seems that other prophets had this gift

When one prophet spoke, other prophets could either validate the message as true or pass judgment that it was false

- Again, the need was to discern what was from God and what was not

There was always the danger of false prophets

- So someone other than the one speaking needed to validate the message

Modern-day discernment about teaching is different from this gift

- This gift, exercised only in the early church, was needed to discern new revelation
- Today, we have the entire Scriptures available to us

D. The gift of wisdom and the gift of knowledge

These two gifts are also included in the revelatory gifts in the early church

- These gifts are different from the modern-day need for believers to pursue wisdom and knowledge

These two gifts involved Divine insight into the mysteries of God

- As God was bringing new revelation into the Church, there was a need to make that revelation clear

These are the five (5) revelatory gifts

- Gifts that had a part with the addition of new revelation to the Church

There were five (5) other gifts that I call confirmatory gifts

- They served to confirm and authenticate the message that was being added

A. Faith

This was the Divine ability to trust God to remove barriers and obstacles as the Good News spread to new areas

- We see this exhibited in the life of the apostle Paul who faced tremendous challenges in spreading the Gospel

On his way to Rome in a ship, Paul said, “Therefore, keep up your courage, men, for I believe God, that it will turn out exactly as I have been told.” (Acts 27:25)

- God had told him in a dream earlier that no life would be taken, as long as everyone stayed on the ship

This gift helped to confirm that the message of the Gospel was indeed from God

B. Healings and miracles

We are living in a day when it is not uncommon to hear of “faith healers”

- Men and women who claim to have the gift of healing

But as look at the NT, the early church witnessed individuals who had the gift of healing

- We see this illustrated by the apostles in the book of Acts on numerous occasions

The gift of healing was not simply to give people good health

- Because every person who was healed eventually died

The gift of miracles covers those outside the realm of healing

- Raising someone from the dead
- Blinding someone

The primary intent of these gifts was to authenticate the messenger as being from God

- It was to confirm the true message in the midst of counterfeit messages

God still has the power and ability to heal

- Predominantly, this is in response to prayer
- James 5 mentions this

God can still do miracles

- But too many times we attribute something as a miracle that is not

Getting better because of medicine is not a miracle

- That is God choosing to use drugs or normal healthcare

“The age of miracles continues, but the age of miracle workers has ceased.”⁴

C. Tongues and the interpretation of tongues

I would have to say that this is the most common misunderstanding when it comes to spiritual gifts

- I think we all know of someone who has claimed to have spoken in tongues
- It is very prevalent today

⁴ Ibid., 185.

It is significant that there is no mention of the gift of tongues being exercised after 1 Corinthians

- It is not listed at all in Romans 12, Ephesians 4, and 1 Peter 4

Remember, during the writing of 1 Corinthians, the Church was still immature

- In the words of 1 Corinthians 13, the Church was like a “child” (13:11)
- It had not reached a stage of maturity

At its base definition, the gift of tongues as an ability to speak a foreign language that had not been learned by a natural and usual method⁵

- It was a Divine gift of learning the language

When the gift of tongues was properly exercised, the result was not random babbling

- It was a known language that could be recognized and understood

The gift of tongues was not a miracle of hearing

- It was a miracle of speaking

The purpose of tongues is listed in 1 Corinthians 14:22, “**tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe, but to unbelievers; but prophecy is for a sign, not to unbelievers, but to those who believe.**”

- Tongues were a sign for unbelievers
- Prophecy was a sign for believers

This is why Paul wanted the Corinthians to prophecy more than speak in tongues

- Because prophecy ministered to the Church
- Prophecy didn't need interpretation

But the Corinthians became enamored with this “secret” ability to speak in tongues

- They were using tongues to edify and exalt themselves instead of the body
- Hence, Paul has to rebuke them and set them straight

As we said earlier, Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 13 that tongues “**will cease**” (13:8)

- They weren't designed to be permanent
- They were a temporary gift

Paul, in writing 1 Corinthians, envisioned that a day in the near future when the Church would not need such external verification and confirmation

- The Scriptures would be a reliable guide and compass

A mature church, in Paul's mind, did not need continual, direct input from God in the form of new revelation

- A mature church could rely on the 66 books of the Bible

Those who would insist that the modern Church allow speaking in tongues are, in essence, keeping the Church in a childlike state

- They are harnessing the Church from full maturity

Furthermore, those who would insist that the gift of tongues is still for today diminish the role of Scripture

- They are saying that Scripture is not sufficient
- That we need something else – tongues

⁵ Ibid., 186.

Today, the Bible puts forth eight (8) gifts that are to be exercised by modern-day believers

- Evangelism – the proclaiming and heralding forth of the Gospel
- Teaching – the explaining of the already-revealed Scriptures
- Pastor-teaching – the shepherding and teaching ministry of gifted men to the local church
- Exhortation – the coming alongside of believers to encourage, comfort, or rebuke – depending on the need
- Helps/ministry – the serving in practical ways
- Mercy – the extending of kindness to others
- Giving – the offering of one’s own resources for the benefit of other believers
- Ruling – the leading of the Church by gifted men

Believer, you don’t need to look for some ecstatic experience in order to validate your effectiveness in ministry

- You don’t need to seek tongues or miracles or any of the 10 gifts that we just mentioned

Instead, focus on faithfulness

- Realize that the Scriptures are sufficient to guide you

But what about experience?

- I have heard people tell me, “But I heard about someone who spoke in tongues” **or** “I heard about this guy who was healed”

When I hear someone say something like this, I ask the person one question

- Which is more reliable – experience or the Word of God?

You can’t validate experiences

- You can’t trust experiences
- You can’t repeat experiences

The apostle Peter had the greatest experience of all

- He was allowed to see the Transfiguration of Jesus Christ
- He was privileged to see Jesus Christ’s glory put on display

Peter writes about that experience in 2 Peter

- Would you turn there with me?

“For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, “This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased” — and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.” (2 Pet 1:16-18)

- Anyone got an experience that can top that?

Yet as great of an experience that was, what does Peter say in the next verse?

- “we have the prophetic word *made* more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.” (1:19)

Which was more important to Peter – experience or Scripture?

- Scripture

Again, don’t let anyone tell you that their experience overrules Scripture

- The burden of proof is on those individuals who would insist that all of the gifts are for today