

**Now about spirituals, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant.**

We found last time how vitally important it is that we understand about the gifts. The gifts are so important because of how important the Church is.

It is the central focus of everything God is doing in the world.

The Church is the Body of Christ in the world. We are the very dwelling place of God in the world.

In fact, not only is the Church the central point of everything God is doing on earth, but also in the entire cosmos including the Spirit world.

Eph.3:9 talks about the mystery of the Gospel which is revealed only in the NT, and then v.10 goes on to explain the purpose of the Gospel. Listen carefully:

**His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms**

The Church is not only the central hub of everything God is doing on earth, but of what He is doing in the Spirit world as well.

So the church is an exceedingly important entity. And the energizing catalyst that moves the Church is the Holy Spirit through the Spiritual gifts.

So it would be tough to overstate how important the gifts are.

**3 Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.**

The idea there is that no unbelievers are spiritual and all believers are spiritual.

So don't elevate unbelievers to the status of being spiritual based on their ecstatic experiences, and don't denigrate believers as being unspiritual because they might not have a showy gift.

The Corinthians tended to elevate the supernatural gifts above the more ordinary gifts.

**4 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit.**

**5 There are different kinds of services, but the same Lord.**

**6 There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.**

#### Gifts, services and workings (vv.4-6)

##### gifts

The word used here is not *pneumatika* ("spirituals") but *charismata* ("gifts").

One of Paul's common strategies is redefinition of the argument. They wrote to him asking about "spirituals."

They put it in those terms, because they were primarily concerned with the miraculous and the extraordinary (they were like many people today who think the more miraculous and extraordinary something is, the more active the Holy Spirit is in it).

So Paul says, “Let me tell you about the spirituals – they are *gifts*.” They aren’t something for you to boast about. They are undeserved gifts that are graciously granted to you by God. *charismata* (gifts) comes from the root *charis* (grace).

The point of using that word is to highlight the point that these are abilities that are graciously given. The point of that is to turn their attention off the gift and on to the Giver.

It is the Giver who accomplishes the work – not the gift. You can’t say one person is more spiritual than another because of which gift he has, because it’s not up to us which gift we have – it’s up to the Giver.

If you are going to criticize me for my giftedness, your argument isn’t with me. It’s with the Giver of the gifts.

Maybe you are working your fingers to the bone at some job in the church, and you are frustrated because no one else is helping – no one else is interested in that job.

Before you allow yourself to become frustrated with the rest of us, realize that maybe this is a situation arraigned by the One who distributed the gifts.

The word translated **different kinds** three times is a word that means “apportionments” or “allotments,” or “allocations.”

It’s not just that we all have different giftedness, but we have different giftedness because the Giver of the gifts apportioned them differently.

So they are spirituals, they are gifts, and then Paul uses a third term to describe them:  
**services**

### **5There are different kinds of services, but the same Lord.**

The gifts are acts of service to Jesus our Master (Owner – this is the language of slavery). This just demolishes any possibility for elitism in the Church.

If you think, “I’m just a grunt in the Kingdom” you are right on – we all are. There is no white collar or blue collar in the Kingdom – just slaves)

Your spiritual gift is not an occasion for boasting. Your spiritual gift is your ticket to slavery. It’s your personal means of serving Christ as a slave.

Some churches today would do well to use this term to refer to the gifts instead of “gifts” until they recalibrate their thinking. Those churches that clamor around the more showy gifts, the churches that have an elitism and a celebrityism – those churches that aren’t interested in serving each other, but are into showing each other up...

instead of talking about the gifts all the time, perhaps they should call them services, so they remember what they are supposed to be.

This description of spiritual gifts as being **services** also helps us understand the difference between a natural ability you had as an unbeliever, and a spiritual gift.

Maybe as an unbeliever you were great at explaining things and teaching. After you became a Christian, nothing necessarily changed in your ability to teach, but now, for the first time it is a service to the Body of Christ.

And in v.9 Paul adds a 4<sup>th</sup> term:  
**workings**

**6 There are different kinds of workings, but the same God works all of them in all men.**

The spirituals are gifts graciously given by the Spirit, they are acts of servitude to the Lord Jesus, and that work is work that is ultimately accomplished through us by God the Father.

A spiritual gift is something that is given to you and that you give back with God's energy.

This is such an important point. When you offer your spiritual gift, that is nothing short of the operation of the power of God.

In some of the charismatic lingo of our day, the word "power" has come to mean "miracle." They talk about "power encounters," etc. and by that refer only to the miraculous.

But make no mistake, the mighty, supernatural power of God is at work mightily in you any time you are using your spiritual gift.

The key to tapping in to supernatural power is focusing on your spiritual gift.

The key to seeing the supernatural power of God at work in Creekside is not for us all to attend a power seminar, or to pray for miracles. The key to unleashing supernatural power in this church is for the people in this church to be using their spiritual gift.

If I have the gift of teaching, then when I teach, the mighty power of God is being exerted through me.

If I decide, "I don't think preaching is all that effective. I think I'll go do something else that God hasn't called me to" and I go off to do some other task, I have just forfeited my access to the power of God.

If someone else has been gifted and called to that other task, and he decides he would rather preach, then he forfeits his access to the power of God in ministry.

If you want God to do a mighty work through you, do what you are called and gifted to do. Anything else will prove to be nothing but a temporary, natural effort of the flesh that will play no significant role in the Kingdom of God.

### Work

It's worth noting the emphasis on the work. Your spiritual gift is both the opportunity and the tool you use to accomplish work.

We tend to think of spiritual gifts as mere abilities. But Scripture ties the idea of giftedness to activity just as much if not more than ability.

In the perspective of the NT, a spiritual gift is always an *event*. It's not just a proclivity or an ability. It is specifically the *use* of an ability in ministry to the Body.

The point of spiritual gifts is not to go to a seminar and fill out a gift inventory and rack your brain trying to come up with a label for your gift.

The point is to just walk by the Spirit – live a godly life and use your best judgement as to which of the opportunities for service that are available right now best suit you.

And as you walk by the Spirit step by step utilizing wisdom, He will lead you into opportunities, and you will be doing what you are supposed to be doing, and what you feel like you are good at or not good at isn't the main issue.

The goal isn't to sit at your desk until you have a name for your gift, and then go out and do it. Just walk by the Spirit through the normal means of godly living and then you will be able to look back and say, "Oh, that's what I do."

If wherever you go to church you always find yourself doing a certain task, that may be your spiritual gift even if you don't seem to have any special skill or ability in that area. In many ways we can think of the *activity* being the gift, not so much the ability.

In fact, as we will see as we progress through the chapter, it doesn't even end at activity.

A person's spiritual giftedness encompasses the whole person, so that it's not so much that you *have* a gift as much as you *are* a gift.

Eph.4, which list spiritual gifts, and the list is a list of people given by God to the church (Apostles, Prophets, etc.) When you read Eph.4 you come away asking, "Is a spiritual gift God giving an ability to an individual, or God an individual with an ability to the church through that individual?"

And the answer is "yes."

God has given Creekside 100+ spiritual gifts in the form of 100+ people. This is clear in

So your giftedness is the combination of your abilities and your actual work, which is packaged up in you, who are God's gift to us.

If you picture the person sitting in front of you wrapped in ribbon with a bow on top of his head, you will get the idea.

That's one reason I want more people to come to Creekside – the same reason a kid wants more boxes under the tree at Christmas time. God's gifts are wonderful, and I love them, and I desire that we could benefit from as many of them as possible.

It's true there is a sense in which something is given by God to the individual.

1 Pet 4:10 **Each one should use whatever gift he has received...**

So your spiritual gift is something you have received. But look at the rest of the sentence:

**Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.**

Your spiritual gift is a means for dispensing God's grace. So when you are not dispensing God's grace, you have the gift only in a potential way.

I think opportunity has a lot to do with it. Right now Cathy has the Spiritual gift of being unable to work since she is recovering from surgery, and that enables her to spend 20 or 30 hours a week doing the tape ministry. Part of your spiritual gift is time, or space in your house, etc.

It's a combination of abilities and actions. Some aspects of your gift you might not even have much talent, but you are in a position to be able to serve the Body in that way.

Your gift is a complex of things. When the Holy Spirit gave you a spiritual gift, He didn't just pick one off the shelf out of His 15 or 20. He took a whole lot of abilities, and a whole lot of desires, and a whole lot of experiences, and a whole lot of opportunities, and stirred for a while, and let them simmer, and then poured them into the life of the Church through you.

A great example of that is Timothy. How many spiritual gifts did Timothy have? One.

1 Tim 4:14 **Do not neglect your gift**

2 Tim 1:6 **fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you**

What was that gift?

Part was leadership – his role was to appoint elders.

Part was preaching 2 Tim. 4:2 **Preach the Word**

Part was teaching 1 Tim 4:11 **teach these things.**

In 2 Ti.4:2 he is told to exhort, so he had the role of exhortation.

In 2 Ti.4:5 he's to do the work of an evangelist.

So your gift is a complex of things. You can think of the lists of gifts in the NT as the primary colors on a palette. But the Artist mixes those together and paints a totally unique painting each time.

And beyond that, we should also keep in mind that giftedness is only a matter of emphasis. Some people think they don't have to do some things because they don't have that gift.

"I don't have the gift of evangelism, so I guess my neighbor can just go to hell."

"I realize that person is in desperation, but I don't have the gift of mercy, so I don't have to get emotionally involved."

"Boy, am I glad I don't have the gift of giving – I could never afford it!"

"I'm have no choice but to be worried and to be anxious about everything, because I don't have the gift of faith."

We are all called to do all those things. It's just that some people have a more pronounced role in one or another.

**God works all of them in all men.**

You may have heard people tell you, "When you serve God, make sure you don't do it in your own strength. Don't do it in your flesh."

I have no idea what people mean by that. If you are not doing something that is sin, then you are not operating in the flesh.

Exercising a spiritual gift is *not* a matter of waiting for something to come over you.

Doing something in God's strength does not mean having some magical wave of energy sweep over you that involuntarily animates your body.

When God works through you, He does it in very normal ways. He uses your own efforts.

The way God uses me to bring a sermon to you is not by sweeping me into some kind of mystical, ecstatic trance, or by automatic writing or something.

I don't stand behind the pulpit on Sunday morning waiting for a wave of inspiration to come over me.

He does it this way:

I wake up early in the morning and discipline myself to get out of bed. I pay money that I could use to play golf to the bookstore to buy commentaries.

Then I make myself sit in my chair and study when I feel like going out for lunch with Tracy.

And it all seems very natural, and very ordinary.

And the result is a sermon that God produced through me by enabling me and sovereignly causing me to do all that.

The point isn't that you need to operate your gift in God's strength instead of your strength. The point is that any time you are operating your gift it is in God's strength.

It all seems very ordinary, but it's the work of God through providence.

When you do something in the church, you are using your will, mind and body to get it done, but it is the work of God, because it is God who makes that effort something that fits into His grand scheme.

It is God who applies that effort to His eternal, spiritual purposes and uses your efforts in the building of His kingdom.

So an unbeliever can study this passage and teach this same message word for word, but there is no promise that God will use that to build His kingdom, whereas in my case there is that promise.

And to the observer, there may not be any visible difference.

If you have the gift of helps, you might go over and clear out the rain gutters for an elderly person in the church, or help tear down and clean up on Sunday night – and some unbeliever could do the exact same thing – and maybe even be more skilled at it than you...

But in your case it is the mighty, supernatural power of God being unleashed in the building of an eternal Kingdom, and in the other person's case it's nothing but some leaves being moved from a rain gutter to a garbage can and nothing else.

And to the observer, there is no way to tell the difference.

By the way, this is the earliest clear mention of the Trinity in a single passage in Scripture.

And it highlights the unity of the Trinity. In one act all three persons of the Trinity are active, yet in

slightly different ways. And that's in harmony with verse three, where the presence of the Holy spirit is validated only by whether the person is glorifying Christ as Lord (which was established when the Father raised Him from the dead).

### **7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.**

**manifestation** This word means more than just making something manifest. It means to make something public. It is the opposite of that which is done in private. (Thiselton p.937) It should be translated "public manifestation."

This is yet another description of what a spiritual gift is (number 5). Paul has used a variety of terms.

A gift is a "spiritual" (something that comes from the Holy Spirit)

It is a gift (something that is graciously given to you)

It is a service (something done to benefit the Body)

It is a working. (the unleashing of the mighty power of God)

And now we see it is a **public manifestation** of the Holy Spirit. It is something that makes public the work of the Holy Spirit.

One purpose of the spiritual gifts is to make the invisible Holy Spirit visible and tangible.

Again, this reminds us of the emphasis not just on ability, but on the *use* of the ability as being the gift.

The Holy Spirit is not made publicly manifest because I'm sitting at home on my couch with the ability to teach, or the desire to teach, or a drive to teach, or even an opportunity to teach.

The Holy Spirit is made publicly manifest in my giftedness through me when I'm teaching.

And it is given **to each one**. Every Christian manifests the Spirit. So you can't point to one to one guy as being more spiritual than another because of which gift he has.

"What do you have?"

"I have the gift of MIRACULOUS SIGNS AND WONDERS!"

"What about you?"

"I have...helps."

"Oh, that's too bad.."

You can't point to the guy who is raising the dead and say, "That is more of a manifestation of the Spirit's power than this guy who has the gift of mercy."

### **for the common good or the common advantage**

The gifts are not designed for personal edification. Your gift is not for you. It's for us.

If God has given you some ability and has also given you desire an opportunity and called you to that ministry, if you always passed up opportunities to minister to people in that way, and just enjoyed your gift for yourself, that would be a misappropriation of giftedness.

You would be guilty of spiritual embezzlement.

Up to now the stress of Paul's argument is the same as Eph.4 – he is stressing unity through diversity.

The truest unity comes not from unison, but from harmony.

Your body, with all its various parts, is much more of a unity than, say, if it were a mass of only hands, or hearts, or brains.

And this unity through diversity idea is seen in a wonderful way with these terms Paul uses to refer to the gifts. Until now, they have all been plural. There are various **spirituals**, various **gifts**, various **workings**, various **services**.

But the word manifestation is singular. All the various gifts combined are one single **manifestation** of the Spirit.

The public manifestation of the Holy Spirit occurs as a result of the composite of all the gifts operating together.