



CHARIS-MATTERS

STUDIES IN FIRST CORINTHIANS

Text

1st Corinthians 12:8-10 & Romans 12:6-8

Topic

The apostle Paul describes how God the Holy Spirit supernaturally enables the words of those to whom He gives speaking gifts

Title

"Putting Words into Your Mouth"

Introduction

I'd never heard the term 'prosector' before this week. It is the technical term for a person who dissects cadavers for anatomical instruction or pathological examination, such as an autopsy.

Autopsies have become a staple of TV crime dramas. It seems each one gets a little grosser than the next as the prosector, more commonly called the medical examiner, probes the cadaver for the cause of death.

We've come to the section of First Corinthians where the apostle Paul discusses the gifts given to believers by God the Holy Spirit. To help us understand how the gift or gifts each of us has been given operates Paul talks about the church on earth as if it were a single body with various members. As we each exercise our gift or gifts the whole body functions together as it should.

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We need to know what some of the members of the body are capable of. We need to know what gifts are given and how they function. In short, we need to define the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

In defining them we don't want to seem like we are prosecutors at an autopsy dissecting the body. It can sound that way as we look at each gift individually.

We're not looking for the cause of death. We're looking at the things that cause a body of believers to be full with vibrant, healthy spiritual life.

I am going to organize the various gifts listed in the Bible into the following three groupings:

1. The Holy Spirit gives some of you *speaking* gifts.
2. The Holy Spirit gives some of you *sign* gifts.
3. The Holy Spirit gives some of you *servicing* gifts.

Most of the gifts we'll talk about are right here in First Corinthians but we'll see some others in Romans 12:6-8. (You might get ready to turn there).

As we begin with the speaking gifts I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 The Holy Spirit Gives All Of Us Spiritual Gifts, and #2 The Holy Spirit Gives Some Of You Speaking Gifts.

#1 The Holy Spirit Gives All Of Us Spiritual Gifts (v11)

Various gifts were in operation in Corinth. Paul gave a partial list in verses eight through ten. Then he gave the church the reminder of verse eleven.

1 Corinthians 12:11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

There are three important reminders in this verse:

1. The word “works” is a reminder that gifts are the supernatural enabling of the Holy Spirit. It is God working through you.
2. The phrase “distributing to each one individually as He wills” is a reminder that the Holy Spirit gives you a gift or gift as He chooses, not necessarily as you desire.
3. The word “individually” alerts you that no believer is overlooked. Every Christian is given a gift or gifts.

Back in verse seven Paul established that “the manifestation of the Spirit” - the gifts - are “given to each one for the profit of all.”

Putting this all together we would say that God the Holy Spirit gives every believer one or more gifts that He chooses for them as their supernatural enabling to profit the particular community of believers they are a part of.

People often ask, “How do I know what my gift or gifts are?” Well, if you understand that any gift or gifts the Holy Spirit gives you are to profit others then you need to be around others. You need to get connected to a local fellowship.

Once you are in a local fellowship you will be presented with opportunities to serve your fellow believers. Over time you will see that one or more of the ways you serve them seem to be extraordinarily blessed. You thus discover the gift or gifts you’ve been given.

Something Pastor Chuck Smith wrote in his book, *Living Water*, is crucial to add at this point:

...True gifts of the Holy Spirit... will always focus people’s hearts on Jesus Christ. Jesus said the Spirit would not testify of Himself, but of Christ. The... exercise of the gifts will always give you a fresh vision of Jesus Christ and His glory, causing you to fall in love with Him, and to be drawn to Him all over again.

The Holy Spirit wants to give testimony of Jesus. He wants to manifest Jesus to others. He gives you a gift or gifts to supernaturally enable you to show Jesus to others in your speech and by your serving.

Let's take a look at some of the speaking gifts listed in the Bible.

#2 The Holy Spirit Gives Some Of You Speaking Gifts

(1st Corinthians 12:8-10 & Romans 12:6-8)

Many people have wonderful natural speaking abilities; or they have improved their natural abilities by much study and practice. Yet, try as they might, they cannot learn to exercise the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, prophecy, the discerning of spirits, tongues, the interpretation of tongues, teaching, or exhortation. Natural ability is no indicator of speaking gifts.

Other people might have difficulty communicating; or their speech may not be very polished. Yet they may, indeed, exercise one or more of those same speaking gifts. Natural inability is no disqualifier of speaking gifts.

First on Paul's list in First Corinthians 12:8 is "the **word of wisdom** through the spirit." As a believer you are to grow in wisdom. Solomon said, in Proverbs 4:7, "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom." As you regularly study of God's Word you will begin more and more to see things the way God sees them.

But here we are *not* talking about the kind of wisdom that comes from experience in the world or exposure to God's Word. If it is wisdom that can be learned then it is not a gift, is it?

There is a supernatural gift of the Holy Spirit that is called "the word of wisdom." It is the Holy Spirit enabling you in a time of ministering to someone by giving you the right words to say.

It is the Holy Spirit using you to say just the words Jesus would say to the person or persons in need.

In order to keep our definitions from being dissections I want to give you living, vibrant examples of the gifts in operation. As much as possible I will take those examples from the Bible.

Jesus often demonstrated the word of wisdom. When asked if it were lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not - a question with a no-win answer - Jesus exercised the word of wisdom.

"Show Me a coin," He said, then asked, "Whose likeness and inscription are on it?" The crowd said, "Caesar's." Jesus replied, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and give to God the things that are God's."¹ It was the word of wisdom in operation.

The **word of knowledge** is the next gift Paul mentions. This is *not* the accumulation of information you can know by studying. All of you *can* and *should* learn as much as possible about God's Word. But that is not the word of knowledge. If it can be learned then it is not a gift being given.

The word of knowledge is information given to you supernaturally. It is a divine imparting of knowledge concerning a person or situation that did not come through natural thought processes. It is information that, as Pastor Chuck Smith says, "God flashes into your mind."

The Apostle Peter, in Acts chapter five, exercised the word of knowledge in his dealings with Ananias and Sapphira. You remember their story. They were a married couple who wanted to seem spiritual to the believers in Jerusalem. They sold some property and kept a portion of the proceeds for themselves. That was OK, except that they told the church that they were giving all the proceeds to the Lord's work. They lied.

Peter knew that they had lied. He knew by the word of knowledge that they had lied to God when they claimed to have given the church the full sales price of their property.

Peter ministered the word of knowledge to a very powerful result. God killed Ananias, then Sapphira, with the result that great fear came upon the believers - a godly fear that purified the young church.

Prophecy is next on Paul's list. It is a very misunderstood gift, mostly because of our own misconceptions about what it is.

¹Luke 20:22-26

Prophecy conveys what is immediately on the mind and heart of God for His people. It can be a *foretelling* of the future, but most often it is a *forthtelling* of God's Word. We will learn in chapter fourteen that it's exercise brings edification, exhortation, and comfort to believers. We will also show you why prophecy is still a gift being exercised today.

Prophecy can be exercised in a variety of ways.

- One of the most common and overlooked ways prophecy is exercised is by the Holy Spirit calling your attention to a particular text or context of Scripture.
- Another way the gift of prophecy often operates is in conjunction with the gift of teaching. As the Bible teacher shares on Scripture, he is directed to say certain things that have a supernatural impact on the hearers.
- Another way prophecy is exercised is by the Holy Spirit putting words into your mind and mouth.
- Dreams can be prophetic; then as you share the dream, you are exercising the gift of prophecy.
- Visions can be prophetic. These are not your own visualizations, but pictures that the Holy Spirit flashes into your mind.

The gift of **tongues** is the supernatural enabling to worship God through prayer and praise in an unknown language you have not naturally learned. In First Corinthians 14:2 Paul will write, "For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands *him*; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries."

The biblical gift of tongues is, by definition, not a known or knowable foreign language. Occasionally you will hear about someone speaking in a foreign language they've never learned. I'd put that in the category of a miracle.

You can't learn how to speak in tongues; no one can help you learn how to do it by giving you certain words to release your faith. It must be given to you.

We'll talk at length about the gift of tongues in chapter fourteen. For now I simply want to add that tongues is not a gift for every believer. It is not the sign that you are a Christian. It is not the sign that you have been baptized

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with the Holy Spirit. It is not even a sign of spiritual maturity. It is a gift that is distributed to some members of the body of Christ according to the will of the Holy Spirit.

The **interpretation of tongues** is obviously a companion gift to tongues. The interpretation of tongues is the Holy Spirit giving you the understanding of what was spoken by someone else or by yourself *even though you don't know the language*.

It is an interpretation, *not* a translation. Translation is a word-for-word transfer from one language to another. Interpretation is something that goes farther, explaining the meaning regardless the particular words spoken. The words are not as important in an interpretation as are the concepts being expressed.

Prophecy, tongues, and the interpretation of tongues are often classified as sign gifts that ceased to function after the initial founding of the Church by the apostles in the first century. They did **not** cease to function, and they are still available to you today!

We'll say something about why we believe they and the other sign gifts haven't ceased next week, and we'll see the proper way to exercise them in the church when we get to chapter fourteen.

The **discerning of spirits** is next on Paul's list. Again, all of you can and should exercise discernment. There are false teachings and false teachers that you can discern from your study and understanding of the truth of God's Word. There are passages like Second Peter and Jude that teach you how to discern false teachings and false teachers. We need to be especially discerning in these last days.

The gift of discerning of spirits is something more. According to the Bible, there are two realms coexisting - the *natural* realm and the *spiritual* realm. For the most part, we are not immediately conscious of the spiritual realm. Nevertheless it has a very real influence on our lives - either for good or for evil.

Paul wrote in Ephesians 6:12, "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the

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darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." A battle is being waged in this spiritual realm, and all of you are involved in it.

It is in this spiritual realm, and against these hostile beings, that the discernment of spirits comes into play. It is a supernatural enabling to know that a teaching or a prophecy is false, or that a demonic presence or influence is at work in some situation.

Discerning of spirits can be frustrating. You can be the only one who has the feeling that something isn't quite right with a person or situation. And it's tough to say, "I have a discernment" when, as yet, there is no tangible evidence of any problem or difficulty. Plus, your own sin nature can cause you to be suspicious or judgmental and then excuse it by saying you have discernment!

Even with all its difficulties, if you even think that you have the discernment of spirits you should act accordingly, as it is God's warning.

The apostle Paul exercised the discerning of spirits in the Book of Acts. In chapter sixteen a slave girl is following Paul and his missionary companions and saying, "These men are servants of the most high God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation." Right on!

But it wasn't right on; the girl was actually demon possessed! Paul had the discernment of spirits and said to the demon in her, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." She was delivered that very hour.

Those are the speaking gifts listed in our passage, but those are not all the speaking gifts listed in the Bible. Turn with me to Romans 12:6-8:

Romans 12:6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith;
Romans 12:7 or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching;
Romans 12:8 he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

Here is another list of gifts. New to us are "ministry," "teaching," "exhortation," "giving," "leading," and "mercy." Let's look at the two speaking gifts on this list - *teaching* and *exhortation*.

Like the other things we've talked about, there can be a call on your life to teach whether or not you have the gift of teaching. If you are a parent, you are commanded to teach your children.

There is also a gift of **teaching**. An uneducated, but enabled, man of God is a more reliable source of the truth of God than an unconverted scholar who understands Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic. Many of the first followers of Jesus are described as ignorant men who had been with Jesus.

Teaching is an interesting gift in that there is a responsibility to study. You cannot simply rely upon the Holy Spirit to give you facts and figures. But that does not take anything away from the need to depend upon the Holy Spirit's enabling to reveal Jesus.

Facts, figures, and formulas are good only as far as they go. They don't go far enough to reach hearts. There is study, a lot of it, but always subordinated to the final editing of the Holy Spirit so that Jesus can be revealed through teaching to the hearts of His listening church.

There is a spiritual gift of **exhortation**. All of us are to exhort and encourage one another. The writer to the Hebrews calls upon all believers to "exhort one another daily."² We are all to exhort one another to love and good works.

People with the gift of exhortation inspire you to do what you should already be doing. They get you back on track, get your eyes focused on Jesus, and help you see things in their proper biblical perspective. The exhorter is able to direct your attention away from your difficulties and toward the Lord and His power and His love and His concern for you. The exhorter reminds you that God is on His throne.

²Hebrews 3:13

The classic exhorter in the New Testament is James. Just read his letter and you'll get a feel for the gift. James writes to you and says, "Be mature! Do the things that you are instructed and empowered to do!"

We've looked at quite a few gifts. In verse thirty-one of chapter twelve Paul says,

1 Corinthians 12:31 But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.

Then, in First Corinthians 14:1 you read,

1 Corinthians 14:1 Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts...

The place to start in discovering your gifts is *not* with the list of gifts. It is with your love for God and your love for God's people.

Love qualifies the statement, "desire the best gifts." The best gifts are the one's that are most suited to ministering to the spiritual need or needs of the people who you encounter.

Walk in love, focusing on the needs of others, and you will naturally discover the supernatural gifts the Holy Spirit has sovereignly chosen for you.