

Gamma 2017

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Today we are going to talk about spiritual gifts, very important topic, very controversial topic, but actually the controversy comes from the wrong direction. I will actually explain to you why there is so much controversy about this. The issue is in the Corinthian church; this church was not the best one around the block. They tend to be interested in lot of things of the world and the things that caught their interest now is basically spiritual gifts.

1 Corinthians 12:1-2 (ESV) 1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. 2 You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led

The word spiritual gifts is actually from the word Pneumatikon, pneuma is spirit. So we are talking about pneumatikon which is a bit of a blend kind of word that could be translated as spiritual people, spirituality or spiritual gifts. So depending on which of your Bible, some will translate it as spiritual people, some would translate it spiritual gifts, but the point is we are talking about spirituality. The whole gist is that the Corinthian people were thinking that if I have this miraculous gifts that means I must be close to God. If you don't have or your spiritual gift is not quite as good as mine, so therefore you are not quite close to God, so therefore spiritual gifts become a marker for spirituality, how close you are to God and that becomes a status symbol.

It becomes a catch word for someone who is close to God and have the spirit and then you don't have and then you are like second class. So now, Paul is addressing this directly. So concerning spiritual gifts or spirituality.

In those days you actually have someone with self-esteem, will use money, talent achievement, connections, now when you come to become a Christian your heart is still the same thing but the only difference of self-esteem is you are serving good works, church attendance, you are leader, you get respect, similar things but you fill your heart with similar idols compared to the world, you just change the idols. If the world is idol, it is money, you come to church it is prestige, you just change it around and if the world is your credit card then you come to church is your gifts.

So you have got all sorts of people with miracle, tongues and all that but they are all used to basically build up your self-esteem, now if that happens in the church there will be fracture. Therefore, you got a huge number of people in church, all having different gifts and they are saying my gift is better than yours. This actually happens in the church today.

In those days filled with the spirit according to the pagan ideas, in the Greek pagan culture they actually have ecstatic speech.

1 Corinthians 12:3 (ESV) Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit.

So this is the way you could differentiate between the two.

1 Corinthians 12:4-6 (ESV) Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5 and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; 6 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

Paul is drawing here to Trinity. So the Trinitarian emphasis is the basis of your existence in the church. We as a church reflect the Trinitarian diversity and unity. The three are different but the three are the same. We are all different and yet we are all the same. So the first thing he brings in is the trinity, nature of your God is the same as your nature, you should reflect that. So it is very subtle but you can see the three parts here. Unity in Diversity finds its design in God.

So here you have got a man who becomes converted, the only difference is that he is having the same Lord. So when he becomes a Christian whatever that he has, all his gifts, actually the focus is completely different, self-esteem is actually based on Jesus Christ, not on himself. So therefore we all have Jesus in the center in terms of serving God then we will actually be united rather than divided.

1 Corinthians 12:7-11 (ESV) To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

11 All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

So he is talking about this unity and diversity. The unity is based on common good, everyone works for the common good, it comes from the same source and you got different gifts by sovereign design. So it is not for self-esteem, it is working towards glorifying Jesus, extension to kingdom, reflecting God. Same source, so therefore you cannot claim any self-esteem because whatever you have is given to you.

God decides which gift is given to you.

1 Corinthians 12:4-6 (ESV) Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5 and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; 6 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

So the spiritual gifts are given for the common good.

1 Peter 4:10-11 (ESV) As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: **11** whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen

So everyone has a gift. There is not a single one in this room who will tell me that God didn't give you a gift. So when Paul says you can serve, actually every single one of you can serve, it is just whether you want to or you don't want to. The whole body of Christ revolves around this particular concept, everyone has a gift and everyone can serve.

The metaphor of the body

1 Corinthians 12:12-14 (ESV) For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. **13** For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

So this is a body metaphor, all of us are different. It has got many parts,

14 For the body does not consist of one member but of many.

So all of us here are many. The body has many diverse parts, each are vital.

1 Corinthians 12:15-21 (ESV) If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. **16** And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. **17** If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? **18** But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. **19** If all were a single member, where would the body be? **20** As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. **21** The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."

The bodily appearances or outward appearances are deceptive

1 Corinthians 12:22 (ESV) On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable,

So therefore we all don't look the same and there are some of you who are actually on the outside looks weaker but actually you are absolutely indispensable, without you life is over. Imagine a human body and you actually at the back of your eyes, there are no lens. So basically you are in the world of darkness. You can have all the biceps you like but you are blind. So bodily appearances are deceptive.

1 Corinthians 12:23-24 (ESV) and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, **24** which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it.

The Goal

1 Corinthians 12:25-26 (ESV) that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. **26** If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. **27** Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it

So therefore can you actually have a good time eating at Gamma when you got a big toothache. You cannot get it. When you get a toothache, all you can think about is the tooth and nothing else. So the goal is that we have no divisions and we all look after each other basically. So there is unity in diversity.

Is there any ranking?

1 Corinthians 12:28 (ESV) And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues.

In the context like this after Paul wrote there is no ranking involved here. Whenever you read scripture it must be in context.

1 Corinthians 12:29-31 (ESV) Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? **30** Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? **31** But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

The answer for this rhetorical question is absolutely no.

Now spiritual gifts are called “Charismata”. Now the word “*Charis*” means grace gifts. Something given to you by grace, you didn’t deserve it. It is like your father started a coffee shop for you and you just stood there and proclaimed it to be yours. So if we all have spiritual gifts we are all charismatic, so there is a misuse of term. So therefore everybody is a charismatic and the gifts are used for up build the church and basically witness.

A lot of problems today come from this over emphasis on the spiritual gifts. There is a big difference between Pentecostal churches, charismatic churches and non-charismatic in the wrong use of the term. They revolve around only three things.

- Baptism of Holy Spirit separate second experience necessary for all Christians.
- Speaking in tongues the external evidence of baptism and infilling of the Spirit.
- Gifts like tongues and miracles must be present in every church ...like apostles.

So they said to you if you don’t have the second baptism you are second class. If you don’t speak in tongues, you don’t have the spirit. If you don’t have miracles your church is dead. When you use words like this it is very-very painful and it is exactly what Paul says.

The eyes says I am not an eye, so therefore I don’t belong to the body. You don’t have the spirit, you don’t belong to the body. This is exactly what Paul does not want them to do. Today if you look a lot of charismatic churches will not believe in this also. They cannot say that this is a second separate experience and they are moving away from this. They are also moving away from speaking in tongues as external evidence that everybody has got to have it. Most of them now read Corinthians 12 properly, do all have gift of tongues, is a rhetorical question. So the only thing is that this part is still controversial.

Tom Smail writes in a charismatic publication and he wrote.

“There is no NT principle which states that the believer cannot be in full freedom of the Holy Spirit unless he has spoken in tongues. Experience shows that people do come to know the release of the Spirit in their lives and yet do not speak in tongues and to suggest to them that their experience is not real for that reason is biblically unjustified, possibly harmful and can create unnecessary doubt and bondages”.

So he as a charismatic does not believe that speaking in tongues is a necessary thing to show the spirit in your life and if you do insist on that then you will start to hurt other people who don't have that particular gift and that they will suffer harmful unnecessary doubt and bondages.

Paul is saying that gifts are the same, it doesn't have to be publically supernatural, because the source is same. So while looking at the gifts we see you have got ordinary gifts mixed in with miraculous. So Paul is not saying that one is better than other. He is saying in the church there will be ordinary type gifts then in the church there will be miraculous type gifts, they are both.

So is there a difference between a natural talent which is developed as gifts given by the spirit as a result of rebirth. I think there is a difference. For example, apostle Paul was brought up as a Pharisee, a theologian, great intellectual rhetorical skill. Same time Luke as a doctor, great precise writing as an eye witness which comes from his medical training. So God uses that. Let's look at the people who build the ark in those days,

Exodus 31:1-5 (ESV) the Lord said to Moses, **2** “See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, **3** and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, **4** to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, **5** in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft.

So back there you got filled with spirit to create art, so that the tabernacle of God looks really good. So that tells you there are many different gifts, God gives that you

ABUSES OF CHARISMATIC GIFTS

Doctrinal Abuse: Because the charismatic movement started to overemphasize experience over scripture, once you start to do this then you have got all sorts of things coming in, like for example the Toronto Church that have got this blessing where people are barking like a dog, howling and laughing uncontrollably and then we can't find that in scripture but they will still support such ideas. So a lot of things come in because once you start to lose the word of God then you depend on your experience and you try to make scripture fit your experience then you got a lot of doctrinal abuse.

Discernment Abuse: One of the best gift to actually have which Paul asked to pray for is the gift of prophecy, but you got a problem there because that is open to abuse. John Piper himself shared,

“A lawyer one time prophesied over me when my wife was pregnant and said: ‘Your fourth child is going to be a girl, and your wife is going to die in childbirth.’ And that lawyer with tears told me that she was sorry she had to tell me that. So I went home and I got down on my knees and I said, ‘Lord, I am trying to do what you said here in 1 Thessalonians 5:20–21. And frankly, I despise what that woman just said.’ It proved out that my fourth child was a son, and I knew as soon as he came out

that that prophecy was not true, and so I stopped having any misgivings about my wife's life. She is still with me now thirty years later. That's the sort of thing that makes you despise prophecy."

This failure to discern prophecies within charismatic churches tempts others to simply dismiss all prophecies outright. The huge risk of abuse and yet Paul says you don't despise prophetic gifts. So therefore you should have prophetic gifts but you should actually discern. For example, in that particular case Piper should have asked his other colleagues to pray with him.

Emotional Abuse: Some of those churches depend too much, there are two kinds of churches, some absolutely no emotion, some of them too much emotion. We call emotional abuse either way. if you have got no emotion you are emotionally abused, you got too much emotion you are also gone.

Faith comes in two ways. Faith comes primarily through your thinking. Faith is not blindly believing something against your thinking. God gave us a brain to think. When God presents scripture it is very logical, you read it, it is in context, it says and means what it says. So the scripture you take it in, you start thinking and when you start thinking and meditating and appropriating it into your life then it changes your emotion. After it changes your emotion, it changes your action. Now if it stays here no emotion and no action, you die. You have three things,

- You need to be thinking,
- You need to be feeling.
- You need to have action.

They all go together. That's true faith. If it is just emotion and you didn't think you are in trouble or you are just doing without thinking and you are doing without emotion you are doing it because of guilt.

Financial Abuse: Once you just depend on your emotion your wallet will follow after that. Always then people will ask for money, it is a lot of problems that's why I cannot understand how you have a church in Singapore who would actually pay 21 million dollars for the wife to have a failed musical career and then call this evangelism. That is absolutely stupid, because the court says it is stupid. So this part is very dangerous.

Baptism of the Holy Spirit:

Luke 3:16 (ESV) John answered them all, saying, "I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

The problem is one baptism, not two. Some people say there is a second baptism. Now let's look at the evidence for the second baptism.

1 Corinthians 12:12-14 (ESV) For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. **13** For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. **14** For the body does not consist of one member but of many.

The Bible has never said that there is a second time. There is no second filling. So you got this one body, one spirit. So you have got.

Distinguished believer from Non believer

1 Corinthians 2:12 (ESV) Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.

Beginning of Christian life

Galatians 3:3 (ESV) Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

Makes person child of God

Romans 8:14-16 (ESV) For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. 1.. but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" 16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

So you are telling other people, you are not baptized in the Holy Spirit, you are telling them they are not Christian and that's very-very dangerous thing to do. So we actually have the Holy Spirit that fills all of us and creates this unity that is in the body.

1 Corinthians 12:27 (ESV) Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

CESSATIONIST:

Now we talk to the people here who are on the other side, the emotionless conservative people. It started of with people like early church fathers, Chrysostom, St Augustine and Gregory the Gate VIII and they notice during their time 200 to 300 years after Christ there were not many miracles, how come not many people speaking in tongues and they surmised that all these spiritual gifts were important for the early church, so that it would confirm and attest to the testimony of Jesus Christ and his disciples, but once the church established already you don't need spiritual gifts any more that is what they thought. Then you have got John Calvin who reacted, catholic relics. So John Calvin was against that and he said, "*All these were counterfeit miracles, they are not after the New Testament church, there are no more gifts*".

Then you have got a guy called D. B. Warfield of Princeton University and he said

- *Miracles are associated with periods of special revelation to process of writing scripture e.g. Exodus, Exile, Elijah time.*
- *They attest to and accredit God's message to become Scripture.*
- *Once Scripture formed no need for miraculous gifts.*

There are some problems. The first thing here is that miracles associate with special period of revelation, not necessarily. There are lot of other types of miracles are seen when there is no scripture written in Genesis, Judges, Samuel. There are plenty of other times in Old Testament where the scripture was not written and you still got miracles. So therefore that theory falls apart.

The second thing is that they attest to they attest to and accredit God's message to become Scripture. Miracles seen in other times to build up church and not exclusively by apostles, Ananias. So miracles are not necessarily just to attest to the authenticity of apostles only, others also have miracles.

Once Scripture formed no need for miraculous gifts. This is derived assumption, not stated in scripture. This is put by Warfield.

Scriptural Evidence

Signs and wonders as well as certain spiritual gifts served only to confirm or authenticate the original company of apostles and when they died so did the signs

1 Corinthians 12:7 (ESV) To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

1 Corinthians 12:31 (ESV) But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way

Scripture contradicts what they say. If spiritual gifts are stopped Paul wouldn't have told to ask for gifts. So he is actually contradicting scripture. Some other cessationists is Thomas Schriener

Prophecy also ended

No evidence of different types of prophets in NT who were not flawless.

His scripture basis is

Ephesians 2:20 (ESV) built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,

He argues prophets and apostles are the same people. The New Testament prophet is actually the apostle. So the same group, Apostoloon KAI Prophetoön. Now since the foundation already built, you don't need apostles anymore, you don't need prophets anymore, but there is a problem with this interpretation. The problem is that his Greek is off, because when you have got plural and plural with a KAI in the middle and end, it means they are separate, they are not the same person. There are two different kinds. So there are prophets and apostles involved in the foundation of church but when you actually build the foundation it does not mean your house finished. Just because the foundation is finished does not mean the rest of the house not finished. So for building the rest of the house you need spiritual gifts. So the argument is fallacious.

Sam Storms says

*Extensive NT evidence in Acts and Epistles of the gifts. Acts 2:17-18 (ESV) And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; **18** even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.*

In the New Testament time the Holy Spirit given to all of us. I expect spiritual gifts even the gift of prophecy among all of us and you should live in a church that expects to see God work. You do not cut him out. Sam Storm is a charismatic and I agree with him because that comes from scripture.

Ephesians 4:11-13 (ESV) And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

The purpose of gifts to people is to build the body of the church. We need people with gifts for the maturation of church. There is no New Testament scripture that says gifts have ceased. We still celebrate Lords Supper, baptism, do church discipline, so therefore we should follow what Paul says.