

NORTHEAST HOUSTON COMMUNITY CHURCH

Sermon: Spiritual Office, Part 1

Topic: Spiritual Gift or Spiritual Office

Scripture Text: Ephesians 4:11–16

04/27/2014

Quote: “Not only is diversity allowed within the People of God; it is expected.”

— Jeremy Myers, Skeleton Church

Ephesians 4:11–16 (NKJV) ¹¹ And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, ¹³ till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; ¹⁴ that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, ¹⁵ but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

Now after our anniversary celebration and Easter we will resume our study of the Holy Spirit and His gifts.

A very natural question one may have is "what are the gifts of the Holy Spirit? If you Google that question you will see many lists varying in type and number. I have seen teaching publications attempting to help people find their Spiritual gifts that are far ranging.

Over the years I have come to the conclusion that there is no, "set in stone", exhaustive list of Spiritual gifts.

Definition - Spiritual gifts are gifts of abilities (not necessarily talents) and knowledge given by the Holy Spirit as He sees fit to individual believers for the work of ministry, for spiritual activity and for the edifying and profit of the body of Christ when and as they are needed.

A source for my definition is in the passage we covered the last time we discussed gifts of the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:1, 4–7 (NKJV) ¹ Now concerning spiritual *gifts*, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant: ⁴ There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵ There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. ⁶ And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. ⁷ But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all:

We are not going to try and cover every possible spiritual gift there are because I believe they are unlimited. We will focus our attention on those listed as spiritual gifts in the Bible. This brings us to our first area of controversy.

There are five main passages I have heard used to identify and name spiritual gifts. In order of appearance they are:

Romans 12:3–8 (8)

Faith, Prophecy, Ministry, Exhortation, Teaching, Giving, Leadership and Mercy.

1 Corinthians 12:1, 4–14 (9)

Word of Wisdom, Word of Knowledge, Faith, Gifts of Healing, Working of Miracles, Prophecy, Discernment of Spirits, Different kinds of Tongues and the Interpretation of tongues.

1 Corinthians 12:28–31 apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles, *healings*, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues interpretation.

Ephesians 4:11 (4)

Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastor and Teachers

1 Peter 4:10–11 (2)

Speaking gifts and Ministering gifts

As the Spirit allows I plan to touch on everyone of these though not in excruciating detail and not in one sermon for each. (feel better? (*smile*)).

Before I can begin there has to be a separation. With some , here comes the first point of contention. In *Ephesians 4:11* do not believe that it includes "Gifts of the Holy Spirit".

V11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,

Ephesians is a letter from Paul to the church at Ephesus. Who is Paul talking about? Who is the "He" in the passage? It is Jesus.

Look at verse 7. I think this is where the confusion may start with some,
Ephesians 4:7 (NKJV) ⁷ *But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.*

The first thing I see is that the word gift is singular. To me this statement is referring to one gift. What is that gift? I believe it is the gift of GRACE give to all those who believe.

Ephesians 2:8–9 (NKJV) ⁸ *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.*

The gift of God, grace, was given to believers through faith in Jesus Christ so it became Christ's gift coming from God to us.

The next verse does speak of gift(s) Plural

Ephesians 4:8 (NKJV) ⁸ *Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men."*

I will make a concession here in order to move on. It could be said that the gifts being referenced here are the same gifts as the gifts of the Holy Spirit I am not sure because this is speaking of a

specific group and a specific time that is believed to have taken place during the 3 days Christ was in the tomb.

I don't believe it refers to believers because the Day of Pentecost had not yet come and that was the beginning of the work of the Holy Spirit.

These gifts could have been for the captives mentioned receiving grace, eternal life or some unknown gifts.

Romans make a grace and gift connection indicating that the gifts were not earned but freely given.

Romans 12:6 (NKJV) ⁶ 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;

But I will not contend on that point. It is a spiritual gift but not to an individual but to the church embodied in individuals

But I think verse 11 is more definitive on the subject.

Ephesians 4:11 (NKJV) ¹¹ And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.

"He Himself" refers to Jesus being the giver. What He gave is for some to be apostles, prophets, evangelist and pastors and teachers. These are titles of positions of ministry not spiritual gifts. Spiritual gifts were given to these selected individuals in order to do the work of their called ministry.

Apostles - Sent ones of Jesus Christ. Only those who had been with Jesus from the beginning of his ministry to his resurrection were qualified to be his apostolic witnesses (*Acts 1:21-22*). Paul qualified because he had seen the risen Christ (1 Cor 15:4-10).¹

In the infancy of the church the role of the Apostle was very important for they had intimate knowledge of Christ and were witness to His resurrection. They provided to the church a firsthand foundation of the Gospel and to build the church upon. During their time there was no written word to learn from so the Apostles filled that void.

Today it is doubtful that anyone qualifies as an Apostle of old. (witness to the resurrected savior) Some may claim to be "sent" by Jesus, but we all are. They don't claim to have seen Jesus after the resurrection, (I think).

I don't feel that Apostle is a spiritual gift but more of a spiritual office. What does the gift of Apostle do? Those that were in the office of an apostle had many of the spiritual gifts named as spiritual gifts, They healed, they performed miracles, taught, prophesied and other gifts. If the Holy Spirit has given these gifts among believers there is no need for them to be concentrated all in one individual.

¹ Elwell, W. A., & Comfort, P. W. (2001). *Tyndale Bible dictionary*. Tyndale reference library (96). Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

We do not need to hear from a witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ for we have the written word of God to put our faith in

Prophet - The word translated “prophet” seems to have the idea “called” as its first emphasis: God takes the initiative, selects, summons, and sends the prophet ² “Man of God” speaks of the relationship into which the prophet is brought by his call: he is now “God’s man” and is recognized as belonging to him ³.

Prophet was a title given to a man that was called by God to speak to the people of God and or to other men for the purpose of God. They were often allowed to foretell coming events for the purpose of God.

The most accurate prototype was Moses. Like the Apostle, the prophet manifested spiritual functioning gifts. They healed, performed miracles, had words of wisdom and knowledge and more. They like Apostles full of multiple spiritual gifts. At the peak of their presence there was no bible only the OT scriptures. Although the Bible names at least 14 people as being Apostles, there are not nearly that many named a prophets.

The convention manner in which the Gospel was spread back then was by word of mouth. *Romans 10:17 (NKJV)* ¹⁷ *So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

As the word of God including the Gospel became more available in its written form there seemed to be less of a need for Apostles and Old Testament type prophets and more of a need for teachers of the Word of God.

But the most effective way to spread the Gospel is still by word of mouth of us all.

I do not believe that the office of "prophet" exists today as it was back then. I do believe that there is a gift of prophecy (hearing a word from God to give to the people) but no more Elijah's, Elisha's and Moses.

Those that claim to be present day Apostles and Prophets I view with suspicion.

All the gifts given to the church through the Holy Spirit chosen people are to keep us grounded, edified and taught.

V14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,

Those that don't think they need church make themselves vulnerable to every wind and doctrine.

Message Scriptures: **Ephesians 4:11–16, 1 Corinthians 12:1, 4–7, Romans 12:3–8, 1 Corinthians 12:1, 4–14, 1 Corinthians 12:28–31, Ephesians 4:11, 1 Peter 4:10–11, Ephesians 4:7, Ephesians 2:8–9, Ephesians 4:8, Romans 12:6, (Acts 1:21–22). 1 Cor 15:4–10, Romans 10:17**

² Elwell, W. A., & Comfort, P. W. (2001). *Tyndale Bible dictionary*. Tyndale reference library (1085). Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

³ Elwell, W. A., & Comfort, P. W. (2001). *Tyndale Bible dictionary*. Tyndale reference library (1085). Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

END

EVERY BELIEVER IS GIVEN A GIFT

Excerpt from

The Master's plan for the church

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1991).

Every believer is given a gift, which is a means or channel by which the Spirit of God ministers to others. Comprehensive lists of all the gifts are in *Romans 12* and *1 Corinthians 12*, with references in *Ephesians 4* and *1 Peter 4*.

I like to think of spiritual gifts as divine enablement's. They are given to us by the Spirit of God with a sovereign design. The church is made up of many people. It functions like a body, and every person is a part of the body. The spiritual gifts we've been given blend together to enable the Body to function properly. Timothy had the gift of teaching. That's why Paul told him to teach, preach, command, and exhort. He was to do the work of an evangelist, making full proof of his ministry (2 Tim. 4:5). He was gifted in the areas of evangelism, preaching, teaching, and leadership—all blended together as his own unique spiritual gift.

Each of us has a least one spiritual gift, a blend of the different gifts the Spirit has put together for each of us. Like a painter who is able to create an infinite number of colors by mixing any combination of the ten or so colors he carries on his palette, so the Spirit of God blends a little of one gift with a little of another to create the perfect combination within you. As a result, you have a unique position in the Body of Christ, with an ability to minister as no one else can.⁴

⁴ MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1991). *The Master's plan for the church* (165). Chicago: Moody Press.