

The Difference Between the 'Gift' and the 'Gifts' of the Holy Spirit

It is important that you understand the difference between the "gift" of the Spirit and the "gifts" of the Spirit. Much confusion abounds in many churches because of this failure in understanding. Also you need to understand the gift of tongues in context with the other gifts.

The gift of the Spirit to the church was given after the ascension and glorification of our Savior. (See John 7:39.) Now the Holy Spirit had been in the world, but now in a new and special way He came to live in the hearts of His people.

He came to dwell permanently within us (John 14:16–17, 26). In Acts 2:38 the sinner is commanded to repent, after which the Holy Spirit will be given. The word is singular, *gift*. In Acts 10:45 the gift is seen as given to non-Jews also. The gift of the Holy Spirit is given to every believer at the moment of conversion. At the moment of conversion you are baptized by the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38; 1 Cor. 12:13). This means that you are immersed in the Spirit and He in you.

Once we are saved and have the indwelling Spirit, then we may be *filled* with the Holy Spirit. The filling of the Spirit is God's controlling presence in our lives. He will fill only what we yield to Him. We may have the Spirit and yet not be filled with the Spirit.

Now all of this has to do with the "gift" of the Spirit. He comes into our lives to save us, sustain us, and strengthen us. So, now we understand the singular gift of the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit is also the bestower of gifts to the believer (1 Cor. 12, Rom. 12). These spiritual gifts are endowments of power from God given to us so that we might

fulfill the calling of God on our lives.

In order to understand the importance of these spiritual gifts, we must first understand the church as the body of Christ. Paul describes and compares the unity and diversity of the human body to the purpose of spiritual gifts. In this symbolism we learn three important truths.

1. They are divine gifts.

The gifts of the Spirit come from the same source. In 1 Corinthians 12:4–6 we see the source as the triune God. Verse 11 sets forth the fact that these gifts are sovereignly bestowed. God not only gives the gifts, but He also decides who gets which gift. Verse 18 supports this by declaring that God sets the members into the church as it pleases Him. Spiritual gifts are not natural talents or abilities that you are born with. Those are your natural gifts. Spiritual gifts are the supernatural gifts of God.

2. They are different gifts.

This passage affirms that there are different gifts. In 1 Corinthians 12:4–6 (NIV), the word *different* is used three times. Three very important categories of gifts are listed: motivational gifts, ministry gifts, and manifestation gifts.

The important thing to note is that different gifts are given to different people. The symbolism of the body holds true here. Every member of the body is different. Paul uses the foot, the hand, the ear, the eye, and the nose. How ridiculous if we were all one foot, eye, ear, hand, or nose. A body is made up of different members.

Each church then has different members with different gifts. When will we learn that we are not all alike, and that it is *in* that diversity—both in our spiritual and social abilities and strengths—that we are best able to function as the body of Christ? Most church problems come because we are intolerant of

others with a different motivation than ours. We must learn that all should not be alike. God has made us and gifted us differently. Many quit the church because they can't respond to the differences of others.

3. They are dependent gifts.

Christ's body is unified but not uniform. God has so designed the human body that each member is necessary for it to function properly. The value of a member is in its attachment to the body.

First Corinthians 12:25–26 describes the dependence we ought to have on each other. We ought to care for each other. Suppose my stomach sends a signal to my brain of hunger? My feet carry me to the place where my eyes and nose tell me there is food. My hand grasps a fork and a knife when I see that steak. My hand carries that piece of steak not to my ear or foot or eye, but to that convenient opening in the middle of my face called the mouth. There enamel grinders called teeth chew it up and keep me from choking to death.

Next, glands provide liquid so it can be conveyed safely to the stomach where the bloodstream will carry its nutrients to the rest of my body.

Just as the body cares for itself, so the church members are to care for one another, hurt with one another, rejoice with one another. We are the body of Christ, and He is our head. We must move as He directs us. We are not to be divided but be together.

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