

THE FACT OF THE ACTUAL CHRISTIAN'S SPIRITUAL GIFT(S)

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by Thomas John Dexter
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The author implores checking his message against Scripture using the tools of biblical interpretation.
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The Scripture for this address tonight comes from the book of First Corinthians chapter 12 verses 4-11:

Now there are differences of gifts, but the same Spirit. [And] there are differences of ministries, and the same Lord. And there are differences of things-worked, but the same God working all things in all persons. And the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for our benefit.

For to one, a word of wisdom is given through the Spirit. And to another, a word of knowledge according-to the same Spirit. To a different one, faith by the same Spirit. And to another, gifts of healing by the one Spirit. And to another, things-worked by miracles. And to another, prophecy. And to another, discernments of spirits. To [a different] one, kinds of tongues. And to another, interpretation of tongues. But, the one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually, just as He wills.

A few points I'd like to make on this text.

Verse 4, "gifts." The gifts spoken of here are such that not one of us deserves the spiritual gift or gifts that we've been given freely. Any and all spiritual gifts are entirely unmerited by the recipient. We are completely undeserving of the spiritual gifts given to us by the Holy Spirit.

Verse 5, "there are differen[ces of] ministries." "Ministries" are different ways we can be of service to others. The "ministries" are the different spheres of service.

In verse 6, the "things-worked," "there are differences of things-worked." This means that there are different things that God accomplishes through different believers exercising their [different] spiritual gifts in different areas of service to others. So the question is this: What will God accomplish through the Christian who does not exercise his or her spiritual gift or gifts in an area of service to others, particularly in the area of service in the local church as this is the context here in chapters 12-14?

[Verse 6,] it is "the same God working all things in all persons." The context limits "all persons" here to be speaking of the actual Christians. Actual Christians are given free gifts by the Holy Spirit.

"To each one" in verse 7. "And the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for our benefit." This documents clearly that each and every single actual Christian has been called by God to and gifted by the Holy Spirit for some field of Christian ministry, some field of Christian service. There are no exceptions. Each and every one of us in this room tonight who [has] genuinely been reborn, we have been given freely by the Holy Spirit at least one gift, at least one. There are no exceptions. All of us have been gifted.

And gifted for what?

[Verse 7,] gifted "for our benefit." This is not talking about personal, private benefit. The Holy Spirit does not gift the Christian for the purpose of private and personal edification. The gift or gifts that each of us [has] been given freely are not for our own good, but they're for the common good, the common good of the local church body, the common good of the Christian community. They are for the benefit of all. And, again, contextually, for the benefit of the local church.

Verses 8-10 list some of the spiritual gifts, but the spiritual gifts themselves [are] not the focal point of my address tonight; that is another matter for another time. The focus tonight is the fact that each individual believer *has been gifted*. The text is unambiguous. Everyone who has been genuinely reborn by God has been gifted supernaturally by the Holy Spirit.

How so?

[Verse 11,] "just as He wills." What this means is that we are not going to get a gift that the Holy Spirit has not determined to give us. We may want certain gifts but if God has determined not to give us those things we will not receive them. So let us operate the gifts that we do have and let us not

try to operate gifts that we do not have because doing such could be detrimental to the [local church] body.

Verses 12 and following talking about being part of the body of Christ: If someone says, "Well, God made me a foot, but I want to be an eye; I don't like being a foot, so I'm going to make myself an eye instead." Well, no one deserves to be a part of the body in the first place. No one of us deserves to have been saved. No one of us deserves to have been gifted supernaturally by the Spirit of God.

If someone says, "I don't know what my spiritual gifts are!" Well, this may be a legitimate question, but it's something that's to be dealt with at another time. It's another subject for another time.

In the meantime though, I can tell you right now, I can tell each and every single one of you that [are] present in this room right now, I can tell you one thing for sure that God wants to accomplish through you, if you are one of His, if you are an actual Christian, if you have been reborn by God. There is one thing I can tell you for sure that God wants to accomplish through you as an individual and through us as a local church body. First Timothy chapter 2 verses 3 and 4:

[Our Savior God] . . . desires all people to be saved, and to come to *the* knowledge of *the* truth.

If we want to know what God's will for our life is, this is an insight into the will of God. "God . . . desires all people to be saved." This being insight into God's will, let us pray accordingly. Let us pray that God place us where He can best use us to draw sinners to Himself. Seek to be placed where to Him our life will matter the most. It's not about us and where we want to be and what we want to do. If God desires all people to be saved, then let us seek His will as to where He wants to place us so that He may use us to draw others to His Son so that they may be saved.

Seeing as how that is very clearly the will of God, I'll offer a challenge to each Christian here tonight: On the way out tonight just pop by the tract foyer. Take one Gospel tract. And if we're not as courageous as others are but, even if we don't give it to someone personally, when we're taking an elevator we can just drop it in the elevator. If we go to the grocery store we can place it on one of the shelves. We can get the Gospel into the hands of many, many people. And so I would challenge each Christian here to just take one, just *one* tract, and distribute it somewhere to someone—but not to another Christian. If you're going to give it to someone, do not give it to another Christian. Get it into the hand of a loved one who needs salvation because if someone didn't do that for us, if someone had not shared the Gospel with us, how would we have been saved?