***The Gifts of Mercy and Faith
RO156-01***

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We are studying Romans 12:3-8. Our subject is "Service of the Body," and this is segment number seven.

In the present church age, God has provided every believer with specific spiritual gifts or abilities. These are used to do God's work here on earth through the church. They are received at the point of our salvation from God the Holy Spirit. These spiritual gifts enable us to produce divine good works for which we will be rewarded in heaven. God the Holy Spirit Himself sovereignly bestows these spiritual gifts. God the Son directs a specific application of these gifts. And God the Father determines the results of our use of the gifts. Some spiritual gifts were for use only in the early New Testament era when Christianity was being established, and the New Testament Scriptures were being written. These are no longer in operation today. Pursuit of these temporary gifts opens one to satanic deception through numerous counterfeits, and there are vast numbers of Christians, as you well know, who today indeed do pursue false spiritual gifts. They are caught up in a tragic situation.

I had a meeting with a young man this week. And I tell you, it makes me sad, on the one side, and it really makes me mad on the other side, to see that the con artists of the charismatic movement themselves may be sincere, but what absolutely deluded leadership is doing to the individual believer, and the painful agony when a person finally discovers what a fraud he is in, and what a fraudulent situation he's in, and then tries to work his way out, and tries to find his way back into the light. And I am grateful for the fact that Berean church stands as a beacon light, such that when people decide it's time to get back to the real spiritual world, they come knocking on our doors, and thank God, we know enough about the Word of God to help them.

So, pursuing of these temporary gifts that are no longer in existence is the objective of large numbers of the Christian church today. And it is a total deception on the part of Satan. And people are going to look back from heaven with great regret over how they wasted their lives. It's important to know about spiritual gifts. You have heard about this before, but I would caution you not to pass this segment of study off lightly. It is not without reason that the apostle Paul, when he gets to the part of his book where he says, "Now, I want to talk about how to live your lives as believers," should start with the subject of spiritual gifts. If you don't understand this, your life is through. You have no purpose in living. You've wasted your life. And when you get to heaven, you'll have all eternity to regret it. This is a major portion of the Word of God, and you need to know it.

Christians who are today pretending and imagining that they have some of these nonoperational temporary gifts are wasting their lives, and are going to lose the rewards that they could have had in heaven.

Please turn with me to 1 Peter 4:10-11, as we move into the subject of gifts today. If a person sitting next to you doesn't have a Bible, before the service is over, and before you leave, exhort them as one good Christ to another good Christian that they ought to have a Bible with them next time. 1 Peter 4:10 says, "As every man has received the gift (receiving a spiritual gift), even so, minister the same one to another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God – these gifts which come to us from the grace of God, and which are a manifold expression of His grace. This verse declares to us that Christians should be diligent in the use of their spiritual gifts. It declares that every Christian has received a spiritual gift. The spiritual gift is to be used, furthermore, in serving other believers. For that reason, Christians are told here to be good stewards of the various gifts, using them in God's service. The grace of God manifested to the believers is his different spiritual gifts with which to serve the body of Christ.

Now, notice verse 11: "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God. If any man minister, let him do it as the ability which God gives, that God, in all things, may be glorified through Jesus Christ to Whom be praise and dominion forever and ever." Amen. Verse 11 indicates that spiritual gifts are divided into the general, broad categories of speaking gifts and serving gifts. Those with the gift of speaking as God's messengers are to deliver God's words. They are not to be delivering their own words. When we speak as the oracles (as the messengers) of God, we have to be able to deliver the Word of God. You can't do that until you have first learned it. But there is a great deal of violation of the integrity of individual human beings because they're being given fool advice.

And the young man I talked to this week was such a prime example of the burdens and the agonies that he was going through because he was a victim of the fool advice of the charismatic leaders. They do not speak that which is God's truth.

One of our men recently was telling us in our last men's meeting, as he got into the charismatic movement, he had a cough that was persistent. And he consulted with the man who had been God's agent for bringing him to salvation, but he unfortunately was in the charismatic movement. And he said, "Well, what God is doing is cleansing the demons out of you. Every time you cough, a demon is coughed out. And our man said that he just kept coughing and coughing, and he didn't know how many of those demons were in him. But there were a lot of them.

The young men I spoke to this week was in the process of the activity in the charismatic movement, working for an agency that all of you are well-acquainted with. And as he spoke to a person on the phone, conveying what he was told to say in response to a spiritual question, he said to himself, "This is crazy." He stood up and said, "I can't do this anymore. This is crazy what we are telling people." What was he saying? He was saying that he was not telling people the Word of God. And his heart was so burdened, and he was crushed by the sense of what he was doing that was wrong, such that even his own good judgment said that what he was telling people was the word of man, and it was crazy. This young man said, "I'm grateful to the Berean ministry, because I learned these things in the Berean youth clubs, and I rode my bicycle on my own, with parents who were not interested in spiritual things. And I rode my bicycle to church every Sunday, because your men were interested and helpful to me. And it is the things that I learned in the Berean ministry that have been eating away down inside me, because those have been the things that the Word of God. And while I got captivated, and went for the word of men, which has wasted years of my life, and lost me a lot of rewards, I could not get away from the Word of God which was planted deeply in me." I think that's an encouragement to us all.

He said, "And it was so great to walk in recently to the Berean ministry, and to see that everything is going on. You're still doing the things that people need to have done for them – and impressively. I look, and there are the people, still on the job for the Lord, that I knew when I was a boy." I wanted to ask him how all of you looked. Mostly, I wanted to ask him how I looked after all these years. But that wasn't necessary.

A kid used to be in our grade school in the academy. She drove up as a young adult. I met her at a gas station the other day. She looked at me. She smiled. I didn't recognize her at first, and she mentioned her name, and I remembered who she was, and she said, "How are you?" And I said, "Fine." And she said, "Gosh, you don't look any different at all." That was 15 years ago. Maybe it was 12, or maybe 10 – in any case.

The Word of God and the word of men – one makes you sick? And I had to tell this young man, "You have a bad case of spiritual indigestion. And you're going to have to flesh it out. Those are the buggers you really have in you. It's the evil of false doctrine.

1 Peter 4:11 is telling us: people, when you talk to God, you better know what God has said, and you better understand from the Word of God that you are not feeding people rotten spiritual food. Furthermore, it says, "Those with the gift of ministering are to do it with the enablement that God gives to do that ministry, not in the power of your old sin nature." Such Christian service, done through the guidance of the Holy Spirit and your spiritual gifts, will bring glory to the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ, Peter says. It is not possible to obey this Scriptures, obviously – you cannot speak as the oracle of God with the gift of teaching and of exhorting (where that speaking factor comes in); you cannot serve with the gift of mercy, and of ministering, and of faith, and all these other gifts – you cannot serve like that, obviously, unless you know that you have that gift.

I'm stressing this today because there is a powerful movement in evangelical circles, in the Dallas Metroplex area, which is telling people that the Bible never suggests that you should worry about knowing what your spiritual gift is. Just go about learning how to be a good Christian, and getting to be mature, and everything will work out OK. That's not true. And it comes from the highest teaching echelons of the evangelicals in this city. It is a false concept, but vast, smug, introspective, powerful congregations have been built on this concept: "We don't have to concern ourselves with spiritual gifts – only about being good Christians, and enjoying our life with God who prospers us." It is not enough to grow spiritually mature through the knowledge and the application of doctrine. You also have to know the way in which you are equipped to serve with that spiritual maturity. That's the fallacy of that argument. It's not enough to be spiritually mature.

There are plenty of spiritually mature people who, unfortunately, have missed the boat on spiritual gifts, and they're way out in left field do their thing, and not God's things. You have to find your spiritual gift. And I think that these two verses, and the admonition they give us, make it very clear that you cannot obey them unless you know how God has equipped you to serve. Psychology is being substituted for Bible doctrine principles, and with occupation with Christ, and that is not what we are called to do.

Furthermore, there is the promise that you should not take this lightly. It is easy to read this Scripture, and to say, "Yeah, I'm for that, and I sure believe that, and I'm glad that that's true." Matthew 25:23 says, "His lord said unto him, "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a few things. I'll make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of the Lord." It is no small thing that you and I should be concerned of someday enjoying this divine commendation: "Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of the Lord. You've been on the job faithful." In what way? With your spiritual gift, so that you have set in motion a reservoir of divine good production that has resounded to the glory of God and the blessing of the people of God. And He says, "Now I am ready to reward you with greater responsibility." And He's talking about what's going to happen out there in the millennium with all you people who have been burning up your life in God's service, and using your spiritual gift to His glory, and being regular participants in this ministry: people we could count on, and people who knew they had to be at these services to be fueled spiritually, to be equipped to serve in a way that they could receive such a commendation.

This is going to be very important to you someday. We gather today in an auditorium, which is the result of a gift of investment on the part of a man who is interested in God's work, and who is interested in the things that we are doing. A few months ago, he came by before a Sunday morning service, and we sat chatting over in the kitchen, and he was reminiscing about the days passed, and how all the thing had evolved out of this Berean ministry from that little corner building when he and I used to sit in that little auditorium that is now the academy library. It is crude and unfinished. There are gas pipes running across the floor. It has no floor except the sub-floor. It has no washrooms except the bushes. I mean, those were the good old days. And I kid you not. That's how it worked. And we talked about how we had proceeded to develop this. And one thing led to another, to what is here, of all things, the Berean ministry, that even affects people in other parts of the world. A prison guard in Kentucky is sitting in his gun tower, and he writes us letters of what the grace of God is doing to him through the Word of God, because Berean church sends it out.

I said to our friend that someday I think he will discover that the finest investments, since he was a man of material resources, and he placed great material financial aid into God's work in a variety of places – so, someday, he would find that indeed some of the finest investments he had made were in the Berean ministries, because it wasn't just in his day. It grew into a thing that has continued, and it has accumulated rewards for him, because of the things he enabled God's work to do at a pioneer stage of getting started.

Last week, as he drove down the highway, a 16-wheeler plowed into the side of the car he was driving in, and he instantly entered the presence of the living God. He was ready to hear, "Well done," or he was ready to hear what? How it could have been. That's how life goes. In a moment, when it is least-expected, and when you're least-thinking about it, someplace down the line, you're going to be ready to get your report card.

Our children in the academy have enough sense to know that, when the six-week period comes to an end, it's time to really knuckle down, because that report card is going to come, and they're going to be taking it home, and they're going to hear from their parents, "Well done, good and faithful little servant. Or, they're going to hear, "Let's have a talk this evening, my little failing friend."

Would that we had the good judgment and wisdom of our children. But the Lord pointed that out to us, didn't He? The kids are smarter in their childish faith and confidence in authority than we adults who should know better. Matthew 25:23 – take it to heart, and it will help you to make a lot of decisions in life that will stand you in good stead. Employ these promises and your spiritual gifts in fulfilling the works that God has specifically allotted to you. Ephesians 2:10 says that God has a program of good works specifically designed for you.

It is then the will of God for Christians to know and use their spiritual gifts in their allotted lifetime. That is the will of God for you. Learn your gift. Find your gift. Use your gift. Whatever else may be said, that is the will of God for you. That's why this series of studies is so important. And those who are absent are probably going to live to regret it, because it is a learning; it is a reviewing; and, it is a refreshing of our minds that is so easy to slip away from, so that we waste the life that God has given us.

Here in Romans 12, the apostle Paul calls upon Christians to offer their human bodies to God for His use. The sacrifice of one's body is to be accompanied by the renewing of the mentality from human viewpoint to divine viewpoint. The mind is renewed through the learning of Bible doctrine, which by faith is stored in the believer's living human spirit. This then enables the Christian to pursue God's perfect will for his life by fulfilling his divinely ordained set of good works in the body of Christ, through the use of his spiritual gifts. Some spiritual gifts do carry more authority. They are more prominent. And in some respects, they are more necessary, such as teaching and instructing, but they all convey divine viewpoint, and they are therefore all equally important.

**Spiritual Gifts**

There are certain and spiritual gifts which we have looked at thus far. First, the evangelist, which is the special ability to reach to reach the lost with the gospel in an itinerant ministry. Secondly, the pastor-teacher, who is the elder in the local church, is to shepherd the congregation with the Word of God, and to supervise the local ministries. There is the gift of ministry, which is helping someone with the need to alleviate his suffering. This gift of ministering sanctifies your natural gifts in God's service. There is the gift of teaching, which is the explaining of divine viewpoint truth, so that it is understandable and applicable to the lives of believers. There is the gift of exhortation which enables a person to make pertinent application of doctrine in order to move believers into the will of God. There is the gift of giving, which is the capacity to provide large sums of money to do God's work. There is the gift of administration, which is the capacity to superintend a group of believers in an area of ministry to accomplish a spiritual task.

**The Gift of Mercy**

We now come to Romans 12:8. And we come to the gift of mercy, Paul says, "He that shows mercy with cheerfulness." The words "show mercy" looks like this in the Greek Bible: "eleeo." This word connotes the ability to exercise sympathy with the misery that another person is going through, and to help him in that misery. The word connotes a sensitiveness that a person is given by God the Holy Spirit, to ferret out those who need this kind of special attention and help. It is in the present tense, as all these gifts are, because it's telling us that we're supposed to use these all the time. It is active because we have to use it ourselves. And we have a spiritual principle being laid down here.

**Pity**

This is a gift which is reflecting one of the great characteristics of the living God. We, who have been made in His image, have been made in His likeness in this respect – in the fact of having the capacity to exercise mercy. Psalm 103:13: "As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him." The word "pity" is the word that explains the action of mercy. Mercy is the exercise of pity toward the person.

Isaiah 63:9 puts it this way: "In all their affliction, He was afflicted. And the angel of His presence saved them. In His love and in His pity, He redeemed them, and He bore them and carried them all the days of old." Here again is the emphasis on the part of the quality of pity that is in our God.

This is a Christian service then, which is rendered to those who are afflicted. They're sick; they're hungry; they're homeless; they're distressed; or, they're discouraged in some way. It is the capacity that some of you have to exercise a rapport with another's need, and to bring help and comfort to that person. This is much more than mere human kindness and charity. It is achieving a spiritual result with a future stability. The world is full of the welfare-state concepts. That is not the kind of mercy we're talking about. The world likes to use the word "compassionate," which is a human-effort production. But we're talking about accomplishing the same thing by a divine effort production. And that is where the gift of mercy comes in.

This is the capacity to get a person operational in life, and a walking with God spiritually. It is not just making a welfare case of him because you meet his immediate need. The work of mercy is what our society needs. And Christians who have this gift are needed out there in abundance – a visitor who lifts the spirit, and turns one's eyes to Jesus. Mercy is extended to those who have little status and little ability to repay. And when you do that, you may be sure that God is aware, and he will reward.

Matthew 10:42, therefore, says, "And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones, a cup of cold water, only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no way lose his reward." The gift of mercy is a gift that God honors greatly.

**Satisfied**

Furthermore, the apostle Paul says, "Those of you who have this spiritual gift, when you use it, you should do it with cheerfulness." The word "cheerful" is the Greek word "hilarotes." This word sort of gives away its meaning, because it sounds like "hilarity," and that's what it means. It means "cheerfulness." It comes from a Greek word which means "propitious" or "satisfied." So, it connotes a readiness to do the job. You are satisfied, or you are happy, to do the job that needs to be done.

There are indeed people who are willing to help others, but they do it grudgingly. There are people who are willing to help others, but they are stingy in doing it. God says that when you exercise this gift, you do it cheerfully, and you do it generously. You don't do it like the fable of the old woman that had the stranger who look like a bum, but who indeed was the king, who came into her hut and requested something to eat. She grudgingly said, "Well, I'll make you a cake here" – a little pancake type of thing. And she made one, and then said, "Oh, that's too big." And she put it aside, and made a smaller one. And she said, "Oh, no. That's too big." And she kept putting it down until she came down to a little speck, and then she could finally give that up. She was very disappointed to discover that she was dealing with the king, and that she had just lost a golden opportunity for a magnificent reward had she treated him with gracious, cheerful mercy, when he had a need that she was able to meet.

It is a pity when Christians, who have the means to exercise mercy, cannot do it with a generous, cheerful mind – a mind ready to do what needs to be done to help out, and to promptly welcome the opportunity to do so.

The gift of mercy in action is a sunbeam in the life of the afflicted. The Christian with the divine ability of this gift can lift the spirits of those who are down in a despondent mood for some reason, and get them going again. This gift must be under the direction of the Holy Spirit, or it will be abused by the con artists and the freeloaders in society today. You must use your gift of mercy (your willingness to shell out your money and your assistance) – you must do that under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, or the con artists of the religious world will take advantage of your gift. You see that obviously in evidence.

**The Gift of Faith**

Well, we're come through eight gifts that exist today. But the truth of the matter is: there are nine. And the apostle Paul, while he touches upon the subject of faith, when he tells us to respond, as God has dealt to each of us the measure of faith, he does not deal more specifically with the gift of faith. But that's number nine of the nine spiritual gifts that are in existence. So, to make the list complete, we're going to add that. The word "faith" is a Greek word "pistis," and we find that in one of the other lists that we have of spiritual gifts. This one is in 1 Corinthians 12:9 where, we read, "To another faith by the same Spirit of God." The word "faith," as you know, means trust in some magic. It is a synonym for the word "believe."

In Romans 12:3, Paul refers to the quality of faith in God's service: "For I say, through the grace given up to me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, according as God has dealt to every man the measure of faith." This is not a reference here to saving faith in Jesus Christ, such as we read about in the Ephesians 2:8. This refers to the super ability that some Christians have for trusting God to enable them to execute a mission to which he's called them. God calls us to many services and to many missions. Some Christians are called to the things that are very hard to commit yourself to. That takes an enormous confidence in God. It takes a special ability to be able to carry through. This is the gift of faith.

**Stephen**

All Christians have faith in God in the sense of part of the fruit of the Spirit of Galatians 5:22. And Christians increase their faith, as we have learned, through divine good works. But this gift is the capacity to move out with confidence in God's service, and to accomplish mission impossible. This is the sort of thing that we have reflected in Stephen in Acts 6:5 where, we read "And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit." They chose this man to be one of the first deacons. Acts 6:8 says, "And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people." Because Stephen had the gift of faith, he was able to launch out, and to perform great Christian service in the face of a great deal of antagonism and anger and rejection.

As you know, ultimately, it led to Stephen's own death. He became our first Christian martyr. In Acts 7:51-60, we read the expression of this man of faith who knew the God that he was dealing with, and therefore had, through his faith, the courage to proclaim to the religious leaders who had just murdered Jesus – to proclaim to them what they had been. Listen to him:

"You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears." There's no greater insult that you can give to a Jew than to call him uncircumcised. And here he is saying that you're uncircumcised spiritually. That is even a greater insult: "'You do always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted. And they have slain them who showed before of the coming of the Just One, of Whom you have been now the betrayers and murderers; who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.' When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up steadfastly to heaven, and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God and said, 'Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God.' And they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul."

Steven, the great man of faith, and the great man of confidence with God, could say, "I look up, and God has given me, because of my faith, a vision. And I see Jesus of Nazareth, Whom you murdered, standing at the right hand of God Himself – at the right hand of the throne of God. That was more than they could take. It happened to be true. But these foolish leaders thought it was false. So, they said, "We'll kill you like we killed Jesus."

"So, they stoned Stephen, as he was calling upon God, and saying, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' And he kneeled down and cried with a loud voice, 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.' And when he had said this, he fell asleep" – asleep in Jesus. This was a man of faith.

This gift is the capacity for unshakable confidence in God's provision, based on the promises of Scriptures and the assurance of the Holy Spirit. If you try to do Christian service with complete abandonment, without the gift of faith, it will lead to presumption. There are certain things that some of us are not equipped to do. We don't have the gift of faith to be able to meet the high challenge, and to take the high ground that only those with the gift of faith can face, and can come off victorious.

**George Mueller**

One of the all-time great men of faith was George Mueller, who conducted the orphanages in England, and who, early in his ministry, taking care of the stranded, abandoned children, George Mueller said, "I will never ask people for money. I will never speak to a single human being about what I need to do this work for these children. And if you read about the life and experiences of George Miller, you shake your head in wonderment. It was a commonplace thing for him to tell the servants, the workers in the orphanage, "Set the table for breakfast." They would say, "But Brother Mueller, we have no food at all." He would say, "God will provide it. He will not let our children go hungry. Set the table. Get the children ready." And it always happened. There was a knock at the door, and from one place or another: the baker; the butcher; or the candlestick maker, what was left over was delivered, and they had the meal. And he never asked anybody for money. He never told anybody.

I remember, as Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer used to tell us about Mueller's experiences in class at Dallas Seminary, he would say, "But do not attempt to imitate George Mueller. He had a gift of faith that was to be applied in that particular context." And then Dr. Chafer said, "If I were to try to live like George Mueller live, I would have starved long ago." And the strange thing about it is that Chafer himself was a man with a great gift of faith who would not ask the Christian public for funds for financing Dallas Seminary. He would never send out a letter that said, "This is our need." But when the need was there, he'd drag us all out of class, and take us down to the chapel, and say, "We need this much money. Let's have a prayer meeting." And we'd all go to prayer as this man of faith moved God through prayer to bring the funds that were needed in that school – funds that came through such men as our brother to whom you are indebted for this auditorium, who is now in the Lord's presence, who was a great help to Dallas Seminary.

So, this is a gift that you must not presume to have. But if you have it, you have a great burden of responsibility – a line of action which is inspired apart from the evidences, and the sensibleness, and the reasons. This is the time we need the Christian with the gift of faith when everything we see says, "Don't do this." but this person says, "This is what God wants us to do, and I'll take the flag and lead out."

It is the faith that enables a Christian to be well-adjusted in facing life. Hebrews 11 is an example of that kind of heroic living. One single believer with the gift of faith can preserve a whole local church from the paralysis of unbelief, and of fear in action. Great faith in yourself is the result of pushing Jesus Christ out. In the Laodicean church, they had enormous faith in themselves, but what they ended up with was pushing Christ out of their fellowship, as Revelation 3:17-20 tell us.

**Temporary Spiritual Gifts**

So, there are the nine permanent spiritual gifts that we have to work with today. To complete our study, I should mention for you temporary spiritual gifts, for which we have a bunch of rabbit-chasers in the Christian community today, who are still trying to find and to claim that they have. These gifts were necessary in the early era of the New Testament church. They were used by God to confirm the transition from Judaism to Christianity. They were necessary to collect the materials that constitute the New Testament Scriptures. But once the New Testament Scriptures were written, 1 Corinthians 13 tells us that these gifts that brought us these communications: prophecy; knowledge; tongues; and, so on, were to be phased out. We have a completed Scripture. We don't need these direct communications anymore.

So, I'll just briefly mention these temporary gifts for you. As you know, of course, there was the apostle. The apostle was the supreme spiritual authority in the New Testament church, and they became the writers, or their associates, of the New Testament books.

There was the gift of prophet. We do not have the gift of prophecy anymore. It was the supreme channel of revelation from God of church-age truth.

There was the gift of the word of wisdom. This was the ability to perceive divine viewpoint insights, to reveal the plan and the will of God in a certain situation where you did not have the Bible to guide you. Some people had a unique word of wisdom that they could give the congregation or individuals, to give them divine viewpoint on what to do in a certain situation.

There was also the gift of the world of knowledge. This was special revelation from God about a certain matter to guide the action of the believers. The word of knowledge was a kind of variation of the gift of prophecy, but it was a distinct gift – a special gift that enabled some people to get information from God to give to people who needed it in a certain circumstance.

There was the gift of discerning of spirits – the ability to determine the source and the truth of a doctrine which is proclaimed: whether it comes from God; or, from the demonic spirits.

There was the gift of miracles – the ability and will to override natural laws.

There was a gift of healing – the ability to produce instantaneous, complete, and permanent healing of the body, including the ultimate expression of the gift of healing, which if you can't do, you don't have to get the gift of healing, and that is to raise somebody from the dead.

The next one was the gift of tongues – the ability to speak real foreign languages that existed in the world, previously not known to the speaker.

And finally, the last temporary gifts was the interpretation of tongues. This was the ability to translate real foreign languages which were being spoken with the gift of tongues to those who did not understand that language. Paul says, "It's no good for you to get up and speak a foreign language in a congregation if those people don't understand the language, unless somebody has the gift of interpreting that language, so that he can get up and tell people what you have said. And because he can get up and tell people, we know you're not lying. If we let you interpret what you said, you may con us. But if he's got to get to understanding what you said, then we can believe that you are telling us something from God." Well, when we have the Bible, we don't need the gift of tongues, and we don't need anybody to interpret communication through languages.

**Identifying Spiritual Gifts**

It is always a question how we should identify our spiritual gifts. I would suggest that, first of all, if you want to identify your spiritual gift, and you're really interested in that, you have to make the decision that you do want to seek the will of God. That seems simple enough, but a lot of Christians do not really care about the will of God. They have their own personal program for life. A personal desire on your part to please and to serve your Heavenly Father above all else in life, is the first step in finding what your gift is. Once you decide that that's your priority, you're on your way. It is the principle of wisdom which we find in Matthew 16:24-27, which say, "What does it profit you if you get everything in life you wanted; you followed all the plans; and, you fulfilled everything you wanted to pursue, and then you find you've lost your life, meaning that you've lost the value of your life when you stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Well this wisdom principle says, "Decide what you're going to do with your life. Decide what priority number one is." Those of you who have your own program are not easily going to find your spiritual gifts. God's will, furthermore, indicates the spiritual gift that you possess. That's why you want to know His will. What God desires for a Christian to do, He will enable that Christian to do. So, God's will always corresponds to your spiritual gift.

**Know Bible Doctrine**

Secondly, you should know Bible doctrine. Spiritual gifts are governed by the objective principles of the Word of God. They are not governed by your subjective feelings or your opinions. This will protect you from trying to serve God with spiritual gifts which are no longer in operation. It prevents confusing your genetic abilities (your natural abilities) with spiritual abilities, so that you get sidetracked into human operations.

**Pray**

Third, to find your spiritual group, pray for divine guidance. Prayer is God's way of doing His work of guiding believers. In John 16:23-24, Jesus said, "From now on, whatever you want done, ask the Father in My Name, and if you have asked under the guidance of the Holy Spirit so that it is a legitimate prayer request, it will be granted. You're not asking God to give you a particular spiritual gift, but to identify the one you already possess. Guidance is the product of prayer. It is not the product of your feelings. James 1:5 tells us that those who lack wisdom (if you want information), ask God. He's glad to give it to you.

**Desire**

Number four, to find your spiritual work, you have to have a desire to serve with a specific spiritual gift. The Holy Spirit, who gives one a gift, will also incline your heart to want to serve in that capacity. It does not mean that the desire for a spiritual gift is an absolute indicator. It does mean that if you are not motivated in a particular service, then it is questionable that you have the gift to do that. Beware of Christian service which is performed from the sense of the obligation that it needs to be done. There are a lot of things in the local ministry that need to be done that you may not have the gift to do. And please do not confuse your inclination to do something with the fact that you do not think you have the gift to do something. There are many things that people do not want to do in a local church ministry, and they cover it up by saying that they do not have the gift to do. What they're telling us is that they do not have the information to do it. They just don't want to do it. But God says, "I'll give you a gift and I'll give you a desire to do it."

**Confirmation**

Number five: there should be confirmation by other believers that you possess a certain gift. On Pentecost, the individual believers could not see the mark of the Holy Spirit in the form of the cloven tongues of fire resting on their heads. But the other people could see that those tongues of fire were there. Therefore, the people had confirmed to them that the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and the filling of the Holy Spirit, had taken place in that individual. Other brethren in the church will recognize a spiritual gift in action through a believer. As a matter of fact, Christians in the local church will often spot the spiritual gifts as existing in a person before that person is aware of it himself. This confirmation of other believers serves as a check on your presumption to have a gift which you do not possess. It is certainly wrong to encourage a person to engage in Christian service which he is not gifted spiritually to perform. In time, if you do that, it becomes evident to him, and to everyone else. And there is a lot of disappointment and frustration, and it discourages the person from seeking to serve.

**The Evidence of Fruitfulness**

Then, one of the primary means of identifying the gift you have is evidence of truthfulness in the exercise of that spiritual gift. This takes us into such a serious area of consideration that we must save that for next time. But evidences of fruitfulness in the exercise of your spiritual gifts is of primary importance. After all is said and done, it is profitless for us to parade around and say, "I have this gift, and I can do this," if there is not the evidence of fruitfulness of productivity with that gift so that we can confirm: "Yes, indeed, you do have the capacity to do this spiritual activity."

However, the other side of that coin is that there are Christians among us who do have a spiritual capacity, and who do have a spiritual gift, and are producing zilch. But their fruitlessness is for some other reason. It is not because they don't have the gift. And that is the serious ground that we must tread next time – the cause of Christians fruitlessness, in spite of the fact that God has giving you a great capacity for using your life and saving it for all eternity through the rewards you will receive. You will stand there, and you will be judged for what you have done with your works; with your life; and, with your gifts, and you will hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant," or you will hear that you have lost an enormous amount of rewards, and the Lord will say, "I'm sorry, but your life has been one chain of a program of your own, of human-good and self-interest, and it never went anywhere." But at least you have heaven. And the tears will start flowing down your cheeks, and your memory will fly back to all those high times and great moments of life in which you invested yourself. And you will ask yourself, "Why did I not consider my spiritual gift, and why did I not take the trouble to make at least some effort to use it? We're going to try to answer that "why" next time, because it will be a sad moment for many Christians – gifted but fruitless.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1988

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