

Grace-Gifts – It's Really About God

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We saw last week that Paul spoke to the Corinthian church about spiritual gifts because they were fighting over the use of gifts. Some in the church appear to have been saying they had exclusive access to the Holy Spirit because they spoke in tongues. Paul addresses the issue of gift, but his emphasis is primarily on unity. He said all believers who confess Jesus as Lord have the Holy Spirit. There is no exclusive outward manifestation that "proves" people have the Holy Spirit in them.

Today, I want to look at the various kinds of gifts Paul mentions. I want to focus on the idea that gifts are tools to accomplish God's mission. Builders, wood-workers, hobbyist's have a variety of tools to help them do their work. It would be very unpleasant if tools argued among themselves as to which tool was the most important tool. Each tool has a unique purpose for the worker. A saw that cuts wood does not work on metal. In God's kingdom work, God has assigned a variety of gifts to accomplish the tasks that must be accomplished in order to reveal Christ to the world.

1 Corinthians 12:3-11 NIV

³ Therefore I want you to know 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.

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

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

⁶ There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

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

⁸ To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit,

⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit,

¹⁰ to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues.

¹¹ All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

1. The source of all spiritual gifts is God (Holy Spirit).

a. Every believer has the Holy Spirit.

! Cor 12:3 NIV

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.

b. The same Holy Spirit works all of the gifts and works.

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

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

⁶ **There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. (1 Cor. 12:4-6 NIVO)**

Paul's emphasis on unity is clearly seen in his statement in verses 4-6. Paul is not making a different classification for gifts, service and workings, just as he is not making a different classification for Spirit, Lord, and God. The unity of God is expressed in the Trinity as God the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. In the same way, Paul is using three words to describe the broad work of God among believers as gifts, ministries, and works. The parallels are a Hebraism, where groups of words are given to express the same concept.

Paul is trying to shift the eyes of the church away from themselves back to God. When our eyes are on each other, we see our differences. When our eyes are on God we see the advance of His kingdom, and we can rejoice, even if people are doing things different than our comfort level.

When you read the list of gifts recognize that Paul continues the emphasis on "the same Spirit." It is God doing all of these works. God is the source of all of the works in all of the believers.

¹¹ **All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines. (1 Cor. 12:11 NIVO)**

Take a moment and read the Scripture I have provided for you. I want you to do two things. First underline every gift and each part

of the body. Then, circle every time the word "same" or "one" occurs. Draw a double line under the word "Spirit." Notice how many times Paul emphasizes that God is the same One who gives all of the gifts. Take notice that Paul is speaking more of unity than giftedness.

2. The list of spiritual gifts are representative more than comprehensive.

What do I mean by representative more than comprehensive? When we read Paul's list of gifts in Corinth, we are reading a list he mentions in a letter to one church. When we read Romans, we get a different list. Ephesians gives us another list. None of these lists claim to be a complete listing of all gifts and ministries. They are summary lists of gifts and ministries.

a. Paul does not use the same list of gifts each time.

Let us compare some of the lists:

1 Corinthians 12:8-10 NIV

⁸ **To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit,**

⁹ **to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit,**

¹⁰ **to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues.**

1 Corinthians 12:28 NASB

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.

List of Gifts - Corinthians

Word of wisdom	Apostles
Word of knowledge	Prophets
Faith	Teachers
Gifts of healing	Miracles
Working of miracles	Gifts of healing
Prophecy	Helps
Distinguishing of spirits	Administrations
Various kinds of tongues	Various kinds of tongues

Romans 12:6-8 NIVO

⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith.

⁷ If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach;

⁸ if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

List of Gifts - Romans

Prophecy
Serving (Ministry)
Teaching
Encouraging
Giving
Leadership
Mercy

Ephesians 4:11-12 NIVO

¹¹ It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,

¹² to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.

List of Gifts- Ephesians

Apostles
Prophets
Evangelists
Pastors
Teachers

In Ephesians, we understand that Paul is giving us the gifts of leadership for the church. However, he mentions teaching, which is one of the gifts given in Romans.

If Paul were trying to teach us that we must know the full list of charismatic gifts, he would have included them in each of his letters to the various churches. Yet, he does not. His list to the Corinthian church is not the list he gives to the church at Rome, nor are they mentioned in the ministries he lists in Ephesians. Yet, Ephesians is his general letter for the discipleship of believers.

b. *Charisma* does not tell us how or when God assigns gifts

We have made much of an assumption out of the Greek word for gift. That word is *charisma* (12:4). It is a gift as an expression of grace. It is often translated as spiritual gift, or grace-gift. We assume much, though, in our theology of gifts just from the word. It is likely

a word created by the church for the work of the Holy Spirit because the normal word for gift is *dora*. However, we are never told how or when God grants gifts. It is likely that much of the spiritual gifting occurs sometime after salvation, because the Holy Spirit must be present in the believer's life for the Spirit to work. However, some gifts that Paul mentions are so much spirit endowments as they are tasks which are learned. No one is automatically equipped to be a leader by the Spirit. It is a learned task. The same is for teaching. Many of the gifts of ministry may begin early in a person's life, and then be effectively put to use after salvation. God is still the source in the giving of such ministry gifts. However, he can be working on the gift even before the person is saved.

Look at Paul. God prepared Paul for ministry long before his Damascus road conversion. Paul spent most of his training in Rabbinic Schools. He was training to be a teacher of the Law. His skills in argument and teaching were learned before he was saved. It was after he was saved that the Holy Spirit empowered his gifts for service. Yet, who can deny that God was preparing Paul long before he was saved?

There may also be gifts which are given to accomplish special tasks given at a unique time, which may not be there for another time. Some aspects of miracles may well fit this case. A gift is a tool given to accomplish a task. It is given by God as God directs. We are not necessarily saddled with a particular gift.

I once had a revival preacher who was used of God to cast out demons. He seemed to run into people who were possessed and

used the Bible to set them free. He told me that God used him one time, and only one time to bring healing to a person.

c. God may assign new gifts not listed in the Scriptures.

The fact that the list of gifts we have are not an exact set repeated in each church letter indicates that gifts are broad and likely not a closed list. God is not limited by His power to create or make new gifts. Gifts are given to help the church do ministry. Through the years, church work has often changed. As a result, new gifts may be given by the Lord as He desires to meet needs.

3. Gifts are given to advance the kingdom of God.

Gifts are tools to accomplish God's kingdom purpose. His kingdom is to break forward into our lost world through evangelism and missions. Apart from missions, gifts turn the focus on the minister or the individual instead of the mission of Christ.

a. God never said miraculous gifts had ceased.

Some of the gifts Paul lists are miraculous works of God through individuals. Gifts of healings and working of miracles are seen in the New Testament. They do continue in many places today. To deny the miraculous is to speak against the work of the Holy Spirit. We must be careful that we do not assign evil to the work of God like the Pharisees did when they claimed Jesus did his miracles by the power of the devil. Jesus said that was blasphemy, and an unpardonable sin.

Having said that, this does not mean we should give credence to people who parade the miraculous or draw attention to themselves by such activity. Those who do miracles, are to say as Peter and John, it is not by our power we did these things.

b. God often uses miracles to open the eyes of the lost for evangelism.

When we read Acts, we note that miracles often occur in the context of bringing a witness to people who are unbelievers. That means that God most often uses miracles to awaken the lost to faith, that God is not merely a religious idea, but God is a real, living Lord.

c. God uses miraculous works to free people from the kingdom of darkness.

In our day, churches that see a great amount of healings and workings of God do so because the people are very intense in prayer for people to be saved and healed. God works in relation to the prayers of his people. This is very evident in Jim Cymbala's church in Brooklyn, New York. That church is made of people who have miraculously left sin's dreadful addictions. So, the people are intensely praying for people to be set free from drugs, and deviant life addictions. God delivers in power in that church because the people are powerfully praying for God's help.

Summary

God supplies the gifts as He desires

God wants unity, not division.

God may assign gifts not listed in the Scripture.

God may assign gifts for a momentary outcome.

God still works miracles.

God uses miracles to evangelize the lost.

God wants His people to serve with their gifts.