

SPIRITUAL GIFTS, Part 1

God has work for you to do.

While our works are not required for salvation, that being appropriated by faith alone totally apart from any human works, that isn't quite the case after salvation. I refer you to Ephesians 2:8 and 9, that passage that so clearly states works do not save and ask you to focus on the verse 10 that follows.

Eph 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ **not a result of works**, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus for good works**, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

God has work for you to do. In the world of the Christian there are two kinds of works: One we called "human good," which are works done by man for the glorification of man ("filthy rags" according to Isaiah 64:6). In the case of human good, man is attempting to gain divine favor through things he does in the hope God will be impressed and bless his efforts. God cannot be bribed. This is the "works" mentioned in Ephesians 2:9 above that can't save us. (See also Ro. 3:20; 3:27-28; 4:2; 9:11; 2 Tim. 1:9; and Tit 3:5.)

The second kind of works we will define as divine good or works done by the believer through the divine leading and enablement of the Holy Spirit for the glorification of God. In the case of divine good, man is NOT glorified. The works (divine good), which are done under the leading and power of the Holy Spirit is the "good works" mentioned in Ephesians 2:10 above. And note my statement in the first sentence of this paragraph: This is "divine good or works done by the believer through the divine leading and enablement of the Holy Spirit for the glorification of God." Both of these "works" are spoken of in the Bible besides in the Ephesians passage we just looked at. Often the context is the only way to tell which is in view.

But, but, but ... what in the world is James 2:17-26 talking about?

James 2:17 So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

¹⁸ But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. ¹⁹ You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! ²⁰ Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? ²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? ²² You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; ²³ and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness” —and he was called a friend of God. ²⁴ You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. ²⁵ And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? ²⁶ For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

This passage is one of the more difficult in Scripture. The "legalists," those who insist works are necessary for salvation, point to it and say, "See, I told you so!" Trouble is they take the numerous passages that contradict the works-for-salvation premise and toss all of them out in favor of what they think they see in James 2. That is like saying I have fifty people who say “yes” and one who says “no,” therefore the answer must be “no”. The problem for the legalists is they never once consider the possibility their interpretation of James 2 may be incorrect or that James is not even talking about salvation. James is, in fact, talking about the life of the believer AFTER salvation. James is not saying works are necessary to save (worthless human good) but he is referring to works (divine good) that are a natural *expected* product of someone who is saved by faith. James is saying that by their divine good they *prove* their salvation.

I really don't like that word “prove” used by some to describe what the works James is speaking of do for the believer. The word “prove” carries a sense of requirement. While these post-salvation works (divine good) are indeed called for (we were “created in Christ Jesus for good works”), they are not a requirement after the fact in order for salvation to be efficacious. Some people who accept Christ as their personal Savior, thus are born again, never produce much of anything by way of divine good after they are saved. That may be because they never really get a grip on the concept of a spiritual life and how it is lived by faith in the power of the Holy Spirit. There can be many reasons for that from really poor

discipleship in the local church, which is common today, to being distracted back into carnality by the influence of others around them. These works (divine good) are *expected* but are not always forthcoming.

A good example of that distraction might be someone who is addicted to drugs. If they never get away from that environment and those who inhabit it, it will be a monumental struggle for the new believer to find success as a Christian, especially if they never develop an understanding of the power available to them in the indwelling Holy Spirit or how to tap into that power. There is that poor teaching thing again. This is why I think a better way of expressing this idea might be, "this divine good *testifies* to their salvation".

James then gives two extreme examples that are so obvious that they cannot be denied as *testimony* that the person performing the "works" was saved by faith, because that faith in God was so strong as to manifest itself in extreme ways. The two examples cited by James are Abraham and Rahab.

Rahab and her story is in Joshua 2. She was a prostitute in Jericho and she hid the Israelite spies from those searching for them. She told them in verse 11, "for the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath." She had faith that God was the one true God and that He had given the land to the Israelites. Her risking her life for them was *testimony* to the faith that had saved her.

The second example is Abraham. He *testified* to his faith in God when he was prepared to offer up his son Isaac as a sacrifice as commanded by God. But God had previously promised many things through Isaac, and those promises could not be fulfilled if Isaac was dead. Abraham knew that God would raise up Isaac, if necessary, to fulfill His promises. Abraham went up on that mountain that day confident he would come back down with a live Isaac. Using the same faith that provided his salvation many years before, Abraham's actions *testified* to that faith when he was prepared to sacrifice Isaac as commanded. God, of course, stopped Abraham before he slit Isaac's throat and provided a ram to sacrifice instead.

Interestingly, Paul uses this very same reference to Abraham in Romans 4:1-5 to prove salvation by faith alone.

Rom 4:1 What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? ² For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³ For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.” ⁴ Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. ⁵ And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness...

Paul is viewing Abraham's faith without works (in this case referring to human good) as saving him. James then is saying, "Yes, and that faith manifested itself in works (divine good), Abraham trusting that God would not kill Isaac even if Abraham went as far as slitting his throat as a sacrifice called for by God." Paul is speaking of human good and James is speaking of divine good that testifies to the presence of saving faith.

Note verse 20 "...faith apart from works is useless." Some translate "useless" as "dead". The Greek is a word that means idle or lazy. What is implied is, if that faith that saved you accomplishes nothing more after it saved you, it is idle and useless.

Verse 24 says, "You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone." Justified is the present passive indicative of *dikaioō*, here should be translated not "is made righteous" or "justified" but "is shown to be righteous" (WPNT). The passage does not imply that salvation faith without works is alone and thus useless for salvation. It says the faith that saved, if without works (the divine good that follows salvation), it is left alone. That faith is idle and rendered useless in the spiritual life of the believer.

What we can draw from this brief study is that salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone, and the natural expectation of salvational faith is for it to produce divine good after salvation. It is possible that almost any deed, no matter how beneficial it is to another, can be either divine good or human good. It depends on the spiritual status and the motivation of the person performing the act. Without that insight, it is impossible for a casual observer to tell which it is. Faith is the force behind the deed. The deed is the finality of the faith, be it salvation or divine good. The ideal for the child of God is that it is expected that he/she will produce divine good for the glorification of God. Not only does God expect a lifestyle of a supremely

higher calling, but He has work for you to do! God's work is the functioning of your spiritual gift, and He expects that you will use that spiritual gift for His purposes. Lack of such does not mean they aren't saved, although that is a possibility. And that is James' point. They may have had the faith to be saved but with no spiritual production after salvation that saving faith is left alone—and James is saying that should not be.

God has work for you to do, and Satan will do all he can to distract you from it! That work He has for you to do is mainly captured in the spiritual gift(s) you receive from the Holy Spirit.

What exactly are these spiritual gifts?

1 Cor 12:4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵ and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; ⁶ and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. ⁷ To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸ For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

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²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. ²⁸ And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. ²⁹ Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰ Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹ But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

Eph 4:11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the

faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴ so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

Every believer receives at least one spiritual gift at salvation (1 Cor 12:7). Some receive more than one, and they can operate simultaneously or sequentially with one operational as a young believer and one or more later with spiritual maturity. Much like the process of enduement in the OT, these special gifts come from the Holy Spirit to empower/enable the one gifted for certain ministries in the body of Christ. They are given by the Spirit for “the common good” (1 Cor 12:7) and “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (Eph 4:12).

1 Cor 12:11 All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

Which gift we receive is NOT our choice; the Spirit apportions them to us according to God’s will and good pleasure. There is no suggestion that these gifts are human generated or empowered, quite the opposite. These gifts are grace gifts undeserved and unearned that come freely distributed to believers by the Spirit. They are completely driven and empowered by the Spirit.

Rom 12:4 For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶ Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷ if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸ the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

1 Cor 12:12 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

¹⁴ For the body does not consist of one member but of many. ¹⁵ If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? ¹⁸ But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. ¹⁹ If all were a single member, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

²¹ The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” ²² On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³ and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, ²⁴ which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, ²⁵ that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶ If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

In these two passages, Paul likens the Body of Christ to a person’s body and its various parts. The spiritual gifts don’t function alone but rather function together to support the whole body. Each gift is important for the functioning of the Church. Paul says, “...God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.” (1 Cor 12: 18-20) Not everyone has the same gift, and none of the gifts are unimportant.

Though they often are, these gifts are not necessarily based on the believer’s natural talents, which are also gifts from God. You may have zero natural ability to execute your spiritual gift, but that is not a problem for God. God the Holy Spirit will provide everything you need to execute whatever you are being called to do—everything you need! God will supply whatever logistical support, training, skillsets, physical assets, and finances—anything that is needed for you to successfully execute your spiritual gift. You need only supply your faith and follow your calling.

And then we have this —

2 Cor 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

This passage is, of course, the Bema judgment of believers—not judgment of the lost. Let’s dispense with that term “good or evil” first. “Good” is *agathos*, which is good of intrinsic value beyond the sum of its parts. “Evil” is *phaulos*, which means ordinary, worthless, of no account even ethically wicked. These two words used in this context are referring to divine good (*agathos*) and (*phaulos*) human good—not sin. It is the believer that is being evaluated here, and what is being evaluated is directly related to your spiritual gift(s). The question asked at this Bema judgment is what did you do with those spiritual gifts and all the assets God gave you to use, that is the logistical support you need, training, skillsets, physical assets, and finances—anything that is needed for you to successfully execute your spiritual gift in the after-salvation, Spirit-led and enabled work (divine good) you were called to do?

So, not only is there after salvation work expected of you, but you are going to be graded for it.

1 Cor 3:10 According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. ¹¹ For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— ¹³ each one’s work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. ¹⁴ If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

This is directed to believers (v9, 11) and pictures events at the Bema judgment. Your works will face the fire test. Human good will be as “wood, hay, and straw” and will burn up, but if your works are “gold, silver, and precious stones” (divine good), it will survive the fire test and you will receive rewards in Heaven—“If the work that anyone has built on the

foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire" (v14-15). Your salvation is NOT in question here. "**He himself will be saved,**" like a burning stick snatched from a fire.

Meanwhile, concerning your spiritual gift(s) and knowing which one you have, is NOT our choice; the Spirit apportions them to us according to HIS will and good pleasure. I never for a moment thought I might have the gift of teaching. For nearly 15 years after I was saved, I often wondered what my spiritual gift was. Turns out God was training me during that time and holding me back until I was ready. When several of my male friends and I decided to start a home Bible class, the study material we wanted to use was temporarily unavailable. After weeks of attempting to get it (the author was out of the country and failed to return calls), I gave up and said I would "try" to pull something together. I was clumsy at it at first, and in some ways I still am, but the Holy Spirit has bombed me with source materials, commentaries, Bibles, advanced computer software, and great teachers that I needed to prepare these lessons.

What I am saying is don't get discouraged if it isn't obvious what your spiritual gift is, and don't try to force it. Don't get involved in some of these online "tests" that supposedly determine your spiritual gift by answering a battery of questions. This will be on God's timing, and He may be simply training and preparing you for your mission. He will let you know what it is and when it is time. Meanwhile, study, grow spiritually, and look for opportunities to evangelize friends and serve in your local church or community, **BUT** listen for God's guiding in this matter. He will open the door when it is time, and as crazy as that open door may look, as it did for me, you must walk through in faith. God will handle the details.

The Gifts

There are two passages of Scripture, the Ephesians 4 passage and the 1 Corinthians 12 passage we looked at above, that give us a list of spiritual gifts. There are other singular mentions of gifts here and there in the Bible. What we do find in Scripture should not be considered as a conclusive list of gifts. As we look through them, you will notice they all serve different purposes.

Missionary – It is the special gift given by the Holy Spirit to certain members of the body of Christ to minister whatever other spiritual gifts

they have (like evangelizing, teaching, service) in a second culture or second community. (1 Corinthians 9:19-23)

Intercession – It is the special gift whereby the Spirit enables certain Christians to pray for extended periods of time with great positive effect for the building of the Kingdom. (1 Thessalonians 3:10-13, 1 Timothy 2:1-2)

Craftsmanship – It is the special gift whereby the Spirit endows certain Christians to use their hands and minds to build up the Kingdom through artistic creative means. We saw examples of this in the artisans that created the worship items associated with the Tabernacle and Temple in Israel. (Exodus 28:3-4)

Hospitality – It is the special gift whereby the Spirit enables certain Christians to open their homes willingly and offer lodging, food, and fellowship cheerfully to other people. (Genesis 18:1-15)

Faith – (Pistis) - Persuasion, moral conviction of a spiritual truth or the truthfulness of God. It is the special gift whereby the Spirit provides Christians with extraordinary confidence in God's promises, power, and presence so that they can take heroic stands for God's work in the church. (Hebrews 11)

Discerning Spirits – Two words. (Diakrisis) - Judicial estimation, discern, judging by evidence whether or not of God. (Pneuma) - Literally, a breath or breeze; figuratively, a spirit. It is the special gift whereby the Spirit enables certain Christians to know with assurance whether some behavior or teaching is of God or of Satan. (Acts 5:3-6, Acts 16:16-18) NOTE: There is some debate about this gift regarding whether or not it is still active. We will discuss this later in the series.

Mercy – (Eieeo) - Compassionate by word, deed, or divine grace. Assumes need on the part of the one who receives it and resources adequate to meet the need by the one who shows it. It is the special gift whereby the Spirit enables certain Christians to feel exceptional empathy and compassion for those who are suffering so that they devote large amounts of time and energy to alleviate it. (Luke 10:30-37)

Giving – (Metadidomi) - To give over, share or impart. (Meta - with.) As distinct from didomi - giving). Marked by liberality or generosity. These people perceive the need and meet it. Not necessarily financial. It is the special gift whereby the Spirit enables certain Christians to offer their material blessings for the work of the church with exceptional willingness, cheerfulness and liberality. (2 Corinthians 8:1-5)

Administration – (Kubernesis) - Directorship, government (Kobernao - to steer, or pilot). Metaphorically, for those who steer or guide people. It is the special gift whereby the Spirit enables certain Christians to understand the goals of a given segment of the Church's ministry and to direct that area effectively, keeping the Church on course. (Acts 12:12-21)

Leadership – (Proistemi) - To stand before (in rank), to preside. To attend to indicating care and diligence. Must be above reproach, with a servant's heart, sound doctrine. An example to those who follow them. It is the special gift whereby the Spirit enables certain Christians to motivate, direct and inspire God's people in such a way that they voluntarily and harmoniously work together to do the Church's work effectively. (Hebrews 13:7, Judges 3:10, Exodus 18:13-16)

Helps or Serving – Helps (Antilepsis) - Signifies a laying hold of (Anti - in exchange, or in front, Lambano - to take hold of so as to support). Service (Diakonia) - Aide, service, attendant, servant. It is the spiritual gift whereby the Spirit empowers certain Christians to willingly bear the burdens of other Christians and help them in such a way that they can do their tasks more effectively. (Acts 6:2-4; Gal 6:1-2)

Wisdom – (Sophia) - Used of worldly or spiritual wisdom with reference to human wisdom in spiritual matters. It is the special gift whereby the Spirit endows particular Christians with an understanding of God's will and work as it relates to the living of life.

Exhortation – (Paraklesis) - A calling to one's side hence an appeal, an encouragement, a consolation or comfort. It is the special gift whereby the Spirit enables certain Christians to stand beside fellow Christians in need and bring comfort, counsel and encouragement so they feel helped. (Acts 11:23-24, Acts 14:21-22)

Music – It is the special gift whereby the Spirit enables certain Christians to praise God through various forms of music and enhance the worship experience of the local congregation. (1 Corinthians 14:26, Mark 12:36)

Teacher – (Didaskalia) - Instruction, the function or the information, doctrine, learning, teaching. It is the special gift whereby the Spirit enables particular Christians to communicate the truths of God's Word so that others can learn. (Hebrews 5:12-14)

Pastor – Pastor/Shepherd (Poimen) - A shepherd, (Didaskalos) - An instructor, master teacher. One who tends herds or flocks, not just feeding but also leading. Implies watch care, being with the flock, seeing to the safety of the flocks, and going after sheep who have wandered away. Feeds spiritual flock on God's truth. It is the special gift whereby the Spirit enables certain Christians to assume responsibility for the spiritual welfare of a group of believers. (1 Peter 5:1-11)

Evangelist – Euaggelistes) - A preacher of the gospel. Announces good news. Brings glad tidings. (eu - well, angelos - messenger) It is the special gift whereby the Spirit enables particular Christians to share the Gospel to unbelievers in such a way that the unbeliever becomes a disciple of the Lord Jesus. (Acts 8:26-40)

Some of you have already identified your calling or ministry and have found it listed here in one or more of the gifts. Some of you may have just realized your gift has been functioning without you even knowing that was the case. Successful execution of your gift now may mean you will be called to even more challenging expressions of your gifts later or even called to other gifts later in your walk with God. It is easy to become distracted. Focus! Someone once said, “Just because you see a need doesn’t mean you are the designated solution.” Let God lead you.

We will stop here for now. And you have probably noticed there are several spiritual gifts left off this list. That was intentional, as they need special consideration. We will begin a study of those next session.