

Corinthians - a Variety of Spiritual Gifts

by J. Glyn Owen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of spiritual character, the variety of spiritual gifts, and the unity that brings those who enjoy these gifts into a oneness of spirit and purpose.

Duration: 53:07

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, 1 Corinthians 12:4-6

Topics: "Spiritual Gifts"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the unity that exists within the diversity of spiritual gifts. He highlights three different entities - the Spirit, the Lord, and God - that are all interconnected and unified. The speaker encourages the audience to see the bigger picture and not be limited by a narrow perspective. He also emphasizes that every believer in the body of Christ has a valuable role and is not a dead limb, but a real and essential part of the body. Overall, the sermon teaches that while there are various spiritual gifts, there is a fundamental spiritual unity that brings believers together in purpose and spirit.

Transcript

read for us, but a good part of it. 1 Corinthians chapter 12 verses 4 to 11. Now I guess I ought to qualify the title that we have in the bulletin.

Really this is a more general theme than that suggested there. I guess we ought simply to speak of this as spiritual gifts, the charismata, the charismatic gifts. Now those of you who are with us, was it two Sunday evenings ago, will remember that when Greg Scharf led us in the exposition of the first three verses in in this twelfth chapter, he reminded us that the Apostle Paul begins there with a word which is not found later on in the chapter.

It's translated in the new international version, spiritual gifts, and also in the King James Version which I have before me. Now concerning spiritual gifts, but if you have the King James Version in your hands, you will see that the word gifts is in italics, which means that the word isn't there. Literally, Paul used a word which can be translated either as spiritual gifts, or spiritual things, or even spiritual people.

And you remember that the thrust of Greg Scharf's message was this, that here he thought the Apostle Paul is laying the foundation for what is to come. And that the stress here in verses 1, 2, and 3 is this. Before we come to consider the charismata, the spiritual gifts, we need to stress the importance of

spiritual character.

And he took that word, pneumaticon it is, from which we derive our English word pneumatic, he took that word as indicating that it refers to spiritual qualities generally. And I'm sure he was right. In other words, if we do not cultivate spiritual character, we shall make all kinds of heavy weather when we come to consider the matter of spiritual gifts.

In order to see the gifts for what they were meant, and in order to appreciate what Paul is saying here to the church of his day in the first place, and to us this evening, we need to have a measure of spiritual character, of maturity. Now we need to remember that and bear it in mind, I think, as we come to the passage that we are concerned with tonight. The only other thing I need to say by way of introduction is this, it's again looking back to verses 1 to 3 and to repeat.

The true Christian is not a stranger to the work and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. If you and I are truly Christian people tonight, then we know something about the ministry of the heavenly parable, convincing us of sin and of righteousness and of judgment, opening our blind eyes and enabling us to see the beauty of the Lord Jesus, just as he did the Apostle Paul. The Apostle Paul could not see anything in Jesus Christ that made him feel that Jesus was anything other than an ordinary person, until, until the Spirit took the scales away from his eyes and out of his blindness he was able to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

So if you and I are truly Christian, we know something about the ministry of the Holy Spirit and in consequence we have all at least come to this point that we speak of Jesus Christ as Lord. To quote again from verse 3, and no man can say meaningfully, heartily, believingly that Jesus is Lord. If we do confess that, if it is the honest confession of our heart then we have come there by the ministry of the Spirit upon heart and mind and soul.

Now then let's come to the passage that is before us tonight, verses 4 to 11. There are two main things that I think we ought to be looking at, there's much else here, but there are two main things I would like us to be looking at and the first thing is this. I want us to notice that according to the Apostle Paul's teaching here, a fundamental spiritual unity overarches the rich variety of our spiritual endowments.

Here we have reference to a vast variety of gifts that God imparts to his people, but behind and beyond, above and underneath the variety there is something else. There is a unity that brings those who enjoy these gifts, brings them into a oneness of spirit and into a unity of purpose. Now let me read verses 4 to 6 in the NIV and I think you will notice that it brings out this particular aspect of our subject.

There are different kinds of gifts, says Paul, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.

Now what Paul is stressing there is this, even though God has a whole multiplicity of gifts to impart to men, overarching and undergirding all the multiplicity, there is this basic unity. So that if you have the gift of the Spirit, one of the characteristics of your life is this, you will find a unity with the people of God. The gifts will not divide, they will unite.

Now let me spell this out, because I think it is something so exceedingly important to see as coming from the Word of God and not just from the preacher. Now let's dwell first of all with the evidence here of the variety of the gifts and then we'll come to the overarching unity that they create. Now if you've got your

Bibles open here, I want you to notice something that is repeated in verses 4, 5 and 6. Now I have to choose what version I'm reading from and people in the pew have all kinds of versions these days, so I've chosen the NIV, but I could choose another one.

Now the NIV goes like this, verse 4, there are different kinds of spiritual gifts. Okay, all right, you got that? Now look at verse 5, there are different kinds of service. And then look at verse 6, there are different kinds of working.

So here we have three statements saying the same thing about different entities. Different kinds of spiritual gifts, and the Greek word is *charismata*. Different kinds of service, and the word is *diakonia*.

Different kinds of working, and the word is *energemata*. They're referring to three different entities and yet we shall see in a moment they're related. And the stress of the Apostle Paul is this, there are different kinds, different kinds, different kind.

Now before we come to that, I want to stress what something that is is not evident from the King James Version, but in the Greek you have the same word translated different kind in each of those three verses. It's one word translated in the same way. Different kind, different kind, different kind.

It's one word. What does it mean? Well there are two thoughts in that word. First of all it's the idea of allotting certain things to different people.

Choosing certain things for people. But now over and above that there is the second concept of the variety of things that we're choosing. It is as if I'm a great father Christmas coming to church.

Well Christmas is coming near isn't it? And I have my gifts to give out. And I am choosing not only a multiplicity of gifts but a whole variety of gifts from my father Christmas bag. But this is not a father Christmas bag.

These are the gifts of God. God is donating. God is the giver.

And he has a whole vast complex multiplicity of gifts and varieties of gifts. Now you see the point here is this, Paul knew the trouble in Corinth and Paul knew the kind of trouble that you and I were going to get in due course. And the trouble is this, that just as in Corinth, so in the 20th century, people think of spiritual gifts only in terms of one, two, or three.

And if you haven't got this one, or that one, or that one, well you're not really a first-class citizen of the kingdom. You see? And so Paul starts here. There's a whole vast variety of them.

He says there are three universes of them. They're different kinds. God allots them.

And if only you could see that how vast and how complex they are. He says you dance with joy that our God is so great and so lavish in his gifts. Now let me now come closer to this and break it down a little.

First of all, God's people have been allotted different kinds of *charismata*. Now you pardon me for using these words tonight. I have a reason for doing it.

I don't like to show off my little bit of Greek, and it isn't very much, but I have to do it tonight. Because I want you to see that we're dealing with three different entities and yet they're the same. They're just like this.

They're just like two hands brought together into a cohesive whole in the plan and purpose of God. They belong together and yet they're different. Now then, God's people have been allotted different kinds of charismata.

That word charisma, the single or the plural charismata, is a beautiful word really. You notice that underlying it, at the heart of it, or really at the beginning of it in the Greek, there is another little word which gives it its main flavor. And the word is charis.

It's a lovely word. Charis. It means grace.

And so the word charisma or charismata really means grace gift. A gift that is given out of sheer grace. Now a gift that is given out of sheer grace is not a gift that's given just because you deserve it.

Not because you've got a white face or a black face for that matter. It's not because you've done a good day's work in the kingdom of God. And certainly not because you haven't done a good day's work in the kingdom of God.

The point is, it has no reference to merit whatsoever. It's a grace gift. It is given without any desert.

You may not even have asked for it. But it is given out of sheer large-heartedness. God gives out of grace.

And you may wonder why God has given this gift to that person. But there it is. It's grace you see.

And because it's grace, grace doesn't look at the giver and say well now I think he he or she would make a wonderful recipient of this gift. Grace just gives. Now in verses 8 to 11, the Apostle Paul goes on to give us a list of these gifts.

I don't want to stay with these tonight. We'll just run quickly through them just to remember what they are. If the list is new to any of you, well just take a little look at it.

It starts off with ability to speak with wisdom. Now notice there are two gifts in one there. Not just the gift of wisdom, but the gift to speak with wisdom.

It's the gift to communicate with wisdom. And then comes ability to speak with knowledge. Now theologians wonder what's the difference between knowledge and wisdom.

Well there is a world of difference, but it would take us a world of time in order to try and disentangle the two and separate them. Knowledge is the accumulation of facts. Knowing certain facts.

Wisdom is the capacity to use and employ the facts to write. We've got a lot of knowledge in the world today, but we don't have a lot of wisdom. Some people with a good bit of wisdom can get on far better with a little bit of knowledge, than people with a lot of knowledge and no wisdom.

Now sorry, you sort that one out. You see wisdom is the ability to do the right thing with a little bit of knowledge that I've got. But here the gift is not simply to possess wisdom and to possess knowledge, but to be able to declare, to tell it out in my speaking, in my utterance, in my talking, whatever I'm doing.

Talking to my children, talking to my neighbors, talking to the church, talking to my Sunday school class, talking to my people anywhere. It's the capacity to speak with wisdom and to speak with knowledge. Faith.

Now obviously this is not saving faith, because every Christian already has saving faith. This is a gift of the Spirit. What then is this? Well evidently it is a special gift for a special purpose.

You remember in 1 Corinthians 13, Paul says though I have the gift of faith so that I can remove all mountains. You know God sends some people to impossible places with an impossible task and he says you do it trust in me. He called Abram to go out from his home and led him on the way and said go Abram this is the way.

And Abram went out not knowing whether he went. But Abram believed God. He had faith.

Faith to do the big thing, the impossible thing. The same with Sarah concerning a child. Now I'm sorry I'm tempted to stay too long with these, but there is faith.

It is faith for something that is that is out of the ordinary. Every Christian has got saving faith, because he's a believer and she's a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ and to believe is to have faith. But this is something different.

Then there are gifts of healing. These are to be distinguished from ordinary medical skills and are illustrated very widely in the Gospels and in the book of Acts. Then there are miraculous powers.

These may include healing but are much wider in connotation. Calvin, John Calvin thought that they referred to the powers by which Apostles subdued demons and executed judgment on hypocrites such as Ananias and Sapphira and one or two others in the book of Acts. The possession of such powers were signs of the New Age.

As Paul speaks of in 2 Corinthians there were signs of the apostleship. Then there's the gift of prophecy. This gift was possessed for example by Agabus, Acts 11 28 and 21 10 and by Philip's seven daughters.

The house was a house of prophecy. It embraced an intense realization of some of the otherwise hidden aspects of God's will and when the Spirit of God came upon a person he was able to speak with power and with conviction. There it was.

Then the next one is the ability to distinguish between spirits. You see if a man has the gift of prophecy he speaks by the Holy Spirit. Whether it is predictive, saying what is going to happen ahead of time or whether it is just speaking and addressing the Word of God to a given situation.

But you may speak with another spirit. There are other spirits abroad. Don't we know it? Now here is the ability to distinguish between spirits and this is necessary.

It's an extraordinary gift that God gives to some people in his community still and and and and my we need it. We need men who have the discernment when a thing is of God the Holy Ghost and when it isn't. Such discernment was always needful whilst life was plagued by a satanic spirit as well as by a divine and it is needful tonight.

Then you notice there are another two mentioned here. First of all there's the ability to speak in different kinds of tongues. F.F. Bruce summarizes this very succinctly and I'll use his words.

This includes those languages intelligible to some hearers though not normally commanded by the speakers as in Acts 2 6 following and those which could not be understood by speakers or hearers unless someone present could exercise the ninth and the last gift in the list which is the interpretation of Now I'm

not dwelling with those as such because for one reason the list is not complete here. When you go to the New Testament you find that there are at least three other major lists and they comprise quite a number that are not found here but what is more you find many other charismata interspersed throughout the New Testament so that these are purely illustrated. Now there the first emphasis in verses 3 4 4 5 and 6 is this God's people have been allotted a whole variety of charismata.

Now the second thing noted here is that God's people have been allotted different kinds of diakonia. He said what does that mean? How is that related to this? Well it's exactly the same thing put in a different way and Paul has a good reason for putting it in a different way. You see we don't necessarily need to use one particular mode of speech in order to refer to the charismatic gifts.

We may be referring to them in terms of this language that is found here. What is this language? God's people have been allotted different kinds of service or different kinds of Now what does the word mean? Well the emphasis is upon calling or commissioning for service. God calls a man from let's say he called Moses as indeed he did but it's one thing to call a man like Moses to lead a people like Israel out of Egypt into the promised land who on earth can do the task who can perform it but you see the point is this when God called Moses God endowed Moses for the task to which he was called.

Within the diakonia is the capacity to do the service that he's called to do and God does that. So we may not use the word charismata or charisma at all if we are talking about service diakonia in the New Testament we're talking about the same thing but under different a different imagery. Now just to show you that we're dealing with the same entity but from a different point of view if you turn down to the end of chapter 12 you will see how the Apostle Paul does it for example and again please these are simply illustrative.

The list is much much larger than what we have here but look at verse 28 and in the church God has appointed first of all apostles. Now this is the diakonia you see this is the service. This tells you the work to which they've been called the work of an apostle they've been called apostles second prophets well now we came across the prophetic gift in the other list but this is describing the office.

Third teachers then workers of miracles also those having gifts of healing those able to teach to help others those with gifts of administration. My word the list is getting larger and wider you see and those speaking in different kinds of tongues and so forth and so it goes on and on and on when you add everything to it that comes under the name of diakonia in the New Testament. What am I saying what is the emphasis the emphasis is this that the gifts that God gives to his people by the Holy Spirit are multiplied and they're varied.

Not just one not just two not just three not just four but they're more than can be numbered. But that's not the end of it look at Paul's third main statement in verse six again he says God's people experience of different kinds of the new international version says different kinds of working the Greek is the word Energemata. I like that word Energemata because our English word energy comes from it and you know really that's what the word means different kinds of energizing.

This is the same kind of thought we're on the same wavelength as we are in the book of Acts when Jesus said to the Apostles look he says you tarry in Jerusalem until you be endued with power from on high energy from on high. Now says the Apostle Paul there are different kinds of energies a whole galaxy of them if that's the right word here a whole variety of them not just one kind of energy but a whole variety of energies to make men suitable and capable of doing the work to which God has called them. So just don't

get caught up in the one shibboleth or another and you think people don't let anybody think because you because you're not using this language you're not talking about the same thing just learn what the Bible says.

Leon Morris in describing this word puts it quite like this and I'd like to pass this across. The thought here is of God's power in action. In other words God energizing God capacitating but now God may do this in one of many ways it may be subjectively.

For example God may illumine the mind of a teacher. Some are called to be teachers God gives him the capacity to know what the Word of God is saying and then when he knows what it is saying the capacity to get it across so that others learn from him he's a teacher. God gives some people the capacity to be an evangelist and the special gift of an evangelist or God gives some people the sensitivity to other spirits and you see this is God giving energy giving power giving capacity inwardly so that we can do certain things that otherwise we can't.

Now God's power may be felt in the mind in the emotions in the will in the conscience and even in the body. God gave Moses a gigantic body I don't know how tall he was I don't know what his size was but I know that he must have had tremendous strength to bear those weary years in the wilderness with a very difficult people. So God's power you see may be felt in in any of these areas the physical the mental the spiritual and so forth.

Not only that God's power may be felt exclusively on my tongue giving me the gift of tongues making me speech speak a language that I do not understand he may do that but he need not do that he may be giving me his power in an entirely different area and it's his power serving the same purpose exactly in the ultimate sense as the gift of tongue. Not only may the power be manifested subjectively in me but the power may be manifested objectively as I do my work. For example Jesus said to the disciples if I go away I will send the Holy Spirit to you and when he is come understood to you he will convince the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment.

Now have you got it? I'm going to send the other paraclete to you and when he's coming to you what's he going to do? He's going to convince the world not the disciples now not the church now he's going to convince the world. Who's going to convince the world? The Holy Spirit is. Now this is an objective work.

As we preach the gospel as we declare the truth the Holy Spirit is convincing and convicting. You know the power in which God comes upon his people gives to his people or to accompany them in their ministrations is varied and vast and this is what Paul wants to get across. He can hear some of the Corinthians they're only talking about one or two of the gifts and they're forgetting everything else.

Oh boys he says don't be so small. God's world is so big have a good look at the vistas he says. There are varieties there are galaxies and you must see them don't just look at things with a little corner of your eye and become so small-minded see the big thing he says.

There are varieties of charismata there are varieties of diaconia they are varieties of energamata and they're all one and the same thing. Looked at from different perspectives. Now that brings me to the second thing I want to say in relation to that first main point.

What we said already stresses the diversity and my friends I think it's time we really took a good look at this. Don't be browbeaten by anybody who says that because you haven't got one particular gift you you

haven't got any gift. If you are in the body of Christ then you're not an artificial limb you're a real limb.

God has no dead limbs in the body of Christ. It could not be. The body of Christ is the body of Christ.

But now look at this this is the other side of the coin. The unity which nevertheless overarches and undergirds that variety. You see if I had to stop now and I'm sorry for some preachers they have to stop after 10 minutes nobody listens beyond that you're a wonderful lot of people you know.

Because you see it's not for me I don't want to hear myself. But if I had to stop now I really would be stopping at a point where the other half of the truth couldn't be heard and it's necessary for the for the glory of God to hear the other half. See it would be wrong for us to go home now.

What is the other half? Well it's this there is a unity which nevertheless coheres all the multiplicity of gifts if there are the Spirit of God and binds all those who have those gifts into the body of Christ and they're one. So that these gifts do not tear the body apart they do not crucify either the head nor the body. They don't dismember but they unite.

He said where on earth do you get that in the text? Well now will you open your New Testaments again? Look at verses four five and six. You said we've already looked at them yes but we've left left something out and that's what I want us to see now. What have we left out? Well see verse four.

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts. We've looked at that but look what's left but the same spirit. Look at the next verse.

There are different kinds of service, diakonia, but the same Lord. Look at the next verse, verse six. There are different kinds of energemata, workings, but the same God.

Now you see in the first part of each sentence Paul is stressing the diversity. There are different kinds, different kinds, different kinds. In the end of the statement he's stressing the identity but the same spirit, the same Lord, the same God.

What's he getting at? What he's getting at is this. That whether we speak of them as charismatic gifts, whether we speak of them as commissionings from God or whether we speak of them as energizing from God, they come from the one and the same source. Now we may speak of the one and the same source in three ways which confuses us perhaps.

We may say that the charismata come from the spirit. We may say that the diakonia come from the Lord. We may say that the energemata come from God.

But you see spirit, Lord, God are the three persons of the indivisible and blessed Trinity and they are one. And the Father does not work at cross purposes with the Son, nor the Son at cross purposes with the spirit, nor the spirit at cross purposes with the Father or the Son. There is a communion that binds the Father and the Son and the spirit in all things.

Here is a mystery and yet here is a revelation of Scripture. The Son does nothing of himself. The spirit does not glorify himself.

The Father works by the spirit and by the Son. So that you see it doesn't matter whether you say it comes from the spirit or from the Son or from the Father. It comes from the one source for the three are one.

Now I find that this passage makes me worship. Not just because it talks of charismatic gifts but because it talks of the great charismatic God. The giver of all things and gives with such variety as befits his deity and is too big for us to understand and to take in.

And sometimes we make fools of ourselves in trying to and try to put him in a little corner or in a little box tucked away. You can't do that. My God's too big for our categories.

The God of the Bible is too large for you to fold him up in your folder and take him with you to the office. You know having a subject like this on a Sunday night is a terrible thing isn't it? I wish some of you came to the pulpit sometimes. I don't know what you'd do.

But there is so much to say isn't there? You know the Apostle Paul was rightly grieved when writing to Corinth he sensed the tragedy of it. How very wrong the Corinthians were when they apparently elevated some of the most spectacular gifts of the Spirit and used them in order to isolate Christian from Christian. So that a group of them said I'm of Paul and another I'm of Apollos and another I'm of Cephas and another I'm of Jesus and you see they split up.

You see insofar as these gifts of these commissionings or these energizings of God, insofar as they are of God given to mature people whose Christian maturity grows along with their understanding of what's happening to them, then they should unite not separate. Now that brings me to the other thing I want to say and I shall not take as much time with it. The second thing is that Paul specifies here the identity of the one who is alone responsible for endowing the body of Christ to serve God's purpose with divinely imparted strengths.

In verses 8 to 11 this is really what Paul does. The outstanding disclosure I should say of verses 7 to 11 is that the same, the one and the same Holy Spirit, the executive of the Godhead is the one who in verse 7 purposefully and in verse 11 sovereignly is active in the dispensing of the necessary gift to each member of the body of Christ and not only to a few. The one and the Holy Spirit, the one and the same Holy Spirit gives your gift to you and my gift to me.

Yours may be quite different from mine but if I have a spiritual gift of any kind whatsoever then it is the blessed Holy Spirit that has given it to me. Therefore you and I should be consciously indebted to the same Spirit and never grieve the Spirit in your brother by saying look brother you haven't got what I've got. Or on the other, putting it on the other foot, I'd like to have what you've got and I do not prize very much what I've got.

We can grieve the same Holy Spirit in two different ways. Now let's stay with this briefly. Look at verse 7, the Spirit and his purpose of work.

Now to each one, to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. That's the NIV again. Now may I make a word of explanation there.

I always feel a little bit strange when I take a translation like this without explaining it. The words for the common good are not in the Greek but you will find them in the New International Version, in the Revised Standard Version, in the various other translations. You don't find them in the King James Version but you may find something the equivalent.

Well you see, why then are they brought in here? Well you see, the Greek here is uncertain. Literally what the Greek says is this, now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit or the revelation of the Spirit in

giving his gift, the manifestation of the Spirit is given for good. For good.

Who's good? Now that's what you've got to answer. Well evidently the Spirit is manifested for the good of the person who receives the gift. Yes, we can't deny that.

But when you go further on into the chapter, once you come to verse 13 and from there on you will find that the whole burden of the Apostle Paul is that we are to be of fellowship, in fellowship with one another and when the one member of the body suffers, we all suffer together. When the one member of the body is elevated or honored, so is the whole body honored together. Therefore, I believe with the vast majority of the commentators that this is quite a legitimate translation.

But those of you, and I know there are some of you who frighten me sometimes with your Greek Testament and you say it's not there. Well all right, you're quite right. It is a little bit of interpretation here but it's interpretation which is in line with the context.

For the context says that the man with a gift does not simply enjoy it for himself and profit himself. He is given the gift to profit the whole community. The eye in the body is to be the eye of the body and not just of some little segment of the head here.

The hand in the body is to be the hand of the body and not just a little entity in itself. The foot is to be the foot for the body and not just a little thing tucked away in the corner of my being down there somewhere, you see. The body of Christ and all its limbs are so given that they are to complement one another and serve one another in unity and in harmony.

What then is our first point here? It is this. The Spirit's work is a purposive work. Why does the Spirit give us these gifts? Well here's the answer.

It's for the common good. Now to those of us who claim to have gifts here tonight, there is an important question to ask. What good, what is it that God counts good, what benefit do you bring to the community of God's people with whom you worship? Now I'm not going off at a tangent now, I'm right on beam.

I'm sorry I'm blowing my own laurels now, but I really am, I'm right on beam. I'm not asking, I'm not asking you, look, if you've got a gift, are you enjoying it? I'm not asking that. What I'm asking is this.

If the Holy Spirit meant it for the common good, what are you bringing to your community, to your fellowship, to your church, to your Bible class, to the people of God that are nearest and dearest to you? What profit are you bringing because the gift was given to profit? That was the purpose. You see, it's not just to sing about, not just to talk about, nor even much less to quarrel about. This is to profit.

Now the other thing I wanted to say is that the Spirit is given not only according to the purpose of the Spirit, but according to the sovereign will of the Spirit. Look at verse 11. I'm missing out a lot, but I have to.

All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each man how? Just as he determines. Who is he? Oh, he is the Spirit. Who determines what gift we get? Well, I'm not unmindful of the fact that Paul told the Corinthian church to seek earnestly the best gifts.

And then he says, I show you a more excellent way. So we ought certainly as a congregation to be thinking in terms of what gifts we most need to glorify our Lord, to do our work properly. And we should pray accordingly.

If we've got a glut of one kind of gift, then we should be praying for the complementary gifts. But especially, as the Apostle Paul says here, we should be praying for the gift of prophecy, that we should be given the capacity to proclaim the Word of God in power and with vitality and with urgency to our day and age. But the question is this.

Who ultimately imparts these gifts? Well, says the Apostle Paul, there's no mistake about it. No room to beat about the bush. Here it is.

All these, he says, all of them, not one left out, all of them, all these are the work of the one and the same Spirit. You got a gift. So have I by the grace of God and every other believer who is a true believer.

Who gave you that gift? The one and the same Spirit. Now my friend, put your arms around that. Don't let that go.

The one and the same Spirit. So if the Holy Spirit gave me my gift and gave you your gift, you and I are brothers or brother and sister. You see? We can't quarrel.

We received our gifts from the same holy hands. And we both want to honor the giver. And we are responsible for our gifts to the giver.

And he did it sovereignly. Just as he determined. Just as he determined.

He is the determiner of what gift to give. He is the Lord. In other words, you know, we're back here again.

We were there from an entirely different tack this morning, but we're back here again. You see, God is sovereign. We may ask him.

He tells us to ask him. But the highest point of privilege in a man's life is when he is so in tune with God by the Word of Scripture and the indwelling Spirit that he only asks what is pleasing to his heavenly Father. And does not try to coerce an unwilling God, but knows his way to the throne and senses the thing that is right in the sight of his heavenly Father and only asks for that.

But he pleads for that. God is sovereign. He chooses.

Therefore, you see, if he chose my gift for me, don't you don't you cock up your nose at me. I may be an ordinary guy, you know. I may have been called from the backwoods as I was.

As a matter of fact. And I cannot boast a lineage of princes or prophets. But if my Lord, the Holy Spirit, has given me a gift, don't you look down at me and say, you haven't got mine, you're no good.

Don't you do that. You'll grieve the Spirit. You'll grieve the Spirit.

He'll have a quarrel with you. If you despise his gift in me or in anybody else, you won't get on very well with him. And if you can apparently get on very well with him, that only reflects the more tragically upon what's going on in your life.

You don't recognize the Holy Spirit from another spirit. You see, it's as serious as that. We close then.

Oh, may the Lord make us sensitive to the realities here. I'm very aware that I don't necessarily take the tack that some of my brothers do. I take these gifts more seriously for us, the church today, than some of my brothers do.

I don't like to be altogether separate from my brethren. I take no delight in that. But having said that, we need to be sane and spiritual and biblical.

And we need to examine ourselves and examine our condition before God and make quite sure that we see the bigness of it. There's a whole variety of gifts in God's hand to give. He chooses what he gives.

Therefore, let the givers, let the recipients from his hand acknowledge him as the giver and glorify the giver in every brother and every sister who has likewise received from the lavishness of his bread. Therein I see the beauty of the church and the joy of the church and the glory of the church in the midst of controversy, in acknowledging what is clearly of God and yet in being willing to scrutinize everything because his honor is at stake. Let us pray.

Our Lord, our God and our Father, we bow adoringly in your presence, confessing that we have been reading parts of scripture that have been a confusion to many of us and the understanding that many of our brethren have of this passage has caused confusion to them and through them to others. We pray therefore that you will come to us and be our teacher and confirm the truth to our every heart and mind and conscience that we may profit from whatever you are eager to give us and yet that the door of our minds and of our hearts may be barred and closed completely to what is not of yourself. Oh Lord, hear our prayer and send upon your church in these days not something like what you deem the best but the best in your sight, the best to equip us for the work that we are called to and for the task that awaits us, for the employment of all the manpower and for the usage of such gifts as are available within the community of your redeemed.

Oh Lord, send forth your spirit and make us willing in the day of your power for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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