Text: I Corinthians 12:8-10
Title: "The Spiritual Gifts" Pt.2

INTRODUCTION

Before I get to text in I Corinthians 12, let me ask you to open your Bibles to John 14:12.

Jesus is explaining to His disciples what's behind all of His ministry. He will say that His teaching and His ministry were not from Himself. The secret was that the Father, who was living in Him was doing the work. And the presence of the Father was none other than the presence of the Holy Spirit in Jesus. So Jesus did His ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit. Now notice what He says to His disciples…

John 14:12 (NIV) - I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.

What would happen when Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father is that the Father would send the Holy Spirit with power to dwell in the lives of the followers of Jesus, just like the Spirit was upon Jesus. And that's what we've been talking about … The Spirit Way.

Note: The ministry and the mission of Jesus have not changed. He's still seeking to save those who are lost. And anyone who has faith in Jesus will do what He did … will follow His footsteps and His example and His mission.

But what does it mean that we will do even greater things than these because Jesus went to the Father? When Jesus was on this earth, He could touch people, but millions of Christians could touch a lot of people. He could feed people, but millions of Christians can feed a lot of people. He could pray for people, but millions of Christians can pray for a lot of people. He could teach people, but millions of Christians can teach a lot of people. He could reach people and make disciples, but millions of Christians can reach a lot of people, and make millions of disciples.

You see, Jesus' ministry was destined to become worldwide and vastly more extensive after He ascended to the right hand of the Father, sent the Holy Spirit and formed His church.

Before Jesus ascended into heaven He told them, "Don't go running off to win the world just yet. I want you to wait for something, better, for Someone. I'll send you the Holy Spirit. And when He comes upon you, then you will be my witnesses, and you will do it with supernatural power because of the Holy Spirit.

And the Holy Spirit was poured out on those first followers of Christ, and today we experience the same outpouring of the Holy Spirit into our lives when we are saved. But once we have received the Holy Spirit, we are then to continually be filled with the Holy Spirit so that we can do the ministry that Jesus has given us to do in this world. So the Holy Spirit is working in all of God's children to continue the ministry of Jesus in the world.

We are all in full-time ministry. Jesus said, "When the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will be my witnesses."

Now turn to I Corinthians 12. We come to talk about something called spiritual gifts. And the spiritual gifts are the very unique tools that are deposited in the Church to help the church do ministry like Jesus did ministry. And when the spiritual gifts are deployed faithfully by believers, we do the things that Jesus did, and even greater things, because Jesus went to the Father and the Father sent the Spirit upon us. We will be effective in carrying forth the mission that Jesus began 2000 years ago to see many, many people come to have eternal life.

Now let's just be reminded of …

1 Corinthians 12:7 (NIV) - Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

The spiritual gifts are called "the manifestation of the Spirit" … the gifts are deposited by the Holy Spirit in our lives and they manifest the work of the Holy Spirit of Jesus in the Church. And what follows is a list of nine spiritual gifts.

> Note: When you combine this list with the lists that are included in Romans 12, Ephesians 4, and I Peter 4, you get a list of over 20 different gifts, depending on how you define each one.

Let's look at the nine that are listed here.

1. THE MESSAGE OF <u>WISDOM</u>

1 Corinthians 12:8a (NIV) - To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom…

DEFINITION: "The message of wisdom" is the ability to make skillful and practical application of Scriptural truth to real-life situations.

EXAMPLE – This gift may have been operating in the life of Stephen, the powerful preacher and deacon in the book of Acts. Stephen was one of the seven men chosen to assist the apostles in the ministry of the church (forerunners of the office of deacons).

> **Acts 6:3 (NIV) - Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them**
>
> Stephen was a powerful preacher, as well as a servant. And his preaching got him into hot water with the religious leaders in Jersusalem. But
>
> **Acts 6:10 (NIV) - but they could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke.**

Now the next gifts listed in I Corinthians 12 is …

2. THE MESSAGE OF <u>KNOWLEDGE</u>

1 Corinthians 12:8a (NIV) - To another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit,

DEFINITION: "The message of knowledge" is the ability to research, remember and make effective use of Scriptural information, and to pass this understanding on to others.

Note: The fact that these two gifts appear at the top of this list may be an indication of their importance. And that certainly makes sense. In the Body of Christ we need people who help connect us in a Spirit-empowered way with the Word of God. In fact, many of the gifts are for the ministering of the Word of God in a timely and powerful way.

> **ILLUSTRATION** – Here's how this works in the Body. Last Sunday George Wilkes came up to me before the second service and handed me a piece of cloth and some other printed materials. I was just getting ready to walk up on the platform so I didn't have a chance to even look at it. I set it down on the pew with plans of looking at it after the service. In the late service we had prayer at the conclusion of the service for one of our young men, Taylor Richards, who is a Marine heading for Iraq. After the prayer time was closed and we ended the service, Kathy Wilkes, George's wife, came up to me and said, "That cloth that George gave to you … it's for Taylor. We didn't know you were going to do this, but Taylor's supposed to have that." I picked up the cloth and looked at it. It happened to be a "do-rag" or a bandana that soldiers wear under their helmets or around their arms. This one is camouflaged and it has printed on it the words of Psalm 91 … often called the soldiers prayer. It just so happened that one of Taylor's aunts came to the service last Sunday knowing that we were going to be praying for Taylor and sending him off. And get this: In preparation for that she had written out on a piece of paper to give to Taylor … Psalm 91. Can you imagine the impact that made on this young man to have these words of Scripture coming at him is such a miraculous way? Reckon that young man got the message that God wanted him to be encouraged with Psalm 91?

The Word of God is the power. It is what the Spirit of God uses to encourage, lift up, exhort, etc. But the Holy Spirit also orchestrates how that Word is delivered at just the right time, and in just the right way that it shoots straight to the need of the hour for someone.

Now in vv.9-10 we come to what some have called the "miraculous gifts" … faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, tongues. And when it comes to miraculous gifts I want to caution us about two extremes:

- **One extreme says that God <u>doesn't</u> or <u>can't</u> do miracles anymore.** God did that in the Bible days, but He doesn't do that anymore. Let me just remind you that one of the benefits of being God is that He can do whatever He wants.

  Psalm 115:3 (NIV) - Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him.

- **The other extreme says that God <u>must</u> do miracles.** That anytime we ask God to heal someone, He must do it, or something is wrong with our faith. That God must perform a miracle, or something is wrong with my faith.

I will just tell you now that I don't believe that the miraculous gifts no longer function today. Certainly these miraculous abilities were possessed by the Lord Jesus for the purpose of authenticating His Messiahship … and by the apostles to authenticate their ministry in giving us God's revelation that would become Scripture.

> But as I read Scripture I see no reason to believe that the miraculous gifts ceased to exist when the apostles died. But I believe that we have to be very cautious in our approach to these miraculous gifts. And everything must be brought before the Supreme Court of Scripture for validation.

So let's look at these next gifts.

3. <u>FAITH</u>

1 Corinthians 12:9a (NIV) - To another faith by the same Spirit…

The Bible often speaks of saving faith, which must characterize all believers. We cannot be saved apart from that personal faith in Jesus Christ.

But Paul is not referring to saving faith here in v.9. This is a spiritual gift that is possessed by some, but not all, in the Body of Christ. Dr. Jack MacGorman in his little commentary on I Corinthians 12-14 says this: "The Spirit of God bestows the gift of extraordinary faith upon some believers, and it makes possible mighty works or accomplishments."

1 Corinthians 13:2 (NIV) - I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

<u>DEFINITION</u>: The ability to envision what needs to be done and to trust God to accomplish it, even though it seems impossible to most people.

They are people who have faith and confidence in God and that gives them hope … no matter what the circumstances seem to be. They boast about the power of God.

> When it looks bad, it doesn't matter. They trust God in difficult situations when others give up. You're ready to give up on a marriage and they are the people that come alongside you and say, "Don't quit. God can do wonders. Let's trust Him together." You're job search is going nowhere. It looks like you're going under. And this person comes alongside and encourages you, "Don't give up. Hold on a little longer. Let's get down here and pray and trust God a little longer."

I think about Joshua and Caleb in the OT. When the other spies came back from the Promised Land and saw nothing but big giants and a little God. Joshua and Caleb saw little giants and a big God. They said, "God has given it to us. We should go forward and trust Him."

People with the gift of faith are so convinced of the power of God and His Word. Their lives are lashed to the promises of God in Scripture. With God all things are possible. And we need the voice of faith in the Body to keep us enthusiastically hoping in the power and the promises of God.

4. GIFTS OF <u>HEALING</u>

1 Corinthians 12:9 (NIV) - To another gifts of healing by that one Spirit…

Now contrary to what you see on religious television, the gift of healing is not the guy in the white suit and the jet.

DEFINITION: The gift of healings is the ability to call upon God to heal the sick through supernatural means for the purpose of revealing God.

I believe this gift is inextricably connected to the gift of faith. The person with the gift of healings does not do the healing. God does the healing, but the person with the gift is used by God to call upon Him by faith for the healing.

ILLUSTRATION - Even the medical community is recognizing that something happens to sick people when they are prayed for. Several scientific studies have been done to determine whether praying for sick people helps them get better. So far, the evidence suggests that it does, even when the sick people don't even know that someone is praying for them. These studies have been published in legitimate, peer-reviewed journals.

The problem with this gift is that it has either been misused, or it has been claimed by people who really don't have it.

> There are people who say they have this gift and they prey on the sick and the elderly. You can see some of this on display on religious television. So many times their healing services are tied to money. Give money and you get healed. And some of them are just con men.

But there are legitimate gifts of healings. Just because there are charlatans, doesn't mean that the gift isn't for real.

Those with the gift of healing trust that God can heal the sick, and they pray for the restoration of those in need of it … physical, emotional, mental and spiritual.

> People with this gift don't see healing every time they ask God. It's when God decides to do it. They can ask. Sometimes God answers affirmatively. Sometimes He doesn't. There are plenty of examples in the Scripture of people who were not healed.

Pastors and elders in churches are to pray for the sick and anoint them with oil, and some will be healed.

We are to pray for the sick. The healings that Jesus performed were to authenticate the fact that He was Messiah. No question! But I see also that Jesus healed out of compassion.

> **Matthew 14:14 (NIV) - When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.**

Does Jesus still care about physical needs? Certainly He does! And I can't help but believe that that care and compassion still extends to hurting people through His church. Now we don't have the ability in and of ourselves to effect this healing, but we can pray and intercede for those who are sick. And sometimes God chooses to heal the sick through prayer.

Sometimes God puts in one the hearts of people to pray for healing, and God grants it. Sometimes God's Kingdom breaks into this world and the forces of this world are overcome by the power of the Kingdom of God and people are healed. Praise the Lord.

5. MIRACULOUS <u>POWERS</u>

1 Corinthians 12:10 (NIV) - to another miraculous powers…

Obviously, healings are miracles, but the word used here would indicate a broader range of miraculous activity. And the person with this gift will most likely have the gift of faith as well.

In the ministry of Jesus these powerful miracles included exorcisms, resuscitations (Lazarus), nature miracles (calming the sea), and the feeding of the five thousand.

> In the OT we read of men who possessed the ability to perform miracles … Moses, Elijah and Elisha.

But how does this gift function today? Like healing, if someone has the gift of miraculous powers, they do not have the power themselves to work miracles. But rather, they are people who have such extraordinary faith that God can move mountains that God does something that is absolutely a miracle.

Now again, we have to be very careful. Stephen Olford has made this observation and it is very important. When it comes to miracles … healings, resuscitations, tongues, and other occurrences that defy nature, they may be one of the following:

- **Some are <u>authentic</u>.** I genuinely believe that. They should be attested and confirmed. But I have no doubt that God can and still does the miraculous.
- **Some are <u>psychic</u>.** By that we mean that they are not genuinely a miracle, but are the result of a person being so worked up, that they can do things that appear to be a miracle, but it really isn't. For instance, a person can make themselves think they are healed of something because their mind tells them just to feel better. I have no doubt that much of the speaking in tongues that we hear today is nothing more than worked up emotions.
- **Some are demonic.** The Bible says that Satan is a masquerader. Remember that Jesus said that would be people who, in the last days, say, "Lord, didn't we work miracles in your name?" Jesus will say, depart from me, I never knew you." Remember that the magicians of Pharaoh were able to replicate the miracles that Moses performed. Some of these manifestations are demonic. So we must be very careful to discern.

Now the next four gifts I will just mention briefly, because we will get into them in greater detail when we get to I Corinthians 14 in a few weeks.

6. <u>PROPHECY</u>

1 Corinthians 12:10 (NIV) – "…to another prophecy"

Now in Scripture there are two ways that prophecy worked. First, there was what we might call "foretelling," or predicting the future. We see this in Acts when the prophet Agabus indicated to Paul that he would face persecution and imprisonment in Jerusalem. The second way this gift functioned is in what we might call "forth-telling." By that I mean that it was powerful and persuasive proclamation of the message of God.

Now the prophet never declares his own message. He speaks for God. He listens to God and speaks the message he has been told to bring to the people.

Note: The revelation given to and proclaimed by the apostles could be called prophecy that became Scripture.

1 Corinthians 14:3 (NIV) - But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort.

Of course, this is a powerful and important gift in the church today, as it was in NT times. But remember, everything must spring from the already-revealed Word of God in the Scriptures. The prophet may make pointed application of the Scriptures to the situation at hand. In this respect, the gift of prophecy may also be linked to the message of wisdom.

Prophecy is a Holy Spirit-inspired message that is intelligible. It is God's message to men right where they are. Through this kind of preaching believers are edified, and non-believers are converted.

Now, sometimes the gift of prophecy is abused or misused. Someone gets up and proclaims something that doesn't square with God's revealed will in His Word. That's where the next gift comes into the picture.

7. DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN <u>SPIRITS</u>

1 Corinthians 12:10 (NIV) - to another distinguishing between spirits

The presence of false prophets is always a threat to the church. Thus there is the need for those who have been endowed by the Holy Spirit with the ability to distinquish between the true prophet and the false prophet. There are also fake-healers and false miracle-workers that need to be discerned.

1 John 4:1 (NIV) - Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

8. SPEAKING IN <u>DIFFERENT</u> KINDS OF <u>TONGUES</u>

1 Corinthians 12:10 (NIV) - to another speaking in different kinds of tongues…

9. <u>INTERPRETATION</u> OF TONGUES

1 Corinthians 12:10 (NIV) – "and to still another the interpretation of tongues."

CONCLUSION

In the Gospels, when Jesus performed miracles He would often point to them as evidence that the Kingdom of God was breaking in to this world. And that's what miracles are … the forces of the Kingdom of God breaking into our lives and into our world, overcoming the forces of Satan and the world.

But let me talk to you about the greatest miracle that happens … the miracle of the new birth. This is the most amazing activity of God.

Jesus said to a guy named Nicodemus, "You must be born again." How? That would take a miracle. And the great miracle of all is the miracle of a changed life.