

LESSON 7



SPIRITUAL GIFTS GIVEN TO THE CHURCH

Scripture Texts: Ephesians 4:7-16; 1 Corinthians 12:7-16

Today we study a little further into the subject opened in last week's lesson. Not only officers and leaders in the church are qualified and placed by God. Every member of the body has a place to fill (1 Corinthians 12:7). The place is according to the ability God gives. Special abilities given by God to enable one to better do His work are called gifts of the Spirit. This is the factor that makes one a living, working part of the church. We bear much fruit unto Christ.

MEMORY VERSE: *"For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building."*
1 Corinthians 3:9

The Spirit's Gifts

Ephesians 4:7 **Unto every one of us is given grace**—the life of God—**according to the measure of the gift of Christ**. The Church of God is built by Christ. It is His body. To live it must have the life of Christ flowing throughout. The gift is different to different people (Romans 12:6). Men can give gifts and titles to one another, but only God can bestow spiritual gifts of ability to do the things of God.

Ephesians 4:8-10 When Christ **ascended up on high**. Several days after He arose from the dead, Christ ascended back to Heaven (Acts 1:9-11). He ascended as a conqueror. **He led captivity captive**. Sin that had captivated mankind was now captivated by the gift of God's dear Son. He made possible the giving of gifts to men. The greatest gift made possible by Christ's ascension is the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. It is important here that we point out that without one first receiving the gift, which is the Spirit, there can be no gifts given by the Spirit. The Spirit's coming makes possible the gifts of the Spirit we are considering.

The deity of Christ and the physical resurrection of Christ are two truths emphasized here. This is important in our lesson because it shows the power and authority He has to give gifts. The One who ascended had first come down from Heaven. The same One had descended into the grave, **into the lower parts of the earth**. Christ came from Heaven, fulfilled His earthly purpose and went back to Heaven to fulfill all things.

Perfection

Ephesians 4:11-13 What are some of the gifts given by the Spirit? He gave gifts, which made some **apostles**, some **prophets**, or **evangelists**, or **pastors and teachers**. The gifts are for the purpose of perfecting the church, Christ's body. The Bible, in many places, teaches that the body of Christ must be perfect (Matthew 5:48; 2 Corinthians 13:11; James 3:2). The church can be perfected only by the **perfecting of the saints** individually. The work is to go on until **we all come . . . unto a perfect man**. What is the standard of perfection we are to reach? **The measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ**. The whole church—all saints—is together the body of Christ. When each one is perfect in his place, with a perfect heart fulfilling God's purpose for him, then the whole body of Christ is a **perfect man**. Only as the ministries made possible by the Spirit's gifts are exercised as God intends are the members of the body perfected. Only as the saints' gifts are received can the ministries be exercised fully.

It is possible to become perfect in this life. Not as the world counts perfection—incapable of mistakes, without weaknesses or failures, or without possibility of falling back into sin. But this Scripture and others teach that saints

can and must be perfect as children of God—pure in heart, living without sin, with a disposition to wholly follow the Lord, having all qualities God intends to belong to His children.

No More Children

Ephesians 4:14-15 Another function of these ministries is to protect the church from heresy. As the saints are perfected by the teaching and work of their Spirit-directed leaders, they grow spiritually mature—**no more children**—and are not led astray by false teachings. Satan has his people busy continually forming new doctrines, twisting the Scripture and using clever arguments to deceive the weak. Many are deceived by these doctrines. But God's saints who are established in **faith** and **the knowledge of the Son of God**, are not deceived. They speak **the truth in love**. Instead of being led into false belief, they **grow up into him**—into Christ.

Gifts Differ

Ephesians 4:16 Let us look at the body of Christ as a whole. Beginning at Christ the head, drawing life from Him, **the whole body fitly (rightly) joined together (the members united) and compacted by that which every joint supplieth** (securely established by what each member supplies), **according to the effectual working in the measure of every part** (in proportion as each fulfills the work measured out to him), **maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love** (the body grows and matures, perfecting itself in the love of God). It is a beautiful church with a beautiful Head and beautiful members. Each member adds his part to the perfection of the whole body. Many members are needed for this beautiful body.

Make Yourself Available

First Corinthians 12:7-11 All saints may have gifts of the Spirit, but not all do have them. Why? If one desires to go to work in the body and become useful to God, one must make himself available for duty. When one says, "Here I am, Lord, use me," then God will give him work to do and it will add beauty to his experience with God, thereby adding beauty to the Church of God. This we call dedicating our lives to God's service. Some gifts of the Spirit make leaders. Others make other workers. There are gifts for every member (verse 7). The body needs many who pray and live godly lives.

Wisdom . . . knowledge . . . faith . . . miracles . . . prophecy . . . discerning of spirits . . . tongues . . . interpretation of tongues. By these the church is filled with the power of God. No doubt the greatest reasons for the lack of gifts of the Spirit in the church are ignorance of the possibility of having them, and the lack of prayer to receive them.

Whatever the size given to us, whether large for gifts of leadership and wide influence or smaller for more hidden services, our business is to keep the channel open between us and God that He may keep us filled with that which only He can supply.

JUST A THOUGHT

The Christian's life is the world's Bible.

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.
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