

So What?

How the Apostle Paul instructs us to live out our life as members of the body of believers.

Part 3—Receiving and using *Pneumatica*--Spiritual Gifts

Everyone who meets my bride immediately comes to the same conclusion: I married way above myself. My wife is intelligent, kind, caring, thoughtful. The best example of the “Proverbs 31” woman I have ever met, she manages her home and children well. I confess, though, it was not my bride’s character traits that I initially noticed 26 years ago when I first met her. I was utterly captivated by her beauty and the sweetness in her eyes.

Soon after we became formally engaged 22 years ago, I began to understand what a huge bonus I was about to receive. I was about to become a member of a wonderful family. My in-laws are hard working, productive, giving, supportive, and encouraging. So much so, in fact, one of them has become over the years a sort of hero to me—a role model extraordinaire. Financial planners preach the benefits of a steady, consistent approach to living and to saving. My father-in-law, a career grade-and-step civil servant, could be their poster child. He was able to put four kids through college such that they could graduate debt-free. He also managed to save enough that he was able to retire early. Next year, my in-laws will celebrate 50 years of marriage. Not surprisingly, with that kind of role model, all four of his children have college degrees, are productive and hard working, living within their means, and are still married to their first spouses. The aggregate statistical probability of those events is approximately 1:450.

I have been bemused over the past few years as Dr. Gary Chapman’s book, *The Five Love Languages*, has become so popular. Chapman’s premise is that everybody has a certain way they like to receive affection. Moreover, Chapman argues, the way we like to receive love is the way we are most likely to express our love. One love language is gift giving. It appears this is the love language of my father-in-law. In his retirement, he has decided to share his savings with his progeny by giving extremely generous gifts. Last spring, my father-in-law announced he was going to take all of the generations below him—kids, spouses, and grandchildren—to the Mexican Rivera to a 5-star resort—air, hotel, and car rental included! I did nothing to earn this gift. It was not a reward based on something I had done. Rather, it was the free gift from a loving father given to me based entirely on who I married.

I have great news for you. Everyone here has been invited to be a part of an amazing family headed by a loving patriarch. The bible teaches us that when we confess our wrong choices to God the Father and ask for his son Jesus to become not only the payment for sins but the Lord of our lives, we become part of the family of God—the Church, the Body of Christ. Indeed, the bible tells us we become the bride of Christ—the spouse of Jesus! And based on Jesus’ work on the cross, we enter the great wedding hall in heaven spotless and pure, adorned in white, pure and holy. And while we are still here on earth, we receive the most amazing wedding gifts. They are called the Gifts of the Spirit. We do not receive these gifts based on any work or talent we have—they are simply the generous gifts from a loving father based entirely on our inclusion in this new family because of a wedding—our marriage to his son, who is Christ the Lord.

In the previous two installments of this series, we began to take a look at the great “therefore…” passages of the Apostle Paul’s seminal works. Paul concludes his arguments in the books of Romans, 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Hebrews, Galatians, and Philippians with a passage that begins, “Therefore…” As each of those works is the laying out one of the basic arguments of the Christian faith, the “therefore” statements of Paul are followed by explanations as to what difference having faith in Christ is to have in our lives. In other words, it is the “so what” of Christianity. *“So what if Christ is my lord and savior—how will my life be any different?”*

The argument of the first 11 chapters of Romans could perhaps be stated like this:

1. There is a righteous and just Lord of the manor—Yahweh, the Lord of the Jewish people.
2. He is the Lord of not only Jewish people but all people and, indeed, all of creation. Or, as the Psalmist says, “the earth is the Lord’s and everything in it”
3. All of people are guilty of offenses, some petty and some major, against the Lord.
4. The just and legal punishment of our offenses is death.

5. All people, both Jews and non-Jews, are treated under the same legal code. In other words, you will get no special treatment in the court of the Lord based on your ethnicity.
6. However, the Lord loves all of his creation and therefore has fulfilled the just requirements of the law by putting someone to death—His own innocent son instead of us, the offenders.
7. All people, though already the subjects of the Lord, are now doubly owed their lives to the Lord, who could have sentenced us to punishment because of our offenses.

Romans, Chapter 12, then begins with a word translated into English as “Therefore..” The next few verses could perhaps be summed up to say:

1. Give all that you are over to God—that is true worship of him.
2. When you give all of what you are and have over to God, he will reveal his purpose for your life and the will and direction he has for you.
3. As you give everything you have over to God, you become part of his family, the Body of Christ—the Church.
4. As members of the family of God, we are given Spiritual Gifts—new abilities empowered by God’s Spirit now living in you.
5. These new Spirit-empowered abilities are given to you so that you can serve AS the church in the world.
6. People receive different gifts based on God’s purposes for their lives.
7. As we collectively serve as the Body of Christ, our gifts mesh with the gifts of others in the body to for a cohesive, effective unit.

Romans, Chapter 12 says it like this:

⁴ For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; ⁷ if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; ⁸ if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

1 Corinthians, Chapters 12 says it like this:

¹ Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. ² You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. ³ Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit. ⁴ There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. ⁵ There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. ⁶ There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. ⁷ Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. ⁸ To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines. ¹² Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For we were all

baptized by ^{1c]} one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. ¹⁴ Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many...

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. ²⁸ And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. ²⁹ Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰ Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹ Now eagerly desire the greater gifts.

These same themes are echoed in Ephesians, Chapter 4:

¹¹ So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

So we become a Christian when we render all that we are over to God and receive the forgiveness and reconciliation through Christ that such faith affords us. God’s Holy Spirit then enters each of us, empowering us with new abilities *to equip (us) for works of service*. So we serve as the church not motivated by guilt, energized by our own work ethic, or by just using the skills we have developed over the year, but by the power of the Spirit of God living inside us.

But what are the different Gifts of the Spirit the Bible lists and how do they work in the Body of Christ? The box below tabulates each gift of the Spirit listed in the Bible, correlating them to the passage where they can be found. Below the box, each gift is further explained. In some cases, a modern example is given of a person who seemed to demonstrate by their actions the gift of the spirit operating in their lives.

Biblical lists of the gifts of the Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:1-14	1 Corinthians 12:27-30	Romans 12:6-8	Ephesians 4:11
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Wisdom ■ Knowledge ■ Discerning of spirits (human, angelic, and satanic) ■ Prophecy ■ Speaking in tongues ■ Interpretation of tongues ■ Faith ■ Working of miracles ■ Healing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Apostleship ■ Prophecy ■ Teaching ■ Working of miracles ■ Healing ■ Helps ■ Administration ■ Speaking in tongues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prophecy Ministry Teaching Exhortation Giving Leading Showing mercy (compassion) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apostleship Prophecy Evangelism Pastoring Teaching

Apostle: One sent by God with a holy mission to fulfill and the supernatural ability to fulfill it. Apostolic ministry usually involves laying foundations. In the case of Paul and Barnabas, we see this expressed in 'church planting' by preaching the Gospel in new areas, establishing new Christian bodies, and creating a lasting structure of authority and method. Example: John Wesley

Prophet/Prophecy: One who speak or communicates a message with authority as moved by the Spirit of God. One given the supernatural ability to receive a prescriptive or predictive message from God to edify, exhort, or comfort the body of Christ. Example: Joan of Arc

Evangelist: One who is driven to proclaim through words and actions the Good News of Jesus Christ and effective in so doing as evidenced by results: people coming to faith in Christ and giving their lives to him as their Lord and Savior. Example: Billy Graham

Pastor (Shepherd): One who is gifted to (1) lead, guide, and set an example for other Christians and (2) care for the spiritual and physical health of a group of Christians. Example: Francis of Assisi

Teacher: One who is able to understand the more difficult things of God and explain them in a way that is easy to understand and live by in daily life. Example: Gib Wood

Service, Ministry, Helps: One who has the supernatural ability to do for others whatever needs to be done or carry another's burden or task without becoming exhausted or frustrated while also not needing to be noticed or receive earthly rewards. Example: Anonymous

Exhortation: One who has the ability to motivate Christians to do the works of Christ. Example: Abraham Lincoln.

Administration: One who has a God-given ability to create structures, systems, and order. Example: John Adams

Giving: One blessed by God with resources or time and being motivated to give money or to give service where and when they are needed with a cheerful heart. Example: Darren Cacy

Leadership: One with God-given insight into when something needs to be done, who can do it, how it can be completed, and how to lead those people to get it accomplished. Example: George Washington

Mercy: One with a heart to care for and encourage those who are not able to care for themselves and whom no one else would care for. A supernatural ability to know who to help, when to help, and how to help. Example: Mother Teresa

Wisdom: One given a message, concept, or insight that God reveals supernaturally. Example: Jimmy Carter

Knowledge: One given facts that God reveals supernaturally to the recipient. Example: Galileo

Tongues: (1) One given the supernatural ability to speak another language commonly used on earth but not known by the speaker, for the purpose of conveying a message from God or (2) one given the supernatural ability to speak a prayer language of the Holy Spirit, a language not known by the speaker, to build up the body of Christ when interpreted.

Interpretation of tongues: One given the supernatural ability to interpret new language such that a clear message is revealed that edifies, exhorts, or comforts the body of Christ.

Working of miracles: One given the ability to perform supernatural acts. Example: Augustine of Hippo

Gifts of healing: One given the supernatural ability to bring or release healing to a person in their body or soul. Example: Francis of Assisi

Ability to distinguish between spirits: One given the supernatural ability to know what is from God and what is not from God. Example: your mother

Faith: One given the ability to hope for God's outcomes before seeing results; one who can trust God without doubt. Example: Martin Luther King, Jr.

So what? So this: as we mature in Christ, we are to eagerly desire the gifts of the Spirit so that we can become productive, fruitful members of the Body of Christ, the church, and serve the world empowered by God. But how do we do this? How do we realize the power of the spirit of God? By doing behaviors outline at the beginning of Romans 12: *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is true worship”*. I like the way Eugene Peterson translates Romans 12 in his book, *The Message*: *“So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him.”*

Would you like to see the power of God's spirit flowing through your life? Paul gives us a simple explanation of how to do this in the first verse of 1 Corinthians, Chapter 14: *“Pursue love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts...”* In the book of 1 John, we are told that “God is love.” So to see the power of the spirit in your life, pursue God and ask for him to give you new gifts. How do we pursue God? By living into the behaviors of a deeply committed Christian:

1. Steadily reading the Bible.
2. Consistently praying.
3. Recurrently confessing wrong choices.
4. Repeatedly gathering with others for accountability, care, and growth (a small group).
5. Habitually gathering with others for worship.
6. Frequently serving others with members of the Body of Christ.
7. Regularly asking God to fill us with his Spirit.