

Spiritual Gifts

August 26, 2018

Romans 1:11-12 and 12:3-8

Reading 2 Peter 1:1-11

Spiritual Gifts Strengthen Faith

This morning we recognized Richard as a Deacon of Canon Bible. Richard has a heart of service, we recognized what God has been doing in his life and this has led to him holding the office of Deacon, serving the needs of the church. In general usage the Greek word “deacon” means someone who waits tables at a banquet or serves his master. Within Christ’s Church there is the office of Deacon, but he calls all believers to serve as deacons, which means we are all servants of God’s kingdom, we serve God as our Master. I thought it appropriate to look at the purpose of spiritual gifts from the perspective of Christian servant-hood. The apostle Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, “**Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed.**” (1 Corinthians 12:1 ESV) I believe Paul was writing to us as well – both as individuals and as a church. It is my hope that we can examine spiritual gifts from the perspective of God’s servants this morning and be informed. We have limited time and not enough time to examine 1 Corinthians chapters 12, 13, and 14 where Paul writes in great expanse about spiritual gifts. Therefore, I have chosen to focus on few short texts so we can examine what they teach concerning spiritual gifts in relationship to our being servants to God.

As one reads through the New Testament, the 1st place they encounter the term “**spiritual gift**” is Romans chapter 1, verses 11 and 12. Paul wrote to the church in Rome, “**For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you—¹² that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each**

other's faith, both yours and mine.” The translation “impart to you some spiritual gift” I believe here the translation loses meaning and may be misleading because it sounds like Paul wants to give them a spiritual gift. The original text means Paul wants to give them the benefit of his spiritual gifts. **Paul is saying, “I long to see you and I desire to use my gifts to spiritually strengthen you.”**

Paul's message is simple; spiritual gifts are for strengthening other's faith. Now this does not mean that the person who uses their spiritual gift to strengthen the faith of others does not receive joy and benefits in using their gift. What it does mean is that spiritual gifts are not to be hoarded, but freely used for God's glory and the benefit of others. When Paul says, “spiritual gift to strengthen you” he is not referring to physical strength but to spiritual strength – strengthening another's faith. Paul made this clear when he wrote in 1 Thessalonians, “we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish (or strengthen) and exhort (or encourage) you in your faith.” (1 Thessalonians 3:2) Timothy was to use his spiritual gifts to spiritually strengthen the believers in Thessalonica. So, to strengthen others by a spiritual gift means to help their faith not suffer but to be stronger when troubles of the world enters into their life. God gives spiritual gifts to his children to help other people keep the faith and stay on the true path in the difficult times of life and even when things are easy and one can forget their need for God. It does not take much effort to look at the people around ones life to see someone in need of strengthening their faith. One should then pray and consider if they can serve that person in a way that will strengthen their faith.

Many feel it is important to be able to name their spiritual gifts. I believe this passage lets us know there is no driving need to try and label ones spiritual gifts before one uses them. So, my beloved, don't worry about taking a class or

aptitude questionnaire to label or name your spiritual gift of prophecy or teaching or wisdom or knowledge or healing or miracles or mercy or administration and on and on. What is the purpose of naming spiritual gifts? Simply, the purpose is so one can say, "These are my spiritual gifts." Spiritual gifts are primarily – not for you, but for others. The reason we have spiritual gifts is to bring God glory by strengthening other people's faith. Look around and when you see someone whose faith is suffering you should pray, "Lord how can I can help him or her?" Then do what the Lord places on your heart and if the person is helped - you may have discovered one of your spiritual gifts. You have not forced the issue, but found your gift by observing, praying and acting.

When you act you will be able to observe if God is in your action. If you warn a person that their behavior is sinful and they repent, then perhaps you discovered you have a gift of "warning." If you are able to come alongside a person who is struggling and help them have hope in Christ, perhaps you have the gift of empathy. If you see someone new in the neighborhood and have him or her over for dinner and make them feel welcomed, perhaps you have the gift of hospitality. The point is we should not get hung up naming our gifts. The thing to be truly concerned about is are you and am I doing the things to strengthen the faith of the people God puts in our life's path? So as you can tell, I believe the problem is not knowing what the name of your spiritual gifts are, but having a heart's desire to serve others and strengthen their faith. I also believe God can give whatever gift that is needed at the time it is needed. I am not aware of anywhere in the scriptures where it says gifts are permanent. Scripture does indicate the right life path is a narrow gate and the world's path is wide and is strewn with obstacles. We all need the strengthening of our faith to stay on the narrow path.

Spiritual Gifts Encourage Faith

So the problem is not being able to name spiritual gifts. The problem is the need to change ones' heart - to become the kind of person who wakes up in the morning thanking and praising God for his great gift of salvation. To be someone who is so moved by having a relationship with God that they cry out each morning, "Lord, show me how I can serve others and strengthen their faith this day! At the end of the day Lord my desire is that someone will be strengthened and more confident in your promises and be able to experience more of your love, grace and mercy by his service. If this is your attitude, well then, the Holy Spirit will give you the strength and gifting to serve effectively. Paul, as he often does, made clear who we are and who we are to be, "If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose." A community of Christ, his church, is to have one mind, one love, one spirit and one purpose, and this comes from the wisdom and power of God's Word. Then as a community we will be able to ³ "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in **humility consider others better than yourselves.** ⁴ Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others." (Philippians 2:1-4) Is this who you are? Is this who I am? Does this describe Canyon Bible Church? Together we can be more, more true servants of Christ and this is just one reason we are called to be in community and our community is called Canyon Bible Church, with Jesus Christ as its Head.

Once more I read from Romans chapter 1 verses 11 and 12, "For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you— ¹² that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine."

Paul restates verse 11 in verse 12 saying, “we may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith.” When we become people who desire to strengthen another’s faith then it becomes mutual and no one is left out. We are all strengthening each other and by this there is mutual benefit. In verse 11 Paul wants to strengthen his readers and in verse 12 he wants to encourage them and in return they will also encourage him. So as I see it a spiritual gift is the ability given by the Holy Spirit to express our faith effectively in word or deed for the strengthening of someone else’s faith. I hope you are seeing this in verses 11 and 12. We all have natural talents and gifts, but they are not spiritual gifts if they are not founded in faith, empowered by the Holy Spirit and if they are not used to serve others – to strengthen their knowledge of God, their awe of God and help them live in faith.

Paul was frustrated with the church in Galatia so he lays it out this way, “Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? ³ Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? ⁴ Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? ⁵ Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith— ⁶ just as Abraham ‘believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness?’ ” (Galatians 3:2-6) You see, my beloved, no matter what abilities we have, if we are not relying on God and not aiming to help others to rely on Him, then our abilities are not spiritual gifts. These abilities and works are not spiritual because they are not flowing from faith and empowered by the Holy Spirit. A church where the Holy Spirit is alive and powerful in the lives of the people will be a church sensitive to the differences between natural abilities and spiritual gifting empowered by God.

Spiritual Gifts Given By God’s Grace

In another passage found in the Book of Romans, Paul gives more detail concerning spiritual gifts even though the passage uses only the word “**gifts**”. Please turn in your bibles to Romans chapter 12 as I read beginning in verse 3, “For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. ⁴For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶Having **gifts** that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷ if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸ the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.” (Romans 12:3-8) I want us to see 2 things. First I believe this passage confirms Romans chapter 1 in that we should not worry about what our spiritual giftings are, whether we can label them or to give them a name. It is the power of the Holy Spirit that gives you the ability to express your faith in order to strengthen the faith of another.

Look at verse 8, there are four gifts listed; “**the one who exhorts ... the one who contributes ... the one who leads ... the one who does acts of mercy...**” The remarkable thing is every believer is called to live out these 4. The Spirit may equip some to do these more easily and more often, but all should strive to live by exhorting or sharing the Gospel of Christ, all are called to contribute or tithe in faith and obedience, all are called to lead – living by the precepts of God to show the world the true path, and all are called to do acts of mercy and this takes us back to spiritual gifts. Anything done in the service of God by the power of the Spirit and based on faith is called a gift – a gift given by the grace of God.

The second thing one perceives is both the gifts we have and the faith to exercise them is given by God in varying measure. This is why it takes all of us to make up the body of Christ, his church for we all have different gifts. As Paul wrote, “we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶ Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us.” (Romans 12:5-6)

So Paul uncovers a profound truth that is intended to blow away all pride — all self-reliance or boasting. He says in verse 6 that we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us. In other words, any distinction that sets you off from others in ability is owing to grace — that is, it is freely given and not earned or deserved. So you can’t boast in it – it given by God for his glory and for the benefit of others.

The final point this morning, is that the aim of all spiritual gifts is that in everything God might be glorified through Jesus Christ. This means that God’s aim in giving us spiritual gifts and in giving us the faith to exercise them, is that his glory might be displayed. He wants us to marvel at who he is and to realize how incredible he is, so incredible he is beyond our imagination. As we live in awe of God and use the gifts he has given us to glorify him the world will observe and some will come to marvel and believe in God also. The astonishing reality of God is all encompassing; the reality of God is found in every molecule of the universe. There is nothing more thrilling, more joyful, more meaningful, more satisfying than to find our place in the eternal unfolding of God’s glory. We may see our gift as small, but it is a part of the revelation of God’s infinite glory, and therefore, it takes on astonishing proportions. I close with this thought from Paul, “**For from him God and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever.**

[Amen.](#)” (Romans 11:36) This is our purpose - to glory in God and use his gifting to help others glory in God. Amen and amen!