

ECCLESIOLOGY
THE VISIBLE CHURCH
Lesson 25

Introduction to Spiritual Gifts

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Of all the instruction the Lord has given us on the church, one of the most talked about and least understood subjects is that of spiritual gifts.
- B. Spiritual gifts are given to every member of the universal church and are to find their expression through the ministry of the local church.

II. MAJOR PASSAGES: (Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4; 1 Pet. 4)

III. CONCEPT OF CHRIST AND HIS BODY, WHICH IS THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH

- A. Christ is the Head of the Church (Eph. 1:22; Col. 1:18).
- B. The Church is the Body of Christ (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:23).
- C. The Body of Christ is formed by the baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13).
- D. The body of Christ is made up of individual believers (1 Cor. 12:27; Rom. 12:4-5; Eph. 5:30).
- E. Gifts are given to the individual members of the Body that it might function properly (1 Cor. 12:11 cf. Context of 1 Cor. 12:7-11).

IV. DEFINITION OF A SPIRITUAL GIFT: A supernatural gift or ability given by God to believers for the purpose of service.

V. GENERAL STATEMENTS ABOUT SPIRITUAL GIFTS

- A. Probably most gifts are sovereignly bestowed by the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation (1 Cor. 12:11; 12:18). However it may be that some gifts are given after salvation (1 Cor. 12:31: "but be coveting earnestly the best gifts").
- B. Every Christian has at least one spiritual gift (1 Cor. 12:7; 12:11; 1 Pet. 4:10: "a gift"). NOTE: There is no such thing as a Christian without a spiritual gift.
- C. Any Christian may, and probably does, have more than one gift (2 Tim. 1:11; 4:5). Paul had the gifts of apostle, evangelist (*karux* - herald or preacher) and teacher.
- D. Gifts differ in value to the body but all are important (1 Cor. 12:28; 14:5).
- E. Gifts probably differ in degree as seen through general observation from Christian experience. NOTE: One man may be more effective than another when both may have the same gift and are filled with the Spirit.
- F. Gifts are to be used in love (1 Cor. 13).
- G. It is possible that there are many spiritual gifts that are not listed in Scripture (argument from silence).

VI. PURPOSE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

- A. To promote the unity of the Body (1 Cor. 12:25 – “no schism”). NOTE: Read the context of 12:14-25.
- B. To promote the growth of the Body (Eph. 4:13-16).
- C. To promote the evangelization of the lost (Eph. 4:11-12).
- D. To bring glory to God (1 Pet. 4:11).
- E. To be an encouragement to other members of the body (argument from silence).

VII. APPLICATION OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS TO LIFE

- A. However small the gift or insignificant the place, every Christian is essential to the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:22). NOTE: Every believer has a place in the body of Christ that no other Christian can fill. Each person is unique to the Body.
- B. There is a divine purpose in the life of every Christian and spiritual gifts are in keeping with that purpose.
- C. Every Christian has a ministry to fulfill for which he has been equipped by God and for which God holds him responsible. NOTE: It is sin not to know and be using our spiritual gifts.
- D. Spiritual gifts are only effective when one is controlled by the Spirit of God. Great gifts do not make great Christians. One must be yielded to the Spirit for the gift to be fully operative.
- E. The Head of the Body of Christ, which is the church, is dependent upon the members to carry out His direction.
- F. The members are dependent upon the head, Christ, for leadership and upon each other for cooperation.
- G. When a believer is not using his gift for the glory of God, then the whole Body suffers. NOTE: If you see a lame and sick church today, it may be because you are not exercising your gift (1 Cor. 12:26).
- H. Read 1 Cor. 12:12-31 in light of these notes.

VIII. HOW TO DISCOVER SPIRITUAL GIFTS

- A. Do you have a desire for a particular gift? It would seem strange for God to impart a gift and the give no desire for it. NOTE: A person may have a gift and a desire but be afraid to try something new or be frightened of people. Failure is no shame; it may simply show that you do not have the gift in an area and that your seeking to find what your gift is.
- B. Others should recognize that you have a gift.
- C. Others should be blessed by the use of your gift.
- D. There should be fruit in the particular area of your gift.

IX. DEVELOPMENT OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

- A. Although gifts are supernaturally bestowed, they must be developed (1 Cor. 12:31; Rom. 1:11; 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6; Eph. 4:7-13).

- B. An individual may be ambitious to exercise certain gifts which ambition can only be fulfilled by study and hard work.
- C. Never measure your gift by your fruit now. Fruitfulness comes with the gradual development of your gift. NOTE: Set out to find your gifts and then in patient endurance seek to put them to work in the Lord's service (preferably in the local church).

X. GIFTS AND CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITY

- A. Spiritual gifts are special abilities in certain areas of Christian endeavor, but all Christians are to exercise responsibility in these areas. NOTE: There is a gift of evangelism, but all Christians are to be faithful witnesses. This same principle can be carried to giving, teaching, mercy, faith, etc.
- B. These special gifts are given to be an encouragement to other Christians in their service for the Lord.
- C. The purpose for gifts and responsibility is that the lost may be reached for Christ and that the saved may be built up in Christ.
- D. POINTS TO PONDER
 1. What is the distinction between natural abilities and spiritual gifts?
Answer: Spiritual gifts are necessary to the functioning of the Body, but natural abilities are not.
 2. Is music a spiritual gift or natural ability? Answer: Music is a natural ability but can be mightily used by God in evangelism and edification.
 3. How can a local church motivate people to discover their spiritual gifts?
 4. How does a highly organized church program effect the functioning of spiritual gifts?