

## 31. Spiritual gifts in grace with humility

November 23, 2008

In light of being a living sacrifice to the Lord as we studied from Romans 12:1-2 last Sunday, we realize that it is an impossible order to fulfill without the help from our Lord God. That is where the generous spiritual gifts from the Holy Spirit come in.

But within the ranks of believers of Lord Jesus Christ regarding the spiritual gifts have been a on-going problem for so long that it is not even funny. Even non-believers poke fun at us because we allow divisions to occur within us. I say that is a shame.

What is the reason that we have so much misunderstanding and confusion for using these precious spiritual gifts? I believe that they all come from being selfish, boastful, ignorant in the Word of God and consequently immature in Christ.

The main reasons for the spiritual gifts that are distributed to us by the Holy Spirit are:

- 1) To bring glory to the Lord our God
- 2) To edify (to build up) the body of Jesus Christ which is the church

Within this premise, apostle Paul clearly and concisely describes how we should exercise our spiritual gifts in grace with humility. I am going to go a little further to touch the proper spectrum of spiritual gift usage this morning.

### A. A WARNING TO LIVE IN HUMILITY

*Romans 12:3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.*

I don't think that you can get any clearer than this for having the right attitude of individual spiritual evaluation.

Apostle Paul is telling us not to over-evaluate ourselves. There is absolutely nothing wrong with recognizing what his or her spiritual gifts are and what ministry or ministries he or she is to be involved in your church. But it starts to go wrong when we think that having these spiritual gifts has anything to do with us.

As I mentioned this before, spiritual gifts have everything to do with the gift Giver, not with the receiver. In His kindness and sovereign knowledge, God distributes His spiritual gifts to everyone who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ. There is not one person who has not received it or them.

We should remember that spiritual giftedness does not equal spiritual maturity. Just because a person has substantial spiritual gifts does not mean that they are necessarily spiritually mature or a worthy example to imitate.

A person who over-evaluates himself can cause a great deal of damage in the church. That person would have a tendency to look down on others and expects respect from others.

The spiritual gifts we have are initiated because of the grace of God. We have to accept them and exercise them by faith. After all we were saved by grace through

faith so we must live and serve by grace through faith. There should be only one person who should get the glory – not us, but God who gives these gifts to us.

Then, there are people who under-evaluate themselves and their spiritual gifts. They belittle the gifts they have received from the Lord and do not use them. This also is a form of pride, because they refuse to acknowledge God's grace and let Him have the glory. Moses was a good example of this when he was called by the Lord at the burning bush. He came up all the excuses why he couldn't lead the Israelites out of Egypt. We should never say, "No," for what God says, "Yes."

## **B. UNITY, NOT UNIFORMITY IN THE BODY OF CHRIST**

*Romans 12:4-5 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.*

Here is the second reason for the spiritual gifts: each believer has a gift – or gifts – to be used for the building up of the body and the perfecting of the other members of the body. In short, we belong to each other, we minister to each other, and we need each other.

Each believer has a different gift, and God has bestowed these gifts so the local body can grow in a balanced way. But each Christian must exercise his or her gift by faith. We may not see the result of our ministry, but the Lord sees it and He blesses.

In the body of Christ there should be unity but not uniformity. Many times, those who have a certain spiritual gift consider themselves spiritually superior than others: like the gift of teaching and the gift of speaking in tongue. Don't think that this is a recent problem. Rather it goes all the way back to the first century churches.

Apostle Paul rebuked the Corinthian believers about their arrogant and immature attitudes in chapter 12 and 14 of 1 Corinthians. Many of you already know that these two chapters talk about the spiritual gifts and how they need to be administered.

But why did God speak to us through apostle Paul this way in chapter 13 which is known as the Love Chapter in the middle? Many brides and grooms love to quote 1 Corinthians chapter 13 during their wedding ceremony as if it is some sort of a magic spell to keep their marriage everlasting. Nothing wrong with quoting this chapter in wedding ceremonies, but the real reason for this chapter in the middle of two spiritual gift chapters is for us to use our spiritual gifts in grace with humility which translates as love for one another in the church.

It is tragic when any one minimizes other people's gifts while he emphasizes his own gifts. This is to deny the very purpose of spiritual gifts: the benefit of the whole body of Christ.

*1 Corinthians 12:7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all:*

## **C. PROPER ADMINISTRATIONS OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS**

Before I talk about the spiritual gifts in this chapter, I need to make it clear to you that all the spiritual gifts the Bible mentions are still active today. The difference and distribution of gifts is all due to the grace that is given to us. Spiritual gifts are not given on the basis of merit, but because God chooses to give them.

*1 Corinthians 12:11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.*

The ancient Greek word for “spiritual gifts” is ‘charismata’, which means ‘a gift of grace’ and we get an English word ‘charisma’.

But there are several well-meaning denominations that believe that some of the spiritual gifts are no longer available since the Bible is completed. The verse they are based on comes from chapter 13 of 1 Corinthians:

*1 Corinthians 13:8-10 Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part. 10 But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.*

Virtually all commentators and Greek scholars are agreed that ‘perfect’ is when we are in the presence of the Perfect One, the Lord Jesus Christ in eternity. The Greek word for ‘perfect’ is ‘teleios’. Considering the way the New Testament uses ‘teleios’ in other passages, it certainly seems to be speaking about the coming of Jesus (1 Corinthians 1:8; 15:24; James 5:11; Revelation 20:5, 7; 21:6; 22:13).

In my opinion, I believe that these denominations go to the other side of the spectrum because such abuse of spiritual gifts by charismatic and pentecostal denominations.

It is extremely important to keep Biblical balances according to the Bible. In other words, we believe that all the spiritual gifts are available as the Holy Spirit dispenses them to us, but at the same time we should not abuse the spiritual gifts or boast about them as if they are our own.

What would it happen if a person stands up and start to speak in tongue during the service? I will have our security person Don Marion to take him out to the desert. No, just kidding. Let’s see what the Bible tells us to do.

*1 Corinthians 14:27-28 If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret. 28 But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God.*

So, if a person stands up and speaks in tongue, we will wait for an interpretation of the tongue. If there is none, we will ignore what the person who spoke in tongue said, since nobody understood. If it is truly from the Lord, there will be an interpretation of the tongue.

If there is an interpretation, it should not be one of those “Thus saith the Lord.” Because that is from the Lord to men. But an interpretation of tongue is a praise of God for His wonderful works.

*Acts 2:11 Cretans and Arabs--we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.”*

In twenty one years in the Lord, I’ve seen many incidents of misuse of the gift of speaking in tongue during services, incorrect interpretations of tongues, as well as improper usage of gift of prophesy. Some may insist that it is something they do in their denominations in spite of what the Bible tells us clearly. It is better for them to change whatever they’ve been doing wrong to the right way of the Bible.

## **D. A FEW EXAMPLES OF THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS**

*Romans 12:6-8 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; 7 or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; 8 he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.*

Paul mentions seven gifts here, but he seems less interested in giving us an extensive list or treatment of spiritual gifts than in urging us to exercise the ones we have.

He begins with prophecy. There are two types of prophecies. The first one is the foretelling of future events and the second one is the forthtelling of God's messages with deep wisdom and insight. Paul probably had in mind both types of ministries in this passage. Sometimes, the Lord gives this gift to one of His believers to let His people know what is about to happen as a warning or guidance.

Regarding the forthtelling ministry, the Lord uses those who are gifted with this ability to communicate the truths of Scripture to others.

The person with the gift of exhortation which means guide, advise and encourage must use this gift to guide, advise and encourage others within the perimeter of the Bible under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

Notice that the Scripture says "he who gives, with liberality". It didn't say, "he who has a lot of money, gives with liberality." Whether you have a lot or little, you give with liberality if the Lord gave you this gift, because He will provide what you need to give with His provisions. You just become a channel of blessings to others.

The person who received the gift of leadership, must lead with diligence, because it is easy for leaders to become discouraged and feel like giving up, but they must persevere if they will please God by their leadership.

If you received the gift of mercy from the Holy Spirit, you must extend mercy with cheerfulness. It can be hard enough to show mercy, but even harder to be cheerful about it. This reminds us that the gift of showing mercy is a supernatural gift of the Holy Spirit like God extended His mercy to the sinners like us.

Remember what William Arthur Ward, author of a fine book "Thoughts of A Christian Optimist" says, "We are most like beasts when we kill. We are most like men when we judge. We are most like God when we forgive."

## **E. APPLICATIONS**

**1) Spiritual gifts are tools to build with, not toys to play with or weapons to fight with.**

We should not emphasize our spiritual gifts that we might lose the real reason for them.

**2) Rather than getting excited about the spiritual gift itself, let's get excited about the gift Giver our God.**

*Luke 10:20 Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.*