

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

THE POTENTIAL TO BE FAITHFUL

How many of you have ever received a gift?

This isn't a trick question - have you ever received a gift?

My prayer is that every one of us knows what it means to receive a gift.

It is important to know what it means to be gifted.

I thought I should have a \$50 bill to give to you if you are ungifted.

I didn't tell Dorothy my thoughts.

She might have decided she deserves one.

She might have concluded that what I thought were gifts to her she earned.

That everything I gave to her was a reward for her hard work.

Gifts and rewards are not the same thing.

Reward has this definition: "Something given in recompense for a good deed, something won in a competition; or something given to induce greater effort."

Gift has this definition: "Something given to show friendship, affection, support, etc. The act, power, or right of giving."

Give begins with this definition: "To turn over the possession or control of to someone without cost or exchange; make a gift of."

That is what God has done.

He has given us gifts.

And each spiritual gift is a reflection of God's holiness.

God gives Himself away to His people without diminishing Himself.

He is not less God because He has given me a gift.

If anything He is more God because He gives Himself away.

God invests Himself in you and me through the gifts of His Spirit.

He doesn't reward, He simply gifts us as we live by faith.

It is through faith that God saves and gives gifts to His children.

"For by grace you have been saved by faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8)

Faith isn't a matter of quantity or size.

Faith is not measured by prestige or influence.

Billy Graham does not have a bigger monopoly on faith than you do.

He doesn't influence more people toward Jesus because his faith is bigger.

He influences thousands to look to Jesus because he uses the gift God gave.

Faith is faith.

Jesus said that faith only needs to be the size of a grain of mustard.

That is the faith that launches mountains into the sea.

That is the faith that unleashes miracles in this world.

The gifts are for the believer, the person of faith.

And gifts are not bestowed by some measurement of your faith.

God doesn't have a faith meter that gauges your faith.

Paul says the gifts are given according to the grace given us (v 6).

He speaks in verse 3 about the grace we have received.

When we recognize God's grace we don't get all puffed up.

We don't get conceited because God's grace is shaping me.

We take no credit because God's grace is gifting me.

We think with sober judgment because God measures faith.

All we are called to do is prove the will of God (vs. 2).

You see my actions? - they are just showing off God.

You see my plans? - they are just showing off God.

You see my abilities? - just showing off God.

You see my love? - God.

Faith? - God!

Talents? - God!

Gifts? - God!

He is the One from whom we have our being.

There is not a moment of life that the will of God does not command.

There is no circumstance that the will of God does not inject with meaning.

The commandment of God is exceedingly broad.

It is His will that we never be found wanting.

John Murray says, "If life is aimless, stagnant, fruitless, lacking in content, it is because we are not entering by experience into the richness of God's will." (*The New International Commentary on the New Testament: Romans vol 2, p. 114*)

The size of your faith is not the issue.

But the focus of your faith is everything.

Where faith is placed makes all the difference.

The time comes when you have to ask yourself, "what do you believe in?"

Faith in God can move the mighty mountain, Faith can calm the stormy sea.

Faith can make the desert like a fountain, Faith can bring the victory.

It doesn't matter who you are, faith transforms everything.

But the focus of your faith is everything.

What do you believe in, where do you place your faith?

God Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth - that's where my faith lies.

God who took on flesh, died, and rose to life - that's where my faith lies.

God who promised Abraham a mighty nation - that's where my faith lies.

God who commanded Pharaoh let My people go - that's where my faith lies.

God who fed a nation with manna for 40 years - that's where my faith lies.

God who invites us to pray for daily bread - that's where my faith lies.

God who is undying and inexhaustible love - that's where my faith lies.

God who calls David to slay Goliath - that's where my faith lies.

God who sees each sparrow that falls - that's where my faith lies.

God who values the widow's coins - that's where my faith lies.

God who places a child on His knee and blesses - that's where my faith lies.

God who gives good gifts to His children - that's where my faith lies.

God who has no second class citizens - that's where my faith lies.

God whose will is good, acceptable, perfect - that's where my faith lies.

God does not set His will for us according to our ability.

He does not demoralize us by dumbing down His will.

His will is always perfect and full of grace.

That is why the church is illustrated as the body of Christ.

It is a perfect illustration.

God the Son is the Head of the body.

He designed the body - the church.

When you come to God in faith, He perfectly fits you into His body.

And how He fits you perfectly is with spiritual gifts.

No one can say, "I have nothing to contribute."

As a community of faith each part is essential.

Not every part has the same function.

Our faith is expressed in different ways.

But each expression strengthens the body.

The gifts are given so we attain unity in faith - Eph. 4:13.

I have property in you and you have property in me.

We have property in each other and therefore in each other's gifts and graces.

Our diversity enriches us because we have communion in all the gifts.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit dispensed by God according to His will.

This is what William Barclay says about these verses.

"The members of the body neither argue with each other nor envy each other nor dispute about their relative importance. Each part of the body carries out its own function, however prominent or however humbly unseen that function may be. It was Paul's conviction that the Christian Church should be like that. Each member has a task to do; and it is only when each contributes the help of his own task that the body of the Church functions as it ought." (*The Daily Study Bible Series*, p. 159)

This brings us to what is under the sheet.

This is us, the church, the body of Christ.

Some are big, some are little.

Different shapes, different colours.

Some have a huge capacity, some hold next to nothing.

Some held medicine, spice, glue, perfume, ink, colouring, insect repellent.

Some have lids some are bald.

Some have a cork in the mouth, others you wish they did.

Each one unique, and yet they all have something in common.

Each one has a something inside.

Each one has a seed - something of huge potential.

But what good will the seed do if it stays bottled up?

Do you think people are going to walk by and say what a great bottle?

Do you see that seed in the bottle - isn't that beautiful?

The potential of the seed-gift remains ineffective if kept inside.

It needs to be poured out, given away, invested, planted.

The same is true with God's gifts.

We receive the gifts through faith and pour them out by faith.

They are not given for us to keep.

The gifts enable us to live to the potential to be faithful.

I close with one more thought from William Barclay.

"In the New Testament a *charisma* [gift] is something given to a person by God which that person could not have acquired or attained. ... whatever gift a person has it must be used and the motive of use must be, not personal prestige, but the conviction that it is at one and the same time a duty and privilege to make a contribution to the common good." (*The Daily Study Bible Series*, p. 160)

As we study the gifts God has given we will also study how they are used.

Carlos and I, as your pastoral team, rely upon your faithful sharing.

It is our desire to equip you so you contribute to bodily growth.

Let's make every move we make a gifted move to God's glory.

Closing Song - Every Move I Make