

(1 Corinthians) Spiritual Gifts

by Brian Brodersen

Spiritual gifts are permanent possessions of believers that are exercised at God's sovereign choosing, requiring faith and the cultivation of the gift.

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Scripture: Romans 12:6

Topics: "Spiritual Gifts", "Ministry Service"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the different gifts that God has given to believers according to Ephesians 4:7-11. These gifts include apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. The speaker emphasizes that even though some gifts may seem more supernatural than others, all gifts are supernatural in nature and should be used for the benefit of others. The sermon also highlights the importance of serving and ministering to others, even in seemingly mundane tasks, as a way to exercise and grow in our gifts.

Transcript

From several places in the New Testament, each of these places, of course, addressing the subject of spiritual gifts, beginning, first of all, in Romans chapter 12, verses six through eight. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith. Or ministry, let us use it in our ministering.

He who teaches in teaching, he who exhorts in exhortation, he who gives with liberality, he who leads with diligence, he who shows mercy with cheerfulness. Now, 1 Corinthians 12, 4 through 11, the same passage that we considered last time, there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministry, but the same Lord.

There are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all. For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.

But one in the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as he wills. Now, from Ephesians 4, verses 7 through 11, but to each one of us, grace was given according to the measure

of Christ's gift. Therefore, he says, when he ascended on high, he led captivity captive and gave gifts to men.

And he himself gave some to the apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers. And then finally, in 1 Peter 4, verses 10 and 11, as each one has received a gift, minister it to one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God.

If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies. So we return again to this subject. Feeling a necessity to spend a bit more time in seeking to bring clarification on this important point.

It really did strike me in preparation last week, how important the gifts are. Because without the gifts of the Spirit, the church can never really attain to all that God has planned for it. We see with a tremendous amount of confusion in the church, Satan's opposition to this whole subject of the gifts.

Of course, he knows that when God's people are full of the Spirit and operating in the area of the gifts of the Spirit, in the truest sense, that this is going to mean trouble for his domain. And so he goes about seeking to bring about confusion and disorder in this area. So it's important that we seek to come to a thorough understanding of these things.

So today I want to clarify some of the things that were brought up in our last study, as well as look at a few other issues. So beginning, first of all, with understanding the distinction between the gifts. Now, I brought this up last week, but I don't think that I made it as clear as I should have.

And so I want to make this as clear as possible, that there are indeed distinctions between some of the gifts. Now, again, in the gifts that we considered last week, we talked about these gifts not being the permanent possession of any believer, but the potential experience of every believer. And what I want to say about that is that that is true of the particular gifts that we looked at last week, with perhaps the exception of the gift of tongues.

But some of the other gifts that we've just read about by looking at Romans or Ephesians or 1 Peter, they are different in the sense that they are the permanent possession of believers. And I think we need to make it clear that there are certain gifts that are the permanent possession of believers. But yet there are those manifestations, the ones that we considered last time that are not the permanent possession.

So let's talk for a moment about the distinction between those two things. Paul refers to them in the text there, 1 Corinthians 12. He refers to them as the manifestation of the spirit.

And of course, he does use the term gifts also in the context. Some people actually go so far as to say these aren't the gifts of the spirit. These are just actually manifestations.

But in the context, Paul does use the word gifts. The word is also inserted by the translators at various points, but there are places where Paul does actually use it. But I think manifestation of the spirit is a good way to understand it.

You see, the spirit of God is present when God's people gather together, of course, as long as he's not being quenched or grieved. But as God's people are gathered together sincerely and honestly seeking him, God's presence is there with us. And it's through these gifts that the Lord will at times manifest himself to manifest himself means to make himself known.

So these manifestations of the spirit, they are obviously supernatural. There's no question about it. They are they are obviously supernatural.

It's very obvious that that there's something supernatural taking place when these particular things are in operation. The word of wisdom, we consider that the word of knowledge, prophecy, tongues, interpretation of tongues, miracles, those kinds of things, they are they are quite obviously supernatural. But again.

In these. Quite obviously, supernatural manifestations, these are entirely dependent upon the sovereignty of God, and they're not exercised primarily by the will of man. Now, of course, man does have a part in it.

You see, let me explain to you from just sort of an experiential point of view how how this would take place. Let's say. We're having a time we're waiting upon God, we're anticipating that God is going to speak, we're opening ourselves up to the Lord, ministering to us that we might minister to one another through the gifts of the spirit.

And so we're waiting upon God and suddenly. Prophecy comes to a certain person. As Paul talks about it in the 14th chapter, he speaks of something being revealed, and that's what prophecy is.

God reveals something to you. OK, so God reveals something to you, prophecy is revealed to you, you're sitting there. Now you must exercise your will and you must exercise faith in order for the prophecy that's come to you to now come through you.

So there is an element of. Our wills being involved, but we cannot will the prophecy to come. See, that's the difference.

God sovereignly brings the prophecy and then we exercise our will simply in delivering what God brings. But I can't command God to bring prophecy. Hey, Lord, we're going to prophesy right now.

Bring the prophecy. We can't do that. That's what I'm talking about.

These these gifts are not the permanent possession of the believer, but when they do come, when God brings revelation, when he impresses upon our mind and heart something that he wants us to speak for, then we exercise our will and we also must take a step of faith, believing that God wants to speak and that he's going to speak. And then we open our mouths and do so. So there are then these gifts.

We can call them manifestations, the spirit making himself known in our midst. And these are not the permanent possession of the believer, but they are exercised by faith. At the will of the spirit.

Now, the one exception. To this list in First Corinthians 12 would be the gift of tongues, it does seem as you do a thorough study of the gift of tongues that there is more of a sort of a permanent kind of a possession of that and that it is exercised by an act of the will. And we'll talk about that more later.

But now looking at the gifts in Romans chapter 12 or First Peter four or even those in Ephesians chapter four, the thing that we need to understand about these gifts is that they are spiritual gifts. With a seemingly natural manifestation.

You see the distinction that we're making here, some of the gifts are very obviously supernatural. There's no question about it. But other of the gifts are seemingly natural.

In that you might not necessarily recognize through the exercise of the gift that something supernatural is taking place, but nevertheless, it is. So you might say that in regard to these types of gifts, God works supernaturally in very natural ways. That's something that's really important for us to realize, because a lot of times people think unless there's something obviously supernatural going on, God is not at work.

But that is not the way God works, primarily people say, oh, look at the book of Acts, you go to the book of Acts, you find supernatural events all over the place, people being healed and the dead being raised and miracles being performed and all of that. Yes, that's true. But did you know the book of Acts covers about a 30 year span? And if you take the miracles in the book of Acts and you calculate them, divide them over a 30 year span, you find there wasn't a whole lot of supernatural or obviously supernatural activity going on necessarily.

Now, there are probably a lot more things going on than were recorded in Acts, but the point is this, we have to learn to understand that God works supernaturally quite often in a very natural kind of a way. He will work supernaturally in an obvious way at times to reveal himself, but most of the time, I would venture to say most of the time, God is working supernaturally in very natural types of ways. Listen to these gifts, ministering, ministering means serving.

Now, serving is something as simple as somebody out here sweeping up before the service begins or someone coming in and setting up the chairs or someone going over and helping someone in need. Now, you know, I walk in in the morning and Tony's out here setting up the chairs and I look at him. There's nothing real supernatural, apparently, about what he's doing.

You know, it seems a very natural thing, just setting up the chairs. But there's service going on, there's a gift of ministry taking place, and there is, even though it's not all that noticeable to the physical life, there's a supernatural element behind it. So ministering and then he refers to teaching.

Now, teaching, this is something that, you know, we're experiencing on a regular basis here on Sundays, and then we have the home groups throughout the week and Alwin's teaching and Rob's teaching and Chris and different guys are sharing the teaching and many of you are being blessed and being benefited from it. But, you know, let's be honest. I mean, you don't walk into some wild, supernatural environment when you walk into the home groups or or even here presently.

I would venture to say at this moment, there doesn't seem to be much supernatural about what I'm doing right up here. There's no aura about me. I'm not.

You know, being lifted off the floor. You see, sometimes we get these distorted ideas of of what it means for God to work, and yet we look at these these gifts of the spirit, ministering, teaching, leading, giving, and on and on and on, and each one of these things, although they're manifested in a very natural way, there's actually a supernatural element to them. We need to understand that.

Now, for these particular gifts that we're referring to here, these gifts that are supernatural but yet seem to be more natural, these are the kinds of gifts that are actually the permanent possession of the believer. And so we might even make that distinction between gifts and manifestations that you can't be dogmatic about it, but manifestations are God showing himself to be among us in a very obvious way, something supernatural happening, a word of knowledge, prophecy, a word of wisdom, a miracle, a healing. Oh, it's it's clear that God did this.

God moved. God was working. God manifested himself.

But then we have service, then we have teaching, then we have leading, then we have giving. And yes, God is still working, but just in a bit of a different way. It's not quite as obvious, but nevertheless, God is at work.

And as I said, the manifestations, they are. They are dependent upon God primarily. And his sovereign choosing to move where the gifts are really dependent much more on the will of man.

Now, the gifts making that distinction. The those natural seeming to be natural manifestations. God imparts a gift to you and that is your gift.

And you grow in that gift and that gift is cultivated and it and let me say this, too, God doesn't only give us one gift, there are people that have a variety of gifts. There are a multiplicity of gifts I've I've seen in people four or five different gifts in operation. So God gives these gifts, they become our permanent possession.

In our service to him. And because there's a real combination of the supernatural and the natural going on, we can cultivate these gifts by the use of them. They can become more refined and more perfected.

And this is clearly seen when it comes to something like the gift of teaching, for example. Now, having been teaching the Bible for quite a few years, I know from my own personal experience that I have grown in the gift of teaching. When I began teaching the Bible almost 20 years ago, there was there was a sense of God's gifting there, but it was very undeveloped.

It wasn't in any way, shape or form refined. But yet there was the sense that there was the God given gift there. But as time has gone on and as you exercise the gift and cultivate it, the gift develops and you become more effective in your use of the gift.

And I've observed that in so many people over the years, you can sense that the gift is there initially, sometimes right almost from the point of conversion. You can sense with some people that the gift that God has given them. And yet you see it in its rawest form.

And in some ways you're like, oh, you know, watch out, you know, there's a gift there, but it's really unrefined. And because of immaturity, a lot of times there's, you know, abuses and things, quite honestly. I've heard plenty of young men who were gifted to teach, but in that undeveloped, unrefined form, oh, they would get up and just practically slay God's people every time they opened their mouth, so zealous and so excited for God and, and, you know, sensing that gift was there, but yet not really having maturity, not really being balanced.

And, you know, I don't know why it is that God actually does this, but he, he allows us to learn at the expense of the flock in some cases, but what he's doing really is he's teaching us all something in the process of it. So these gifts are given by God to be used in his service, and because there's a real fine line between the supernatural and the natural, there will be a real development of that gift as you exercise it, as you step out and use it. You think of a spiritual gift in a sense, you could think of it like a muscle.

The more you use a muscle, the more stronger the muscle is going to become, the more effective it's going to become. And likewise, with the gifts, Paul spoke to Timothy, who was a man who had many gifts. Paul talked about the gifts that Timothy had received through the laying on of hands, and then he said to Timothy, he said, Timothy, stir up the gift that is in you.

Timothy was a timid individual and had a tendency to neglect the gift, and the gift was there, but it could conceivably become dormant through lack of use. And so God gives us gifts, but in order for the gift to develop and to cultivate and to become all that God really desires it to be, it has to be used. It has to be exercised.

That's why it's important when God's given us a gift to step out in faith and to use that gift. Because it becomes more and more effective as we do that, and so that's the first point that we wanted to consider, the distinction between the gifts, the obviously supernatural, the manifestations where God is present and then he shows himself to be present. And then those gifts that aren't so obviously supernatural, they function in more of a natural way, but nevertheless, they are supernatural.

And that, again, I want to emphasize, we need to see God as working. More often than not, supernaturally in very natural ways, one of the ways that God. Moves you into service for him.

Is by simply giving you a desire and an opportunity to do it. And you know what? It seems all so natural. Because after all, heaven didn't open and God didn't speak with the voice of thunder and tell you.

Thus saith God, my child, this is my will for thee. But isn't it true that so often we think in those kinds of terms, they go, if God calls me, if God has a plan, if he has a gift and he's going to or, you know, I'm going to come into a meeting and someone is going to stand over me and prophesy. Someone's going to tell me.

Exactly what God's will is for me. No. Probably not.

But what's going to happen is it's all going to seem to just come about so naturally, in a sense. It's all just going to seem to come together and there's the opportunity and suddenly there's the willingness on your part. And there's also the ability that God has supplied.

And then you find yourself there. You are. You're serving the Lord.

But you didn't have that that great thunderous call or that clear prophecy that was given. We have to get away from looking for those kinds of things as signposts for what God would have us to do. God can certainly use things like that.

I'm not saying that he can't. Of course he can. But generally speaking, he doesn't.

Because generally speaking, God works supernaturally in natural. Sort of ways. And so we need to understand that and be open to that now.

I want to touch also today on something that I brought up in our last study, but it's in reference to. Ephesians 4. We read that. For seven through 11, you remember the list that's mentioned there, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.

Now, these again would be the kind of gifts that are permanent and exercised at will by those who possess them. And as I said last week, and I want to reiterate this, but I also want to clarify it. The apostles and prophets had, according to Ephesians to 20, a foundational ministry.

They had a foundational ministry and theirs was the ministry of bringing to us the New Testament. And so in the strict sense, the ministry of the apostles and prophets has ceased in a sense, but it's perpetuated through the New Testament. You remember in Acts chapter two, as the as the people gathered together after the time of Pentecost there, after the great harvest that came in of 3000 souls.

And Luke tells us a bit about what they were doing in those early assemblies. And it says and they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine. The apostles doctrine is what we have in our New Testament.

And so in the first and the most strict sense, the ministry, the apostles and prophets is perpetuated for us through the New Testament. So in a strict sense, in the first sense, there are no longer apostles and prophets. There are no men on the earth today that have the same kind of authority that Peter, James, John, Paul, these kind of men had.

They had a special authority that was invested in them by Jesus Christ for a specific purpose of bringing finally the New Testament into written form. But their ministry has been perpetuated to us through the New Testament. But let me say this now for purposes of clarification.

There is a secondary sense in which there are still apostles and prophets. There is a secondary sense. And actually, you even see this a bit in the New Testament.

You see that there are certain people in the New Testament who are referred to as apostles who were not strictly apostles. They were not numbered with that number that Jesus had chosen. Silas, for example, was a companion of Paul and he's referred to as an apostle.

Timothy was a companion of Paul. He's referred to as an apostle. But yet they would perhaps be in a secondary sense.

They would also perhaps fall into the category of the prophets. But the word apostle. The word apostle means one who is sent.

And I think as we look at the long history of the church, I think we can see definitely that there have been men subsequent to apostolic history who have come along who have not in any way, shape or form had that same authority that the apostles had to write scripture primarily. But yet, as you look at them, you would have to say that they had, in a sense, an apostolic ministry. And I think there are people even down to this very day that you could say that about as well, that they have, in a sense, an apostolic ministry.

And here's a way that I would define an apostolic ministry. Remember, the word apostle means one who is sent. I believe that you could define apostolic ministry as one who is sent to significantly further the kingdom of God.

And you find in history that there are certain key figures, certain men that God did raise up and send. He sent them to nations. He sent them at a specific point in time.

And these men greatly impacted the world and they greatly furthered the kingdom of God. Let me give you a few examples of the kind of men that we're talking about. We're talking about men like John Wycliffe, for example, who became known as the Morning Star of the Reformation, who a few hundred years before the Reformation ever took place, Wycliffe understood the problems in his own church, the Roman Catholic Church.

He translated the scriptures into English and he began to send out preachers all over the country to bring the word of God to people. And he did indeed have what you might call an apostolic ministry. You could say the same thing about John Wesley, who came a few hundred years later after the time of the Reformation, the 18th century.

But here's this man. God raises this man up and this man, along with those that God raised up alongside of him, they significantly furthered the kingdom of God. They spread the gospel throughout this country and through their ministry, the gospel went out into virtually all the parts of the world.

And churches were planted all over the world. The Methodist denomination, of course, was born out of this. And so I think Wesley would be another man.

Or you think of a man like J. Hudson Taylor, who I think was undoubtedly an apostle to China. God sent him to China. There were many missionary organizations in China.

And they were seeking to bring the gospel to people. But in a sense, they were hindered by many of their traditions. And in the process of trying to bring the gospel to people, they were they were.

I don't think they were intentionally doing it, but they were thinking that somehow they needed to civilize the Chinese. They needed to turn them into Europeans if they were going to be good Christians. But Hudson Taylor, this man, he goes into China.

He realizes that in order to reach the Chinese people, he has to become one of them. And so we know the history of the China Inland Mission and the tremendous impact that this one man with vision had upon that nation for the gospel. I think clearly Hudson Taylor would be an apostle in the secondary sense, an apostle to China.

I think you could say the same thing, in a sense, about Charles Spurgeon, who was preaching in London just over 100 years ago. And as you look at Spurgeon, you could see that he was a man who was sent by God to this city. And he had a tremendous impact on the city, had a tremendous impact on this country, had a tremendous impact worldwide.

Sermons going out all over the world, raising up young men in his Bible college and sending them out to plant churches all over the country. That's apostolic ministry right there. That's what we're talking about.

D.L. Moody, I think, although he's primarily known as an evangelist, you would say that he had also somewhat of an apostolic ministry. You see, in each of these men, what you find is they're unique. They stood out.

They were great leaders and they significantly furthered the kingdom of God. God used them in a powerful way. I think you could even say this about Pastor Chuck Smith.

I think that in the in the modern setting. Here is a man that God raised up and is used to impact literally hundreds of thousands, if not millions of people. Through bringing people back to a biblical understanding of the Christian church and through one man's ministry, hundreds and hundreds of churches being planted and raised up.

And so in a secondary sense, we do still have apostles with us. And in a secondary sense, we do still have prophets with us. Now, a prophet.

I think a good definition for what we're talking about here would be this. Men who speak the word with extraordinary clarity and authority, men sent by God to speak to the whole church. And the men that we just mentioned would probably fall into this category also.

But it's interesting, even in the New Testament, the apostles were also acknowledged as prophets. Acts chapter 13, I think I mentioned that before in the list of prophets and teachers. There is no mention of apostles, but there's a list given of prophets and teachers in the church in Antioch.

And Paul and Barnabas were among them. Now, Paul, of course, was an apostle, but he was listed there as a prophet. So in a sense, these these things cross over, because after all, going back to apostles and prophets in the strictest sense, they had a similar ministry.

The foundation of the church was laid by both apostles and prophets. But a prophet would be a man who would speak with extraordinary clarity and authority, a man that God would raise up to speak to the whole church. I think the the best example of this in modern times would have been Martin Lloyd-Jones, a man who had definitely a prophetic ministry, a man who spoke with extraordinary clarity and authority, a man that commanded the attention of not just a little segment of the church, but a man who commanded the authority of the church worldwide.

Or commanded the attention of the church worldwide in many cases. Now, apostles and prophets are to the church what a general might be in a military setting. Apostles and prophets are to the church what a general might be in a military setting.

They are great leaders possessed with vision and the faith to carry out the vision. Great leaders possessed with vision and the faith to carry out the vision. And now listen to this, because this is vital.

They are also humble, godly men who would never claim for themselves the titles of apostle or prophet. You see that consistently in every person that I've mentioned, and we could list several others. And this is where you can draw a sharp distinction between men today who claim to be apostles.

Now, of course, in the days of the apostles themselves, there were false apostles. Paul spoke of them. Writing to the Corinthians, the tenth chapter, the first epistle, or the second epistle.

He mentions those who, he said, they want to be considered like we are, the apostles. And he said, but in actuality, they are the ministers of Satan. Now, if there were pseudo apostles in the days of the apostles, and now as we have the apostolic or prophetic ministry being carried on in a secondary sense, then you can be certain that there will also be pseudo apostles and prophets currently.

And I would say the first way to recognize a pseudo apostle or a prophet is that they would tell you that that's what they were, or that they would allow other people to refer to them as that, without any genuine protest. Now, of course, you could put up a fake protest. Oh, please, please, no, don't call me apostle.

It's probably true, but please just, you know, let's not broadcast it. You know, that's pride. And when you see that immediately, you can be certain this person is not an apostle, not a prophet, regardless of what they say or what anybody else says.

And we need to be clear on that because there are many today who are claiming apostleship. There are many today who are claiming to be prophets. Now, of course, there are tests that we can look at, especially when it comes to the area of a prophet.

There are easy tests that we can apply to a person's claim to be a prophet. The first test is how accurate are their prophecies? If they're less than 100 percent accurate, then they're not a prophet, according to Deuteronomy. It's as clear as that.

And of course, that would show us that there are no prophets in that in that first sense today, because even a person who would have a true prophetic ministry is not necessarily accurate about everything. But one who would have a true prophetic ministry would never claim to be accurate about everything. They would never claim that their word is equal to the scripture.

They would not claim that when they speak, they speak ex cathedra. So we can be certain of those who are not apostles and prophets. If we find that there is pride, a lack of humility, a lack of godliness, there are apostles and prophets.

Presently, God, at His appointed time, will give these gifts to the church. But yet, again, they themselves would never consider themselves to be so. But it would be obvious to those who were receiving from them.

Going back to Martyn Lloyd-Jones for a minute. The thing that where I see such a prophetic thing in operation in his ministry is that you can read his books or listen to his tapes today. And you would think he preached those messages tomorrow.

That's how relevant they are. Yet he preached some of them 50, 60 years ago. And you see just this timelessness in the message.

You see this authority. You see this foresight, this understanding, this ability to see where things were going. A God-given ability.

And again, you see in a person like that where this kind of a person commands the attention of the church. And so, apostles and prophets. In the first sense, like the apostles of the New Testament, we do not have that ministry perpetuated except through the pages of the New Testament.

But in a secondary sense, yes, we do have apostles and prophets today. Those who operate in that kind of ministry, that kind of leadership. And yet they would not be broadcasting that.

They probably wouldn't even be aware of it in some cases. It wouldn't be important to them to be recognized in that way. So that's a way to make the distinction.

Now, some practical questions in relation to the gifts. How do we know what our gifts are? This is a very practical question, isn't it? How do we know what our gifts are? Now, first of all, the only way to know what our gifts are would be in reference to the gifts that are the permanent possession of the believer. So don't bother to ask the question whether you have the gift of healing because you don't.

Or if you have the gift of prophecy, you don't. Or the gift of the word of knowledge or the gift of miracles. You don't have those, but you could potentially experience those gifts in your life.

But you don't have it as a permanent possession. But what about leading? What about teaching? What about giving? What about teaching? What about these other things that are mentioned, these other gifts? Evangelist. We haven't even really talked about evangelists, but what about that? What about apostles and prophets in the secondary sense? Or what about pastor and teacher and those kinds of things? Well, how do we know what our gifts are? I think I touched on this earlier, but let me say it again.

The gift will, in a sense, come natural to you. It'll just it'll come. You see, it's a gift.

God gives it to you. And in a sense, it just comes naturally, you just you just really find yourself doing it. Without in a sense, without any forethought.

You're not even thinking so much in those terms. You just find yourself moving in that direction. God working in you to will and to do of his good pleasure.

See, we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. People often ask me, how did you go about getting into the ministry and becoming a pastor? And you know what I say? I never tried to do it. I didn't seek it.

I didn't go after it. No, that doesn't mean that that it's wrong to pursue it. But other people do pursue it and that's fine.

And some sometimes that's how God does it. But for myself, I didn't I didn't try to do it. I didn't seek after it.

I didn't pursue it. It just sort of came. Just opportunities came.

God. God just brought opportunity and I just found myself ministering to people without doing anything other than simply saying, Lord, I'm willing to do it. I'd like to serve you.

That was really my prayer. I wanted to serve the Lord. I didn't say, Lord, I want to serve you and be a pastor.

As a matter of fact, when I thought about being a pastor, that didn't appeal to me at all. And, you know, it didn't appeal to me because I really didn't know anything about it. And all I knew of a pastor was Pastor Chuck, and I knew that I couldn't be him.

So that was out. I mean, I think if I wanted to do anything, I probably would have, you know, now looking back, it probably would have been an evangelist because that's what I did. I just shared the gospel of people and I love doing that.

And in my thinking was, Lord, I just want to be as free as possible to do this as much as possible. And so there wasn't really necessarily a seeking after it, although that's not in and of itself necessarily wrong. But for me, it was more just something that God just brought about as I would go to church, just like you are today or tonight or during the week as I would go there.

I would just go with an openness, say, Lord, you know, whatever you'd like to do with me, that's, you know, I'm there. And I would find that the Lord would inevitably every time I was in in the church, every time I was with Christian people, God would put me in touch with somebody that needed to be prayed for. Somebody that needed to have a word of encouragement from the scriptures or something like that.

It just it would just happen. And I think that. I think to some degree that that will be true with every one of us.

Now, another thing about the gifts. And how we know what our gifts are, is that. Others quite often will recognize the gift that you have before you recognize it.

Others will recognize it, especially those in leadership who who have enough experience to know something when they see it. God has given me the ability over the years, I think, through experience and maybe just sort of an intuitive thing by the spirit to look at someone and just sense that, yeah, there's

something there. And quite often that's what will happen.

You'll be functioning in a gift and you don't even realize it. And someone might come up and say, did you know that God's really using you? In the area of helps. God's really using you to lead people.

God's really using you in service to minister. Or, you know, God's got his hand on you to teach the word. You might, you know, as a pastor, I'm always walking around with my ear kind of just picking up on things that are going on.

And I'll hear somebody talking and sharing the word. I think, man, I can share the word. If you can share the word with an individual, you can share it with a congregation.

It just takes time and cultivation. So, you know, you pick up on these things. And that's what will happen a lot of times is others will recognize the gift before you might even realize that that's what God has gifted you to do.

You might even be doing the very thing God's gifted you to do. And because it comes so naturally, you don't recognize it as a gift. That's what we were saying earlier.

Supernaturally, in a very natural way. It just seems to come so naturally. But yet it's a gift from God.

Now, let me say this. On the negative side, we do not find out what our gifts are by taking a written survey on the gifts. I don't know if you've ever been subject to anything like that, but there are churches where you go in and, you know, of course, they're looking for workers.

So they pass out the sheet and then you go through and you check off what you think your gifts are. And then they go through a process of elimination. And then they decide, OK, you are a, you know, whatever.

Whatever you scored highest in. And I feel sorry for those people. Because inevitably they get stuck in something that God really hasn't gifted them to do.

And they end up very frustrated. They end up burning out. They end up saying, I don't want to serve the Lord.

See, because they're doing something that God hasn't really gifted them to do. Now, do we have any part in determining what our gifts will be? That's another question. Do we have any part in determining what our gifts will be? The gifts that are of not that are not of a permanent nature.

We do have some part, although the gift will not be permanently imparted to us. Paul said, desire spiritual gifts, pray especially that you may prophesy. So there is some indication in Paul's words that we through prayer could be the recipient of some of these gifts.

We could actually desire earnestly to prophesy and God then might respond to that. So in the sense of the manifestations, as we open ourselves up and yield ourselves and say, Lord, I'd like to be an instrument that you could prophesy through. God might very well do that.

Of course, God knows what's best for us. And so he would never give us a gift that would harm us in the end. And you might say, well, how could a gift harm you? Well, if you were a frequent vessel for the gift of prophecy and you weren't prepared for that, you could easily become prideful over it.

And that pride could really cause a fall in your life. So you see, God knows. And I think in God's wisdom, he will give things to people who he knows are capable of maturely demonstrating them without having that negative kind of effect.

So the gifts of a permanent nature, do we have any say so in those gifts? I don't think so. I think that this is where it's entirely up to the sovereignty of God. You might really want to be a prophet.

You might really want to be an evangelist. You might really want to be, you know, a teacher. You might want to have a gift of giving or something like that.

And yet, I think at the end of the day, it's ultimately up to God. He decides. As we looked at these men that we were referring to as apostles and prophets, I don't think any one of them ever said, God, I want to be an apostle or a prophet.

I think they simply said, God, I want to be consumed with love and devotion to you. Whatever you want to do with my life, you go ahead and do it. And that's the best place to be.

People quite often strive. They desire to be something for God because they don't have a real accurate picture of what it is. You know, many people desire to be in the kind of ministry where you're up front, you're seen.

You have an element of popularity. And they covet that and they go, oh, if I could just be, oh, I know I could do. Oh, God, if you just got me up there, Lord, I would really, I could really advance the kingdom for you, God.

And so they have this, they have this ulterior motive. What they're thinking, you know, is, yeah, I'm gonna get something done for God. But I'm gonna get some recognition in the process.

You see, God knows all of that. He's certainly not going to put that person in that position. That would be unwise and God is wise.

So these things, I believe, are up to the sovereignty of God. God decides, God chooses. And he just simply says, I'm going to take this person, do this and take this one, do that, take this one, do this.

And then when it's all over, you know what we all do? We just glorify God. Because I didn't have anything to do with it. God didn't pick me to do this because I'm any better than anybody else.

He didn't pick you to do that because you're less or any of those things. It's just God just did it sovereignly, according to his will and his wisdom. As we've looked at the 12th chapter, God places each member in the body.

According to what he knows to be the best place for them. And so, as we close today, one final word, one final word of encouragement in regard to the gifts. The gifts proceed from a life in the spirit.

We're not going to experience the gifts of God, whether they are the temporal manifestations or the permanent possessions. We're not going to experience them if we're not living in the spirit. Now, you might say, oh well, there's no hope for me then.

Because I had a horrible week. Well, I did too. Living in the spirit doesn't mean that we walk around two feet off the ground with a halo over our heads.

Living in the spirit means that regardless of our failures and those things, we're going to press on and we're going to pursue Jesus. We're going to follow him. Even though we might stumble and fall during the week, we're going to get up, confess our sin, and we're going to keep going.

We're going to pursue after holiness. We're going to make our quest for God the priority in our lives. And those are the people that God's going to use.

Those are the people. Sinful, yes. Faulted, definitely.

But yet by the grace of God, those are the people that God uses. So seek to cultivate your spiritual life so that you may be an instrument of the Holy Spirit. That's what it is.

It's just being an instrument of the Holy Spirit, having his gifts flowing freely from your life.

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