

# TOO HOT TO HANDLE

## 24 The Holy Spirit's Gifts

### Scripture Reading

Ephesians 4:1 – 16

### What Are The Gifts Of The Spirit?

This week we are going to begin to look at the subject of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Before we inquire about any individual gifts that stir our interest we are going to consider some things that are true of them all.

### Ephesians 4

To do that we are going to turn to Ephesians 4. In that chapter Paul's primary subject is the unity of the church. He says, there is only one church but that does not mean that we are all the same. We are different because we have different gifts and he tells us where those gifts come from, something about their character and what their purpose is.

### The Giver Of The Gifts

According to verse 7, each gift is Christ's gift. The following verse, which quotes from Psalm 68<sup>1</sup>, brings to mind the picture of a conquering ruler who takes his enemies captive and distributes the spoils of war to his own people. Paul applies that image to Christ's ascension. The Lord Jesus Christ, having defeated and dethroned all principalities and powers has ascended to the Father's right hand and from that position of power and authority distributes gifts to His church. It is incorrect then to think of the gifts as exclusively gifts of the Holy Spirit. They are gifts of the ascended Lord Jesus Christ and the Father (see Romans 12:3ff) carried to His church by the Holy Spirit.

### The Character Of The Gifts

Verse 7 refers to Christ's grace in the distribution of these gifts and elsewhere the word translated gift is the Greek word *charismata*, *charis* being the word for grace. Clearly then these gifts are a mark of His undeserved favour. Their distribution does not depend, in any way, on the merit of those who receive them. Rather they are distributed, "according to the measure of Christ's gift." As He chooses, when He chooses and to the degree He chooses. Indeed, we should not forget that it is even a possibility for an unbeliever to experience and exercise spiritual powers.

"Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"

Matthew 7:22 – 23

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:4 that there are varieties of gifts. Some would restrict the list of possible gifts to a set number. The five lists given in the New Testament mention between them at least twenty distinct gifts and each list differs considerably from the others. This suggests that no one list is complete and that even all five together do not make up an exhaustive catalogue. Doubtless there are many more that are not listed at all.

#### 1 Corinthians 12:8 –11

Wisdom  
Knowledge  
Faith  
Healing  
Miracles  
Prophecy  
Discerning spirits  
Tongues  
Interpreting tongues

#### 1 Corinthians. 12:28

Apostles  
Prophets  
Teachers  
Miracles  
Healing  
Helps  
Administration

#### Romans 12:6–8

Prophecy  
Service  
Teaching  
Exhorting  
Giving  
Leadership  
Mercy  
Tongues

#### Ephesians 4:11

Apostles  
Prophets  
Evangelists  
Pastors  
Teachers

#### 1 Peter 4:11

Speaking  
Serving

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting that it was the custom in the synagogues for Psalm 68 to be read on the day of Pentecost.

Certainty about the exact nature of all the gifts listed is not possible. We will take time to think about some of them specifically in future studies but it seems to me that, in general terms, the gifts of the Spirit are all those different abilities the Lord distributes to individual members of His church.

The New Testament does not go into the relationship between spiritual gifts and an individual's natural abilities and disposition but I think we can assume that, much as in the way the Spirit gave Scripture, He does not totally bypass our natural abilities.

### **The Purpose Of The Gifts**

In verse 12 we are told why the Lord distributes these gifts. They are given so that the saints — all the people of God — may be equipped for the work of ministry so that the body of Christ — the church — will be built up. In other words, the gifts enable those who receive them to play a part toward the fulfilment of the task Jesus assigned to His church before His ascension.

We should also note the emphasis that is placed upon love in the exercise of the gifts. It is implicit in Romans 12:3 – 8 and 1 Peter 4:10 – 11 and clear in 1 Corinthians 13 as well as here in Ephesians 4. Without love, the purpose of the gifts is thwarted for all spiritual gifts are service-gifts. They are given for the common good (1 Corinthians 12:7) and Paul's point in this passage is that although those gifts may differ widely, when they are exercised together one complements the other and the job gets done.

### **Some Questions**

- What gifts has the Lord given to you?
- Are you exercising those gifts to their maximum potential?
- Are we as a church good at encouraging everyone to use his or her gifts?
- Is the way in which you are exercising your gifts for the good and advancement of the church, or are you using them in an individualistic way?

### **Next Week**

Next week we will go on to find out about some of the individual gifts listed in Scripture.