



April 2, 2017

Having dealt with what spiritual gifts are, it would be useful to consider the list of spiritual gifts we find in the Scripture. There are a few passages where we find spiritual gifts mentioned. These are our primary sources for knowing what spiritual gifts Christ gives to His people. They are Romans 12:6-8; I Corinthians 12:8-10, 28; Ephesians 4:11; and I Peter 4:10-11.

In these passages we find the following gifts:

Faith	Healing
Discerning of spirits	Word of Knowledge
Miracles	Word of wisdom
Tongues	Interpretation of tongues
Prophecy	Ministry
Teaching	Exhortation
Helps	Giving
Ruling	Governing
Mercy	Apostles
Evangelists	Pastor-Teachers

While some believe that the biblical lists are not exhaustive and that there are spiritual gifts that are not found in the Bible, I believe it best to limit the gifts to those expressly identified in the Scriptures (the list above). This list can be categorized (though not perfectly or without overlap) under the following headings:

Sign Gifts (grab attention and make a point)

Speaking Gifts (useful, helpful communication)

Serving Gifts (*useful, helpful activity*)

Servant Gifts (*people/offices given to the church*)

March 19, 2017

Now that we have described a little of the context of spiritual gifts we need to define what spiritual gifts are. I find I Corinthians 12:7 to be a great verse to help in this regard. This verse says "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." Based on this verse I would define spiritual gifts as spiritual abilities that manifest the working of the Spirit in the life of believers for the profit of the church.

Consider this definition more carefully. First, spiritual gifts are spiritual abilities. Though there may be some overlap, spiritual gifts should generally be distinguished from talents, skills, and resources. While all of these can be used for God, they are not exactly spiritual gifts.

Second, these spiritual gifts are manifestations of the Holy Spirit. There are a couple of implications we can draw here. As we cooperate with the Spirit's work in our lives, our gifts should become clear to ourselves and others. The Spirit's gift should be manifested. We might also conclude that spiritual gifts are given to us when we receive the Spirit (when we are saved).

Third, spiritual gifts are manifested in the life of every believer. We could also state it like Paul did in I Corinthians 12:7 and say that spiritual gifts are "given to every man". This means that every believer has at least one spiritual ability to use.

Lastly, our definition includes the purpose of spiritual gifts. They are for the profit of the church. Paul's context in I Corinthians 12 is the profit that the body receives when individual members do their part. This reminds us that spiritual gifts are not for selfish ends but for the blessing of the church.

March 12, 2017

Last week we saw that spiritual gifts are given to us in the context of Christ's triumphant exaltation over His enemies. Christ's ascension into Heaven made possible another part of the context of our gifts: the sending of the Holy Spirit.

The coming of the Holy Spirit to indwell Christ's people was a major turning point in redemptive history. One aspect of the Spirit's ministry that relates to our topic of spiritual gifts can be seen in I Corinthians 12:11-13. In these verses we learn that the Spirit baptizes

believers into the body of Christ. This involves bringing us into spiritual union with Christ and thus with other believers so that we make up His body on earth.

Related to this is the truth we find in verse 11. When the Holy Spirit brings us into union with Christ (at the moment of our salvation), He also distributes spiritual gifts to enable us to function as a part of Christ's body. Some are given speaking gifts like teaching and exhortation. Others are given serving gifts like the gift of helps, ministry, governing, mercy, and giving.

The result of this ministry of the Spirit is that every believers in the church has a functioning role. As we use our gifts and do our part to edify Christ's body, the church is enabled to fulfill its mission of making disciples of the nations.

Consider what you are a part of! Every Christian has purpose and meaning! Every Christian is a part of something bigger than themselves! Every Christian is involved in something that has eternal value! May God help us give ourselves to this purpose!

March 5, 2017

I have had the privilege recently to teach a seminar on spiritual gifts for CBB1 and would like to share with you some of the fruits of my labor. I have addressed spiritual gifts before but I believe the subject to be worth mentioning again. While believers should be willing to help out where needed, the Scriptures clearly indicate that God has given us all different spiritual gifts that we should be using in His service.

In the coming weeks we will take a look at some of the basic truths surrounding the topic of spiritual gifts. I would also like to address why it is that we believe that some of the spiritual gifts given to the early church have ceased to operate in the church today (i.e. speaking in tongues, miracles, healings, prophecy).

As we begin, it is important to consider the context of spiritual gifts. In Ephesians 4:8-11 we learn that the servant gifts (Apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers) were given to the local church in connection with Christ's exaltation. Christ left the glories of Heaven and descended to the earth (indeed, He descended into the lower parts of the earth - the tomb). By dying for our sins, Christ obtained the victory over sin, death, Hell, and Satan himself! Though His descent was humbling, He was exalted by the Father far above the heavens.

Christ is pictured as a conqueror who leads his enemies captive in a public display of His victory. As a part of the triumphal celebration, He gave gifts unto men. Spiritual gifts are

victory gifts. As we will see next time, they are to be used to edify Christ's body as it preaches the Gospel to the world!

February 19, 2017

In today's cultivator we will finish our brief look at parenting our children according to God's Word. We have been focused especially in Ephesians 6 and there is one last phrase in that passage that we need to explore. In Ephesians 6:4 we are told to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

Consider first the reality of this exhortation: children need to be brought up. This phrase "bring up" translates a Greek word that means to nourish to maturity. This reminds us that if left to themselves, children will be spiritually malnourished and immature (Prov. 29:12). We should also note that the sphere in which they are to grow to maturity is in the Lord.

Consider secondly the responsibility involved. They are to be brought up in the nurture of the Lord. The word nurture has to do with the whole education and training of a child. Paul used a general word here having to do with instruction, direction, correction, rebuke, reproof, and discipline. Whether a child attends a public, private, or home school, parents are clearly responsible for the Christian education of their children.

Children are also to be brought up in the admonition of the Lord. An admonition is a warning or exhortation. The Greek word literally means "to put in mind". Bringing children up in the admonition of the Lord involves keeping them conscious of the Lord's commands, exhortations, and warnings. It involves instilling in them a proper fear of the Lord (Deut:31:12; Prov. 1:7).

Though I do not have space to develop it, consider also the resources for bringing children up in the Lord. They include the Bible, prayer, church, and our own example.

February, 12, 2017

As we continue to explore the topic of parenting our children according to God's Word, we need to consider our responsibility to avoid provoking our children to wrath (Ephesians 6:4). This exhortation is given particularly to fathers but has application to both parents.

When parents act in ways that provoke their children to wrath they disobey this clear command by God in Ephesians 6:4. They also contribute to a lifestyle of anger which ultimately will be destructive to the child as he or she grows older (Proverbs 14:17; 21:19; 22:24). Another result of provoking our children to wrath is that it can discourage them (Colossians 3:21). The word "discouraged" has the idea of being spiritless or disheartened.

Parents can truly "take the wind out of the sails" of our children by provoking them to anger.

Though they were adults at the time, the relationship between Laban and his daughters provides some insight on how we might provoke our children to wrath (Genesis 31:15). Insensitivity (are we not counted of him as strangers) can provoke to wrath. A lack of real relationship building can foster such discouragement. Exploitation can also do this (for he hath sold us...). Exploit means "to make use of selfishly or unethically". Some parents use their children as a means of gaining praise from others or even to live out their own unfulfilled lives. Injustice can also cause wrath (and hath quite devoured our also our money). While it is true that "life is not always fair", injustice in the form of making promises we do not keep, severe discipline, or refusing to correct injustice among siblings can all lead to anger in our children.

February 5, 2017

As parents we have the responsibility not only to teach our children obedience but also to teach them to honor us. This may seem a bit self serving but a part of bringing our children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord is teaching them that God says, "Honor thy father and mother" (Ephesians 6:2).

Both the Greek and Hebrew words used for honor in the Bible involve the idea of value. The Greek word (used in the New Testament) means "to prize, esteem as valuable, affix a value to something." The Hebrew word (used in the Old Testament) means, "to make heavy, weighty, glorious." To honor one's parents then means to esteem them as valuable and thus to treat them respectfully.

The importance of this is clear in the Scriptures. Honoring parents is commanded by God (Exodus 20:12; Ephesians 6:2). Honoring parents is also something that God rewarded, particularly among His covenant people Israel (Ephesians 6:3). Just as honoring parents was rewarded in the Old Testament, dishonor brought a curse and in extreme cases was punishable by death (Exodus 21:15, 17; Deuteronomy 27:16).

Children should be taught how to honor their parents. They should be reminded that honor should come from the heart with a motivation to please God. Honor or dishonor can be shown with the eyes (Proverbs 30:17). Honor can also be shown with the mouth in words of respect and with the ears as children listen properly to instruction (Proverbs 23:22).

Of course, we as parents should live before our children in such a way that makes it easier for our children to show us honor!

January 29, 2017

In Ephesians 6:1, God says, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord for this is right". If parents are to raise their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (v. 4), then they must train them to obey. Failure to do so will lead to the destruction of the child and the sorrow of the parent.

Consider the importance of obedience in relation to God. In the Law, disobedience to parents was to be chastened (rebuked and disciplined) and in extreme cases of unrepentance, it was to result in capital punishment (Deuteronomy 21:18-21). Obedience is commanded by God (Ephesians 6:1). We must help our children understand that to obey us is to obey God. Obedience is also well pleasing to the Lord, a goal we should cultivate in our children (Colossians 3:20).

Obedience is important in relation to society. By teaching children obedience we prepare them for a life of submission to proper authorities. Learning obedience will prepare young ladies to submit to their husband's authority (Ephesians 5:21). It will prepare future husband's to submit to Christ's authority (I Corinthians 11:3). It will prepare them for work (Colossians 3:22) and even for proper submission to spiritual leaders in the church (Hebrews 13:17).

Obedience is important in relation to the child. Children who learn obedience are better able to receive the wisdom of biblical instruction that their parents give them (Proverbs 6:20-23). Obedience to biblical instruction which flows from godly parents will also bring honor, enhancing the child's spiritual beauty like a crown of gold or a necklace (Proverbs 1:8-9).

January, 22, 2017

For the next few weeks I would like to turn our attention to family life. The family is one of the most basic (and certainly the oldest) institutions that God has created. Not only is it a foundational element of society, it is also a fundamental means of evangelizing and discipling the next generation.

This spiritual training up of the next generation to know and love God was clearly set forth as the responsibility of parents in Israel. Consider Deuteronomy 6:6-7, "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children..." Christians are likewise commanded to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4).

Failure to do this properly seems to have contributed to the context of Israel's apostasy and judgment in the book of judges – "And there arose another generation after them, which

knew not the LORD" (Judges 2:10). This is a tragic statement yet it is one that can also occur within the church. Children may grow up with parents and grandparents who know and serve the Lord (Joshua's generation and the one following knew and served the Lord) yet never know Him themselves.

Parenting is a truly a great responsibility. At HLBC we must strive to be the kind of parents that raise our children as God commands. Even if you do not have children, reading the coming cultivators will certainly give you a good reminder of how to pray for those who engaged by the will of God in this sacred task. We should all pray that the generation that is coming up will know Christ and serve Him.

January 15, 2017

According to God's Word we are to teach and admonish one another with "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs" (Colossians 3:16). We praise God for those who have provided us with Biblically accurate and doctrinally rich hymns in the past. However, from time to time God raises up new writers to serve and bless His people.

This year we will be learning some new hymns and spiritual songs written by a brother named Chris Anderson. Some of Bro. Anderson's songs have been included in the Rejoice Hymnal from Majesty Music (the "sequel" to the hymnal we use). I would like to commend these to us for our teaching and admonition. As I do so, please consider three important things about these songs.

First, they are new. Of course, this should not concern any of us since all of the hymns in our hymnbook were new at one point in time! In fact, according to the Scriptures, new songs of praise are an appropriate response to new deliverances and blessings (Psalm 40:1-3). We might also expect fresh meditations on God's Word and the glory of Christ to produce new songs in the mouth of His people.

Second, they are doctrinally rich. The particular songs I have selected will help us meditate on Christ, the Trinity, God's presence, and Christian living. I believe the words to these songs reflect serious, as opposed to shallow, meditation on the Word. They are biblically informed and thus useful to our souls.

Third, they are free. One thing that I appreciate about our brother's work is that he is willing to make these songs available for church use through his website churchworksmedia.com. We have printed the booklets we will be using with permission. This kind of gracious giving for the good of the church is a blessing.

These songs will provide us with new opportunities to reflect on the glory of God. I trust they will bless and encourage you.

January 8, 2017

Psalm 22 is one of those portions of Scripture that powerfully testifies of Jesus Christ. In this Psalm we find the wicked despising and reviling Christ (v. 6-9, 12-13), the effect His sufferings had on Him (v. 14-15), and even details of the crucifixion itself (like the piercing of Christ's hands and feet v. 16, the visibility of His bones as a result of suffering v. 17, the parting of His garments v. 18, and the casting lots for His vesture v. 18).

The overall point of this Psalm, however, goes beyond these prophetic revelations of the cross. The Psalm depicts Christ praying unto God for deliverance while all the outward circumstances seem to indicate that God has forsaken him (and indeed, God was withholding deliverance so that Christ might bear our sins!). Though God had heard and helped the fathers of Israel in the past (v. 4-5), it does not appear He will do so for Christ. In fact, his enemies ridicule his trust in God (v. 8). In the midst of these circumstances, Christ evidences great faith. God has been his God since birth and he will continue to look to Him for deliverance (v. 11, 19-21).

The end of the Psalm indicates that God indeed would help. Christ would have the opportunity to declare the name of God to His brethren (v. 22) and praise God in the congregation (v. 25). God did not deliver Christ off of the cross because it was His will that Christ learn (as a man) obedience through suffering and thus be perfected as our High Priest (Hebrews 5:7-10). God did hear His prayers and after fulfilling His will, delivered Christ through the resurrection!

Jesus is a powerful example of faith even in circumstances that might lead us to believe that God has forsaken us. If you feel forsaken, strengthen your commitment to look to God no matter what. Trust His will and wisdom to be perfect. God does not ultimately forsake His humble and submissive servants who call upon Him!