

## THE MINISTRY OF GIFTS

By  
Dr. O. Wilburn Swaim, TH.D.

I Peter 4:10, 11 with I Corinthians 12, 13;  
Romans 12; Ephesians 4:7,8

### Introduction:

One should never attempt to serve God without a spiritual gift (note section on "helps," below, for a word about "talents"). To do so would be similar to one attempting to carve a statue, without possessing any artistic talent; to play a musical instrument, with no ear for music. The first could hack away, but there would be no artwork produced. The latter could make a sound, but the ears would cry for it to cease. As one learns about spiritual gifts, their definition, origin, identification, distribution, empowerment and exercise, the ultimate end of the glory of God will be perceived as achievable.

Three principles must be recognized, by which to guide this study:

1. There can be no calling without the possession of a spiritual gift.
2. No gift may be considered to have ceased operation, unless the Bible says as much.
3. A New Testament Church gift may bear the same name as an Old Testament ministry, but be altered in its function.

### I. DEFINITION OF GIFTS

(I Corinthians 12:1-7) Consider v.1 "spirituals" vs. v.4 "gifts" (Note the Greek Text, for this distinction). "Gifts" defined: "The Holy Spirit's manifestation of His unity and power, through individual enabling of believers, for the mutual benefit of the Body of Christ" (I Corinthians. 12:7).

### II. THE SOURCE OF GIFTS (Ephesians 4:7)

All of Grace:

- A. Received from the Father (Ephesians 4:6 w/ John 14:16, 21b-23)
- B. Given By Christ (Ephesians 4:7-11)
- C. Distributed By the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 12:11)

### III. ORDER OF DISTRIBUTION OF GIFTS

- A. According to the Purpose of the Father (I Corinthians. 12:18)
- B. According to Measure of Christ's Grace (Ephesians 4:7)
- C. According to the Will of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 12:11)

### IV. THE DURATION OF THE GIFTS (Romans. 11:29)

Imparted at Conversion. As talents, so gifts. Note Example in Acts 22:15, 21.  
Irrevocable Once Given (text).

### V. THE PERFORMANCE OF GIFTS (Romans 12:6-8;; I Corinthians 12:12-30)

To be administered in:

- A. Humility—They are by Grace (v.11)
- B. Unity—They are not Self-serving (I Corinthians. 12:12-26)
- C. Diversity—They Together Make up the Whole (I Corinthians 12:27-30)

### VI. PURPOSE OF GIFTS

A. The Enabling of Saints (Ephesians 4:12). Perfecting, in the sense not so much of spiritual growth, but of spiritual-service.

B. The Effectiveness of the Assembly (I Corinthians 12:14-26)

1. To Perform it's Tasks (17)
2. To Care for the Members (25)

C. The Edification of the Body (Ephesians 4:12-15)

To become:

1. Like Christ (13)
2. Steadfast in Christ (14)
3. Effective in Christ (16)

D. The Glory of God (Colossians 3:17; Ephesians 3:21).

#### VII. THE POWER OF GIFTS (I Corinthians 12:31; 13:1-13; Acts 1:8)

Possessing gifts only valuable as they are:

A. Exercised in the Local Church (Ephesians 4:12)

B. Energized by Love (I Corinthians 13)

C. Empowered by the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8)

D. Effective Through Diligence:

1. Stir It (II Timothy 1:6)
2. Guard It (I Timothy 6:20 w/ II Timothy 1:14)
3. Use It (I Timothy 4:14; I Pt. 4:10,11)

#### VIII. THE CATALOG OF GIFTS

To Men (I Corinthians 12:4-11) Three groupings based on use of Greek words "heteros" and "allos"

A. Gifts of the Word (8)

1. Word of Wisdom
2. Word of Knowledge

B. Gifts of the Ministry (I Corinthians 12:9-28) Romans 12: 6- 8)

1. Faith (I Corinthians 12:9) Acts 6:5 w/ chapter 7
2. Healing (I Corinthians 12:9,28) Acts 3:7,8
3. Miracles (I Corinthians 12:9,28) Acts 5:15
4. Prophecy (Romans 12:6; I Corinthians 12:10) Acts 21:11
5. Discernment (I Corinthians 12:10) Acts 16:18; I John 4:1
6. Ministry (Romans 12:7a) "diakonian," Acts 6

Note: There is no gift of DEACON anywhere listed. The word "ministry" is Greek, "diakonian", translated "Deacon" in I Timothy 3:8. Many may possess the gift of "Ministry", i.e., "to serve; to do the bidding of another" (in contrast to "doulos", which emphasizes the relationship of slave to master), but only those possessing the qualifications set forth in I Timothy 3:8-13, may hold the office.

7. Helps ((I Corinthians 12:28)

Note: There are no gifts of Music anywhere listed. Consequently, there can be no "calling to a music ministry". Spirit empowered use of a natural talent must come under the gift of Helps. That is, one who has the gift of Helps may use his natural talents in spiritual service. But such lack the status of the gifted men listed in Ephesians. 4:11.

8. Governments (I Corinthians 12:28)
9. Teaching (Romans 12:7b; I Corinthians 12:28)
10. Exhortation (Romans 12:8a)
11. Giving (Romans 12:8b)
12. Ruling (Romans 12:8c) "to stand before", as a leader  
Showing Mercy (12:8d)

C. Gifts Special (I Corinthians 12:10b,28)

1. Tongues ( 10b,28)
2. Interpretation (10b)

D. Gifts to the Churches (Ephesians 4:7-11; I Corinthians 12:28)

1. Apostles (4:11; 12:28) Our modern day missionary  
(see the Author's study: Dispensational Distinctions\* linked here or under menu item "Doctrinal Studies").
2. Prophets (4:11; 12:28) Preachers serving within the local church.
3. Evangelists (11) Men with a special gift (burden) for evangelism (i.e. soul-winning).
4. Pastor/Teachers (11) The Pastor of a local church. He also has the gift of teaching  
(Note the Greek text).

\*Note: There is another point that needs to be faced. It is the matter of who qualifies to be a missionary. Should a woman be ordained as a Pastor-Teacher? Will God call a woman to be a Prophet? An Evangelist? Not in accordance with Biblical principles! (I Timothy. 2:8-15; 3:2,4). One must be likewise consistent concerning the office of Apostle, or Missionary. Only a man, gifted, proven, called of God, and going forth to do the four-fold ministry defined in Acts 14:21-28, can be a Missionary. The precious ladies may assist their husbands and engage in all kinds of benevolent ministries--even on the mission field (note I Corinthians 9:5). But, they do not qualify to be called, commissioned, or sent forth as Apostles, or Missionaries.

Conclusion:

When a sculptor carves a statue, it is often done in secret. Only he knows what the ultimate form, clearly defined in his mind, is anticipated to be. His ability, with other factors, will determine whether his goal is achieved. God has a plan for His Church. He will achieve His goal. One day--when God's plan is completed--that which was in His mind from all eternity past, will be perfected.

His servants may not be able to visualize the ultimate outcome of their labor. All the chipping, carving and shaping may not make sense. God is using it to perfect His plan. One's exercise of spiritual gifts is but the ministry of the Holy Spirit, working through the believer, to accomplish God's purposes for His Church.

"One who labors faithfully in the confines of time, may bask in glory for the eons of eternity" Dr. Swaim.