

Spiritual Gifts for the Body

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- [0 : 00] I'm going to sing now to God's praise from Psalm 15. Psalm 15, and we're singing the whole psalm.
- Within thy tapernacle, Lord, who shall abide with thee? And in thy high and holy hill, who shall a dweller be? The man that walketh uprightly and worketh righteousness.
- And as he thinketh in his heart, so doth he truth express. Who doth not slander with his tongue, nor to his friend doth hurt.
- Nor yet against his neighbour doth take up an ill report. In whose eyes vile men are despised. But those that God do fear, he honoureth and changes not.
- For to his heart he swear, his crown puts not to usury. Nor take reward will he against the guiltless.
- [1 : 02] Who doth thus shall never move it be. Psalm 15, within thy tapernacle, Lord, who shall abide with thee? Within thy tapernacle, Lord, who shall abide with thee?
- And in thy high and holy hill, who shall not dwell ever be?
- The man that walketh uprightly and worketh righteousness.
- And as he thinketh in his heart, so doth he truth express.
- Who doth not slander with his tongue, nor to his friend doth hurt.
- [2 : 49] Nor yet against his neighbour doth take up an ill report.
- In whose eyes vile men are deist eyes.
- But those that God do fear, he honoureth and changes not.
- God, God, that to his heart, his name. The man that to his heart, his name. His kind could not be used to be. His kind could not be used to be.
- Nor take reward will he. Against the pure pleasure, God, that to his child and death.
- [4 : 25] God, that to his heart, his name, and has been used to be. Can we turn to the passage that we read from 1 Corinthians chapter 12?
- And we can read again verse 12. 1 Corinthians chapter 12.
- 2 Corinthians 1.
- I'm sure you can think of many passages within Scripture that are descriptive of the church.
- Descriptive of it as an entity that is recognisable, that possesses characteristics and features that make it stand out in the world.
- [5 : 41] 1 Corinthians 1. Here the apostle Paul speaks of the church as the body of Christ. 1 Corinthians 1.
- When he writes to Timothy, he speaks of the church as the church of the living God. 1 Corinthians 1. 2 Corinthians 1. And then he says it is the ground, the pillar and ground of the truth.

2 Corinthians 1. 2 Corinthians 1. That adds to the description that he gives of the church.
2 Corinthians 1. God's church, but descriptive of why it is the way it is and what is expected of it.

3 Corinthians 1. I think in the same verse he speaks of it as the house of God. 4
Corinthians 1. And if you read John Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion, he talks of the house of God.

5 Corinthians 1. He talks of the church having God as father and the church as its mother.
5 Corinthians 1. Christ as the head, but the church as its mother.

[6 : 57] 5 Corinthians 1. A very powerful image in Calvin's mind of the church as the family of God.

5 Corinthians 1. And as the church is probably reinforced by most if not all of the many descriptions that we have of the church.

is that it is something that exists in the world by reason of God's calling, selection first and foremost, followed by his calling and adding to it.

And that passage that we saw there, for example, again, Paul's letter to Timothy, the existence of the church in that respect is to proclaim and to herald and highlight through the preaching of the word and through the witness and testimony of God's people, their relationship to God through Jesus Christ.

We know that the Apostle Peter also speaks of the church. The terminology is again descriptive of the uniqueness of its existence, the purpose of its existence, but also the way that those who are part of that church are united as one to Christ and to each other.

[8 : 52] He also, he says, as lively stones are built up, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Christ Jesus.

Again and again, we find that we are reminded that the church is founded on the gospel, that those who are part of it are united by faith to Christ.

They are united and bound to each other by that same faith, the work of the Spirit in them collectively. And the more you search out this topic, the more you find this image of the church of Christ emphasising to us the uniqueness of it.

Sometimes we lose sight of it. Sometimes we lose sight of the part that we have within this church. If we are part of it in a vital way, not only are we part of the body of Christ, we are part of each other because of that vital union that we have within who is its head.

But I want us just to think for a brief while on this passage that we, the version in particular, but reminding ourselves that it forms part of an important whole.

[10 : 44] And we see that verse 12 links the first part of the chapter to the next part of the chapter. For as the body is one, he says, and as many, and have many members, for that word links together what follows on from this and what came before.

So the question is what Paul, what has Paul been doing? what has he majored on in the opening verses of the chapter?

And the concern that the apostle has, remember, he is speaking of the church, he is describing the unity that belongs within the church to those who are part of it.

but his concern is that there are causes arising within the body that creates fissures and that fragments the body.

And in this instance, and it's not always like that, in this instance, the cause of the difficulty is, as one describes it, as a defect of spirituality.

[12 : 22] What he means by that is that as we saw even with regard to the way that the Lord Jesus had to deal with some who reckoned themselves to be of a higher spiritual order than others, and they looked down upon others because they reckoned themselves to be of that higher spirituality.

And in Corinth at the time, within the church, there were those who highlighted the fact that the Holy Spirit bestowed spiritual gifts upon the members of the church.

And most of the commentators would say he's talking about spiritual gifts and not spiritual graces. And how would you separate the two?

What is the difference between a spiritual gift and a spiritual grace? Well, you'll see if you go to that passage in Galatians, we often refer to it on a Sabbath morning of a communion.

You read it of the fruit of the Spirit, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, against such there is no law.

[13 : 55] And I suppose you could argue, and I think you're right in doing so, that that is spiritual fruit of grace that is the possession of every believer.

The believer is not without any one of these graces. They are never, once they come to faith, they are in possession of these graces.

however, with regard to what he is speaking of here in this passage, he is talking more about what some may have and others do not.

Some may have greater measures of one and none of the other. he is talking about the spiritual gifts.

Both have the one source. Both are given to the church by the Holy Spirit and both are given to the church for the good of the church, for the glory of God, it has to be said, no doubt.

[15 : 22] but the gifts are not necessarily equally divided amongst the membership. There may be some who may possess one or more of these gifts, while others may be without them.

And if you read down in the passage, there is a further complication, I suppose, in trying to understand what these gifts are, the fact is that some of these gifts are no longer current.

I think it is popularly believed that some of the gifts that are listed by the apostle here were prevalent at the outset of the New Testament church.

But as the church developed and grew, some of these gifts no longer were prevalent, were part of it.

If you notice, there is the gifts of healing, the gifts of prophecy, the discerning of spirits, the diverse kinds of tongues, the interpretation of tongues.

[16 : 44] Now, some insist that tongues are part and partial of the New Testament church, and that they should still be part and partial of our experience of church.

but clearly, as far as my experience is concerned, and I'm not allowed to use my experience as the point at which you assess scripture, but rather you assess what the scripture says, and you interpret from that basis rather than the other way round.

You don't allow your experience to determine what the scripture is saying or not saying. If you carry on further down towards the end of the chapter, you'll read it, God hath said in the church first apostles, second daryl prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, health, governments, diversities, of tongues.

Now, does that mean that there is a gift of prophecy still in exercise in the New Testament church today?

Is everybody gifted to prophesy? Is everybody gifted to heal? Is it something that exists within the church today?

[18 : 23] tongues is probably one of the more contentious issues. But God in his wisdom saw fit to supply his church with spiritual gifts for the good of his people who are the church and for its advancement as the body of Christ in the world.

And we understand that at this point what Paul is concerned with is not so much the difficulty in ascertaining whether these gifts exist.

At the time at which he spoke these gifts were current. These gifts were in exercise. but the outcome of these gifts in the church at the time was that there were those who looked down on others if they possessed if they themselves possessed these gifts and others didn't.

And that became problematic that there was rather than what we find here the emphasis on the unity that is part and partial of what should be the experience of the church it was creating discord.

And when a person possessed a certain gift and especially if they considered that gift to be of a superior order the others who did not have it were looked down upon.

[20 : 18] They were almost treated as second class Christians which is what they were not. Paul in his epistle to the Romans I think reminds us of the importance that we give to God's provision through the Spirit to his church of giftings that are spiritual.

In chapter 12 we read there from verse 4 For as we have many members in one body and all members have not the same office so we being many are one body in Christ and everyone members one of the other having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us whether prophecy let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith or ministry let us wait on our ministering or he that teacheth on teaching or he that exhorteth on exhortation he that giveth let him do with simplicity he that ruleth with diligence he that showeth mercy with cheerfulness now there the gifts are again listed and they are listed as being apportioned to certain members within the church but not all now some have chosen to understand this and say these are ministerial gifts these are gifts that are accorded to those who are set aside for the work of the ministry and they're not the procession of the ordinary membership but

I don't think you can argue that from here because in this passage what we have is a description of the membership as a whole not the preacher not the teacher but all the members and all the members are described as either possessing some or all of these gifts in a measure greater or smaller than others and we need to be sure I suppose of what we are being reminded of here that the outcome of failing to appreciate the source of these gifts as God himself through the spirit and that it was God who endowed the recipient with these gifts and that should have had the effect of removing from that person any sense of pride because they were in possession of them because when

God gifts he gifts for the benefit of the body not for the benefit of the individual not for the individual's pride but for the good of his body these gifts are for the good of the church of Christ and while Paul here settles on certain dangers that accompany a misunderstanding or an ignorance of the fact that it is the spirit you know he goes on in verse 13 by one spirit are we all baptized into one body and he's not talking about the water baptism that was a feature of the church's sacrament but rather what was true of every member that the spirit was instrumental in bringing them to

Christ and endowing them with the wherewithal by which they understood God's word and the nature of it and what it said to them they experienced the baptism of the spirit go back to the book of Acts and the outpouring of the spirit on the new testament church is much in evidence but because it was new it appears so extraordinary but no Christian comes to faith in Christ without experiencing a measure of the spirit's baptism because it is through that that their eyes are open their understanding they receive enlightenment they receive a grasp of the teachings of God's word and so on Roger Ellsworth one of the commentators suggests several things that could be the case with regard to what the apostle has an issue with but

[25 : 49] I'll just mention two of them first of all the fact he said that one feature that was disconcerting was the emphasis that was placed upon emotionalism under the hand of God that if you weren't moved by the spirit to almost an ecstatic experience then you lacked something that those who suggested that they possessed it were of a higher order of spirituality and that always emerges in the church not just at the outset it appears especially at times of revival that there is a hyper emotionalism which is spoken of as being something that only the super spiritual will enjoy whereas those who are not moved in the same way with this ecstatic experience that they are of lesser order but that's not what

Paul teaches it's not what the scripture brings to us we are one body made up of many members who have various gifts and they are as the one body designed to glorify God they are designed they are collectively there to support one another as they engage with the world and as they live out their Christian life as individuals and collectively as his church here on earth the second thing is the emphasis that you find on the Holy Spirit and it's interesting because Paul is here almost forecasting or prophesying what will emerge through

Pentecostalism these are features of the Pentecostal church where there is a greater emphasis put upon the work of the Holy Spirit and the work of the Holy Spirit almost side puts to one side what Christ has done the Spirit becomes the focus rather than the passion of Christ now that's back to front the Bible tells you that the role of the Spirit is to bring Christ to the attention of the believer he gives honor and glory to Christ and that is his role not for him to displace Christ and receive the honor that Christ should be receiving but we should always

I think keep in mind that it is the Spirit that endows the believer with gifts and his church with gifts gifts and graces are he is the source of them for his glory and for the good of his body and the place we have whatever it may be we should remember that it is God given while we may measure ourselves against other Christians and we may fall prey to an envious spirit that is harmful to ourselves and to the body because if we envy somebody that God has gifted with whatever the gift may be we forget and we are looking the fact that God has gifted these individuals with whatever it is for the good of his body and for the glory of his name the divine

R.C. Sproul warns us against something that we may be guilty of we might not be guilty of envying others because they have greater gifts than we have in our estimation but one thing that we are often guilty of is belittling our own gifts belittling them in the sense that we overlook them or despise them and say well what are they I'm just Joe blog and it doesn't matter how God has given to me any particular gift whatever that gift may be that's not a right way of thinking we have no right to think that others are more important for ourselves in the scheme of things in the way God works in the way that he has placed us within his cause whatever he has given us to do whether it is to preach to pray to witness on his behalf to be a mother to be a father whatever a

[31 : 44] Christian parent all of these things if we are endowed with the grace of Christ in our heart to do these things to the best of our ability that's what we should do and be content with the place that God has given to us in that sense whatever God assigns to us as his people within the church of Christ is important it is valuable but Sproul says something else and it's important as well that we remember it that we should not and we are prone to do so to insist that others carry out by way of service something in the church that God has not equipped them to do whatever that gift may be it is important for us when we consider our own calling that we realise our limitations and we do not allow others to browbeat us into doing things that we know that we are not competent to do you can

I suppose you could argue and say God is able to equip anybody to do anything well he could and often he does but not always and there are certain things that belong to certain individuals that not others are equipped to do and we should not despise their understanding of their own limitations and we should not browbeat them into doing things that they are not able to do in our hearts are given for the wondrous outcome of his glorious body which is in the ultimate

Christ in us in the glorious state that is prepared for us we have to be aware that Paul is teaching here a people who have lost sight of the instrumentality of the spirit and the equipping that the spirit gives to his church and the way by which the church best functions in cooperation what kind of body would the church be like what would it be like if well that's what Paul is saying we can't all be a foot we can't all be an eye and when it comes to congregations when it comes to the church as it is displayed within society you have to remember that our congregation is no different to any other congregation

God in his wisdom has seen fit to supply the congregation with a membership that is diverse in nature not just diverse in ages and in males and females but also in the giftings that he has given to each one who formed part of it we may think that we do not have much power to play that is wrong because what part we have to play is the part that God has equipped us for we can't usurp his authority by bypassing what we should be doing on to somebody else nor should we take on something that somebody else should be doing we have responsibility to him we have the burden to fulfil our role not somebody else's and it's for the benefit of his body

I think very often when it comes to making new office bearers in the church for example I've seen it happen in different congregations I've seen it happen at the time of choosing ministers for a congregation individuals have in their own mind what the kind of gift gifting or gift that the minister should have or that the office bearer should have but also alongside that they put their thoughts that have no part in the process of the choice that is given to them as members of the church a person can be a member for a long time without necessarily being the right kind of candidate for office in the church I know it's hard to say that but it is expected that there is a natural progression because of the advancing of years well if the years are not accompanied by growth in grace and a growth in spirituality and a marked advancement in the graces that are theirs then there is no question but that that should come into the thinking of those who are responsible for fulfilling the vacancies that are there in a congregation but these are things that that we seem to forget so easily

[38 : 53] God gives God endows God provides God equips his people to fulfill our role within the body of Christ be it teaching be it serving be it ministering to others being going alongside others whatever it is we we have a role to fulfill in establishing what our gifting is and using it to the glory of God and sometimes it is not easy to do that Paul comes back to this now he says you are the body of Christ and members in particular and God has said this is God's doing this is what God does so it is not something that you can do for yourself but rather something that you can do with his help if we are to grow in these graces that God supplies us with well may God give us some food for thought in reflecting on these verses that Paul has written here let us pray oh Lord our God we understand that not everybody can do everything and not everybody should be doing everything and we see in some settings that some are of the opinion that something is not done properly if the other ones not doing it and there has to be a division of labour in the light of the provision that you yourself have made we may be of the mind to think that if it is not done by ourselves it won't be done properly and that allow us to understand if that is so and why that is so we pray Lord for your guidance in all things with regard to the affairs of your church here on earth and that we may understand our limitations and extend ourselves to accommodate your calling upon our lives whatever it may involve hear our prayers and pardon our sins in

Jesus name Amen I'm going to sing in conclusion some verses from Psalm 43 in Gaelic
Psalm 43 Psalm 43 Psalm 43

Psalm 43 Psalm 43 Psalm 43

Psalm 43 Psalm 43 Psalm 43 Psalm 43 Thank you.

Amen.