

Spiritual Gifts, Part 1

2025

God has work for you to do.

Ephesians 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.

Our works are not required for salvation, which is appropriated through faith alone, totally apart from any human works. Our works do not produce salvation. However, works are a *product of* salvation. Ephesians 2:8 and 9 so clearly states that works do not save, but I ask you to focus on verse 10 that follows.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are his workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus for good works**, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

“Created for good works.” God has work for you to do, but what kind? In the world of the Christian, there are two types of works. One type is referred to as “human good,” which involves actions performed by individuals to glorify themselves. In the case of human good, people seek to gain favor, whether divine or earthly, hoping that God or others will be impressed and bless their efforts. Alternatively, it may simply be done because it gives the worker a warm, fuzzy feeling inside—self-gratification. God cannot be bribed. This human good is the type of “works” mentioned in Ephesians 2:9 that cannot save us. (See also Romans 3:20; 3:27-28; 4:2; 9:11; 2 Timothy 1:9; and Titus 3:5.)

The second kind of work we will define as divine good, or works performed by the believer through the divine leading and enablement of the Holy Spirit for the advancement of the Kingdom and the glorification of God. In the case of divine good, the aim is not the glorification of man. The “good works” mentioned in Ephesians 2:10 are divine good. Both of these “works” are referenced in the Bible in addition to the Ephesians passage we just examined. Often, context is the only means to discern which type of work is being referred to.

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.

The legalists—those who insist that works are necessary for salvation—point to it and say, “See, I told you so!” The trouble is that they ignore the numerous passages contradicting the works-for-salvation premise, favoring instead what they believe they see in James 2. That is akin to claiming I have fifty people who say “yes” and one who says “no”; therefore, the answer must be “no.” The problem for the legalists is that they never consider the possibility that their interpretation of James 2 may be flawed or that James might not even be discussing salvation. James is, in fact, addressing the life of the believer *after* salvation. He is not asserting that works are necessary *for* salvation; that would be human good. He is referring to works (divine good) that are the natural, expected product of someone who *has been* saved by faith. James states that through their divine good, they *demonstrate* their salvation. This is why I believe a better way to express this idea might be, “This divine good *testifies* to their salvation.”

While these post-salvation works (divine good) are indeed called for (we were “created in Christ Jesus *for* good works”), they are not required to make salvation effective. Some people who accept Christ as their personal Savior and are thus born again never produce much of anything by way of divine good after being saved. This may be because they never fully grasp

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 this, ranging from inadequate discipleship in the local church to being distracted back into carnality by the influence of those around them. These works (divine good) are expected but are not always forthcoming.

A good example of this distraction could be someone who is addicted to drugs. If they remain in that environment and among those who inhabit it, it will be a monumental struggle for the new believer to find success as a Christian, particularly if they do not develop an understanding of the power available to them through the indwelling Holy Spirit and how to access that power.

James provides two striking examples that are undeniable as evidence that the individuals performing the "works" were saved by faith. Their faith in God was so strong that it was manifested in remarkable ways. Their actions testified to their saving faith. The two examples cited by James are Abraham and Rahab.

Rahab's story is found in Joshua 2. She was a prostitute in Jericho and hid the Israelite spies from those searching for them. In verse 11, she told them, "For the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath." She had faith that God was the one true God and that He had given the land to the Israelites. Her willingness to risk her life for them testified to the faith that had saved her.

The second example is Abraham. He testified to his faith in God when he was willing to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice as commanded by God. However, God had previously made many promises through Isaac, and those promises could not be fulfilled if Isaac were dead. Abraham believed that God would raise Isaac from the dead if necessary to fulfill His promises. That day, Abraham ascended the mountain with confidence that he would return with a living Isaac. Utilizing the same faith that provided his salvation many years earlier, Abraham's actions testified to that faith when he was prepared to sacrifice Isaac as commanded. God, of course, stopped Abraham before he could harm Isaac and provided a ram to sacrifice instead. His testimony was not to God, who already knew in eternity past what was in Abraham's heart. His testimony concerning his faith was to you and me.

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

Romans 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 views Abraham's faith without works (human good) as sufficient for salvation. James is saying that saving faith manifested itself in works (divine good), as demonstrated by Abraham's trust that God would not kill Isaac. Paul speaks of human good when he says, "If Abraham was justified by works." The word "if" is in the first-class condition in Greek and assumed to be true for the sake of argument, though it is untrue in fact. It should be understood to mean, "If Abraham was justified by works, but he was not..." In contrast, James discusses divine good that *testifies* to the presence of saving faith.

Note James 2:20: "...faith apart from works is useless." Some translate "useless" as "dead." The Greek word implies idleness or laziness. What is suggested is that if the faith that saved you accomplishes nothing further *after* saving you, it is idle and useless.

James 2:24 states, "You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone." The term "justified" is the present passive indicative of *dikaioō* and should be translated not as "is made righteous" or "justified" but rather as "is shown to be righteous." The passage does not suggest that faith without works is alone and, therefore, useless for salvation. It indicates that the faith that saves remains alone if it is devoid of works, the divine good that *follows* salvation. Such 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. Any deed, regardless of its benefits to others, can be categorized as either divine good or human good. This

categorization depends on the spiritual status and motivation of the individual performing the act. Without this insight, a casual observer cannot discern the nature of the act.

It is expected that the child of God 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 primarily manifested in the exercise of your spiritual gift, and He expects you to use that gift for His purposes. The absence of such divine production does not necessarily indicate that they aren't saved, although that is a possibility. However, James' point is that they may have had the faith to be saved, but without spiritual production after salvation, that saving faith is left alone—and that should not happen.

God has work for you to do, and Satan will do everything he can to distract you from it! This work is primarily revealed in the spiritual gift(s) you receive from the Holy Spirit.

What exactly are these spiritual gifts?

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

1 Corinthians 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. ²⁸And 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. ²⁹Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹But earnestly desire the higher gifts.

Ephesians 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. ¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Every believer receives at least one spiritual gift at salvation (1 Corinthians 12:7). Some receive more than one. If more than one, these gifts can operate simultaneously or sequentially, with one being active as a young believer and others developing later with spiritual maturity. Similar to the process of enduement in the Old Testament, these special gifts come from the Holy Spirit to empower the gifted individuals for specific ministries within the Body of Christ. The Spirit gives these gifts for “the common good” (1 Corinthians 12:7) and “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12).

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

Which spiritual gift we receive is not of 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 are freely distributed to believers by the Spirit. They are entirely driven and empowered by the Spirit.

Romans 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 Corinthians 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

In these two passages, Paul compares the Body of Christ to an individual's body and its various parts. The spiritual gifts do not function independently; instead, they work together to support the whole body. Each gift is essential for the Church's functioning. Paul states, “...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.” (1 Corinthians 12:18-20) Not everyone possesses the same gift, and none of the gifts are insignificant to the effective functioning of the “body.”

Although they often can be, these gifts are not necessarily rooted in the believer's natural talents, which are also gifts from God. You may possess little to no natural ability to carry out your spiritual gift, but that is not a problem for God. God, through the Holy Spirit, will provide all you need to fulfill whatever you are called to do—everything you require! God will furnish any logistical support, training, skills, physical resources, and finances—anything and everything necessary for you to successfully execute your spiritual gift. All you need to provide is your faith and follow your calling.

And then we have this —

2 Corinthians 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 Church Age believers, which we have discussed before. It is not a judgment of the lost. “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, and even ethically wicked. In this context, these two words refer to divine good (*agathos*) and human good (*phaulos*)—not sin. The evaluation here pertains to the believer, specifically in relation to their spiritual gift(s). The question posed at this Bema judgment is: What have you done with those spiritual gifts and all the assets God entrusted to you, such as logistical support, training, skills, physical assets, and finances—anything necessary for you to successfully execute your spiritual gifts in the after-salvation, Spirit-led, and enabled work (divine good) to which you were called?

Not only is work expected of you after salvation, but you will also be graded for it.

1 Corinthians 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 (vv. 9, 11) and illustrates events at the Bema judgment. Your works will undergo a fire test. Human good will be like "wood, hay, and straw" and will be consumed, but if your works are "gold, silver, and precious stones" (divine good), they will endure 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" (vv. 14- 15). Your salvation is *not* in question here. "He himself will be saved."

Meanwhile, regarding your spiritual gift(s), it is not up to you to determine which one you possess; the Spirit distributes them according to His will and good pleasure. I never once thought I might have the gift of teaching. For nearly 15 years after my salvation, I often wondered what my spiritual gift was. It turns out God was training me during that time and holding me back until I was ready. When several male friends and I decided to start a home Bible class, the study material we wanted to use was temporarily unavailable. After weeks of trying to obtain it (the author was out of the country and did not return calls), I gave up and said I would "try" to put something together. I was clumsy at it at first, and in some ways, I still am, but the Holy Spirit has overwhelmed me with source materials, commentaries, Bibles, advanced computer software, and excellent teachers that I needed to prepare these lessons. That incident was the open door I was called to walk through in faith.

Don't get discouraged if it isn't clear what your spiritual gift is, and don't try to force it. Avoid engaging in those online "tests" that claim to identify your spiritual gift through a series of questions. The answer will come in God's timing. He will inform you of what it is and when it's time for you to use it. In the meantime, study, grow spiritually, and seek opportunities to evangelize friends and serve in your local church or community. However, be attentive to God's guidance in this matter. He will open the door when it's time, and as surprising as that open door may seem, as it was for me, you must walk through in faith. God will take care of the details. If He is calling you to some task, He is self-obliged to supply your every need to accomplish that mission.

The Gifts

There are two passages of Scripture: the Ephesians 4 passage and the 1 Corinthians 12 passage we examined earlier, both of which provide a list of spiritual gifts. Additionally, there are individual mentions of gifts throughout the Bible. However, what we find in Scripture should not be considered a comprehensive list of gifts.

Missionary – It is a special gift given by the Holy Spirit to certain members of the body of Christ, enabling them to minister whatever other spiritual gifts they possess (such as evangelizing, teaching, and service) within a second culture or community. (1 Corinthians 9:19-23)

Intercession is a special gift through which the Spirit empowers certain Christians to pray for extended durations, significantly enhancing the growth of the Kingdom. (1 Thessalonians 3:10-13, 1 Timothy 2:1-2)

Craftsmanship is a unique gift that the Spirit bestows upon certain Christians, enabling them to use their hands and minds to build the Kingdom through artistic means. We observe examples of this in the artisans who fashioned the worship items associated with the Tabernacle and Temple in Israel (Exodus 28:3-4).

Hospitality is the special gift that enables certain Christians to open their homes willingly and offer lodging, food, and cheerful fellowship to others. (Genesis 18:1-15)

Faith – *Pistis* - persuasion, a deep moral conviction of spiritual truths or the truthfulness of God. It is the special gift through which the Spirit grants Christians extraordinary confidence in God's promises, power, and presence, enabling them to take courageous stands for God's work in the church (Hebrews 11).

Discerning Spirits – *Diakrisis* - Judicial estimation, discerning, and judging by evidence whether something is of God. *Pneuma* - Literally, a breath or breeze; figuratively, a spirit. It is the special gift by which the Spirit enables certain Christians to know with assurance whether behavior or teaching is from God or from Satan. (Acts 5:3-6, Acts

16:16-18) NOTE: There is some debate 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. It assumes a need on the part of the recipient and adequate resources to meet that need from the one who shows it. This special gift enables certain Christians to feel exceptional empathy and compassion for those who are suffering, allowing them to devote significant time and energy to alleviate it. (Luke 10:30-37).

Giving – *Metadidomi* - To give over, share, or impart. Marked by 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). 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) and preside. To attend to with care and diligence. Must be above reproach, possess a servant's heart, uphold the sound doctrine, and be an example for those who follow them. It is a special gift through which the Spirit empowers certain Christians to motivate, direct, and inspire God's people to work together voluntarily and harmoniously, thereby effectively accomplishing the Church's work. (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, attendant, servant, or service. 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 is a special gift that allows the Spirit to enable certain Christians to praise God through various forms of music, enhancing the worship experience of the local congregation. (1 Corinthians 14:26, Mark 12:36)

Teacher – *Didaskalia* - Instruction, the function or the information, doctrine, learning, and teaching. It is the special gift through which the Spirit enables specific 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. This implies watchful care, being present with the flock, ensuring their safety, and pursuing sheep that have wandered away. Feeds the spiritual flock on God's truth. It is the special gift through which the Spirit enables certain Christians to take responsibility for the spiritual welfare of a group of believers. (1 Peter 5:1-11)

Evangelist – *Euaggelistes* - A preacher of the gospel who announces good news and brings glad tidings. It is the special gift through which the Spirit enables certain Christians to share the Gospel with unbelievers in a manner that fosters their discipleship to the Lord Jesus. (Acts 8:26-40)

This is just the beginning. Some of you have already identified your calling or ministry and found it listed among the gifts. Some may have just realized that your gift has been functioning without your awareness. Successfully executing your gift now may lead to even more challenging expressions of your gifts or perhaps a calling to other gifts later in your walk with God. But it is easy to become distracted down rabbit holes.

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. You have probably noticed that there are several spiritual gifts omitted from this list. This was intentional, as they require special consideration. We will begin a study of those in the next session.