

SERVING THE LORD BY MEANS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

II. Description Of The Spiritual Gifts

I. Introduction

- A. Every believer has been equipped by the Holy Spirit for Christian service with a supernatural enabling called a “spiritual gift,” what translates the Greek term *charisma*. (Charles C. Ryrie, The Holy Spirit, 1973, p. 83)
- B. However, many believers are not sure what their gift is nor how to begin to use it effectively, so we view Scripture on the descriptions of the various spiritual gifts for our insight, application and edification:

II. Description Of The Spiritual Gifts (Charles C. Ryrie, The Holy Spirit, 1973, p. 85-91)

- A. Some gifts were temporal, meaning that God no longer gives them to believers today:
 1. We know from Hebrews 2:1-4 that some of the spiritual gifts were meant only for the Early Church:
 - a. The author of Hebrews charged his readers to heed the truth that had been handed down to them from those who heard Jesus in His earthly ministry, for that truth had been validated by signs, wonders, miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit that God had given to that first generation of believers, Hebrews 2:1-3, 4.
 - b. Since the author of Hebrews would have made his argument much stronger by referring to miracles that would still have existed in the Church, his reliance on the miracles shown by Christ’s initial believers and not to any in his era implies that those gifts had already ceased to exist by the time Hebrews was written.
 2. There is also an Old Testament precedent for temporary “sign gifts”: when the Holy Spirit came upon the elders of Israel in Numbers 11:25 ESV, NIV, they initially prophesied, but they never did so again!
- B. We name those temporary gifts and explain why God has ceased to give each one of them to us today:
 1. Apostleship was needed to lay the foundation for the Early Church (Ephesians 2:20), and an apostle needed to have seen the Lord (1 Corinthians 9:1), so this gift ceased with the passing of the initial apostles.
 2. Prophecy was the gift perfectly to predict the future (Deut. 18:21-22) and was needed to guide the Church when the Scripture canon was incomplete. With the close of the canon and all 7 eras of Church History being predicted with God’s comments by apostolic authority on each era in Revelation 2-3, Scripture now is the only source of God’s revelation needed for the Church (2 Tim. 3:15-17), so prophecy has ceased.
 3. The gifts of performing miracles and healing were given to validate the truths taught in the Early Church (Hebrews 2:4), and since apostolic truth is unchanging (Jude 3), with the close of the canon of Scripture, no miracle worker or healer would need to exist today, so God has ceased to give those gifts of miracles.
 4. The gift of tongues was the ability to speak in other Gentile languages (Acts 2:1-11) to fulfill the Mosaic Covenant at Deuteronomy 28:49 (Isa. 28:9-11; 1 Cor. 14:20-22). It was a sign to Israel that the Church was of God. With the A. D. 70 fall of Jerusalem, this gift would no longer need to exist since God then ceased working with Israel, and Church History validates this: “Chrysostom, a fourth-century theologian, testified that (tongues) had ceased so long before his time that no one was certain of their characteristics.” (Thomas R. Edgar, “The Cessation of the Sign Gifts,” Bibliotheca Sacra, Oct.-Dec. 1988, p. 371-386)
- C. Spiritual gifts we have today include the following list of gifts, and we explain the characteristics of each one:
 1. The ability to evangelize the unsaved exists in some believers today, cf. Ephesians 4:11.
 2. The ability to be a pastor and teacher of a local assembly exists today, Ephesians 4:11. This includes the capacity to teach God’s Word and to guide God’s people in the application of Scripture to life.
 3. The gift of ministering or serving, helping other believers, exists today (Rom. 12:7; 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:12). This is a basic gift, but it is very much needed in local churches today.
 4. The gift of teaching, to explain the harmony and detail of God’s revelation, can sometimes exist alone or in combination with the gift of pastoring a local church. (Rom. 12:7; 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11)
 5. The gift of faith, the capacity to trust God to a great degree (1 Cor. 12:8-10), often exists in missionaries.
 6. The gift of exhortation (Rom. 12:8), positively motivating people, also exists in some believers today.
 7. The gift of discerning spirits (1 Cor. 12:10), the ability to discern true and false sources of supernatural revelation when it is being delivered in oral or written form, exists in some believers today.
 8. The gift of showing mercy (Rom. 12:8), helping the sick and afflicted, exists in some believers today.
 9. The gift of giving (Rom. 12:8), an unusual drive to donate to the Lord, exists in other believers.
 10. The gift of administration (Rom. 12:8; 1 Cor. 12:28), the ability to order and rule, exists in some believers.

Lesson: *Believers today can discern what spiritual gifts they have received from God by the Word of God.*

Application: *Upon understanding our gift as clarified by Scripture, may we use it to serve the Lord.*