

Series: The Reign of Grace: A Study Through Romans

Today's Message: We Each Have Different Gifts / Pastor Jeff Kennedy / Jan 29, 2023

Romans 12:6 "According to the grace given to us, we have different gifts:"

1 Corinthians 12:4, 7 "Now there are different gifts, but the same Spirit... <sup>7</sup> A manifestation of the Spirit is given to each person for the common good"

Ephesians 4:11–12 "And he himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to equip the saints for the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ"

1 Peter 4:10 "Just as each one has received a gift, use it to serve others, as good stewards of the varied grace of God."

**Intro: There was a newlywed couple that was given a weeklong honeymoon** at a nice resort. They opened their door to find a small little room and no bed and a locked fridge. They slept on the uncomfortable pull out couch and to save money, bought snacks from the vending machine.

On their last night, one of them happened to open the closet door and it turns out there was a sprawling master suite filled with presents and gift baskets of food and wine.

**They had spent their entire honeymoon missing out, ignorant and uninformed about the gifts that awaited them behind the door.**

The point is that it's possible to have been given a gift that you don't know about. **It's possible for it to be right under your nose.** And that's what we're going to help you to discover and identify today.

**Paul told the Romans and the Corinthians that he didn't want them to be ignorant concerning spiritual gifts. Rather, he wanted them to be informed about their operation and use.**

We've looked at Romans 12:1–8 and discovered that in addition to the **saving grace, sanctifying grace, and now serving grace.**

Last week we saw that the renewed and transformed mind can discern between right and wrong, can think sensibly and soberly about ourselves, and can discern our unique contribution to the body of Christ.

This week we're going to look at the ways in which God has uniquely gifted each of us to serve the body through Spiritual Gifts—we'll discuss their nature, their operation, and give you some helpful ways to begin discovering the gifts of the Spirit in your own life.

Now, we can't cover everything Paul teaches on this, but we're going to focus on 1 Corinthians 12–14. The overarching theme of 1 Corinthians 12 is the need for unity in the body of Christ—but that unity is accomplished through the diversity of gifts to each individual member. Paul's chief analogy is of one body comprised of many parts all with different functions but the same source; each individual part has a different function but the same goal.

Paul stresses the importance of humility, selfless service to others, and desiring the greater gifts in the public, gathered assembly—which include those operations of the Spirit which are intelligible and understandable.

**A Key Passage: 1 Corinthians 12:4–7** “Now there are different *gifts*, but the same *Spirit*; there are different *ministries*, but the same *Lord*.<sup>6</sup> And there are different *activities*, but the same *God* works all of them in each person.<sup>7</sup> A *manifestation* of the Spirit is given to each person for the common good.”

**Two big observations here:**

**Now, firstly notice the thoroughly Trinitarian nature of the expression of the gifts.** The diversity within the Godhead—Father, Son, and Spirit, is expressed in the administration and distribution of the gifts.

**Secondly, notice that spiritual gifts must have some visible expression.** Now there are a couple of ways that scholars have interpreted these words—(1) is to see them as different categories under the concept of a “manifestation.” (2) to see these words as describing different aspects of the same thing—that is, everything that goes on in the life of the Church that is given for its edification and growth has these three aspects. **I personally think we are dealing with four terms that all have the same connotation but different denotations.** The connotation conveys the relative meaning of a word, whereas denotation is the wooden literal meaning or the objective of a word. Take, for example, the word “**shady**”—the literal denotative meaning being “providing cover or shade.” But the word can also connote being crooked, shifty, or suspicious. That's what's going on here—each word on its own has a definitive meaning, but together in this context connote the same idea—v. 7 to each has been given the manifestation of the Spirit for the commonwealth of Christ.

**Key Terms:**

- *gifts (charis, charisma, charismata)*: In his various letters, Paul uses three interrelated terms meaning that which is freely and graciously given; an exceptional act of generosity or beneficence. This word is modified with the word with the term “spiritual.”
- *spiritual (Gk. pneumatikos)*: that which derives from or pertains to the Spirit; belonging to a transcendent order of being (not material).
- *ministries (diakonia)*: any kind of service rendered that furthers the local church’s mission: upward (we worship, Jn 4); inward (grow in the grace and knowledge, 2 Pet 3:18); outward (we go into the world, Matt 28:19-20).
- *activities (energéma)*: the outward expression of an inner capability, the effective outworking of an inner work of the Spirit. Spurgeon said that we are to work out whatever the Spirit has worked in. There’s no such thing as an effortless spiritual gift. Spiritual gifts are the effective outworking resulting in the activity and the life of the church.
- *manifestations (phanerosis)*: to make visible or known what has been hidden or unknown. All the gifts from the Holy Spirit given to our spirit remain discreet until they become manifest in the life of the body.

**A Working Definition:** Spiritual gifts are heavenly resources given to each individual believer for the welfare and edification of the body of Christ (Christ’s commonwealth in the body politic), made apparent by the outworking of the various ministries and activities of a local church. **While God’s gifts are “Spiritual” in nature, they are made visible through** either ordinary or extra ordinary means of expression.

**Before we cover the examples of spiritual giftings that Paul gives us here, particularly in 1 Corinthians 12–14,** I want to say a few things up front.

***First and foremost, these are not exhaustive lists but are rather examples of various kinds of gifts,*** ministries, activities, and manifestations of the Spirit in our midst. These lists are representative of the kinds of things that God does to promote body life and health.

***Secondly, Paul makes no distinction between the ordinary and the extra ordinary outworkings of the Spirit.*** So, for example, the gift of administration is no less a Spiritual manifestation than is the gift of prophetic preaching.

***Thirdly, scholars have, for many years, debated the meaning of these things and this requires that we hold loosely*** our own definitions. We do our best to understand Paul’s semantics, his context and instruction in light of our own experience.

**Fourthly, Paul's entire idea is that not everyone has all of these gifts—they are variously distributed to each individual.** I want to just take a few moments and put a fine point on this. No one individual has all the gifts and no individual gift is for all the members.

**Why I am not a Pentecostal:** And while I am very sympathetic to their passion for God, their zeal to be empowered for mission, and their exuberant joy that God's Holy Spirit is a present, transforming reality in our midst—I mean, I resonate with all of that—I could not consider myself a Pentecostal because they hold that all believers should have the gift of speaking in tongues as the initial physical evidence of the Baptism in the Spirit; that seems very problematic in light of Paul's question, "Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all do miracles? Do all speak in tongues" His point is "No. One body, many parts." No one individual has all the gifts, and no individual gift is for all the people.

**Why I am not a Charismatic:** I want to pause and say this is the sense in which I am not a charismatic: First, I do not affirm the modern charismatic practice of ongoing doctrinal revelation. Second, I do not affirm the modern charismatic teaching that words of knowledge, prophecies, and other extraordinary gifts are for everyone.

**Why I am a Continuationist:** Historically, the church has fallen into two camps on this: (1) Cessationism; (2) Continuationism. I do hold that spiritual gifts have continued beyond the first century and the apostolic age. Paul teaches it explicitly:

1 Corinthians 1:4–8 "I always thank my God for you because of the **grace** (*charis*) of God given to you in Christ Jesus, <sup>5</sup> that you were **enriched** in him in every way, in all **speech** and all **knowledge** (2 main gifts in 12–14). <sup>6</sup> In this way, the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you, <sup>7</sup> so that you do not lack any **spiritual gift** (*charisma*) as you eagerly wait for the **revelation** of our Lord Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13 "glorious revelation of our great God and Savior"). <sup>8</sup> He will also strengthen you to the **end** (*telos*), so that you will be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Now, how long does Paul say they will be enriched, not lacking any spiritual gift? Until the Revelation of the Lord Jesus, who will by means of these gifts, strengthen and confirm them to end in the Day of the Lord Jesus. He calls it the "end" using the word *telos*. Same word Jesus uses repeatedly in Matthew 24 in his end-times discourse, "And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed in the whole earth for a testimony to all the nations, and then the end (*telos*) will come."

Now, what happens to the spiritual gifts when on the Day of the Lord, when Christ returns and is revealed?

1 Corinthians 13:8–12 "Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. <sup>9</sup> For we know in part, and we prophesy in part, <sup>10</sup> but when the perfect (*teleios*) comes, the

partial will come to an end...<sup>12</sup> for now we see only a reflection as in a mirror, but then (when the perfect comes) face to face (see Rev 22:4).” With the rising of the Sun all lesser lights are extinguished. And on the Day when Christ is revealed in glory, all gifts of prophecy, wisdom, knowledge and speech will wash out in the light of the perfect revelation of God’s Son.

**Ordinary and Extra Ordinary Manifestations of the Spirit:** I'll systematize the list here, and frontload it with those ordinary gifts which become visible/manifest through the activities and ministries of the church:

1. Administration (Rom 12:7; 1 Cor 12:28; 2 Cor 8:20): excelling in organizational management.
2. Leadership (Rom 12:8; 1 Thess 5:12; 1 Tim 5:17): the ability to manage the affairs of the local church or a ministry within the church.
3. Service (Rom 12:7; 2 Cor 9:13; Rev 2:19): the ability to render assistance by serving the tangible needs of the body.
4. Generosity (Rom 12:8; 2 Cor 8:2; 9:11, 13): the ability to give sacrificially and cheerfully.
5. Hospitality (Rom 12:13; Heb 13:2; 1 Pet 4:9): an unusual capacity for social interaction; socially warm and welcoming people.
6. Mercy (Rom 12:8; Phil 2:1; Col 3:12; 2 Tim 1:16): the ability to demonstrate unusual acts of compassion.
7. Faith (1 Cor 12:9; 13:2): an unusually high degree of faith to accomplish God's will. Larger tolerance for risk.
8. Words of exhortation (Rom 12:8; 1 Cor 14:3, 31; 1 Tim 4:13): to strongly urge someone in the right course of action.
9. Distinguishing of spirits (1 Cor 12:10; 14:21; 1 John 4:1): an unusual ability to discern between spirits. To distinguish the spirit behind someone's message or their motivation and to discern whether it is in line with the gospel. **Illus. A couple who visited my church in Post Falls who** seemed very shady and announced to me that they wanted to cast demons out of my church.
10. Words of wisdom (Acts 6:10; 1 Cor 12:8; cf. 2:6–16): an utterance characterized by wise application of the gospel and its value system.
11. Gifts of Miracles and Healings (1 Cor 12:10, 28; 2 Cor 12:12; Gal 3:5; Heb 2:4): instances of supernatural healing and miraculous provision. This is not a "gift" given to an individual, but "gifts" (plural) given to the body in response to prayer and obedient faith. Jesus is the only "faith healer" in His church.
12. Words of knowledge (1 Cor 12:8; 13:2, 8–12; 14:6): the occasional revelation of something undisclosed. This is never doctrinal but always directional. It can manifest as a Divinely given intuition or insight for the encouragement, consolation, and strengthening of others. **Illus. A couple who attended my training and burst into tears** when I mentioned the dilemma of spending too much time in the garden and the shop working on his 69 hotrod and they were contemplating divorce.

13. Prophecy (1 Cor 12:10; 14:29–33; Acts 2:17–18; cf. Joel 2:28–30; 1 Thess 5:19–22; Rom 12:6): intelligible, Spirit-enabled proclamation (public not interpersonal) with special insight, intended for the “strengthening, encouragement, and consolation” (14:3) of the body. Biblically, prophecy occurs in the context of public proclamation (prophecy is preaching/proclamation) in the gathered assembly for worship (1 Cor 12:10; 14:29–33; Acts 2:17–18; cf. Joel 2:28–30; 1 Thess 5:19–22; Rom 12:6). Notice what he doesn’t say. He doesn’t say it’s so that people can get up and predict famine and judgment on your local church every week at an open mic.

**Illus. A friend who regularly gave me “prophetic words” and I thanked her and told her that I would test that** in light of Scripture (1 Thess 5:21) and God’s insight to me. She was appalled and came back later and said, “In all the years I’ve practiced this, no one ever told me they would ‘test’ these words. I always assumed that if the Lord spoke to me it just was the word of the Lord.” That same person attended a doctrine course where I explained the difference between the Biblical doctrine of God—as a transcendent, personal, infinite creator of the universe—and pantheism (everything is God) and panentheism (God dwells in everything) and discovered they had been all this time a functional practical panentheist. Now can you imagine having an open mic where that person can just deliver what they think is a prophecy to the congregation? In the same way I wouldn’t allow just anyone to get up and preach without knowing their background, training, maturity—there’s no way I would do the same for public “words.”

**Now, I pray every time before I get up to preach for special insight**, that God would give me an anointed intuition—a Word for someone and that it would bring encouragement, consolation, and strengthening.

14. Different kinds of Tongues (1 Cor 12:10): a mode of “prayer” “praise” or “thanksgiving” in a language not previously studied or learned by the speaker (1 Cor 14:2, 14–17). This can involve known human languages (Acts 2), what Paul refers to as “the tongues of men” (1 Cor 13:1a) or unknown, heavenly speech forms—what Paul refers to as “the tongues of angels” (1 Cor 13:1b). Paul makes it clear that this gift is not preferable in the public worship gathering and should be replaced by more intelligible forms of speech—the clear, anointed, Spirit-empowered preaching of the gospel. While certain individuals may receive the gift of speaking in unknown tongues as part of an active and spiritually recharging prayer life (1 Cor 14), not all should expect to receive it and it has little if any use in the public assembly.

- Isn’t 13:1 (tongues of angels and exaggeration not meant to be taken literally?) No. The exaggerations of vv. 2-3 are of scale not substance. There *are* acts of prophecy, knowing mysteries, acts of mercy and martyrdom but not *all*.

- Paul explicitly says that the tongue speaker speaks to God not to men, it is a mode of prayer, praise and thanksgiving with the spirit; speaks mysteries that are known to no one; and his two principle analogies: (1) instruments playing different or unknown tunes; (2) diverse, normal human languages.
15. Office Gifts (Eph 4:11–12): “And he himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, to build up the body of Christ.” The Apostles in the first century were of two varieties: the Apostles to whom Jesus revealed himself directly through his earthly ministry and/or his post-resurrection appearances. Paul refers to the 12 and then to himself, “the last of the Apostles” (1 Cor 15:8). This confers upon the 12 and Paul a certain authority to establish the foundation of the Church in the gospel message and gospel doctrine— and practically in the planting and support of churches in Gentile regions. Other apostles are mentioned who merely served as commissioned heralds or messengers who proclaim the gospel and plant churches on foreign soil. These folks include Barnabas (Acts 14:4, 14), Silvanus and Timothy (1 Thess 2:6), Andronicus and Junia (1 Cor 16:7).

As for prophets, the NT church appears to have certain individuals considered to often operate in the gift of prophecy— and with such regularity that they are simply called Prophets. Like the Apostles, they are said to be foundational to the life of the Church.

Paul has earlier stated, Eph 2:20 “So then, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints, and members of God’s household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole building, being put together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.” Thus, the Apostles and Prophets in this context had a foundational role to play in establishing the church in doctrine and polity.

**Should I seek the gifts?** No. Paul says in 14:1 “Pursue the way of love and eagerly desire the greater gifts in the public worship assembly.” Jesus said, “A wicked and adulterous generation seeks signs.” Seek the God who gifts us with all things, and ask for what you need. Let him determine what gifts you receive.

**How do we discover our Spiritual Gifts?**

- Start with being informed about Spiritual gifts. Read Romans 12; 1 Cor 12–14; Eph 4. As you renew the mind in Scripture you begin to learn what kinds of graces Christ bestows on the family.
- Try a self-assessment: <https://christcommunity.faith/start-serving> Ideally you discover spiritual gifts in the context of community. But a spiritual gifts self-assessment tool may help to get you started. On that page you can fill it out, turn it in, and a ministry leader will contact you.
- Explore opportunities to serve. Sometimes, the only way to discover what you were made to do is to begin to try.

**Closing Illustration: My mom used to send me a box of Christmas presents in October. Intended to be opened with whatever family I was staying with in college.** But I always couldn't wait and opened them in the loneliness of my dorm room. How sad. Gifts were intended by God to be opened and discovered in the context of community—in the family.

**Those gifts were designed to be opened with others.** Gifts are the emergent properties of community. Often, it is your environment that will call them out of you.